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Demonstration gardens showcase rehabilitation

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First author Rachel Bechtold conducts a plant survey as part of an ongoing effort to increase knowledge of species richness in prairie areas of Cherokee County, Kansas. Photo courtesy of Rachel Bechtold.

Land degraded by mining or other industry is common worldwide and costly to restore. Planting regional forbs and grasses in these areas offers a simple approach to

land rehabilitation.

In an article published in Natural Sciences Education, researchers created an outline for installing plots planted with beneficial native species along a multi-use trail in Kansas. The goal of the project was to increase public awareness of remediation and rehabilitation options for degraded landscapes and to evaluate a community's aesthetic perception of these plots. Signage was included to inform the community of local species that provide erosion control options, food for pollinators, or amendment to soil.

The research team found that these demonstration plots were very economical when regional species and volunteer staffing were used. They also found that understanding and including a community's aesthetic preferences in the plots can improve their effectiveness and that "plant blindness"—being oblivious to nearby vegetation nearby—needs to be addressed.

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Bechtold, R., Shoulders, C., Popp, J., Johnson, D., & Wood, L. (2022). Demonstration gardens as informal education strategies in rehabilitation efforts. *Natural Sciences Education*. **https://doi.org/10.1002/nse2.20080**

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