

GREENSCENE

CREATING THE FUTURE FOR THE KANKAKEE RIVER VALLEY

Sponsored by Aqua Illinois, Kankakee Community College, and Security Lumber Company.

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The Landscape: Style and Substance?

The history of our current landscape styles are rooted in garden fashions that have gone in and out of vogue over the centuries. Here's a brief and incomplete tour through garden history. Persians perfected their pleasure gardens from about 400 B.C. through the 1700's. In the same vein, the Romans had their "villa gardens" that were filled with statuary and exotic plants from around the world. The villa-style garden fell from grace shortly after the fall of the Roman Empire. In direct response to the excesses of the Romans, the Christian monasteries set the tone for the Medieval Era. This saw the return of the practical garden, with function being the main rationale. The Renaissance period of the 15th and 16th centuries re-birthed the pleasure gardens of the Romans which in turn morphed into the highly controlled and very formal pastoral landscapes, like those at the Palace of Versailles. From the 17th to 19th century, practical French and Scottish gardeners were developing vegetable gardens that were both decorative and functional. Eighteenth century English landscape designs were idealized reflections of the natural landscape. The settlers of the "new" world were faced with the basics: survival. So, edibles were the priority, mixing their familiar Old World crops with the introduced Native American foods. Flowers found their way into their cottage gardens, purely for delight. The Victorian Period of 19th century saw a new "school" of thought, often called the museum school, defined by eclecticism. On both sides of the Atlantic, Victorian gardeners borrowed from practically every earlier landscaping style, embellishing their grounds with lawns, statuary, metal furniture, urns, busts, pseudo-ruins and collections of new plants from around the world. Edibles came into vogue if they were exotic or could be grown to fruit out of season in greenhouses. White vegetables fascinated the Victorians. Some of the white pumpkins, tomatoes and cucumbers we still have today were bred during this period.

Then there were the Ancient Egyptians! The advanced civilization of King Tut's era was among the first to design a landscape. To deliberately plan the grounds around a dwelling for aesthetic and utilitarian reasons. Tomb paintings from as early as 1400 B.C. show gardens of well-to-do Egyptians with pools for fish, grape-covered trellises, flower beds and fruit-bearing trees. The basic principles of the edible landscape are simple: Plants of all shapes and sizes that produce food mixed strategically with ornamentals to create a satisfyingly productive space. The "look" can range from simply beautiful to spectacular. The possibilities are limited only by specific location and imagination. The ultimate local food!

For more: *Edible Landscaping* by Rosalind Creasy. Copyright 2010

Landscaping for Sustainability

What does sustainable landscaping mean for the homeowner? Sustainable landscapes should include an aesthetically pleasing design that is in balance with the local environment and requires minimal resource inputs from fertilizers, pesticides, and water. The sustainable landscape begins with a thoughtful, appropriate, and functional design that is visually pleasing and ecologically friendly. Begin by studying landscape design concepts and sustainable landscape design. A wealth of information about sustainable landscape design is available from university extension offices, local municipalities, and local landscape design firms. Keep these two primary ideas in mind: the long-term goal is to create a sustainable landscape through a series of short-term goals and the sustainable landscape will be unique to its specific site. Sustainable landscaping can be thought of as having four primary elements: soil, water, hardscape selections, and plant selections. Tackling these four elements in an ecologically responsible manner will help to create a sustainable landscape.

Preparing soils for a sustainable landscape depends on what is to be planted. Amending soils can make them more fertile, but increased soil fertility may not be needed. Many native plants will adapt to local soil conditions and do not greatly benefit from soil amendments or increased soil fertility. Non-native ornamental plants often require increased soil fertility, as well as consistent water and fertilizer. Addition of organic matter to landscape soils will aid in soil aeration, water penetration and water holding capacity, and overall soil fertility. However, addition of too much organic matter can lead to an imbalance in the soil carbon-nitrogen ratio and nutrient shortfalls in the soil. These shortfalls cause increased dependence on fertilizers and the potential for environmental damage. For the sustainable landscape, soils should be prepared using minimal amendments with an eye toward maintaining an appropriate carbon-nitrogen ratio for optimum soil health.

Watering a landscape is an inevitability. Northeastern Illinois may experience drought conditions during any given year. In order to maintain an aesthetically pleasing landscape, watering is required. There are numerous methods that can be used to minimize water input and, increase water use efficiency within the landscape. The simplest technique is to use mulches. Two to four inches of mulch in flower beds will help decrease water evaporation and increase the moisture held in the soil and around the roots of plants. Plants with similar water-use requirements should be grouped together in the sustainable landscape. This allows targeted watering of those plants that require irrigation, while minimizing wasteful watering of those that do not require as much supplemental watering. The use of rain barrels or in-ground water collection cisterns to capture water for irrigation use will reduce costs and improve sustainability of the design. The choice of hardscape materials can impact the sustainability of the landscape design. Consider reusing materials — such as rock, pavers, brick, and stones — from an existing landscape. Also, consider using newer recycled plastic materials for the sustainable landscape.

Finally, appropriate plant selection is critical to the long-term success of the sustainable landscape. The basic rule of thumb for all landscape design, including sustainable landscaping, is to select the right plant for the right place. Plants native to the local area or region are a natural choice for the sustainable landscape. However, it is just as important to consider selecting plants that are adapted to the local environment—meaning they have been grown in the local area and are adapted to the local temperatures, soil conditions, rainfall rates, and other environmental factors. Consideration of all these factors is important in creating a sustainable landscape.

By: Scott Stewart, Ph.D.

Horticulture Club at Kankakee Community College

KCC's newest club is growing—not just in membership size but in the greenhouse. The KCC Horticulture club, established in the spring of 2011, is an opportunity for all KCC students to participate in an exciting new chapter in the schools' history. The Horticulture Club is open to any student who enjoys working with plants. KCC has an incredible teaching greenhouse located on the college's West Campus. It is within these walls, as well as a ¼ acre vegetable and small fruit field, that the Horticulture Club meets—to sow seeds, harvest crops, learn the science of hydroponics and other methods of plant propagation, and enjoy the beauty of everything as it sprouts and comes to life. The crops raised by the club are currently being sold at KCC's on-campus Farmer's Market. This market serves the KCC community, including students, faculty, and staff of the college. Crops currently being offered include a variety of leafy vegetables, herbs, annual and perennial plants, and house plants. Potted plants are also available, and bedding plants will be available soon. Crops and vegetables will change with the seasons, and plans are underway to supply the campus cafeteria with locally grown, seasonal vegetables and herbs.

The club is very excited about the on-campus Farmer's Markets, not only to share what they have grown, but also to make it easier for students, faculty, and staff to eat locally grown foods. The increasing focus on eating foods grown close to home is an important one, known as the locavore movement. The KCC Horticulture Club is happy to be a part of this important step in making our lives and our community more sustainable. For more about the KCC Horticulture Club contact Kelly Krygowski, club secretary at kcchorticultureclub@gmail.com

FEATURED Business

Kankakee Nursery – A Local Wholesale Nursery Grower

Kankakee Nursery has been in business for over 80 years and has grown from its 20 initial acres to over 3,000 acres, about 1,200 of which is used to produce nursery stock. It has gone from offering a few varieties of plants to as many as 500. Located just south of Aroma Park, the business got its start when two high school buddies, Clyde Worth and Lloyd Pottinger, began hand digging trees as a way to support themselves during the Great Depression. Kankakee Nursery now employs 100 with an additional 50 during its peak season. Kankakee Nursery is a family owned and run business with a fourth generation of the Worth family now actively engaged in the business started by their great grandfather.



Although the company has grown significantly and expanded both its production area and variety of plant stock, customer service, reliability, providing quality plant materials, and fair dealing have remained hallmarks of Kankakee Nursery. The business has persevered and prospered by adapting its methods and product line to meet the changing trends of architecture and landscaping. Smaller scale ornamentals, dwarf shrubs, and perennials are growing in popularity. Each year Kankakee Nursery adds new varieties to its mix, providing one of the most complete product lines in the industry. The environmentally conscious company is converting its extensive 60 acre container growing area from overhead watering to the much more efficient and water saving drip irrigation mode. This will conserve water and energy and allow better quality control for a more consistent product. They are also working with several major chemical companies to conduct trials to develop safer, more effective herbicides, pesticides, and fertility products.

What began as a small, local business now has clients throughout the United States and has made shipments to Canada and China. For more about this successful, long-standing, local business go to www.kankakeenursery.com.

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Kankakee Kultivators

The Kankakee Kultivators were founded in August 18, 1948. Their Goal is to foster knowledge and love of gardening, to further community beautification, to aid in protection of trees, wildflowers and birds, and to help in conservation. At each meeting, an educational program is given by a notable speaker to educate club members in environmental - sustainability issues, gardening techniques, or other programs that enhance the club's purpose.

In 1983 the Kultivators began a new fundraiser by establishing the now ever popular Garden Tour and Artisan Faire. Money raised from this project goes directly back into the community to help conservation and beautification. In 1999, grants were established to further promote their goals and to date, over \$64,000 has been awarded throughout the Kankakee area. In 2011 the Kultivators created a Scholarship Grant in Horticulture for Kankakee Community College.

In May 2006, Kankakee Kultivators developed the "Column Garden," a meditative shade garden incorporating both native and ornamental trees, shrubs and perennials. In addition, the "Let Freedom Ring Garden" was created to honor the military men and women who protect the freedom of our country. Both gardens are located next to the Kankakee County Historical Society Museum in the Governor Small Memorial Park.

The annual Kankakee Downtown Planting is another popular project, it features brightly colored flowers in the planters located on Schuyler and Court Street and at the Train Depot. This unexpected "pop of color" is meant for the community to enjoy as they drive or walk by.

For more information about the organization and a list of planned events go to: www.kankakeekultivators.org



The Kultivator's Column Garden project

Kankakee Valley Garden Club

The Kankakee Valley Garden Club was organized in 1963 by its founder, Betty Reynolds, who passed away in January 2011 at 97. The club's purpose now is as it was when it began: "To enjoy gardening through the exchange of ideas with other gardeners and promote the development of better knowledge and understanding of nature through study." Its 55 members describe themselves as an eclectic group of avid gardeners who share garden tips, garden mistakes and enjoy each other's company. While many of them are novice gardeners, some have achieved Master Gardener status. They love digging in the dirt, planting things too close together only to transplant them again, and chasing down the salvage man for that "perfect" piece of garden art! The members enjoy going on garden walks and sharing stories about their gardening adventures. Their gardens may be large or small, have a theme, or be water gardens. Some of them have been featured in the annual Kankakee Kultivator's garden walk. The group belongs to the National Council of State Garden Clubs, Garden Clubs of Illinois, and the Kankakee Community Arts Council.

Sponsored by the Kankakee Valley Park District, the club meets at the Bird Park field house at 7 p.m. on the 4th Thursday each month. The three summer months are devoted to walking tours of member's gardens, in November the meeting is a week earlier and there's a Christmas party in December. The meetings may feature guest speakers, hands-on classes for creating floral centerpieces or bird baths, or one of the members sharing their gardening experiences.

The Club is an active supporter of many local projects and activities such as: the Strawberry Jazz Festival in June, the Fall Arts Stroll, and the Gallery of Trees at the Kankakee County Historical Museum at Christmastime. They maintain the flower beds at Bird Park and will be doing the landscaping at the 4th Habitat for Humanity home this fall. The Club is sponsoring an urban garden this summer, and starting a scholarship at KCC for the fall semester.

So if you don't mind getting your hands a little dirty and like growing things, this club is for you! For more information call the Club president at: 815 / 933-7254



Bird Park flower bed project

Career Corner

David Cook, Landscape Designer

David Cook is a local resident who has been involved in many landscaping projects both large and small in the Kankakee area. His landscape designing skills are apparent whether as an employee of Art's Landscaping, where he has worked since the summer of 2000, or as a member of a volunteer group. His work is evident in the design and maintenance of the Column Garden at the Kankakee County Historical Museum, a Kankakee Kultivator's project. He has been involved with the "Friends of Conrad Park" over the last 10 years in the development of Conrad Park in Momence. This project has transformed an old building site into a park with distinct public use areas by installing native plantings, a grove of oaks and other native understory trees. One of his favorite projects was the landscaping done at College Church North Campus at 6000 N. Rd. and Career Center Rd. This project relied heavily on the use of native grasses to match the open prairie site aesthetics and for hardiness of the installation. He is most proud of his many tree planting projects done in many locations in concert with the Kankakee Kultivators, the projects at Conrad and Island Parks in Momence, and selecting and planting trees on the historic Courthouse lawn in Kankakee. Trees are very important to him and, by serving on the Momence Tree Board he works hard to properly manage the urban forests of the area.

Mr. Cook's sustainability roots were established as he grew up on the family dairy farm in northern Wisconsin. On the farm, they grew much of their own food. From his grandfather, he learned about raising small game and keeping bees. His father was recognized with a conservation award for his use of contoured planting strips on the farm's hilly land to control soil erosion. David later learned about wild spaces and unspoiled land while spending a number of childhood years growing up in rural Alaska. The lack of "wild land" in the mid-west struck him when he returned to the farm in his high school years. After high school, David attended and graduated from Olivet University with a degree in Art and Business. He then spent about 10 years as a florist and another 10 as a retail merchandiser and buyer. He did not consider either of these careers to be particularly "eco-friendly" and followed his interest in sustainability, working with natural things to become a landscape designer. He admits that for a time during this phase of his career, he thought only native plants had merit and that the use of "exotics" was only adding to the problem. His philosophy now is that "anything that gets a tree planted makes my heart happy, if it's a native, long lived species, so very much the better."

David Cook's life experience and concern for natural places has helped him create many beautiful places in the Kankakee area for all to enjoy.



Events

SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

KANKAKEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Solar Water and Space Heating for Homes and Businesses

Learn how this technology can be integrated into current systems to supplement hot water and space heating. An excellent option for large hot water users. Instructor: Chuck Von Drehle. 6 - 9 p.m. Tuesday, June 21

Solar and Small Wind Market Overview

An introductory discussion of the growth of the solar electric, solar thermal, and small-scale wind markets in Illinois, nationally, and globally. With a brief overview of technologies and trends in prices, policies and incentives. Instructor: Mark Burger. 6 - 9 p.m. Tuesday, July 12

Solar and Wind Entrepreneur: Management, Sales and Marketing

Offers a comprehensive understanding of solar photovoltaic, medium temperature solar water heating and small-scale wind technologies. Instructor: Mark Burger. 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Tuesday, July 26

For more information regarding these offerings contact KCC Continuing Education & Career Services at 815.802.8207

KANKAKEE FARMER'S MARKET SCHEDULE - 2011

The Kankakee Farmer's Market is in its 13th year in downtown Kankakee. It features over 30 vendors of fresh produce, plants, flowers, baked goods, meats, olives, cheeses, and specialty items as well as live music on most dates.

The markets are held every Saturday. Spring market 8:00 a.m. - Noon.

The summer markets begin in May and start an hour earlier.

For details go to www.downtownkankakee.com/farmers.html

Some special Farmer's Market dates are:

May 28 - First day of Summer market season

June 25 - Salute to Ag & Local Foods Breakfast

Local Foods Breakfast Buffet - Serving 7:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Limited number of tickets at \$10 each available in advance at the Farmers Market or contact U of I Extension at 815. 933.8337

July 9 - Library Family Fun Day

July 16 - Community Foundation Day

July 23 - Health Fair

August 6 - Hispanic Arts and Heritage Day for Education

August 13 - Sweet Corn

August 20 - Pro Chef Challenge

August 27 - Amateur Chef Challenge

September 10 - Senior's Day

September 17 - Memory Walk

September 25 - Zonta Empowerment Walk

October 29 - Final Market of the season

Kankakee Kultivators
Presents their 18th Annual Town & Country - 'Slice of Paradise' Garden Tour & Artisan Faire

Governor Small Memorial Park - 9 am ~ 9 pm Friday, June 17, 2011

The Artisan Faire is Free to the Public, tickets required for garden tour and lunch For information call: Jane at 815-933-6058

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KCC Sustainability Center Working to create a "Greener Future" for the Kankakee River Valley

The KCC Sustainability Center is your community resource for information about conserving energy, recycling, building "green" and much more.

Learn more:
www.kcc.edu/sustainability
rschultz@kcc.edu • (815) 802-8243

The KCC Sustainability Center- located in the KCC Learning Resource Center- is part of the Illinois Green Economy Network, a community college partnership (www.igencc.org), and partner with the Illinois Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Energy and Recycling.



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