

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Grand Challenges

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Grand Challenge: Community Vitality, Health & Water

Title: Master Gardener Teaches City of Topeka Code Enforcement

Why is this issue important?

Shawnee County Extension Master Gardener Kevin Siek taught a course on April 1, 2022 to 7 code enforcement officers for the City of Topeka on native landscapes and invasive plants. Code enforcement for the city carries a large responsibility for keeping homeowner properties within city code but officers had never received training on identifying plants, (native, invasive or noxious) or recognizing the difference between a managed native landscape versus a neglected property.

How did Extension address this issue?

Kevin taught the 2 hour course with assistance from the Horticulture Agent and covered all the noxious weeds for Shawnee County, many invasive plants and how both types of plants compare to native-plant lookalikes. Kevin also taught a section on recognizing a managed native landscape and how to determine if a homeowner was maintaining a property for pollinators rather than neglecting maintenance.



What was the impact?

All 7 officers completed a post-programmatic survey. 100% of the officers indicated they were either "Somewhat Confident" or "Very Confident" that they could recognize a managed native landscape after taking this course. 100% of the officers also indicated they felt either "Somewhat Confident" or "Very Confident" that they could recognize a noxious weed and 83.33% indicated they were "Very Confident" that they could identify an unknown plant in a homeowners yard with the training and resources provided.

When asked what about the training was useful for the officer's work, we received the following responses:

- "The ability in identifying some noxious weeds. The ability to identify a native garden. Who to contact if I need to identify a plant."
- "I learned about multiple resources to help with knowledge in identifying and addressing a variety of different grasses, plants, and weeds."
- "The limited number of noxious weeds we really have to deal with."