

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
WEST CENTRAL RESEARCH AND OUTREACH CENTER**

**HORTICULTURE NEWSLETTER
STEVE POPPE
December 2006**



Numerous accomplishments took place this past summer and fall at the West Central Research and Outreach Center Horticulture Garden. It continues to amaze me the amount of contributions and dedication of faculty, staff, volunteers, donors, and garden members.

I appreciate your continued support in making the garden a destination for visitors who enjoy horticulture displays. I hope you enjoy these updates and educational information in these newsletters. Please share with me if you know of others who would be interested in this newsletter and becoming a garden member.

Accomplishments June – December, 2006

OVERLOOK STRUCTURE



A ground breaking ceremony for an interpretive overlook structure recently took place at the University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC) Horticulture Gardens. Construction will begin in 2007. Donors for the project are Neil and Linda Schmidgall and Les Lindor all of Morris. Pictured from left to right are Susanna Styve, Development Officer; Neil and Linda Schmidgall; Greg Cuomo, WCROC Head; Les Lindor; and Steve Poppe, WCROC Horticulture Scientist.

We will construct a garden building on a bluff at the west end of the horticulture garden overlooking the Pomme de Terre river valley at the (WCROC) West Central Research and Outreach Center. We envision the overlook structure to be an important prominent feature of the WCROC. We visualize it as an interpretive location of important ecological, geological, agricultural, prairie, and river history of the west central area. A trail system will originate at the overlook on the bluff and wind through various theme garden rooms organized along the trail.

The overlook will be a place of learning. It will connect with an existing children's garden, a display and research garden, a woody arboretum, a restored native prairie area, and a connecting trail system with the Morris city park. Interpretive signs will be displayed in various themed areas creating a learning environment.

WES GRAY, WEST CENTRAL SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE (WCSA) TEACHER AND COACH, HONORED WITH DEDICATION OF GARDEN



On July 27, 2006 during Horticulture Night, a new garden was dedicated in honor of Wes Gray, WCSA teacher and coach. The Wes Gray Backyard Garden is a gift to the WCROC given by Gray's children to recognize their father's love for horticulture and for teaching.

Gray's children chose a backyard theme because of their father's desire to make horticulture accessible to everyone, not just researchers and scientists. The garden features flowers, vegetables, shrubs, and trees

that are easy to grow and enjoyed by all gardeners, novice and experienced.

Steve Poppe, states: "Wes was my mentor when I started at WCROC. He is a wonderful educator. He taught me a lot about being a good teacher. This garden is a living, growing recognition of Wes' contributions to the development of horticulture and to horticulture education in West Central Minnesota."

Greg Cuomo, WCROC director, notes that unlike Poppe he is not a professional horticulturist. Gray's joy, patience, and skill in teaching ignited his personal enthusiasm. "It took me awhile to really comprehend Wes' love of plants, especially of lilies," shares Cuomo. "But, Wes' passion for horticulture is contagious. Now, thanks to him, I look at lilies in a whole new way, all the varieties, all the colors. Wes gave me this gift."

Gray and his family were present at the dedication during Horticulture Night. Numerous friends, family, local community, and WCSA alumni were in attendance. A fundraiser was conducted to allow others to contribute to the garden in Gray's honor. An endowed fund to maintain the garden was established.

Gray began his career at the West Central School of Agriculture and Experiment Station in 1948 after graduating from the University of Minnesota in 1947. In addition to teaching and research, he was responsible for the campus gardens, greenhouse, windbreaks, and orchards. In 1973 when the Experiment Station moved from the Morris campus to its present location, Gray transferred to that facility where he worked until his retirement in 1988.

BERGET FAMILY SPONSORS BACKPACK SHACK



Front: Steve Poppe, WCROC Horticulture Scientist;
Chlene Anderson, WCROC Children's Garden
Coordinator, Karen Berget, Kyle Berget.
Back: Lincoln Berget, Alyson Berget

The Backpack Shack, a new addition to the University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center Children's Garden, is already in use by visitors. Karen and Kyle Berget, owners of American Eagle Realty, have generously sponsored this outstanding new structure. One purpose of the Backpack Shack is to house educational backpacks created for specific gardens all with the theme of teaching children the important role plants play in our daily lives. Another purpose of the Backpack Shack is to give a place for garden volunteers to call home.

The structure was designed by Jay Lindahl from Hooter's Lumber in Chokio and built by the Prairie Correctional Facility in Appleton. "This is such a great gift to the garden and its visitors," says Chlene, Anderson, Children's Garden Coordinator, "It provides a much needed function while also giving the garden a friendly feeling—it is the first thing children have been noticing as they step off the bus for tours."

The backpacks are readily available for families and visiting school groups to take with them as they tour the garden. The fun and interactive educational materials contained in each backpack help garden visitors better interpret the garden. The backpacks were designed and created by Amy Rager and Brian McNeill, both Extension Educators located at the West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris.

Karen and Kyle Berget on behalf of American Eagle Realty would like to thank the Morris area for their confidence. The entire American Eagle Realty staff is excited to share their success with the community with the donation of the Backpack Shack. The WCROC Horticulture Gardens are a hidden gem and the Berget's would like to help get the word out about this beautiful and educational facility.

CHILDREN'S GARDEN HORTICULTURE FIELD DAY

The 2nd annual Horticulture Field Day was held at the West Central Research Outreach & Extension Center on September 19th. It was an exciting day for teachers and fourth grade students. The theme for the day was, "Teaching people the important role plants play in our daily lives." We had over 650 students participating in the day's activities. The event was coordinated by Amy Rager, Regional Extension Educator, Natural Resources and Brian McNeill, Regional Extension Educator, 4-H Youth Development.

Each class attended eight educational stations each with a different topic related to the theme. Station presenters provided a hands-on learning opportunity for the students. Activities varied from making a mini pizza, sweeping with nets for insects, learning how dairy cattle use plants to produce milk, to making race cars out of vegetables.

Each teacher received a resource packet to take back to their school/classroom. They received a CD containing two curriculums. The first, Nutrition Expedition, was a multidisciplinary curriculum put out by the Dairy Council with an on-line component, and the second, Corn Lessons, was from the Corn Growers Association and featured plant growth using corn and highlighted its uses. The teachers also received a curriculum from the Soybean Growers Association called Soy Sleuth and a DVD and curriculum from the Pork Producers.

Evaluation comments from teachers:

- All the presenters were very well prepared and know their subject matter. Great variety of activities.
- It was a great day! It was well planned and very organized.
- Really fun! Gardens look great! Learned a lot! God job of teaching
- A number of “hands-on” activities engaging kids effectively.
- The Children’s Garden is a fun place.
- Thank you for all you did to provide a fun day for 4th graders! The garden is beautiful!

FALL KINDERGARTEN TOURS

Twenty four classes were organized into 15 fall tours. The fall tours were given by Chlene Anderson, Children’s Garden Coordinator. The tour included visits to the water garden, shady hosta garden, butterfly garden, gardens of the world, prehistoric garden, the corn maze and more. Children learned about the parts of plants we eat, where in the world their food comes from, and all about seeds. Each child got a chance to find seeds, become a butterfly, and dig for dinosaur bones.

Evaluation comments from teachers:

- Nice to see our wonderful tour guide back
- I liked how we went to the different areas in the children’s garden and each one was explained so well. I appreciate the fact that Chlene tried to keep the lesson moving along. My class has a very short attention span and she was well aware of my needs
- The hands-on experience for kids
- Very child friendly – interesting and fun
- It’s a wonderful place and Chlene does a super job
- The children had an opportunity to use all 5 senses while interacting with the garden and the tour
- The opportunity to get out in nature and observe such a wonderful variety of trees and plants
- The students were able to touch and handle the plants and vegetables
- I truly enjoyed every single thing about it.

MAMMOTH MUMS

Finally! A truly winter hardy garden mum!

Mammoth Mums have been specially bred by the University of Minnesota to withstand very cold winter temperatures, down to -30° F.



Bred for the landscape, by the second and third years they will produce thousands of flowers and attain an eventual width over three to four feet across. They can be planted as individual plants or used in mass plantings. Mammoth Mums can even be grown as a seasonal hedge that blooms each fall. They require minimal care in the landscape: no pinching, no pruning, no deadheading.

Though Mammoth Mums can be grown as regular fall mums, they do best when transplanted in the spring so they have more time to establish

themselves in the landscape before going dormant in winter.

Fact Sheet

HARDINESS

- Cold-hardy down to minus 30°F (-34°C)
- Hardy in plant hardiness Zones 9-3b
- In winter, protect with mulch
- Perform well in both warm and cold climates

HABIT

- Some varieties can attain a height the third year of 3½ feet and 5 feet in diameter.
- As many as 5,000 flowers can be produced per plant
- Cushion habit

PERFORMANCE IN THE LANDSCAPE

- Truly perennial
- Start out the first year acting like a normal mum, by the second year, the difference is they continue to grow larger each season, bursting with blooms
- Can form a seasonal hedge that blooms each fall
- Great in mass plantings

GROWING IN THE LANDSCAPE

- Plant in full sun to partial shade
- Require minimal care: no pinching, pruning, or deadheading
- Fertilize in spring and summer every 3-4 weeks with a liquid feed fertilizer
- In cold climates, trim back to 2" in late winter, early spring
- Best transplanted in early spring
- Plant 2-3 feet apart for a hedge effect, 4 feet apart to maintain individual plants

Top Performing Annuals for 2006

Neil Anderson, Steve Poppe, Karyn Vidmar, Dave Wildung
University of Minnesota, Department of Horticultural Science
<http://www.florifacts.umn.edu>

Part of the University of Minnesota support for the floriculture production industry is the annual flower trials conducted at Morris, St. Paul, and Grand Rapids. In 2006 annual flowers from 19 major plant companies were evaluated at the University of Minnesota. Our gardens are open to the public and industry for self-guided tours throughout the growing season, providing a unique opportunity to compare performance of bedding plant cultivars under regional conditions. The public's response to the 2006 display gardens at all locations was very positive. Several thousand people visited these sites during the summer. Numerous educational programs and garden tours were provided at all sites, where we highlighted the outstanding annuals in our trials.

Listed here are the top performers for 2006. If you would like to view our complete flower evaluation please visit our web site at <http://wecroc.cfans.umn.edu>

St. Paul

1. *Begonia* 'Nightlife Red'
2. *Capsicum* (Ornamental Pepper) 'Black Pearl'
3. *Catharanthus* (Vinca) 'Pacifica Burgundy Halo'
4. *Cleome* 'Sparkler Blush'
5. *Cyperus* 'King Tut'
6. *Petunia* 'Easy Wave Coral Reef'
7. *Petunia* 'Lavender Wave'
8. *Petunia* 'Opera Supreme Pink Morn'
9. *Petunia* 'Plush Deep Pink'
10. *Zinnia* 'Profusion Coral Pink'

Grand Rapids

1. *Begonia* 'Braveheart Rose Bicolor'
2. *Calibrachoa* 'Superbells Coral'
3. *Cleome* 'Sparkler Blush'
4. *Cyperus* 'King Tut'
5. *Diascia* 'Diamonte Coral Rose'
6. *Euphorbia* 'Diamond Frost'
7. *Pelargonium zonale* 'Himalaya Fire Scarlet'
8. *Pennisetum* (Ornamental Millet) 'Jester'
9. *Petunia* 'Suncatcher Plum Vein'
10. *Petunia* 'Tidal Wave Silver'
11. *Petunia* 'Whispers Purple'
12. *Solenostemon* (Coleus) 'Gage's Shadow'
13. *Solenostemon* (Coleus) 'JoDonna'



Morris

1. *Calibrachoa* 'Cabaret White'
2. *x Calitunia* 'Purple'
3. *Cleome* 'Senorita Rosalita'
4. *Impatiens* 'Envoy Peach Butterfly'
5. *Lobelia* 'Waterfall Azure Mist'
6. *Pelargonium peltatum* (Ivy Geranium) 'Fidelity Cascade XL Lilac'
7. *Pelargonium zonale* (Zonal Geranium) 'Eclipse Red III'
8. *Petunia* 'Blanket Pink'
9. *Petunia* 'Surfinia Patio Hot Pink'
10. *Salvia* 'Mystic Spires Blue'

GREG CUOMO LEAVES WCROC

As many of you know our Head, Greg Cuomo has left WCROC and accepted another University appointment. He has accepted a dual appointment as Operations Director of the University of Minnesota Outreach, Research and Education (UMore) Park and Director of the Rosemount Research and Outreach Center. Greg's new assignment began October 15, 2006. The role of operations director for UMore Park follows the University's strategic positioning activities, which include a vision for this unique 12-square-mile property in Dakota County. The University is undertaking a strategic planning process to better assess the range of opportunities for the property. The UMore Park responsibilities are overseen through the new Office of the Vice President for Statewide Strategic Resource Development.

Greg led the West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC) in Morris for the past six years. The WCROC has seen significant growth and success under his leadership. Renewable energy, characterized in part by the wind energy project, has gained international acclaim and is the foundation for future renewable energy projects at Morris. The Horticultural Gardens have created a regional focal point for research and education pertaining to consumer horticulture. In addition, the livestock and crops research programs have created a unique niche for research information, especially relating to swine and dairy systems. The success of these and other programs is a true reflection of Greg's leadership at the WCROC.

Jerry Wright has agreed to serve as the Interim Head of the WCROC. This appointment also includes supervision of the Becker research facility. Jerry Wright is an Associate Professor tenured in the Department of Bioproducts and Biosystems Engineering, primarily leading an Extension program focused on water management via irrigation and drainage. Jerry has been at the University of Minnesota for 30 years.

HANDS-ON-HORTICULTURE WORKSHOP

Plans are underway for this year's annual Hands-on-Horticulture Workshop to be held Saturday March 24, 2007, from 9:00 am to 2:30 pm at the WCROC. This educational workshop is open to adult gardeners at all experience levels.

Two of the four educational sessions are currently set:

- Digital Photography – Mike Cihak from UMM Audio Visuals will give a workshop on digital camera photography. The morning session will involve a power point demonstration and the afternoon session involves picture taking outside and use of the computer lab at the UMM Humanities Fine Arts.
- Pruning Trees and Shrubs – Tim Swedberg from Swedberg Nursery, Battle Lake, MN will give a hands-on session on pruning. Learn about the dos and don'ts of pruning woody trees and shrubs.

Watch for more details as time gets closer.

The cost including lunch is \$35 (\$30 for WCROC Garden members). Contact Jean at 320-589-1711 (or <http://wcroc.cfans.umn.edu> for more details). Registration form and payment are due no later than March 15, 2006.

GAZEBO SHELTER COMPLETE

Generous donations have enabled us to purchase materials to finish the construction of a gazebo shelter. The gazebo was placed in a new garden setting on the west end of the garden. This shelter will enable our visitors to relax in a shaded environment and enjoy the beauty of the garden.

Materials Generously Donated by:

Terry and LaVon Beseman
Charles Glasrud/Deb Economou
Ken and Linda Hodgson
Charles and Margaret Krebs
Paul and Gina Martin
Neil and Ruth Thielke
Anonymous Donor

Construction Generously Donated by:

Prairie Correctional Facility
Appleton, MN

