



2023
ANNUAL
REPORT



NEBRASKA STATEWIDE
Arboretum



Mission

We plant Nebraska for healthy people, vibrant communities and a resilient environment.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am so proud to tell you about the momentous things we've accomplished this year. As you'll see in this Annual Report, we've worked hard throughout the last year to live our mission of Planting Nebraska for healthy people, vibrant communities and a resilient environment. Much, if not all, of our work aligns with one of the three pillars of our mission. Throughout this report we're shining the spotlight on a few specific projects and activities in each area.

Under our Healthy People pillar, you'll learn about four of our grant-funded projects. These are just four of many—since the inception of our community landscapes programs in the 1980s, NSA has granted more than \$10 million to Nebraska communities.

Under our Vibrant Communities pillar, you'll see how our belief that trees and plants have the power to connect comes into play. Finally, in a year that is projected to be the hottest on record, you'll see how we are working diligently to adapt to and reverse the effects of climate change through tree trials and education.

We hope this report will help you learn more about who and what you are supporting with your time and money. Please reach out to me, or any NSA staff member, with any questions. Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,



Hanna Pinneo
Executive Director



In the Spotlight **Wildflower Week 2023**

From a hike in Chadron State Park and a meet and greet at the Hemingford Care Center, to a plant sale in Gering and a wine social in Scottsbluff, Wildflower Week 2023 was a wonderful opportunity to connect with our western Nebraska friends!



A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

As I begin my term as president, I thought it would be fitting to share how I became a fan of NSA. I first began attending Spring Affair in the early 1980s, when it was still held at the old state fair grounds. Since then I've attended every year—picking up new plants, enjoying the preview dinners and volunteering.

In the 1990s, my husband, Dave, and I met Bob Henrickson, and the hook was set. Dave and I both immediately realized that we wanted to support this important organization that benefits all Nebraskans. When I was asked to serve on the board, it was an easy yes.

As we begin a new fiscal year, I'd like to welcome Jessica Barrett, Bob Gritmit and Edward Pohren to the board. We also say goodbye and thank you to Zack Fergus, who served with wisdom during his term.

This past year our board launched the "Build a Greenhouse" campaign, which raised \$70,000 and qualified us for a matching grant. Construction of the new greenhouse is in progress—the generosity of many members made this dream a reality.

In the coming fiscal year, we will continue to create green spaces in communities, develop public gardens and arboretums, supply Nebraskans with native plants and educate residents on their importance. Additionally, we will launch a legacy campaign, which will allow us to secure the means to continue the important mission of NSA for decades to come. Most of all, we look forward to meeting more of you and partnering with you in the work of planting Nebraska.

Happy planting,



Julie Zahn
Board President



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In the Spotlight Spring Affair 2023

Our biggest fundraiser of the year did not disappoint! More than 3,300 shoppers showed up at the Lancaster Event Center in April to fill carts, wagons, boxes and bags with plants, trees, shrubs, perennials and herbs!





A Passion for People and Plants

At Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, we take our middle name seriously: we plant Nebraska from east to west and everywhere in between.

Here are just a few of NSA’s planting projects during the past year:

Living Memorial Gardens, Sidney

NSA Sustainable Landscape Specialist Sarah Buckley road tripped to Sidney with a pickup full of plants to help the local garden club at the Living Memorial Gardens add some perennials to their beautiful landscape. This garden has a unique history, beginning in 1982 when a local art teacher suggested to the town that the defunct, weed-choked swimming pool be turned into a sunken garden. The idea became a reality, and 40 years later the garden still thrives with trees, shrubs, annuals and perennials planted in memory of loved ones.

“This garden is truly an important part not only of the care center, but of the whole community.”

Merissa Ruiz
Hemingford Care Center
Activities Director

Hemingford Care Center, Hemingford

Residents of the Hemingford Care Center regularly gather outdoors in the gazebo to enjoy the beautiful flowers and landscaping made possible in part by an NSA Plant Grant.

Hundreds of perennials, including natives like dwarf blue indigo, yarrow and coreopsis bloom alongside trees and shrubs, as birds, bees and butterflies alight on branches, leaves and petals.

Activities Director Merissa Ruiz even had her wedding ceremony in the gazebo. “This garden is truly an important part of the whole community,” said Ruiz.

Right: Western NE Community Forester Chrissy Land and Sustainable Landscape Specialist Sarah Buckley in Sidney.





“Experiences like this tree planting reenergize young learners to the positive benefits of the outdoors.”

Josh Synder
Director of Learning
Wahoo Public Schools

Wahoo Public Schools, Wahoo

This past spring we connected with kindergarteners and high schoolers at Wahoo Public Schools to plant trees throughout the sprawling grounds. As the trees mature, they will provide much-needed shade in the parking lot and along the street.

“Connecting kids with nature helps them understand that nature is living and breathing all around us, and that can have a positive impact on them,” said Josh Synder, director of learning for Wahoo Public Schools. “Experiences like this tree planting reenergize young learners to the positive benefits of the outdoors.”

Beal Slough Disc Golf Course, Lincoln

A Trees for Nebraska Towns grant enabled the Lincoln Flying Disc Club and the City of Lincoln to reinvigorate a disc golf course with diverse tree plantings and landscaping improvements, increasing enjoyment of the space for both players and others visiting the park.

Top: Students at Wahoo Public Schools plant a tree in front of the high school.

PLANTING BY THE NUMBERS

Here’s a quick look at what NSA got growing in FY23 across Nebraska:

14,946 plants, trees and shrubs in the ground statewide through our Bloom Box, Greener Towns, Waterwise, Trees for Nebraska Towns and Ten Free Trees programs

252 total planting projects

194 communities impacted across Nebraska

15 schools trained in Project Learning Tree and given free Bloom Box gardens and assistance from NSA in planting

We plant
Nebraska for
vibrant
communities



It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Nebraska Statewide Arboretum comes alongside communities large and small to help residents create beautiful, sustainable spaces.

South 24th Street, Omaha

When Karen Pesek, director of finance at Pesek law and volunteer coordinator for the South Omaha Business Improvement District, first saw a post about NSA plant grants on social media, she contacted Sustainable Landscape Specialist Sarah Buckley, who came out to the South 24th Street location for a site visit. Together they created a plan to fill the planters, which had previously been filled with annuals and struggled to thrive in the heat, over three seasons with hardy, native perennials.

“This is a labor of love,” said Pesek. “We can see how this kind of natural beauty benefits the neighborhood. It makes people feel safer; it makes them feel secure. These plantings will add to the vibrant environment and flavor of the culture that is already here.”

Arboretums & Landscape Steward Affiliates

From Brownville to Alliance, NSA facilitates a network of more than 100 arboretums and landscape steward affiliate sites across the state that demonstrate regionally appropriate adaptability and sustainability.

This year we welcomed Lincoln Children's Zoo, which features more than 300 species of plants and trees, many of them native to the Great Plains, as our newest affiliate site.

Visit plantnebraska.org for more information about NSA's arboretums and affiliate sites.

*Top: Martin Salazar plants on South 24th Street in Omaha.
Left: NSA Horticulture Program Director Bob Henrickson at the Lincoln Children's Zoo.*



Heritage Park, Battle Creek

When the residents of Battle Creek celebrated their town's sesquicentennial anniversary in August, they had a beautifully restored park as the backdrop for the historic occasion.

The Heritage Park Revitalization Committee was awarded a \$10,000 NSA Greener Towns grant that was used, along with locally raised funds, to refurbish the landscape with native plants that accentuate the historical elements of the space, which include a sculpture of Pawnee Chief Petalesharo, a Pawnee teepee and the Heritage Museum.

"This project was an opportunity to tell the unique native and settler history of Battle Creek by grounding the story in an authentic landscape," said NSA Sustainable Landscape Specialist Brad Kindler.



"There's a lot of history here, and we've brought it to life in a beautiful native landscape."

Marcie Sextro
Heritage Park Revitalization Committee

Plants like milkweed, yarrow, purple coneflower, white sage, serviceberry and wild plum were selected because of their medicinal and culinary importance to the Pawnee and early settlers of the area.

"There's a lot of history here, and we've brought it to life in a beautiful native landscape that's accessible to everyone in our community," said Marcie Sextro, who serves on the park's Revitalization Committee. "This will be a place to experience our history in a new way."

Left: Two Future Farmers of America student volunteers plant at Heritage Park.

Grant Funding FY23 at a Glance

- More than \$227,300 awarded in Greener Towns, Waterwise, Plant Grants and Trees for Nebraska Towns grants
- 45 planting projects completed
- 28 communities impacted
- Plus more than 800 trees planted in 76 communities across Nebraska through the Ten Free Trees program.

*Ten Free Trees
Trees for Nebraska Towns
Plant Grants
Greener Towns
Waterwise Landscapes*



Planning and Planting for the Future

At Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, we are committed to pursuing new ways to help make our environment more resilient for the next generation.

Here are a few unique projects we've engaged in over the past year.

Tree Trials across the State

Since 2014 NSA Green Infrastructure Coordinator Justin Evertson and NSA Horticulture Program Coordinator Bob Henrickson have been trialing dozens of tree species across the state and collecting data on which species have what it takes to thrive in extreme drought, cold and heat.



Bob Henrickson (left) and Justin Evertson have been conducting tree trials since 2014.

NSA is also partnering with other entities throughout the state to conduct tree trials. Between 2014 and 2016, 635 trees (27 different species) were planted in 17 trial sites through a program called Environmentally Adapted Trees, funded by the Nebraska Forest Service. Last year an additional 335 trees and shrubs from 12 species were planted at 18 trial sites through the Urban Tree Improvement Program, which is a cooperative effort with other Great Plains states to expand the palette of climate-adapted trees.

NSA provided all the trees for the trials, most of which were grown from seeds collected by Henrickson.

Right: A handful of bur oak acorns that were collected locally.

“We are learning what works here, and then ideally we can partner with nurseries to get some of the more successful options into the pipeline and available for distribution,” said Evertson. “It’s really about the long game—slowly changing the mindset of the public about trees that will work in Nebraska over the long-term.”

So far, what Evertson and Henrickson are observing at Prairie Pines Nature Preserve in Lincoln, where more than 50 species have been planted since 2014, is that oaks and hickories are thriving, which is not altogether surprising.

“There is a genetic toughness there that makes these species well-suited for climate adaptability,” said Evertson. “They have thrived through some extremely wet years and some amazingly dry years, through the coldest temperatures we’ve ever had in February, and through the hottest, driest conditions we’ve seen in years.”



Seed Collecting from Locally Sourced Trees

Come autumn, if you're looking for NSA Horticulture Program Coordinator Bob Henrickson, you'll likely find him on his hands and knees, gathering up acorns beneath various oak trees or snipping plants and grasses as they go to seed.

During the winter and early spring, Henrickson and a cadre of dedicated volunteers plant these seeds in trays and nurture them in the greenhouse as they grow from seedlings into viable plants and trees that will then be planted across the state (see the story about tree trials on the opposite page).

Now you know: when we say “locally sourced native plants and trees,” we really do mean local!

Top: NSA Board President Julie Zahn (far left) and her husband Dave (second from right) invited NSA staff to collect chinkapin, red and black oak acorns at their property near Indian Cave State Park. Right: Sheila Schrader is one of the many NSA volunteers who sow seeds and nurture seedlings in the NSA greenhouse during the winter and early spring.



Waterwise Work in Gering

It was all hands on deck during Wildflower Week in June when NSA staff joined a dozen volunteers at Community Ever Green House in Gering to complete phase two of a Waterwise grant.

The project kicked off in 2022 with the construction of a bioswale to move stormwater from the greenhouse roof through a series of native plantings. This past June, volunteers pitched in to plant 18 raised beds of native perennials which, once established, will be easy to maintain.

“This was a great collaborative project and a wonderful community effort,” said longtime Community Ever Green House volunteer Tina Luz.

Left: Bioswale at Community Ever Green House in Gering. Right: North Platte NRD Community Educator Amanda Shepperd plants a raised bed at Community Ever Green House.

Thank You to our generous donors

We gratefully acknowledge the following generous supporters for gifts given between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023.

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FY 2023 Financial Overview

NSA remains a fiscally healthy organization, as evidenced by our annual audits.

On the revenue side, our largest source of income is plant sales, including Spring Affair. Donations this year comprise a larger portion than normal due to our greenhouse fundraising campaign. While membership comprises a smaller percentage than normal, total membership dues are up this year. Grant revenue are salary, supply and services funds we receive to operate our grant programs.

On the expense side, we are well under the national average for the proportion of overall personnel expenses. Note that all greenhouse and planting supplies, including plants we order in for Spring Affair, fall under Materials & Supplies.

Grants Received in FY2023

Nebraska Environmental Trust

Trees for Nebraska Towns, 3-year grant
 Year 1: \$331,761

Greener Nebraska Towns, 3-year grant
 Year 1: \$334,564

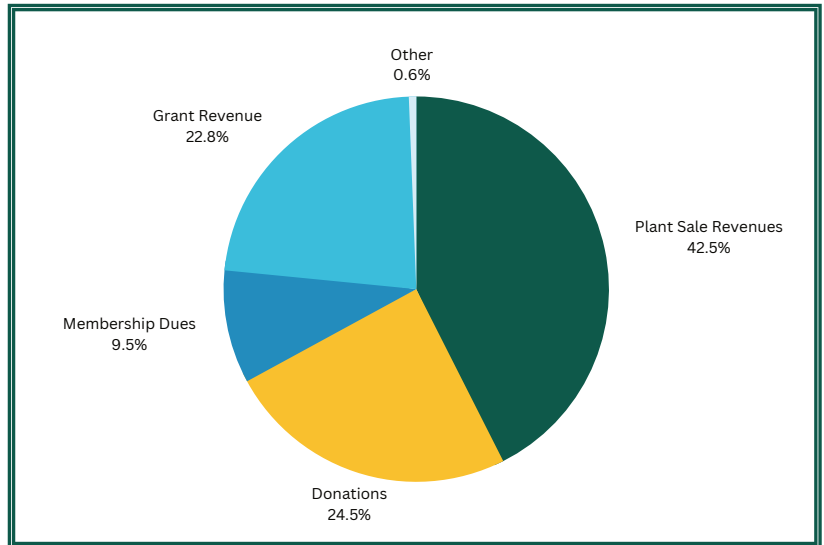
Nebraska Department of Environment & Energy

Waterwise Landscapes, 2.5-year grant
 Year 2: \$58,619

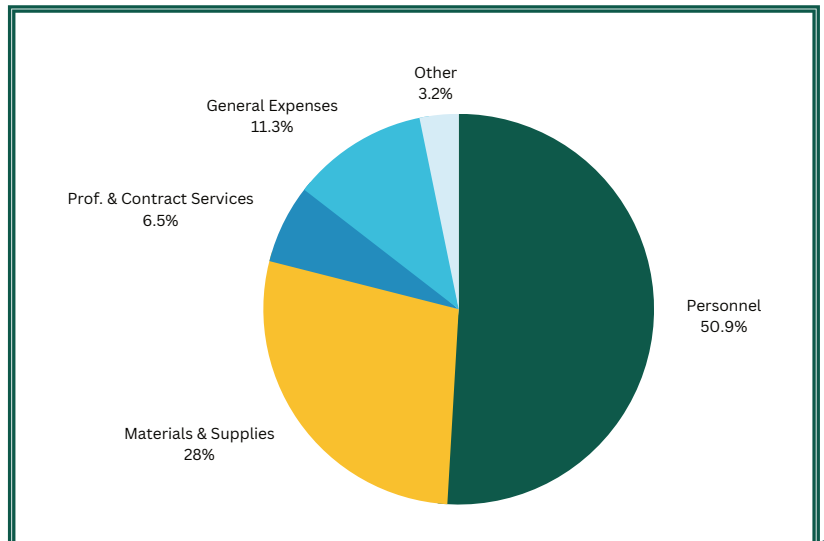
Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Shovel Ready Grant for the Production
 Greenhouse, \$66,000 Total

FY 2023 Revenue



FY 2023 Expenses



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University of Nebraska
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P.O. Box 830964
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