K-State Horticulture Club creates

PATIO PERFECTION

A beautifully landscaped outdoor space with a water feature, paved patio and walkway, irrigation system, lighting, seating, and a variety of labeled plants now exists near the south entrance of Throckmorton Plant Sciences Center. It took planning, hard work, cooperation, and generosity to make it happen.

The idea to renovate the space originated with Associate Professor Cathie Lavis and Delmar Westover, of facilities ground maintenance. In spring 2014, Horticulture Club advisor Lavis (MS ’93, horticulture, PhD ’05 agronomy) and Matthew McKernan, then president of the Horticulture Club, discussed the patio project.

Next, McKernan presented the idea to the club, and the members approved the project.

“We thought it would be cool to have an attractive outdoor space that everyone could use,” said McKernan.

Over the summer, Lavis worked with K-State administrators to ensure that the club could pursue the project. Lavis, who teaches landscape maintenance, arboriculture, and irrigation, and Chad Miller, who teaches ornamental horticulture and plant propagation, saw the project as a way to incorporate hands-on learning into multiple horticulture classes.

Getting started

Shane Steelman (BS ’14), who now works for High Prairie Landscape Group, LLC, Kansas City, and McKernan (BS ’15) started planning in fall 2014. Initial projects involved killing the existing grass, grading and sloping the area, designing the space, and removing a drain and retrofitting it. They asked Greg Davis (BS ’79, PhD ’93), associate professor of landscape design, for design tips and help with logistics.

Now they had a plan and tools from Lavis’ lab, but they lacked large equipment. That’s where the campus facilities crew came to the rescue.

“Campus facilities staff have been wonderful,” said Lavis. “Joe Myers, Delmar Westover, Kris Fulkerson, and others have been instrumental in the project and were always there to help. K-State administration also supported the project.”

Additional support

Club officers Molly Palmer and Kelsey Hatoesohl, both May 2015 graduates, crafted a letter to horticulture alumni, explaining the project and offering options for named memorials, such as engraved bricks, specific plants, patio containers, etc.

The club had pavers from hosting the national Professional Landcare Network student competition in 2012 to complete the patio.
Brent (BS '01) and Jason (BS '97) Rothwell, of Rothwell Landscape, Manhattan, loaned equipment and helped with mulch and edging.

Tim McKay, district sales manager for Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting, and Kevin Marks, John Deere Landscapes, Manhattan, donated materials and did a lecture and demonstration on how to install the lighting. Tory Schwoppe (BS '99), KAT Nurseries in Olathe, provided plant material.

Friends of the KSU Gardens donated the water feature, and Scott McElwain (BS '96), director of the KSU Gardens, helped students in the Landscape Construction/Contracting class install the fountain.

Pallace Schnittker, senior in horticulture, recruited her father, Bill Schnittker at ESI Inc. of Wichita, to design and fabricate the purple patio tables and umbrellas.

The Wheat State Agronomy Club donated a bench for the space, the Turfgrass Club donated their time on a couple of weekends, and other alumni and friends contributed to the project.

Right equipment, right time

McKernan served many roles during the planning and construction. He documented every step of the process with photographs and created a poster to hang in the Throckmorton lobby for the patio dedication on April 12, 2015.

"The biggest struggle was organizing all the components," said McKernan.

He made sure the equipment, tools, and supplies were delivered and ready when students were available to help.

Looking ahead

In addition to the patio area, the club installed new plant material around the building and added decorative potted plants.

The Horticulture Club initiated a landscape maintenance committee to care for the patio. That committee will coordinate with the bedding plant committee to ensure they grow adequate seedlings for the annual bedding plant sale and to keep the areas around Throckmorton beautiful.

"The project brought the campus and community together," said McKernan, who recently became the horticulture agent for K-State Research and Extension – Sedgwick County.

"Throckmorton is the home of plant sciences, and we — the students — believe the landscape should reflect what we learn and do."

If you would like to be part of this ongoing project, named pavers are still available for $50 each. Contact Lavis carvis@ksu.edu for more information.

By Gloria Hokombe