

---

For Immediate Release

# NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Randall D. Schultz (505) 822-8222

---

## Outstanding Gardening Projects Win 2009 Nature Hills Nursery Green America Awards

Three community gardening projects from across the United States have been honored with 2009 Nature Hills Nursery Green America Awards.

Honored with the Grand Prize Award of \$2,500 in plants was Bridging The Gap, a non-profit environmental organization in the Kansas City area that is beautifying a vacant lot in the Ivanhoe Neighborhood. The lot has already been cleared of litter and debris, and volunteers are ready to begin creating the garden which will serve as a green space for the neighborhood complete with play areas for children and rest areas for adults.

Chosen for the First Place Award of \$1,500 in plants was Two Coves Community Garden in Astoria, New York. Two Coves Community Garden is a newly established oasis in western Queens that provides fresh produce to residents of a neighborhood that has been described as “a food desert.”



Honored with the Second Place Award of \$1,000 in plants was Homewood Heights Community Garden in Austin, Texas. Homewood Heights is a one-year-old community garden that has sprouted from a reclaimed urban lot that was used for many years as a dump for construction debris. Many of the plants received from the Nature Hills Nursery Green America Award will be used to beautify the community space in front of the community garden.

“The winners of the inaugural Nature Hills Nursery Green America Awards are nonprofit gardening projects that are truly making a difference in their respective communities,” said Jeffrey Dinslage, president of Nature Hills Nursery, which sponsors the national awards. “We are proud to support these local efforts to beautify neighborhoods and create gardens even in the midst of urban environments.”

The Nature Hills Nursery Green America Awards were created to give national recognition and \$5,000 in plants to community organizations and groups who are making “hands-on” improvements to their local environments.

Winners of the 2009 Nature Hills Nursery Green America Awards were chosen from over 200 applications submitted by community groups, nonprofit organizations, and

— more —

---

**Schultz Communications for Nature Hills Nursery**

8205 Spain Road NE, Suite 201 • Albuquerque, NM 87109 • Phone (505) 822-8222 • FAX (505) 822-9122  
email [schultz@schultzpr.com](mailto:schultz@schultzpr.com)

gardening programs from across the USA. Nature Hills Nursery, an Omaha-based website-only retailer that sells trees, shrubs, perennials and other plants, created the Nature Hills Nursery Green America Awards as a way to give back to the communities and people who have contributed to the success of the company.

“This year’s crop of Nature Hills Nursery Green America Awards winners is living proof that gardening makes the world a better place, one garden at a time,” said Dinslage.

Applications for the 2010 Nature Hills Nursery Green America Awards will be accepted nationwide from September 15, 2009 until March 31, 2010. To apply for the 2010 award, visit the website at [www.naturehills.com/green\\_america\\_awards.aspx](http://www.naturehills.com/green_america_awards.aspx).

---

## **2009 Nature Hills Nursery Green America Awards**

**Grand Prize-- \$2,500**

**Bridging The Gap (Ivanhoe Vacant Lot Beautification)**  
**435 Westport Rd., Ste. 23**  
**Kansas City, MO 64111**

**Contact Person: Bill Grotts**  
**816-561-1087, ext. 110**  
**[bill.grotts@bridgingthegap.org](mailto:bill.grotts@bridgingthegap.org)**  
**[www.bridgingthegap.org](http://www.bridgingthegap.org)**

Bridging The Gap and its affiliates, Heartland Tree Alliance and Keep Kansas City Beautiful, are working with the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council and neighborhood residents to beautify a vacant lot at 3624 Highland Ave in Kansas City, MO. In the interest of removing blight and improving the appearance of the neighborhood, the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council worked with Jackson County Land Trust to acquire ownership of vacant lots in the neighborhood. The lots were selected based on the potential for infill housing and for green space (play areas for children and rest areas for seniors). This particular lot was chosen for this project because of the severity of dumping in the lot, and the opportunity for creating a garden in a low-income neighborhood.

The most important goal for the Ivanhoe Vacant Lot Beautification project is to improve the appearance of the neighborhood. Second is to address environmental issues and concerns. Low-income, urban neighborhoods often have increased air pollutants and planting trees in this lot will help improve air quality. Studies also show that beautifying neighborhoods creates a safer place to live by encouraging neighbors to get outside and get to know each other. A final goal of the project is to create environmental stewards by training the neighborhood residents to properly plant and care for what is planted.

Bridging The Gap has significant experience in volunteer engagement and grass-roots neighborhood projects. Bridging The Gap and Ivanhoe have partnered on many projects in the past, including a large-scale tree planting project in a neighborhood park and multiple litter clean-ups.

Ivanhoe has more than 300 volunteers that participate in neighborhood activities. Neighborhood supporters include the police, the City of Kansas City, Missouri, James B. Nutter & Co Realty, Bank of America, Commerce Bank, Hall Family Foundation, Legal Aid, Bryan Cave Law Firm, Habitat for Humanity, Macedonia Baptist Church, Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church, and Gregg Tabernacle AME Church.

**First Place-- \$1,500**  
**Two Coves Community Garden**  
**Po Box 2585**  
**Astoria, NY 11102**  
**718-512-8649**  
**twocovesgarden@gmail.com**

**Contact Person: Stephanos Koullias**  
**718-704-4734**  
**skoullias@gmail.com**  
**www.twocovescommunitygarden.org**

Two Coves Community Garden was borne out of the concern over an empty, abandoned lot in the low income section of Astoria, Queens. With no frequent public transportation and no place within 20 blocks to buy affordable fresh produce, the neighborhood is a food desert.

The garden had eight members in the Spring of 2008 and swelled to over 80 participants by Fall 2008. By Spring 2009, more than 200 members were maintaining and beautifying this urban oasis. Partnerships are actively being sought with local schools, summer youth programs and a day care center for working folks.

One major goal of the community garden is to maximize the participation of neighborhood youth in order to encourage their sense of community involvement and social contribution— as well as give them a taste of what fresh garden produce is really like.

A core group of about a dozen people have been building up the soil on a 1,300 square-foot plot in the 1/2 acre garden, using a no-till method. There have been various design consultation meetings, and contributions have been solicited for plants, flower seeds, hay for mulch and lumber for handicap-accessible raised beds. The Nature Hills Nursery Green America Award is the first major award received by Two Coves Community Garden.

Support for Two Coves Community Garden has come from Just Food, GreenThumb, Partnership for Parks, NY Cares, NYers for Parks, Build It Green, Community Environmental Center, NYC Community Gardening Coalition and Citibank.

— more —

**Second Place-- \$1,000**

**Homewood Heights Community Garden**  
**2601 Sol Wilson**  
**Austin, TX 78702**

**Contact Person: Amber Burks-Cole**  
**amberburkscole@gmail.com**  
**<http://homewoodheightsgarden.blogspot.com/>**

The Homewood Heights Community Garden was established last year on a 5,000 square-foot lot that had been used as a dump for construction debris for many years. The first step in the process was clearing the lot of mattresses, concrete, asphalt and assorted trash. Today, there are 13 rows of vegetable plots and a community gathering space in the front of the garden.

The plants received from the Nature Hills Nursery Green America Award will be used primarily to beautify the community space in the front of the garden. This space is used as a gathering spot for garden planning and neighborhood planning meetings. This area is also used as an informal gathering space during and after working in the garden.

East Austin is a neighborhood that has been neglected for the past 50 years. Parts of the neighborhood are low-income housing and housing projects. Neighborhood residents have already found that Homewood Heights Community Garden is a magnet for kids looking for something to do. According to Amber Burks, "We are able to work together on something productive and fulfilling, then send the kids home to their families with a bag full of fresh produce to share. Our goal is to continue to make this an attractive and inviting place for all of our neighbors to enjoy."

The Homewood Heights Community garden is now in full swing. All of the labor and a large portion of the cost associated with maintaining the garden comes from the neighbors involved in the effort of sustaining this local food source. Assistance has also been received from the Sustainable Food Center in Austin.

**Garden Editors/Writers:**

For additional information about each Nature Hills Nursery Green America Award winning garden, contact Randy Schultz at 505-822-8222 or [schultz@schultzpr.com](mailto:schultz@schultzpr.com).