

EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

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Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Extension Master Gardeners Create Native Landscaping Demonstration at Therkildsen Field Station at Emiquon

When Therkildsen Field Station at Emiquon requested assistance with renovating their landscaping, University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners (EMG) Carla Presnell, Allie Goudy, and Lisa Davis stepped in to help and brought their knowledge of native plants with them. The team created a native plant demonstration garden that will educate visitors and provide ecological benefits and beauty.

Therkildsen Field Station located just outside of Lewistown resides within The Nature Conservancy's Emiquon Preserve and provides researchers and students of all ages opportunities to study and learn from a unique floodplain restoration project.

"We are always looking for ways to add informative and educational content at the Field Station," explained Thomas Rothfus, Director of Therkildsen Field Station. "Utilizing native plants and in particular plants found in the Emiquon Preserve seemed like a great way to revitalize the garden space at the front of the building."

Having recently completed her advanced training certificate in native landscaping, Carla Presnell was eager to put her knowledge to work. She worked with Lisa and Allie to measure the space and create a landscape plan that includes species from the surrounding tallgrass prairie.

"I love Emiquon and really enjoyed creating an educational plot for the front of the building," stated Carla.

"Carla completed additional coursework in composting, stormwater management, and eco-conscious garden design," explained Tara Heath, horticulture program coordinator. "As both a Master Gardener and a Master Naturalist volunteer, her knowledge base provided the perfect fit to lead this project."

The first phase of the project completed this year included design, removal of existing plant material, and installation of six native plant and grass species: blazing star, cardinal flower, butterfly weed, purple coneflower, whorled milkweed, and prairie dropseed grass. These plants join the Rudbeckia that was already there. Three more species are on order for a fall planting: rattlesnake master, New England aster, and at least one species of Goldenrod.

"Future plans include removing the existing hydrangea bushes, extending the native prairie garden along the entire front of the building, and adding educational signage. This project will be completed by spring 2022," added Carla.

The long-term plan also looks to establish a demonstration incorporating rain barrels utilized to water the plants.



Photo by Christine Belless | Illinois Extension

University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners spread mulch in the renovated landscape bed at Therkildsen Field Station at Emiquon. The project highlights native plant species and serves as a demonstration garden for visitors interested in sustainable landscaping. Pictures left to right are EMG Carla Presnell, Allie Goudy, and Lisa Davis.

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