

# Working for plants, people

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Nebraska Statewide Arboretum

Over the past 38 years, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum has come to understand that trees and landscapes have a dramatic impact on quality of life — they renew our environment, improve our health, increase social interactions, deepen our sense of place and provide opportunities for learning.

The idea of our founders, a group of committed citizens and University of Nebraska staff, was visionary. How could the best regionally appropriate trees, plants and practices be experienced all across the state?

Our work began by creating a network of grass-roots public gardens and arboreta. Today this unique network of local and accessible arboreta numbers 104. Parks, schools, libraries and other entities represent efforts large and small, many of them undertaken by volunteers, that provide a bright spot in communities from Brownville to Chadron. Recently the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum was honored to invite several new sites to the Lincoln area — Hilltop Arboretum, Vintage Heights Neighborhood Arboretum and the Fireworks Rain Garden.

Our programs have diversified over the years to include community greening efforts, tree and plant growing and numerous education and outreach events.



COURTESY PHOTO

The Beattie School Garden was partially funded by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

We grow thousands of trees and plants each year that go out to public and private landscapes across the state. We focus on testing and growing regionally native trees and plants that are well-adapted to complex urban conditions (you can purchase and learn more about these plants at [plant-nebraska.org](http://plant-nebraska.org)).

Our Greener Nebraska Towns program works to make our public landscapes more beautiful and ecologically beneficial. It affects communities where they need it most: funding, technical expertise and practical solutions to environmental challenges. We provide matching grants, and support the design and execution of the projects in collaboration with the University of Nebraska, Nebraska Forest Service,

Nebraska Environmental Trust, local municipalities, nonprofits and businesses. These projects include streets, campuses, schools, parks, libraries, hospitals and other facilities. Not only do they reflect a "sense of place," they are also designed to conserve and clean water, enhance habitat and make a more viable community.

Recently we have focused on creating more ecologically diverse school grounds, partnering with local schools and volunteers. These improved areas provide learning opportunities and physical and mental health benefits that connect kids, families and the whole community to each other and to the natural world.

While Nebraska Statewide Arboretum is certainly about plants, it is also about

## Upcoming events

### Upcoming Nebraska Statewide Arboretum events in the Lincoln area:

- Landscape Workshop, 5-7 p.m. Dec. 8, the Jane Snyder Trail Center. It will offer ideas to improve home landscapes and the benefits they offer. Bring photos and questions for round-table discussions and some "stump the experts" problems. RSVP to [jevertson1@unl.edu](mailto:jevertson1@unl.edu).
- First Thursday Brown-Bag events, Room 150 of Keim Hall on UNL's East Campus. The noon Dec. 1 presentation is "Decorating Naturally."
- Spring Affair, the Midwest's largest plant sale, April 21-22 at the Lancaster Event Center.

For questions about the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum or upcoming events, visit [plantnebraska.org](http://plantnebraska.org) or email [arboretum@unl.edu](mailto:arboretum@unl.edu).

people. We build community through our network of 1,000 members who are passionate about the landscape and the legacy they leave behind. We invite you to join in the fun by becoming a member of the arboretum or working to improve the outdoor environment of all the places where you live, work and play.

Christina Hoyt is executive director of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum.