

## Work Continues on KEC Haymaker Parkway Adopt-a-Spot

Ten years after Haymaker Parkway was completed in the late 1970s, the Kent Environmental Council spearheaded the move to put natural and sustainable landscaping along this new east /west corridor through central Kent. Initially, KEC raised more than \$65,000 from individuals, businesses and organizations to purchase plant material and provide more than \$20,000 in volunteer labor to implement the landscaping design goals. In June 1993, the landscaping project, including many plant memorials, was dedicated to the city of Kent to ensure continuing maintenance and enhancement of the project. Eventually, as upkeep under city management began to decline, KEC decided to maintain a block-long parcel on the north side of the parkway between River and South Mantua streets as part of the city of Kent's Adopt-a-Spot program.



Over the many years that KEC has maintained this plot, the weed problem has become harder and harder to manage. In 2008, KEC sought professional help. Landscape designer Helen Green (left) of Burton, Ohio, looked at the plot and, last January provided us a year-round plan for dealing with the weeds and improving the garden. The plan called for early-spring physical weeding supplemented with later rounds of tightly focused chemical weeding (no broadcast spraying). She also recommended a schedule of mulching along

with the installation of a fabric weed barrier. She made a number of specific plant recommendations with the goal of establishing an easier-to-maintain plot, long on native plants and low on invasive species.

Last year, KEC got off to a slow start, with a wetter-than-normal spring, but by summer members and others were weeding and mulching pretty regularly, using about 12 yards of mulch by the end of the season—the most ever spread at this site. Green came out six or eight times—often by herself—weeding and spraying, planting new plants and moving others. By the end of the season, the plot looked better than it had in years. KEC members are energized to get back to the work this spring. Some of the plants Green added or moved to better locations include Little Bluestem, Wild Blue Indigo, Gaura and Artemesias. She even wants the group of workers to meet before the spring for some late-winter pruning—taking some of the dead branches from the crab apple and oak trees, cutting back the smoke trees, and trimming the junipers.

While KEC members and others worked more often last year, it somehow seemed easier. This was probably stems from having some supervision of the weeding and mulching sessions and having a master plan. Thanks so much to Helen Green for her expertise, her many volunteer hours and the plants she donated from her own garden. She worked well with our crew of volunteers, and she factored in our limited budget in all of her recommendations.

People interested in volunteering this year at the Adopt-a-Spot should contact Bob Wilson. If you or your organization is looking for a good landscape-design consultant, we can recommend Green. Green became interested in sustainable landscaping after completion of a horticulture certificate program and four years of volunteering at Holden Arboretum. As a special feature on the KEC Web site before spring planting weather arrives, she has prepared helpful suggestions for working in sustainable practices into home gardening projects. For more information, contact Helen Green.