



# The Bloomin' News



## Sandhills Horticultural Gardens

Sandhills Community College

Vol. 16, No. 2

Summer 2021

*The Sandhills Horticultural Society - dedicated to the support of the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens since 1987.  
Please help the Gardens grow by becoming a Society member.*

## Pollinator Garden

*Jim Westmen*

What a wonderful thing it is to see a plan come together. The Pollinator Garden located in front of the G. Victor and Margaret Ball Garden Visitors Center is almost complete. The stone edging surrounding the garden as well as the six planting beds are finished. These six beds are hexagon in shape mimicking a bee's honeycomb. Each bed is planted with plants that support all kinds of pollinators. Both our many native bees as well as European honeybees can be seen buzzing around and utilizing the resources available. Other pollinators such as butterflies, moths, flies and hummingbirds can be observed in this new garden throughout the day.

Future additions to the garden will be some 'Bee Houses', different types of nesting materials and habitats needed by bees. We recently incorporated some older spit rail fencing in three of the beds and our native carpenter bees have already started drilling into them. A decorative water basin will be placed in the very center of the garden to allow access to water for our buzzing visitors. Some educational signage is another element to be developed and incorporated for everyone to learn of their vital importance to all of us. Four garden benches have now been placed into the garden to encourage visitors to sit and observe nature in action. This garden is just full of life.

The original design concept for this garden was from a recent Landscape Gardening Program graduate, Susannah Held. She really put her heart and soul and developed talents into her design. From Susannah's design the garden has come to life with just a few modifications here and there.

The hardscape construction and bed installation were performed by two past graduates as well. Gaston Lynch and Brennan McDuffie have been working together with me from the beginning. Together they worked on the site layout and implementation of all the stone masonry edgings and bed construction. They also performed most of the planting bed prep along with installing the walkway surfacing material.

I am always eager to involve past graduates of our program back into the Sandhills Horticulture Gardens to show off their talents. Many of them have mentioned that they were honored to be asked but I am honored to have them back to contribute. I have great pride in how they have grown in our industry in so many ways.

The next time you visit the Gardens please walk around and enjoy this new one. Because it is right in front, you can't miss it.



# Design to Fruition

Hilarie Blevins

It has been a longstanding tradition at Sandhills Community College for the students in Design I to create an annual planting design for the large annual bed behind Steed Hall. The designs are created in the fall and implemented the following spring. As a faculty member it is always interesting to see each student's approach to the space and it is ALWAYS hard to choose the winner. This year senior student Heather Conkle's design was chosen. Her design embraces the unique shape of the bed, conjuring up the image of an eye with a flower for its iris.



Students, Levi McDonald, Melissa Hall and Heather Conkie

At the same time this design was being drafted, students in Advanced Propagation begin propagating herbaceous plants from our gardens for use this spring. We divided grasses and Colocasia. We rooted cuttings of many herbaceous crops. Unbeknownst to us, these would be some of the primary selections used in implementation of this design. On the green industry side of things, we have had a difficult time having orders filled by our suppliers and plants were not an exception. When we began to evaluate what we had on hand, we realized that we had a substantial amount that could be used for this design: Euphorbia, Blue Daze, and Alternanthera were already happily growing in our greenhouses. We were able to purchase some Purple Pennisetum and Creeping Zinnias to round out our scheme.

During the last week of April, Heather Conkle and her work based learning partner, Heather Brookfield, tackled laying out the bed with a pallet of plants at their disposal. It was amazing to see the design come to life! The other work based learning students were eager to lend their fellow students a hand. As an instructor it is a joy to watch them problem solve and brainstorm through a process.

Our first program coordinator, Fred Garrett, led by philosophy:

Tell Me, I Forget  
Show Me, I Remember  
Involve Me, I Understand.

Every step of this process leads to greater understanding. Please stop by and check out their hard work!

## Summer Garden Tips

- Irrigation systems should be monitored for performance and efficiency to reduce wasting water.
- Inspect your landscape plants for possible insect or disease issues to catch them early.
- Use more natural treatments when deemed necessary to control or mitigate plant problems.
- Fertilize centipede lawns in June, applying .5 lb. of Nitrogen/1000 sq. feet. Be sure to choose fertilizer with low Nitrogen and, if possible, the addition of Iron which benefits centipede lawns.
- Continue harvesting summer crops in your vegetable garden. August is the time to plant some cool season crops such as Collards.

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*As always, any contributions to the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens will help us with these upgrades and continued improvement of the Gardens.*

*Thank you for your support.*

# Fruit and Vegetable Garden Update

Johanna Westmen

The fruit and vegetable garden in the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens has had a few updates and changes this past year so I thought I would share with you some of our successes. If you have not been in the gardens recently or have not walked down to the fruit and vegetable garden, I would encourage you to. The students have been working hard growing and producing beautiful crops this past year. There have also been changes which will involve new crops and new ventures.

We are currently working on revamping the bramble area to now grow fuzzy kiwi (*Actinidia deliciosa*). I have had great success at home growing this aggressive vine and have even been successful with fruit production. To grow fuzzy kiwi you need to purchase a male pollinator as well as the female plant. We plan to have at least one male for every three females we grow this year to assure cross pollination. The vines will be trained along the wire system we currently have in place. They require quite a bit of attention to train and keep pruned, but we are looking forward to the challenge. The flowers are showy and passionflower-like, quite beautiful! The fruit ripens in November and sometimes into the winter months as well. One of the best features of fuzzy kiwi is that deer do not like them, and this is absolutely necessary for us because they will be grown outside of the deer fencing.

Another new project this year was to place river stones around the outside of the fruit tree beds. This stone now serves as the beds edging. You will be pleased with the results. The students overseeded the Bermudagrass turf in the orchard with perennial rye in the fall and the green overseeded lawn surrounding the beds stands out showcasing the fruit trees. Our goal is to add Asian pears this fall to these beds. This will be another crop that requires a male pollinator tree along with the female for cross pollination.

This year's production of garlic and shallots are being produced outside the student vegetable garden. Since deer also are not interested in these crops, we decided to up production and utilize this area which has previously grown potatoes as well as sunflowers. We are producing this year's crop with ground cloth to help us with our ever-constant weeding situation. So far, so good! Once this crop is harvested, our plan is to grow sunflowers through out the summer and fall.



Several rows of asparagus have been added inside the student vegetable garden. We are excited to watch the progression of this crop, unfortunately it will take a couple of years before they can be harvested. The education that the students received being involved in the process was in no doubt invaluable. A special thank you to

Gary Priest of Priest Family Farms for sharing his extensive knowledge, wisdom and generosity for helping with this project!

We spent a couple of months this past spring semester improving the soil in the large student vegetable garden. All ground cloth was pulled up, generous amounts of compost added and incorporated, and new ground cloth laid back down to prepare for our early spring crops as well as the summer crops to come. It took us a while to get this project done, but the commitment and help from the students made it happen. We also learned a new way to prepare planting holes in the ground cloth this year. Templates were made using plywood by cutting 3" holes into several different boards based on the type of spacing we were looking for. We now have three boards that contain round holes in them with 8", 10" and 12" spacings. Once we determine the spacing of any crop on any row, we simply pull the board along the top of the bed and use a small weed torch burner to burn the holes into the ground cloth. This has been a game changer. Previously we were cutting holes in the cloth to plant crops which was very time consuming and back bending. One of the benefits of burning the holes is that they do not fray. The students even attached rope to the boards to pull them along the top of the rows! One of the things I love so much about working and teaching here is what you can learn from others.



This past spring, we installed trellises in the raised beds and were very successful with spring peas. Our goal is to transition these to cucumbers for the summer production. We also are trying to grow our potatoes in pots. This is a first-time venture for any of us, but I have heard from many people that have been successful. It has got to be a lot easier than digging your potatoes out of the ground by hand, which is how we have always done it in the past! An amazing collection of fig trees, thirteen different cultivars, have been planted behind what will be the new kiwi area. I am excited to have this new addition to the orchard.

I hope I have enticed you to come see the changes that are happening in the fruit and vegetable garden. My fruits and vegetables class is in the summer semester, so if you are in the gardens and just happen to come by on a Tuesday morning, please stop and talk with the students and see their efforts. I look forward to an early morning chat if you do.



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## Notifications:

Artist and sculptor Patrick Dougherty is coming to the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens during the first three weeks in June to create one of his whimsical outdoor sculptures. This exhibit while being temporary will hopefully be around for visitors to see and experience for several years ahead. I know you will want to come to the Gardens and see this new addition in progress and when complete.

The G. Victor and Margaret Ball Visitors Center has been reopened. This means that the restroom facilities are now available for your visit. As we continue to emerge out of this pandemic and all of its challenges, I hope we will be back to a more normal routine with workshops, lunch and learn activities and Garden related presentations returning soon.