

NEBRASKA NURSERY NEWS

NEBRASKA NURSERY AND LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION



WILDFLOWER WEEK – WILD PLACES, WILD FLOWERS

By: Karma Larsen, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, plantnebraska.org

To celebrate Nebraska’s wildflowers, nature organizations across the state host wildflower-related events for the whole family in early June of every year: tours, presentations, prairie runs, etc. Updated events, as well as wildflower publications, posters and other resources can be found online at plantnebraska.org/wildflower-week.

What is it about wildflowers that appeals so strongly to our imaginations? Maybe the surprise of coming upon something fragile-looking in the toughest of places, blooming regardless of whether they are seen or not. Their flowers and seeds feed birds, butterflies and other pollinators and wildlife; their roots loosen and improve soil; they thrive without care in places other plants could never survive; and they lend fragrance and beauty to wild places all across the state, making us want to take a closer look at places we might otherwise ignore.

Importantly, “Where wildflowers are found thriving, it is a sign that the environment is healthy,” says Bob Henrickson, whose nursery production work with the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum concentrates on native and regional plants.

While 2022 events are still somewhat limited in number, wildflowers may best be celebrated without fanfare by planting native plants in your own yard and by visiting wild places nearby in the form of parks, trails, forests for a closer look at the natural beauty surrounding us.

NNLA MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership renewal forms will be sent June 1 for the 2022-2023 membership year. If you do not receive your renewal invoice, contact the NNLA office. Membership dues must be received by September 1, 2022.



THE NNLA MISSION: TO ADVANCE THE NURSERY AND LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR NETWORKING, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY AND CERTIFICATION TO INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS FOR THE PURPOSE OF COLLECTIVELY GROWING THEIR BUSINESSES.

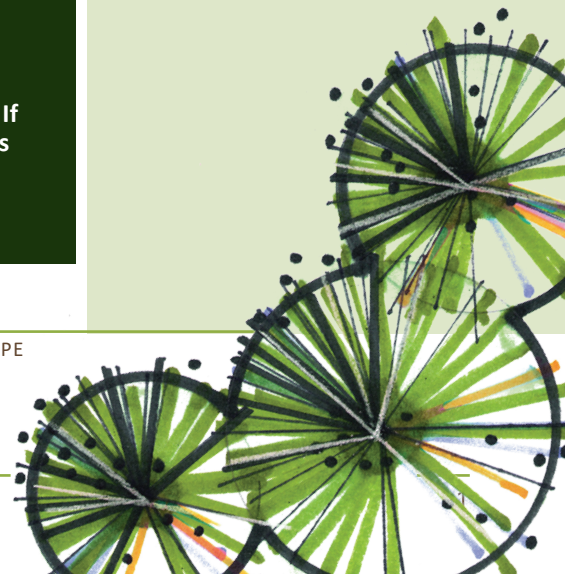
Save the Date!

NNLA Summer Field Day
TBD
Information coming soon!

NCNLP Testing to be held later this summer

NNLA 2023 Winter Conference
January 26 & 27, 2023

Watch members.nnla.org/nnla-events for details!



NEBRASKA NURSERY NEWS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY JASON KUEHL, NCNLP



Good spring to all of you,

Winter is never quite what I expect it to be. Early in my career it felt like a reward to take some time off from all the hours we worked during the rest of the year but as the years go on the seasons really run together. It has become a more year-round industry. With seasonal ups and downs in labor requirements we have to find things in the "off" season to keep our employees gainfully employed so we can retain them for the coming spring. More than ever employees want a quality of life ratio of work and home. With raising costs and wages maybe that is good for keeping overtime down in the spring but that puts more pressure on those off peak season hours to be productive for the company.

Recently I was given the opportunity to present two awards at the Future Farmers of America State Conference in Lincoln at Pinnacle Bank Arena. A former farm kid myself, of course I was aware of FFA, but had never been around it. Somewhere around five thousand students and parents were in town for the conference. NNLA supports FFA and we have a booth at their show to support our membership and talk about opportunities in horticulture. Our board members typically fill the role of attending but I found myself wondering if this wouldn't be a better opportunity for some of our members to be there instead. It is more like a job fair anyway. A chance to engage with potential future horticulture students. These are the people we could be interviewing in a few years. Who gets the seasonality of the industry better than the students with an agricultural background or interest?

When the day at the booth was over I was able to eat supper with a few of the participants and their parents. Very engaging and thoughtful people, who asked questions with respect and interest. After that was the awards ceremony. Formal and exuberant at the same time, it was a little daunting with that large attendance but it was well scripted and organized. Even better I didn't have to speak, just hand out the two awards in the horticultural competitions. What I learned from my experience was how many students participate in FFA and even how many chapters were in Omaha and Lincoln. Some of this won't be news to you but for those of you that weren't aware I wanted to make sure.

The other winter event we represented NNLA membership at was the University of Nebraska-Lincoln career day on East Campus. The most common question we got was about career and internship opportunities. We referred them to our website and encouraged them to check with their local nurseries and garden centers for better information but once again I was thinking about job creation and potential employee contacts and wondered how NNLA members could be more involved. So please make sure if you have opportunities in your business use the website and contact us with questions. Possibly volunteer to attend these or other events. The board and committees are focusing on improving the NNLA website and your input is always appreciated. Maybe some of these resources will help find that next employee to help in your business.

Have a wonderful and productive spring, and if you can do something about all this wind I would really appreciate it.

Thank you,
Jason Kuehl, NCNLP, NNLA President

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NNLA WELCOMES ONE NEW NEBRASKA CERTIFIED NURSERY AND LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONAL

The Nebraska Nursery and Landscape Association’s newest Nebraska Certified Nursery and Landscape Professional (NCNLP) is Tim Vrooman. He took the NCNLP Certification test in February and passed all three components.

The NCNLP program was established to promote the professionalism of individuals within the industry. A rigorous three-part test, which covers plant identification, landscape, and the NCNLP manual, must be successfully completed. To learn more about becoming a Nebraska Certified Nursery and Landscape Professional, visit nnla.org/certification.



Tim Vrooman is employed with Nebraska Nursery & Color Garden in Lincoln.

What factors motivated you to become certified?

I feel certification allows an individual to be recognized that they are willing to learn and grow within the industry.

Educational and Work Background

I have worked at Nebraska Nursery & Color Gardens since April 2019.

How has becoming certified affected you and your company?

I am grateful and appreciative for the certification process offered by NNLA. It allows individuals in Nebraska to have an industry standard of certification to collectively help advance residential horticulture in Nebraska. Certification shows that we take our line of work and our industry seriously not only as an individual but as a company as well.

FFA CONVENTION

The NNLA continues to reach out to the next generation and encourage them to consider a career in the diverse horticulture field. The Association sponsors the Nursery Operations Proficiency Award and the Landscape Management Proficiency Award during the FFA convention. The 2022 FFA Convention was held April 6-8 at the Pinnacle Bank Area. NNLA also hosted a booth during the event.



JOB OPENINGS

As a member benefit, NNLA will post job openings to our website for no cost. To view current posting, go to nnla.org/resources/job-openings-2/. If you have a current posting, notify NNLA if you want it removed or updated.

To list an opening, email jennifer@youraam.com with the information to be posted.

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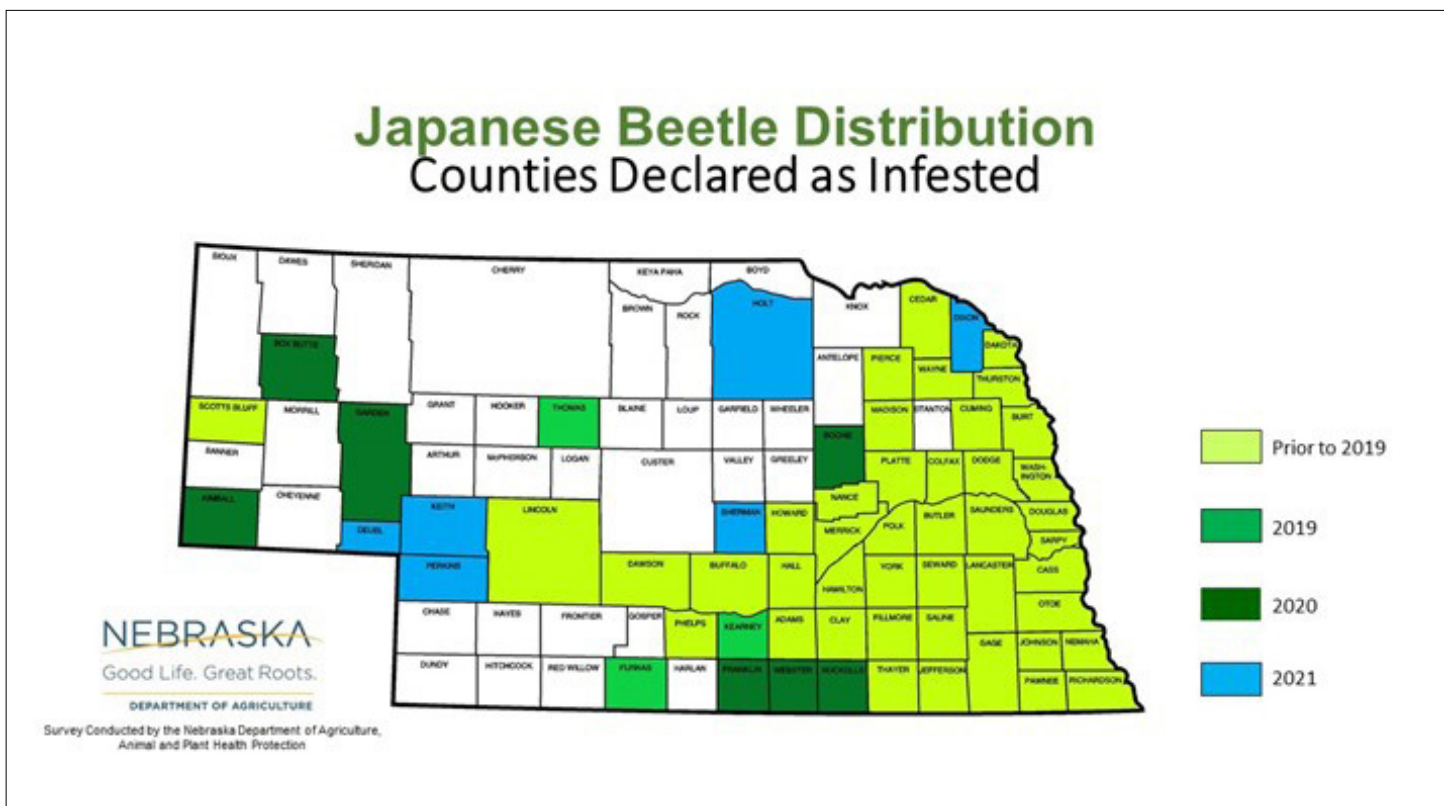
JAPANESE BEETLE UPDATE

Nebraska has numerous counties infested with Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica*). As this pest becomes more common across the state, the prevalence of Japanese beetle has implications for nurseries that ship out of state.

Nebraska nursery stock moving interstate may need special certification, in addition to a regular nursery inspection and license, to meet other states' entry requirements. This certification may require soil sampling, trapping surveys, inspections and/or chemical treatments.

Special certification may be required for all Nebraska nurseries shipping nursery stock to other states, not just nursery stock shipped from known infested counties.

All Nebraska nurseries involved in interstate shipment of nursery stock should contact NDA now to determine what certification measures will be needed. Be proactive in contacting NDA; do not wait until you are ready to ship, or certification may not be possible. Contact Jessica Schueth, Export Certification Coordinator, at 402-471-5902 or by email at agr.phyto@nebraska.gov, for more information or to discuss certification requirements.



HEALTHY POTS, HEALTHY PLANET

Healthy Pots, Healthy Planet is an initiative of the Association of Professional Landscape Designers (click here to learn more about APLD.) The Nebraska Nursery & Landscape Association has signed on in support of this initiative to find more sustainable alternatives to plastic pots. Plastic pots significantly contribute to the proliferation of plastic pollution. Through their Healthy Pots, Healthy Planet initiative the APLD is raising awareness about the dangers of plastic horticultural pots to the earth and they are asking for individuals, businesses and non-profit organizations to sign their names in support of more sustainable alternatives.



An in-depth study of the production, use, disposal and environmental impact of horticultural plastic containers revealed that plastic pots significantly contribute to the proliferation of plastic pollution, with numerous adverse environmental effects. A more sustainable product for growing, shipping, and selling plant material must be found. Check out this video to learn more. You can find Healthy Pots, Healthy Planet on Facebook and Instagram.

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OBITUARIES

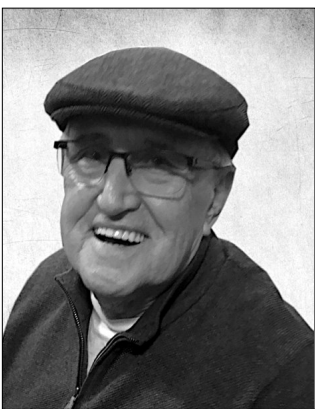


Jason Lee Heller

NNLA member, Jason Heller died on January 3, 2022. Jason worked at Mulhall's and later owned his own business, Neptune's Water Gardens in the Omaha/Gretna area. Jason was a current NCNLP, becoming certified in the early 2000's.

Jason Lee Heller
December 10, 1978 - January 3, 2022

Jason is survived by his children, Will and Anabelle; their mother Jessica; parents, Gary and Deb; brother, Steve (Angi and Cooper); grandfathers, Rich Heller and Ralph Scott; many aunts, uncles, cousins. He was preceded in death by grandmothers, Barbara Heller and Carol Scott; and uncle, Kevin Scott.



Duane L. Novotny

Duane was born on July 21, 1941. He was the eldest child of Lumir and Eleanor Novotny. He began his education at Clarkson Elementary school and at the age of 10, was stricken with polio. He spent the next 19 months at Children's Memorial Hospital in Omaha, Nebraska. When he was well, he returned to Clarkson and finished his education graduating from High School in 1959.

After high school, Duane joined the National Guard and served for 6 years. In 1962 he also began his working career at Moore's Grocery Store in Clarkson as their head meat cutter. Duane married Brenda Nelson on October 7, 1967, at Ss. Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church in Clarkson. He continued to work at Moore's until 1976 when he decided to do a career change. He helped start and manage the Garden Center and Landscaping Division of the Bluebird Nursery in Clarkson. Harlan Hamernik, owner of Bluebird Nursery, was instrumental in guiding Duane toward the career he accomplished as a horticulturist.

While residing in Clarkson, Duane was very active in many organizations. He served on the local school board for 16 years, he served on the state school board for two years and he was a member of the Clarkson Volunteer Fire and Rescue squad for 25 years. He was also a member of the Clarkson Commercial Club, the Lyons Club, and co-chaired the Czech Festival numerous times. He created the "Cesky Butcha" sandwich which is enjoyed still today at Czech Days in Clarkson.

In 1996 Duane moved his family to Lincoln, Nebraska to accept a position with Campbell Nursery. He remained an employee/manager of Campbell Nursery until his passing. Duane shared his love and talents of horticulture with many others. He was a certified Nurs-

eryman and received the Nebraska Nurseryman of the Year Award in 2006. In his younger years, Duane played Fast Pitch Softball as a catcher. He caught for Darrell Dubsy, who is in the Nebraska Softball Hall of Fame. In later years, he went from playing to umpiring both Fast Pitch and Slow Pitch softball. But over the years, his true enjoyment came from watching his own children and grandchildren play volleyball, football, basketball, baseball, track, and compete in rodeo events.

Duane is survived by his wife of 54 years, Brenda; daughter Angel Arkfeld; grandchildren, Sydney, Jaden and Ava; son Brent and daughter-in-law Kelly Novotny; grandsons Gavin and Garrett; brothers, Garry (Janet) Novotny, Ron (Shirley) Novotny, Dean (Jackie) Novotny; sisters, Janice (Fred) Prewitt, Diane Novotny, Cheryl Most; sister-in-law's, Janice (Roger) Kucera and Cindy (Frank) Pekny; and many nieces and nephews and cousins.

Duane was preceded in Death by his parents, Lumir and Eleanor Novotny, in-laws Delbert and Virginia Nelson and brother-in-law Jerome Most.

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GREATPLANTS 2025 – THE VOTES ARE IN

You voted and now we can announce the winners for the 2025 GreatPlants of the Year! Plants of the Year are voted on three years in advance so nursery owners have time to plan future orders and grow or order plants well ahead of time.

Thank you for your interest and support of the GreatPlants, and for voting. Once again you chose a great selection of plants for home and public landscapes. Spring is here, go green!

Tree of the Year 2025

Yellow Buckeye, *Aesculus flava*

Height: 50-75 feet

Spread: 30-50 feet

Sun: full sun to part shade

Moisture: medium

A large and reliable shade tree with pretty yellow flowers in spring and reliable fall color; a good combination accent and shade tree for large landscapes. Yellow Buckeye has upright spikes of lemon yellow flowers rising above the foliage in mid spring. It has handsome, dark green foliage that turn an outstanding coppery-bronze to pumpkin orange in the fall. The bark is gray, smooth until later strongly furrowed to scaly. The squirrel-loving nuts can be seen as messy in the landscape, so best to mulch this beauty out to the dripline so the buckeye fruit falls on the mulch and not the lawn.



Conifer of the Year 2025

Korean Pine, *Pinus koraiensis*

Height: 30-50 feet

Spread: 25-35 feet

Sun: full sun

Moisture: medium

Korean pine is a white pine with a narrow, pyramidal form with branching that becomes horizontal with age and lower branches often extend to the ground. Needles are blue-green and cones can be 3-6" long with edible pine nuts that are widely valued and distributed in commerce. Attractive gray bark flakes to reveal reddish-brown inner bark.



Shrub of the Year 2025

Iceberg Alley® Sageleaf Willow, *Salix candida* Jefberg

Height: 6 feet

Spread: 6 feet

Sun: full sun to part shade

Moisture: medium

This northern native plant was discovered by the Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador Botanical Garden. It features delicate silver catkins with red overtones and yellow anthers along the branches from late winter to early spring before the leaves. The flowers are excellent for cutting. It has attractive grayish green foliage with white undersides and tinges of silver which emerges white in spring. The fuzzy pointy leaves are highly ornamental but do not develop any appreciable fall color. The smooth bark and white branches are extremely showy and add significant winter interest.



Perennial of the Year 2025

Salvia 'Rose Marvel', *Salvia nemorosa*

Height: 14 inches

Spread: 12 inches

Sun: full sun

Moisture:

This bushy salvia has hot pink flower buds that open to large, rich rose flowers that in turn fade to reveal burgundy calyces. It blooms from early summer to early and re-blooms without cutting back. The flowers are also excellent cuts. Fragrant narrow leaves offer a gray-green complement to the bright blooms, and are more finely textured than most garden plants. It's very low maintenance and and early to grow so it's best cleaned up in early spring before active growth begins. It attracts butterflies and hummingbirds but not deer. Perfect for planting en masse, in borders and even in containers. to your yard, but is not particularly attractive to deer who tend to leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. It tends to die back to the crown in winter and regrow from the base in spring.



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Grass of the Year 2025

'Prairie Blues' little bluestem, *Schizachyrium scoparium*

Height: 36-48 inches

Spread: 18-24 inches

Sun: full sun

Moisture: dry

This western selection of little bluestem has a strong, upright habit and more consistently blue-gray foliage than others in the species. Purplish-bronze flowers about 3" long rise above the foliage in August. They're followed by attractive clusters of fluffy, silvery-white seedheads that often persist into winter. One of its most outstanding ornamental features is its bronze-orange fall foliage. This native prairie grass provides food for birds and many species of butterflies and is drought-tolerant for difficult spots.



OUTDOOR DISCOVERY DAYS



Outreach and education on plants pest issues is an important component of the work of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) Entomology Program. While the majority of that effort is focused on educating industry, we also work to inform the public about plant pests that could negatively impact Nebraska agriculture and the environment. For example, in April and May each year, Entomology staff participate in the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Outdoor Discovery Days. Elementary students from across the state attend hands-on outdoor learning opportunities each spring, held at several state park locations across the state. Students learn new outdoor skills and increase their knowledge of wildlife and the outdoors.

This spring, youth attending Outdoor Discovery Days at Fort Kearney and Platte River State Parks had the opportunity to learn about exotic and invasive insects that threaten Nebraska's trees. NDA staff taught students about invasive insects including spotted lanternfly, emerald ash borer (EAB) and Asian

longhorned beetle. Activities help students better understand the biology and identification of these pests, preferred hosts, signs and symptoms of infestation, and how to prevent pests from becoming introduced and established in Nebraska.

Outreach is a vital part of NDA's work to protect the state from the introduction and establishment of invasive species. Teaching the industry and citizens about invasive species increases the number of eyes looking for these pests. As more people across the state know what to look for and how to report possible invasive species sightings, the potential increases



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TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

In addition to our current job posting webpage, a 'Tools and Equipment' page will be located on the NNLA website as an exclusive benefit to members to list tools an equipment they would like to advertise. The webpage will be viewable by the public but only members will be able to list items. To place your ad, simply send the NNLA office an email at jennifer@youraam.com. Include all pertinent information and attach a photo if appropriate. Ads will be listed for 30 days, and the posting of ads will not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by NNLA.

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NNLA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

To promote our members and learn about each other, NNLA will begin highlighting members with a spotlight feature in the NNLA newsletter, Facebook page, and website. To participate, click [here](#) and submit the Member Spotlight form.

For this issue’s member spotlight, we visit with Soil Diva Midwest.

Tell us about your business’ background and history. How did the company start and where it is today? Describe your path to get here.

We started in the nursery business doing crop insurance. Meeting many producers in many states, we learned that a lot of products they used were very toxic. We decided to find answers for these producers, which lead to forming Soil Diva Midwest. From there, we expanded into the lawn care, gardens, specialty crops and farmers.

What are you known for or what is your niche?

Our goal is to help you find a safer way to tend to your plant needs. We believe in lowering your cost, as well as help you plant sources while doing it. We are a premier wholesale/retail company that services nursery, garden centers, lawn care, fruit and vegetable growers, orchards and farmers with safe, effective products that range from organic to conventional items.

What are some highlights of serving your community?

Seeing lights go on in their head there is a safer, better way to do things, with less toxicity.

What are you passionate about professionally?

Bringing back native plants. Less yards, more plants.

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ADVERTISE IN THE NNLA NEWSLETTER

Would you like to see your company featured in an ad in the Nebraska Nursery & Landscape Association’s quarterly newsletter, Nebraska Nursery News?

You will have the opportunity to present your company logo, products/services and company identity to members from across the state. Check out the new lower advertising rates on the last page of the newsletter. This is a great, affordable opportunity to reach members and anyone who views the newsletter on the website. Please contact the NNLA office at jennifer@youraam.com or (402) 381-7154 for further details.

Do you ship nursery stock out-of-state?

More than just your Nebraska nursery license may be required, so be sure to plan ahead.

Don’t risk shipping without proper certification!

For information about requirements, contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture Export Certification Coordinator at 402-471-5902 or agr.phyto@nebraska.gov.



LANDSCAPING FROM FRONT TO BACK

BENEFICIAL LANDSCAPES

THE FRONT YARD

By: Karma Larsen, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, plantnebraska.org



The front yard is the most public and visible part of home landscapes. It's important in terms of welcoming visitors, defining entrances, giving the house some separation from the street, and situating it comfortably within the physical environment. Besides its value to the owner, the curb appeal and appearance of our front yards also impacts neighbors, property values and the larger community.

While curb appeal is often reduced to sale value, its impact on passersby might be a more meaningful evaluation. When walkers adjust their route to go past your yard... that's curb appeal.

Because they are so visible and public, front yards tend to be more about form than function while backyard privacy lends itself more to activities like eating, relaxing, recreation, growing edibles and other personal preferences.

In terms of size, trees have the most impact aesthetically and spatially on the way structures fit into their surroundings. When placed thoughtfully (shading from deciduous trees on the south, shelter from evergreens on the north), they can reduce heating and cooling costs by 25 percent or more and make both the indoors and outdoors more appealing throughout the year. Trees frame views both from the street and from inside as seen through windows. They help mark boundaries and can shelter areas of the front yard, separating them for activities like eating outside, play areas for kids, etc. Even a very exposed street-side landscape can be made more private and usable by means of screening with plants or fences.

The more layered the plantings in any landscape, from tall shade trees to shrubs to low-lying perennial beds, the more interest and year-round appeal they're likely to offer. They also provide a more hospitable setting for plants, with larger plants creating a sheltered micro-climate for smaller plants as well as birds, butterflies and other pollinators and wildlife—further increasing interest and diversity. For more separation and screening from the street, some homeowners develop berms or islands between the house and the street. The more natural they appear, the better they fit in.

Lawns provide year-round green but some homeowners forego turfgrass entirely in favor of low-growing perennials or groundcovers, in many cases with a focus on native plants for larger environmental benefits and biodiversity. Keeping them well-managed with mown paths or other evidence of intentional design can make them more appealing to turf-preferring neighbors.

In any planting effort, make sure there are no city or neighborhood restrictions about size and species, and no utilities, above or below ground, that should be avoided.

Sometimes we give little thought to our yards but the way we plan and care for them can have far more impact than we realize in terms of how inviting they are to ourselves and the people around us, and on how much time and pleasure we get from being out in them.

FOUNDATION PLANTINGS

By: Justin Evertson, Green Infrastructure Coordinator

The term "foundation plantings" generally refers to landscape plants purposely placed at or near the foundation of a house. In the past, such plants were regularly used to help hide unappealing foundations and first-floor basements and typically consisted of shearable evergreen shrubs such as boxwood, juniper, or yews with a few easy-to-grow daylilies or other perennials thrown in to add some color and seasonal interest. Over time, it became common practice to add foundation plantings to most new homes, as well as many commercial buildings, and the tradition continues.

Many newly-built homes don't end up with unsightly foundations that are better hidden, so are foundation plantings still an important concept? That question depends a lot on the context: the style of house, its scale, the surrounding landscape, neighboring

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properties, personal tastes, etc. Frequently plants selected to hide the base of the house are chosen with little thought about their long-term suitability and tend to outgrow their usefulness.

At their best, foundation plantings can soften harsh architectural angles and help a home blend in better with its surroundings. And for gardeners and landscape aficionados, foundation areas can be a great place to grow some of their favorite plants.

Here are a few suggestions for thinking about foundation plantings:

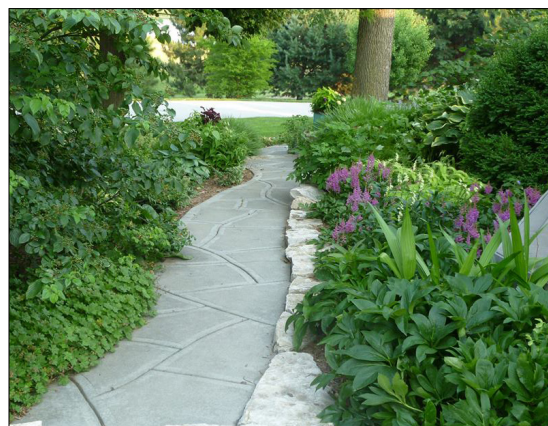
- It's smart to concentrate on the complete setting of the home and not just the foundation line. For most situations, and especially for novice gardeners, foundation plantings should generally be simple and in careful scale so they enhance rather than hide the house.
- Landscape designers discourage placing "foundation plants as if they were little soldiers pressed up along the perimeter of your house." They're most effective when used to enhance the home rather than to hide it. Unless you want total screening, avoid planting varieties that will block windows.
- They're rarely visible from inside the home unless they're near low windows. So unless you don't have enough space elsewhere, you may not want to hide and waste your favorite plants here.
- On the other hand, if you're short on space or an avid gardener, the foundation area can be a place to have fun while expanding your plant collection. Foundation zones are often the areas that we interact with the most, and they're usually near a water source, so having dynamic landscape plantings near doors, foundations and walkways is worth the effort.
- Remember that beauty is in the eye of the beholder and that tastes change over time. A growing trend across the country is a return to gardening and a desire to be more ecologically sound with landscape plantings. This applies to foundation plantings as well, and people are becoming more accepting of a little bit of fuzziness or wildness in the home landscape if it's leading to better environmental outcomes.
- Foundation plantings can have great curb appeal while still helping to sustain pollinators and other wildlife. There are a lot of great resources about easy-to-grow plants for pollinators.
- Areas near downspouts are great places to practice some rain gardening, where stormwater is captured and allowed to naturally percolate into the soil instead of running off site as quickly as possible. The best rain gardens use deeply-rooted plants that tend to grow a little taller.
- Beware of large-growing trees and shrubs in foundation zones. Many a view from a picture window has been blocked from a poorly placed tree. And large growing shrubs can quickly get out of bounds, making exterior maintenance of the home more difficult.
- Finally, if you're a novice to landscaping, work with a good landscaper or landscape designer. They're worth the investment.



These are particularly lush foundation plants but, with the home's high windows, they don't obstruct views from inside.

SIDE YARDS

By: Justin Evertson, Green Infrastructure Coordinator



How often do we think about our sideyards? Those open spaces between the lot line and our homes, garages or other outbuildings are often very narrow. And the narrower the space, the less likely we are to think about them or use them.

They are of course essential, a way to get from front to back without trespassing on neighbors' lots. If they're narrow, they're often relegated to some form of walkway with turfgrass or hardscaping.

For as small as they are and as little as we "use" them, what we require of them is significant:

- They need to be somewhat navigable to move from front to back within the property lines.
 - Since they butt up to buildings, they need to slope away from foundations to prevent water damage.
 - We don't want them to be an eyesore, either to our neighbors or to ourselves.
- If they're close to homes or other buildings next door, privacy or some kind of visual barrier is often desirable.

Homeowners, and gardeners in particular, like to use every inch of land they have. The wider a sideyard is, the more likely to be used like any other yard space. But there's no reason to waste even a narrow patch of yard. It might be just 3 feet wide, but if it's 50 feet long, that's 150 square feet.

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So what can we do with these “outdoor hallways”? Below are some ideas but do check city codes; and it’s helpful to let neighbors know what you’re doing in advance if it will affect their property or views.

What do you need? What do you want?

For homeowners with dogs, a dog run might be the highest priority. Stepping stones or turf are the most likely choices for surfaces as very few groundcovers can handle the abuse.

For families with children, some kind of usable play space could take pressure off the more visible front and backyard. Is there room for an outdoor kitchen, hopscotch or sandbox? Is it cool or warm enough for use in the times and seasons they’re most likely to use it?

If storage space is at a premium, is there room for narrow storage for things that don’t require temperature control? Tools, ladders, lawn or sports equipment, etc. Again, storage that is not an eyesore.

Is it wide enough for a small patio area with tables and chairs? Keep in mind that sunlight or shade can be intense in narrow spaces like this and can vary dramatically by season.

Plants

What do you want in your sideyard? “I know,” says the gardener, “plants.” Not bare soil or physical stuff but plants – for beauty, interest, eating, pollinators. Possibly a space for a potting bench, maybe even a foldup one that can be raised and lowered as needed. But more likely plants.

The amount of sunlight and moisture will dictate plant choices, but groundcovers can cover bare soil and eliminate the need for mowing. Sedges can only handle minimal foot traffic but they tend to be lower and require almost no care. Taller plants are preferably upright to keep paths walkable. One tricky thing about these tight spaces is that they may have a full day of shade and then an hour or more of full, hot late day sun, or vice versa. It may take some experimenting to find the shade or sun plants best adapted to the conditions.

Edible options depend on sunlight and moisture but salad greens like kale, lettuce or arugula and root crops like radishes and carrots can handle limited sun, which is actually a benefit for greens and extends the season.

Vines on a trellis, chain link or other style fence can convert undesired views to green ones.

Keep your neighbor in mind. Aggressive plants will impact their yard possibly more than your own. With these spaces that are may be more visible to them than to us, a slight twist of Wendell Berry’s “Do unto those downstream [beside you] as you would have them do unto you” is a good guideline for making neighborly choices.

CURBSIDE PLANTINGS

By: Bob Henrickson, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, plantnebraska.org



Grasses, blue flax and Red Rocks Penstemon in this curbside planting can take the heat from hardscapingbugwood.org

This is the first in a series of five articles on landscaping different areas of a home landscape: curbside, front yard, foundation plantings, side yard and back yard.

What’s the biggest landscape challenge on your property? For many homeowners, it’s that curbside strip of soil surrounded by asphalt, concrete or buildings—difficult to mow, almost impossible to water without runoff, possibly shaded for part of the day and exposed to hot sunlight other times. It has to withstand foot traffic, pet refuse and de-icers from winter snow removal. It also needs to be accessible for water and sewer line maintenance and meet local street codes, which may greatly restrict plant height and spread.

Besides the obvious rewards of transforming a boring, sun-beaten strip into a thing of beauty, curbside gardening offers some unexpected pleasures. In caring for it, you reclaim otherwise “wasted” space, visit more with neighbors and passersby and, if it’s looking good, maybe even get compliments on the makeover. On a more financial level, curbsides are the first step toward curb appeal in terms of real estate value and in making the whole neighborhood more appealing.

It can take some time and care to manage it well but with good planning it can require

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less maintenance in the future and be a gift to beneficial insects, songbirds, yourself and your neighbors. The soil in these spots was likely not rich in organic matter from the beginning and is often extremely compacted from foot traffic. Before planting or as new plants are placed, putting in a shovelful of good, rich hummus or compost will little by little loosen and enrich the soil here and give plants a better chance.

What to plant—in sun or shade

What plants are up to the challenge? Prairie plants meet many of the challenges of tough locations since they're deep-rooted to better withstand drought, heat, wind, sun and difficult soils. Once established they need little mowing, watering or other inputs. It's a good place to practice the survival of the fittest, since if it's watered too frequently the plants that survive will be the ones that continue to need extra water. Once established, watering only once a month may be enough to keep plants from going dormant; and even if they go dormant, these tough plants are likely to come back.

Low grasses like little bluestem, prairie dropseed and sideoats or blue grama can be intermingled with prairie wildflowers in between to provide seasonal highlights. Consider short varieties of dwarf spiderwort, prairie smoke, salvia, ajuga, dead nettle, Missouri primrose, pasque flower, phlox, allium or purple poppy mallow. For salt-tolerance, good groundcovers include: candytuft; sedum; coral bells; and Artemisia.

Low perennials for hot, dry areas are evening primrose; daylily; feverfew; yarrow; basket-of-gold; purple poppy mallow; prairie phlox; blanket flower; coreopsis; pasque flower; pussytoes; butterfly milkweed; curly or prairie onion; and aromatic or heath aster.

For shady curbsides, woodland sedges are tough, long-lived and adapt to minimal sun and moisture. They're among the first plants to emerge in spring. After setting seed, they can be tidied up with a quick haircut and will send out a new flush of growth. Their fine texture combines well with spring bulbs or with drought-tolerant lower-growing versions of perennials like cranesbill, aster, goldenrod and other shade-tolerant species.

THE BACK YARD

By: Sarah Buckley, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, plantnebraska.org

I love getting a peek into gardeners' back yards; it's like watching the behind-the-scenes reels from a movie set. For lifetime gardeners, the back yard is where the magic happens: compost is decomposing, plants are being divided and their favorite tools are stacked up against the side of the garage. Newer gardeners are experimenting, trying new plants and different design styles.

For many the front yard is all about curb appeal and usually some effort is put into fitting into the neighborhood. Back yards are more often the place to relax, play and entertain. The relative privacy of the back yard gives gardeners a place to try out new plants, wilder design styles or simply designate a low-maintenance zone where they can be outdoors without feeling the pressure to weed or fix something.

The back yard is a garden of opportunities (pun intended); here are some to consider:

- Is this a low maintenance relaxing zone or a well-groomed entertainment area? Or somewhere in between?
- Is this a deep shade woodland retreat or a sunny wildflower bower?
- Go ahead and grab that beautiful plant you've never heard of and see how it does!
- Backyards are great for habitat; sheltered from the busyness and grime of the street with less pressure to keep things groomed for the neighbors.
- Release yourself from the need to specify a "design style" and put your impulse purchase plants wherever they fit.
- Seating areas can be planted with fragrant herbs, especially things like geraniums, mints and lemon grass that could help discourage mosquitoes.
- Want to plant a nut tree but worried about having them drop on your driveway? Maybe the back yard is the right place for that hickory or bur oak.
- Get wild with your play spaces! Plant interesting textures and leave room to dig in the dirt.
- Start a tradition of sharing plant divisions with neighbors and discover new species.
- Create a pet retreat, I plant a bunny garden for my pet rabbit every year and place a chicken wire run over it so she can nibble and explore.



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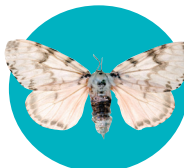
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