



PHOTOS: BRENDA K. JOHNSON

LEFT: A new entrance sign, limestone boulders, native grasses, and perennials now welcome visitors to the Lewis & Clark Recreation Area. Dale Dawson and Tanner Hanson chose boulders and plants that blended with natural surroundings in the park to give visitors a positive first impression. ABOVE: Dawson and Hanson positioned some boulders somewhat stacked above the horizontal plane of the ground for a natural look. Here, boulders are slightly submerged as if the limestone has been weathered and exposed the flat surface here.

'A Good First Impression'

Boulders And Other Landscaping At Lewis & Clark Recreation Area

BY BRENDA K. JOHNSON
P&D Correspondent

Dale Dawson, conservation forman, and Tanner Hanson, conservation technician, have worked together on landscaping projects around Lewis & Clark Recreation Area.

"Last April, we finished the installation of the new Welcome Center entrance sign," Dawson said. "To finish the island landscaping at the sign we chose 'Buckskin' limestone boulders from a Sioux Falls company that supplies aggregates. It's harvested in Wisconsin east of the Twin Cities. It matches the color and texture of our bluffs along the lake very well. As you know, if you put limestone from our bluffs in your landscape, it will dissolve. When it rains, the limestone melts. 'Buckskin' limestone boulders will be there for years.

"When I install a boulder, I like to make it look as natural as possible, not by just setting it on the surface of the ground."

Noted Hanson: "We want it to look like we didn't place it there—that it is jutting out of the ground."

"Mother Nature doesn't have a perfectly flat terrain," Dawson said. "It undulates—there are berms and dips.

The boulders are 8-10 inches thick and two feet by four feet or more across, he said.

"You look at the face of the rock and decide which is the best looking. That will be the part that shows. You want to decide before you plunk the rock," Hanson said.

They used a skid loader to move and adjust the boulders once in the area.

"My gut guides me," Dawson said. "I don't have a plan in my head. It works itself out. I visited with Jeff VanMeeteren and Shane Bertsch and get an idea of what they liked. Then Tanner and I worked in a direction that makes the spot look rustic but nice."

Hanson said it makes "a good first impression when you come to the park."

"We wanted plants (at the entrance sign) that blend in with the park. Plants need to stay within the island curbing, that won't overgrow the area," Dawson



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ABOVE: Stone installed for décor needs orientation to make it look more like a natural outcropping and less like a bowling ball resting on hard surface. RIGHT: Some grasses planted last season displayed winter interest contrasting curves of natural plants and stationary weathered boulders. With the park visited year round, having entrance area plants with long season interest held appeal for off-growing season.

said. "Dwarf barberry only gets a foot tall and about four feet across." As it grows, it won't block the sign.

"We needed plants that would screen light underneath the sign," Hanson said. Geometry was important to the scheme, Dawson said.

"We could have vertical plants on either end of the sign, but on either side of the sign, we needed plants that would stay low," he said.

"In the marina entrance we had that problem," he said. "Some of the Karl Foerster grass grew too tall and obscured some of the sign." Indian grass also leaned over instead of remaining upright within the island curbing. "We pulled them out and transplanted them at the new entrance area at Chief White Crane and elsewhere in the park.

"Soil conditions, nutrients and water are factors that impact growth," Hanson said.

Sometimes plant information to put the right plant in the right place was in-

complete. So Dawson tried a plant in one location, and then moved it to a better site when needed. "You want to know the height and width of plants when you put them in so you don't overgrow the area. But sometimes plants grow taller than expected," Dawson said.

TRAFFIC ISLANDS NEAR THE WELCOME CENTER

Dawson and Hanson wanted to repeat the 'Buckskin' limestone boulders in the traffic islands near the Welcome Center. Boulders are sold by the ton. "I had the idea of their size and how much they weighed. We used 10 tons at the entrance sign and 10 tons at the center islands," Dawson said.

They prepared the site for boulders. "We painted the ground where we would set the boulders," he said. "We used a backhoe to notch out the space for the boulder. We used a pay loader to place the boulder. Sometimes we had to lift it



back out and do handwork with a shovel for the boulder to lie like we wanted it to look."

"You paint the ground so you don't have to destroy more of the spot than you need to," Hanson said.

They fall seeded grass near the boulders. "We put an erosion blanket of wood fibers by some stones," Dawson said. "The ground stays moist and the blanket protects seed and then decomposes." Other plants and flowers will be added to the boulder areas next growing season. "This spring I'll spray pre-emergent herbicide around the boulders so we don't have weed-eaters or mowers hitting the boulders."

OTHER LANDSCAPING

Work at Chief White Crane entrance continued. "I'll complete the landscaping there this spring, with the new booth, widened entrance and monster block retaining wall," Dawson said.

The Welcome Center parking lot pavement has been extended to the traffic curb. "We had a four feet wide strip there, but it wasn't conducive for plants to grow," he said. The strip was surrounded by hot pavement in summer and piled snow in winter.

"We want to put in something that will act as a barrier along the curb," Dawson said, with the solution to be determined.

Another project is in the marina area. "One the goals for Tanner and me this summer is to clean up the causeway between the marina and the lake," Dawson said. "We sprayed weeds last fall. Our goal is to burn the weeds yet this winter and put in two or three varieties of native grasses to spruce up that area and give it color. Once established, it would be easy to maintain. As it is, the steep banks have to be hand maintained because you can't use equipment there." Spring will be a busy time for all.

Vegetable Seeds Are Available for Educational Garden Programs

BROOKINGS — To assist educational gardens across the state of South Dakota, SDSU Extension is offering 20 vegetable seed packets per project, for up to 30 gardens.

The donated seeds are intended only for newly starting and established educational gardens.

Eligible projects include gardens for schools, learning centers, daycares, 4-H clubs or other non-profit groups, where the produce will be used as part of the program or freely shared with those of need in the community.

Qualified projects must include an educational component, meaning they must have a regularly scheduled program with participants learning skills of growing food. Youth and adult programs will qualify.

To apply participants must complete the Seed Bank Application located at http://igrow.org/up/articles/2012_S

eed_Bank_App.pdf. Deliver or mail the application to the SDSU Extension Regional Center in Sioux Falls, at 2001 E. 8th St., Sioux Falls, SD 57103. Or email the application to Christina.Zdorovtsov@sdstate.edu.

Participants must complete a short follow-up report to summarize participation and project impact within 30 days after the project completion to be considered for future granting.

Seed packets were donated from a number of individuals across the regions to assist with these types of community gardening efforts. The Extension Service is storing the seeds and coordinating the seed bank effort.

If individuals are interested in donating seeds packaged for the 2012 growing season, contact Zdorovtsov at 605-782-3290 or Christina.Zdorovtsov@sdstate.edu. Seeds less than one year old are preferred.

CORRECTION



This photo, which ran with the May 4 "Plant Exchange" column, was incorrectly attributed to the column's author. The photo was actually shot by Kim Brannen. We apologize for the error.



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This one-year program, which returns to RTEC in August 2012, is eligible for the Critical Needs Workforce Scholarship. Stop in today and find out if you qualify!

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