Making a Difference

2015 – 2016

Grand Challenges

K-State Research and Extension: providing education you can trust to help people, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future.

Dennis Patton
Horticulture Agent
(913) 715-7000
dpatton@ksu.edu

Horticulture Program Focus Team

Kansas Healthy Yards and Communities Use Demonstration Gardens as Teaching Tools

Situation

Gardeners and landowners often struggle to maintain environmentally responsible landscapes that increase property values and community vitality while conserving water and other resources. Ever-changing weather patterns increase the challenge to grow plants in Kansas landscapes. Continuous education about conservation, best management practices, pest management, and plant selection can improve quality of life and preserve limited resources.

What We Did

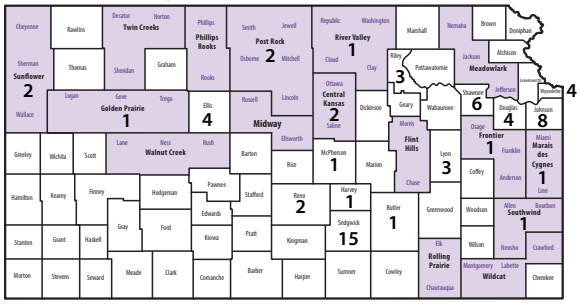
The *Kansas Healthy Yards and Communities* program emphasizes building healthy soil, proper plant selection, mulching, waste reduction, fertilizer use, pest management, pollinator habitats, water quality, and water-wise practices. A comprehensive website, research-based publications, and how-to videos help citizens learn and implement new skills to create and maintain environmentally friendly, attractive landscapes.

Outcomes

Extension and Extension Master Gardener volunteers maintain a network of 63 demonstration gardens across the state. These gardens:

- Enhance informal educational efforts
- Support self-directed learning
- Provide educational opportunities not possible without the gardens
- Promote volunteer training and recruitment
- Build partnerships
- Market K-State Research and Extension
- Showcase research

County/District Demonstration Gardens



63 Total Gardens

Demonstration gardens provide a living laboratory to teach plant selection, smart watering strategies, soil management, organic waste reduction, and pollinator habitats. Properly maintained gardens reduce water use, improve water quality, and save money while keeping communities beautiful. These outcomes benefit all Kansas communities.

Success Stories

Johnson County hosted a tour for green industry professionals. One visitor remarked, "That's what that plant looks like! I have never seen it growing outside of the nursery container." A garden center uses the garden to train new personnel on plant materials. They indicate the importance of this garden for learning appropriate plant selection.

Reno County and Hutchinson Community College (HCC) partnership — Campus staff, students, and the public use the gardens as a teaching lab for biology, agriculture, reading, and arts classes. "We truly appreciate and value the relationship we share with the Reno County Master Gardeners," said Carter File, HCC president. "Their work enhances the efforts of our staff in creating a warm and welcoming campus environment."

Harvey County maintains the Giving Garden, which has donated 54,000 pounds of fresh produce to Kansans in need over the last 17 years.

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