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## **RIVER ACCESS AT VALLEY VIEW TO BLOSSOM WITH NATIVE PLANTS**

***Akron Garden Club centennial gift funds thousands of native plantings at Valley View***

As construction continues to bring Cuyahoga River access to the public at the Valley View Area of Cascade Valley Metro Park, another transformation is taking place simultaneously. With grant support from Akron Garden Club (AGC), a new public space alongside the Cuyahoga River will soon blossom with nearly 6,000 native plants.

Beginning April 23, AGC members, park staff and volunteers will plant thousands of native plants there over the course of several days. The new garden will feature accent areas that consist of meadows filled with native blooms, evoking a natural landscape while differentiating themselves with vivid bursts of color and intricate textures.

Celebrating 100 years in 2024, AGC chose Summit Metro Parks as the recipient of its centennial gift to the Akron community. This project was selected because it underscores the importance of native plants in supporting ecosystems and creating enduring natural spaces. The grant provides up to \$100,000 for the project design, development, materials, installation and a portion of the first year's maintenance.

The park district and AGC share a commitment to biodiversity, which is why each plant is native to Northeast Ohio. AGC worked closely with Summit Metro Parks staff to determine plant selection, with about one-third of the project's plants grown by AGC members. Started from seed in 2023, those 2,000-plus plants were transplanted to larger containers as they grew, nurtured over winter. Other plants were grown by Summit Metro Parks or purchased from nurseries.

"The native plant gardens at Valley View are yet another opportunity for AGC to create a more beautiful Akron, but in a way that is sustainable and improves lives," said

AGC President Elise Bennett. “We hope this garden achieves these goals and perhaps encourages visitors to incorporate eco-friendly gardening practices in their own yards.”

New amenities near the Cuyahoga River at the Valley View Area will open to public this summer, including kayak and canoe access, gathering spaces, a scenic overlook, nature play area, restrooms and three new trails. Details will be announced in the coming weeks.

While visitors await the opening of the park district’s newest space, they too can embrace the beauty and benefits of native plants through the park district’s Wild Back Yards program. Wild Back Yards encourages individuals to make simple yet impactful changes in their own outdoor spaces and yards to support local wildlife. Learn more at [bit.ly/wildbackyards](https://bit.ly/wildbackyards).

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Akron Garden Club (AGC) is a private nonprofit service organization, founded in 1924. The purpose of AGC is to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening and to improve and protect the quality of the environment through programs and action in the fields of horticulture, conservation, civic improvement and education. Learn more at [akrongardenclub.org](https://akrongardenclub.org). AGC is affiliated with The Garden Club of America, a nonprofit national organization composed of 199 clubs with 18,000 members who devote their energy and expertise to projects in their communities and across the nation.

Summit Metro Parks manages more than 15,000 acres throughout 16 parks, three nature centers and over 150 miles of trails, including 22 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. Annual attendance is approximately 5 million visits. Find us online at [summitmetroparks.org](https://summitmetroparks.org).



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