

EarthKind™ News for November



Cleburne Leads in EarthKind™ Initiatives

On October 23, 2008 in Cleburne, Texas, Dr. Steve George, Professor and Extension Horticulturist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service and Director of the EarthKind™ Program, announced major new EarthKind™ projects all involving the city of Cleburne. This was an exciting day not just for Cleburne, but also for gardeners around the United States and especially for Texas Master Gardeners who have been deeply involved in the development of the highly successful EarthKind™ Roses.

Cleburne will become the first city in the nation to adopt EarthKind™ principles throughout its extensive park system. The new Winston Patrick McGregor Park will be the centerpiece of the initiative, but all city parks including the outstanding Splash Station and a new municipal golf course will be included. Parks and Recreation Director Max Robertson noted that Cleburne has for several years used earth friendly procedures, but will make further changes to completely conform to EarthKind™ protocols.

Even more exciting for gardeners was the announcement of national research to begin in spring, 2009, to develop regional lists of EarthKind™ Perennials. This project under the

leadership of Dr. Ann Marie VanDerZanden of Iowa State University, will involve extensive testing of perennials to be grown under EarthKind™ conditions with the same high level of performance expectations as EarthKind™ roses. While the rose tests were for several years confined to the state of Texas before becoming a national program, the perennial research will occur in several regions of the United States simultaneously. The first two sights have been announced as Winston Patrick McGregor Park in Cleburne and the campus of the University of Iowa. Dr. VanDerZanden will work with Master Gardeners, academics and nursery professionals to develop regional lists of perennials to begin the trials this spring.

In the earliest planning stages is an EarthKind™ shrub project, which will be under the direction of Dr. Kathy Zuzek, Horticulturist at the University of Minnesota. With an extensive background of research and development in the area of shrub roses, Dr. Zuzek is eminently qualified to take on the task of research to locate outstanding landscape shrubs that will prosper without fertilizer and chemicals. Cleburne will also serve as a research site for this project.

In addition to Cleburne city officials, chamber officers, tourism representatives and Johnson County Master Gardeners, on hand for the announcement were Dr. VanDerZanden, Dr. Zuzek and their colleagues Dr. David Zlesak of the University of Minnesota who is National Coordinator for the Northern Collection of EarthKind™ Roses and Nick Howell, EarthKind™ rose researcher and Superintendent of the Horticulture Station at Iowa State University.

Joan Leach, Johnson County Master Gardener