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## Gering Civic Plaza Nears Completion

It has been a long summer of construction downtown, but the end is finally in sight. The main contract for the Gering Civic Plaza has been completed, including the completion of the bathrooms, walkways, fence, terraced lawn area, and lighting. City staff would like to express their appreciation to the contractor, Anderson and Shaw, who were able to meet their August 31st deadline in spite of less than favorable weather conditions throughout the summer.

The next step is the installation of all the plantings. The City was fortunate to receive over \$30,000 worth of grants to put towards the plantings. The project was awarded \$18,000 through the Greener Nebraska Towns Grant which is administered by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. This grant is funded by the Nebraska Environmental Trust, which gets its funding from lottery ticket proceeds. In addition, the City was awarded over \$13,000 through the Full Circle Benefits grant program which is administered by the Nebraska Forest Service.

The plants in this space have been specially selected by area experts to showcase native and well-adapted plants with a special emphasis on pollinators and drought tolerance. There is a good mix of "tried and true" plants along with some that are a little less common in our area. Many of these have been proven to be successful in our area in various locations, but are not commonly planted, so we are very excited to be able to showcase them here.



Establishing a landscape after a large-scale construction project is always a challenge. City staff is doing everything possible to set the project up for success, including bringing in topsoil, amending the soil to increase organic matter and nutrients available to the plants, installing drip irrigation throughout the landscape beds, and mulching with a high-quality mulch. Even with all of these best practices, Parks staff expects that there may be some plants that will be lost. City staff will be continually monitoring the



**Plaza Dedication Ceremony  
October 15  
at 2 p.m.**

recreation and tourism corridor. The City of Gering and Gering Visitors Bureau are assembling plans for the preliminary line-up of Plaza scheduled events for the 2019-2020 season; Arboretum tours with Santa, Veterans Day celebration, dance parties, kid's penny carnivals, car shows, street performers and food trucks, craft beer and wine festival, weddings, reunions, farmers markets and yoga on the Plaza to name a few.

All, or portions of the Gering Civic Plaza, with the exception of

project to determine if there are any plants that need to be replaced, and whether or not we should consider planting something different in the place of the plants that do not survive. Additionally, over many years we expect the landscape to change considerably as the trees mature and the surrounding perennials go from full sun to part or full shade. A well-managed landscape is always evolving, and we look forward to managing this space in a way that ensures it will be beautiful and environmentally functional for many years to come.



Because it is such a unique landscape, it will be managed differently than some of the other spaces around town. We will not be using salt on the walkways; instead, we will use sand to provide traction for anyone walking on the sidewalks in the winter. Salt eats away at concrete, and we want to ensure that our colored and stamped concrete stays in good condition long-term. We also want to avoid getting any salt into the landscape beds, as too much salt will kill our plants. We will also wait to cut back grasses and perennials until the spring every year. In addition to creating visual interest in the winter, this provides critical habitat for wildlife.

One of the features that we are extremely excited about are the two permeable paver patios. These permeable pavers will allow stormwater to infiltrate into the soil rather than running off. Because these are the first permeable pavers the City has installed, it will be a learning experience as we figure out the best ways to maintain them and ensure they do not plug up.

The space is to be designated as an affiliate site of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. This gives us the opportunity to work with NSA over time to evaluate the plantings and continue to work to improve the site through new management practices and plant replacement. It also allows us to better use the space for public education. We truly want this space to be a place where community members can come to learn alongside us as we put these different practices to use.

**By Annie Folck, City Engineer**

## Make Plans for the Plaza

Gering Civic Plaza will be open for business by holiday season 2019; offering a uniquely designed and amenity equipped venue for events, family gatherings and celebrations of all types. The Plaza was designed to develop a sense of place for the community where individuals and groups desiring to hold a social, educational, community or recreational function in the heart of Gering's downtown business,

recreation and tourism corridor.

The City of Gering and Gering Visitors Bureau are assembling plans for the preliminary line-up of Plaza scheduled events for the 2019-2020 season; Arboretum tours with Santa, Veterans Day celebration, dance parties, kid's penny carnivals, car shows, street performers and food trucks, craft beer and wine festival, weddings, reunions, farmers markets and yoga on the Plaza to name a few.

All, or portions of the Gering Civic Plaza, with the exception of

the south parking lot, may be rented for private or public events that would close the Plaza to the general public. Renting the Plaza will be secured with a signed contract, damage deposit, rental fees and certificate of insurance where applicable. The City of Gering has adopted a Plaza Rental Agreement; parties renting will be assessed rental fees based on the space(s) and duration of use. Other than times the Plaza is rented for public and private events; the entire Plaza and bathrooms will be open to the

public for access and enjoyment.

Community input is encouraged and welcomed for the activities and events residents and visitors would like to see scheduled in the Plaza. Call the Gering Visitors Bureau at (308) 436-6886. Tell us what you would like to see happening in the Plaza in the coming year and get your organized events or celebrations scheduled on the Gering Civic Plaza Master Calendar.

**By Karla Niedan-Streeks,  
Tourism Director, City of Gering**



Evelyn Sharp in P-51 Mustang, August, 1943



HUMANITIES NEBRASKA

## Evelyn Sharp, Nebraska's Barnstorming Pilot

Ord, Nebraska native, Evelyn Sharp, started flying at age 16 in 1935. By age 18 she had her commercial pilot's license, making her the youngest person in the US with a commercial license. With nearly 3,000 hours in the air, in 1942 she joined the WAFS and the war effort.

During World War II she ferried war planes from factories to bases where male pilots could be trained on them.

Humanities Nebraska speaker, Diane Bartels, will be in Gering on October 27 at 1:00 p.m. to talk about the amazing Evelyn Sharp at the Gering City Council Chambers. This free program is sponsored by the Friends of the Gering Library; everyone is welcome!

## Little Free Libraries- Take a book, share a book

Thanks to a donation from Scottsbluff/Gering Rotary, Gering will soon have three little free libraries. A volunteer will make sure each library is stocked with books, but people are welcome to take a book to read or put a book in that they are done with.

"Little Free Libraries help promote reading in the community by putting books in peoples' hands" according to Library Director, Diane Downer.

Gering's three little free libraries will be at Hampton Park (by the Junior High), Johannes Park in the Meadows, and McLellan Park on East D Street.

To learn about the world's largest book-sharing movement visit: [littlefreelibrary.org](http://littlefreelibrary.org).

## Children's Programs at the Library

### Lego Club is back!

Wednesday afternoons from 3:00-4:00 the community room is bustling again with kids building all kinds of amazing Lego projects. Join in the fun!



**Toddler Read & Romp Story & Playtime** meets each Wednesday morning at 10 a.m., and is targeted toward children ages 1 - 3. The first 30 minutes consists of books, songs, fingerplays, felt-board stories, rhymes, and movement activities. The second 30 minutes involves hands-on materials and activities for an educational and social playtime.

**Preschool Move & Groove Storytime** meets each Thursday morning at 10 a.m. and is targeted toward preschool children ages 3 - 5. Movement and song accompanies read-alouds, felt-board stories, rhymes, fingerplays, videos, and a craft or educational activity. Storytime helps build children's letter knowledge, vocabulary, and reading skills.

It's story  
**TIME**  
@your library™

Storytime introduces children to reading and language through books, rhymes, music, and other fun activities. Every week the library offers programs that match the attention span and developmental levels of different ages of children. Children must be accompanied by a caregiver while attending storytime, but no registration is necessary.



## Family Game Fiesta November 3 at the Gering Public library

**Bring your family and friends  
for fun at the Library!**

Join us for board games, puzzles, cards and more. The library will supply games for all ages, or bring your favorite game to share! We will pop some popcorn and families can bring their own sodas

and other snacks if they like.

Board games are fun, but they are educational too. Little kids learn their colors and how to count, and lessons like waiting for their turn and following rules. Older kids can learn strategy and decision making skills as well as developing a longer attention span and team work. Good sportsmanship might be the best lesson of all.



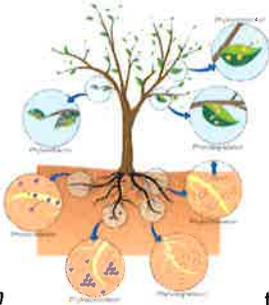
**Save the Date!**  
**Gering Library's**  
**Mingle and Jingle**  
**is scheduled for**  
**December 13**  
**from 3:00 p.m.**  
**to 6:00 p.m.**

## Phytoremediation: Pollution Control with Plants

by Leann Sato, Scottsbluff  
Stormwater Program Specialist

Super heroes often have hidden powers to make the world a better place. So do plants. Through phytoremediation plants can transform metals, fuels, and solvents into less harmful substances, providing a natural filter for stormwater runoff and restoring water quality. A plant's superpower can work in several ways.

**Rhizodegradation or phytostimulation:** Plants release natural substances through their roots that supply nutrients to microorganisms in the soil. The microorganisms digest organic substances such as fuels or solvents and break



them down into harmless products.

**Phytostabilization or phytosequestration:** Plants sequester or stabilize contaminants when pollutants are absorbed into the roots, the surface of roots, or release chemicals in the immediate vicinity of the roots. This prevents pollutants from migrating to ground water or air. Polyaromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs), a carcinogenic by-product in substances like cigarette smoke or car exhaust, are removed from contaminated ground in this manner.

Contaminants are absorbed through the roots and stored in the stem or leaves during phytoaccumulation or phytoextraction. Pollutants are not degraded but are removed from the environment when the

plants are harvested or extracted. Hyperaccumulators, plants that are especially adept at absorbing specific substances, can be used to clean polluted ground.

**Rhizofiltration or Phytofiltration** uses hydroponics to treat ground water. Plants are raised with their roots in water, instead of soil, and irrigated with contaminated groundwater. When the roots become saturated with contaminants, the plants are harvested and properly destroyed. For example, radioactive contaminants were removed from pond water with sunflowers in Chernobyl, Ukraine.

**Phytovolatilization:** Pollutants travel through plants to the leaves and evaporate, or volatilize, into the atmosphere. Some contaminants are modified to harmless substances as they travel through the plant while others degrade quickly

once released in the atmosphere.

During phytodegradation or phytotransformation plants digest and destroy contaminants within plant tissues. Depending on the plant, transformation may occur in the roots, stem or leaves.

**Phytohydraulics:** Deep-rooted plants, like trees, can contain and clean ground water contaminants that come into contact with their roots. They can also be used to manage underground water flows. A poplar tree, for example, pulls out about 30 gallons of water per day and a cottonwood can absorb up to 350 gallons per day.

Plants are becoming more widely used as attractive, effective, low-cost green options of pollution clean-up or control. So a beautiful garden is not only attractive, but also a pollution fighting super hero.

## The Where, What, and Way to Cleaner Water

Stormwater programs preserve water quality. And water quality begins by being aware of stormwater – where it goes, what it picks up, and the simple ways to help keep it clean

Gering's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) takes rain, snowmelt, and anything that floats down the gutter to the North Platte River without cleaning or treatment. In contrast, the Sanitary Sewer takes our home's wastewater from the shower, laundry, dishwasher, and toilets to the wastewater treatment plant where it is screened, aerated, clarified, and disinfected before returning in clean condition to the North Platte River.

When rain, snowmelt, or sprinkler overspray runs across streets or sidewalks and down the gutter it picks up pollutants such as pet waste, leaking oil and other vehicle fluids, grass clippings or leaves, and phosphorus and nitrogen from fertilizers. The stormwater and its pollutants deposit directly into our waterways. This type of pollution is called non-point source (NPS) pollution, since there's no specific source, and it is the largest cause of impaired waterways in the United States.

Stormwater pollution is difficult to treat, but easy to prevent. The table shows the top six surface water pollutants with options to keep them from contaminating stormwater.

Top 6 Surface Water Contaminants	Pollution Prevention Measures
Fertilizers & Pesticides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apply the minimum amount needed to do the job</li> <li>- Apply in still, dry weather to prevent chemical drift or wash</li> <li>- Sweep dry fertilizer back onto the lawn to prevent gutter</li> <li>- Plant native - native plants require less water and chemicals</li> </ul>
Sediment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plant trees to intercept rainfall and help prevent erosion</li> <li>- Use native plants in the landscape - the deep root systems help hold soil and infiltrate water</li> <li>- Mulch large bare areas to minimize soil loss</li> <li>- Landscape with rain gardens and biowales to manage runoff flow, sediment, and erosion</li> </ul>
Litter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Put trash IN the can and put the lid on the container to prevent litter from blowing out, rodents from scattering, or moisture collecting inside creating "dumpster juice"</li> <li>- Properly recycle what you can in the city's single stream program or other recycling options in the community.</li> <li>- Go paperless where possible</li> <li>- Use durable reusable containers like water bottles, grocery bags, lunch boxes to reduce package waste and single use plastics.</li> </ul>
Animal Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bag, tie and put in the trash if coated in kitty litter</li> <li>- Scoop and flush in the toilet</li> <li>- Compost if the animal is healthy</li> <li>- Grind and use as fertilizer if the animal is healthy.</li> </ul>
Yard Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mulch - leave clippings as a fertilizing mulch on the lawn or place as a weed barrier in the garden</li> <li>- Compost yardwaste and use as natural fertilizer and soil rejuvenator</li> <li>- Collect and place in the yardwaste container. Gering hauls yardwaste to the Scottsbluff Biosolid &amp; Compost Facility</li> </ul>
Vehicle Fluids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keep vehicles in good repair</li> <li>- Walk or take alternative transportation when possible (bikes, public transit)</li> <li>- Absorb drips, leaks or spills with floor dry, kitty litter or sawdust, then sweep and dispose in the garbage</li> </ul>

**PLEASE HELP KEEP ALLEYS FREE OF OVERGROWTH & DEBRIS**

§ 53.45 ALLEYS; USE OF.

*Alleys are public thoroughfares and are to be kept clear of obstructions at all times.*

Containers must be placed in such a way that it will not obstruct the use of the alley as a public thoroughfare at any time, and provided that no permanent bases or foundations for such containers be permitted in the city alleys or street. If other collection facilities are to be used, they must be placed within the boundary of the private property, and immediately adjacent to the alley used by the Sanitation Contractor for *pick-up service*. *It shall be the duty of the property owner adjacent to the alley to keep the alley clear of weeds, and to prevent obstruction of the alley by overhanging shrubs and trees.*



**It is becoming increasingly more difficult for City personnel to drive and maneuver equipment through alleys in Gering.**

**Damage is occurring to Sanitation trucks while attempting to collect garbage and yard waste.**



**By law, residents are required to keep alleys clear of obstructions. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!**



If you have a fire hydrant on your lot, remove any landscaping that may have grown up around it in the event that the Fire Department needs to find it quickly and easily.



**REMINDER:** With your monthly utility bill you have a free dump pass to the landfill each month!

## Running At Large




**A Friendly Reminder from the City of Gering**

Please remember to keep your pet's vaccinations current, protect pets from harsh weather conditions; make sure they have plenty of clean drinking water, obtain a license annually and **DO NOT ALLOW PETS TO RUN AT LARGE - CATS AS WELL AS DOGS.**

Also keep in mind that just because most pets have a fur coat, they can still succumb to frostbite and hypothermia. Remove snow from between your pet's toes to prevent frostbite. By law domestic animals must be provided with shelter.



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