

Yard and Garden – 10-06-2012 - Ted Griess / Extension Horticulture Assistant

On September 28, I had the pleasure of attending the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum (NSA) Recognition Conference and Workshop.

For those of you not familiar with this organization, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum's mission has been to enrich lives through the beauty and wonder of plants. Founded by a small group of individuals in 1978, its goal was to create a network of arboreta throughout Nebraska where plants could be grown and displayed. Remarkably, what has been accomplished is an arboretum unlike any in the world. The statewide arboretum now consists of a growing network of ninety affiliate sites in more than fifty Nebraska communities. These affiliate sites of NSA can be many things: parks, places for play or reflection, historic properties, outdoor classrooms, areas to test new plants, or even stages for the performing arts. Their common feature is a site where plants are displayed for their aesthetic, cultural, educational, and historical value.

Furthermore, for the past three decades the NSA has provided plant and landscape information to inspire gardeners throughout the Great Plains. Some of the valuable services of NSA include the following:

- Arboretum planning and development.
- Funding and technical expertise for public landscaping projects.
- Training and professional development opportunities for the stewards of public green space.
- Landscape stewardship consultation.
- Horticultural publications.
- Talks, tours and presentations for garden clubs, master gardeners and other organizations.

Today the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum is a program unit of the Nebraska Forest Service at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources; however, it remains a private nonprofit organization with 501(c) (3) tax-exempt status from the IRS.

Amazingly, the NSA has delivered over \$8 million in grants to more than 245 communities resulting in over one thousand public landscaping projects involving parks, schools, libraries, hospitals, business districts, and other places important to community life.



Three affiliated arboreta exist in the immediate Kearney area.

The first NSA affiliated arboretum in Kearney was the Kearney – UNK Arboretum. Located on the UNK campus, it was established as a “Landscape Steward Site” in 1980. Dr. Steve Rothenberger is the curator of this site.

The next affiliated arboretum in Kearney was the Kearney - Harmon Park Arboretum. It was established as a "Landmark Site" with the NSA in 1999.

Interestingly, Harmon Park is an eleven acre WPA-era city park. It contains an extensive rock garden that features a flowing stream, ponds with fountains, a gazebo, a lighthouse, and a variety of plantings. The park also features a swimming pool, tennis courts, a ball field, playgrounds, horseshoe pits, shelters, and a formal flower garden. The park has a diversity of species and sizes of trees. Curator for this arboretum is Alan Roesler.



Another NSA affiliate arboretum in the Kearney area is the Kearney Public Schools Arboretum. It was established as a "Landscape Steward" site in 2002. Art Hansen is the curator of this site

Other communities within the Kearney area that also lay claim to NSA affiliate arboretums include Axtell, Minden, and Lexington.

To learn more, I urge you to visit these arboretums. You may also digitally visit them and other arboretum sites across the state of Nebraska by going on line at:

<http://arboretum.unl.edu/nsaaffiliates/sites.google.com/site/nsaaffiliates/home.html>

If you are an avid gardener, or just a beginner at gardening, I strongly encourage you to consider becoming a member of the NSA. To learn more about this wonderful organization, take a few minutes to view their website at www.arboretum.unl.edu I'm convinced you will be glad you did.