SUMMARY:
A ten year project to establish Victoria Educational Gardens (VEG) has proven successful with 37 demonstration gardens plus 13 other garden features all within one acre size. Over 1300 youth plus several hundred adults toured the demonstration gardens in 2009 and typically annually. As a result, area residents learn sound ecological techniques, proper landscape management and can see from direct visual appraisal how recommended landscape plant varieties survive and/or flourish in the Victoria County environment. Fundraising started in 2008 raised $118,605.60 to build the final phase, a 60’ x 100’ educational pavilion. Coupled with funds on hand the new VEG Pavilion was nearly complete by the end of the year.

OBJECTIVES:
To demonstrate sound, environmental and economical horticultural practices and to provide a resource for the general public to see first hand how recommended plant varieties perform in the Victoria area so these techniques and varieties can be adapted in local private and commercial landscapes.

MATERIALS and METHODS:
In the spring of 2000, three master gardeners working on a small landscape project to beautify the old Foster Field Officer’s Club at Victoria Regional Airport let their imaginations run wild and came up with the idea to create a complex of gardens in the open field that surrounded the club.

The wheels started turning, design plans were drawn up and by the end of the year the Victoria Regional Airport Commission granted permission for the Victoria County Master Gardeners Association to use the land surrounding the Officer's Club for an educational garden.

Thus, Victoria Educational Gardens (affectionately called VEG) was designed and divided into 6 phases - the first one being the children's garden, vegetable garden, storage shed and greenhouse – built all on the west side of the Officer’s Club. Phases II through Phase V include 16 mini-gardens, a large water garden and several demonstration areas on the property to the south and east of the Officer's Club. Phase VI funding for a 6000 square foot educational pavilion started in 2008 with major efforts in 2009 and construction started in October 2009.

RESULTS and DISCUSSIONS:
Initial groundbreaking took place May 10, 2001 with about 50 active Victoria County Master Gardeners. After many months of fundraising, and with determination, enthusiasm, love of gardening and hard work, the first phase was completed and presented to the community on May 18, 2003. For the next two years, the Master Gardener took a break from hard labor and concentrated on spreading the word about the gardens and encouraging the community and schools to tour the educational facility.
With five more phases to complete, Master Gardeners conducted fundraising efforts by writing grants, sending out letters for community support, conducting plant sales twice a year, holding garden symposiums and co-sponsored annual garden tours. By 2005 enough funds were raised to continue garden plans for phase 2 – 5 on the east side of the Officer's Club which was started and completed in late 2006 and early 2007. (See Table 1 for a list of gardens) Pavers were sold at cost for the Military Honor Garden and as a fundraiser for the Path of Family and Friends.

After seven years in the making with the help of now 162 Master Gardeners and more than 11,600 volunteer hours (see Table 2 listing VEG chairs), the vision is now a reality with 37 demonstration gardens plus 13 other garden features bringing the investment in this educational project to over $250,000. (See attached new 2008 VEG color brochure highlighting all features.)

VEG is open free to the public from dawn until dusk for individual viewing and is located at the Victoria Regional Airport at 333 Bachelor Drive. Victoria Educational Garden tours are conducted by VCMGA Members and Interns. Public tours can be arranged for groups by calling the Extension Office at 361-575-4581 or email: moni31@suddenlink.net or nancyk@vcmga.org.

By early 2010 the Phase VI new VEG Pavillon was nearly complete. Over $118,605 was raised and/or donated towards building the new Master Gardener Pavilion by the Master Gardeners plus other funds on hand were used for construction. See Master Gardener Pavilion Donor list in Acknowledgements for list of personal and business donors (not including fundraisers).

Table 1. A list of 37 Educational Demonstration Gardens and 13 other Garden Features constructed at Victoria Educational Gardens (VEG), 333 Bachelor Dr., Victoria County Master Gardeners, Cooperators, Victoria County TX, (2000 - 2009).

Educational Demonstration Gardens
Entrance Garden
Children's Garden
    Concrete Pond
    Rainbow Circle
    Animal Alphabet Circle
    Sensory Area
    Gravel water feature
Native Area
Birding Area
    Birdhouse classroom
Butterfly Area
    Secret Garden with butterfly house
Vegetable Garden
    Compost Area
Patriotic Garden
Heirloom Garden
Earthkind™ Rose Trial
Meditation Garden
Ornamental Grass Garden
    Large wind chimes
Antique Rose Garden
Xeriscape
    Bubble Urn Fountain
Iris Garden
International Garden
Perennial Garden
Turf Grass Demonstration
Annual / Seasonal Garden

Ground Cover Demonstration
Pocket Herb Garden
Shade Garden
Water Garden with waterfall, bog and land bridges
Tropical Garden
Patio Container Garden
    Original Fountain
Daylily Garden
Weed Demonstration

Other Garden Features
Donor Wall
Gazebo (x2)
Greenhouse
Storage Shed
Rainwater Harvesting System
Cathedral Arbor
Rose covered Arbor
Pergola
Labyrinth
Military Honor Garden
Path of Family and Friends
French Drain
Dry Creek Bed
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:
Appreciation is expressed to Pat Plowman, Chairman of VEG, all Victoria County Master Gardener volunteers and their spouses and the following numerous donors to Victoria County Master Gardeners and Victoria County Extension making VEG possible:

**Victoria Educational Garden Donors (2000 – 2007)**

**GOLDEN RAINTREE** $20,000 and more
Crossroads Foundation

**TEXAS REDBUD** $10,000
Victoria County
Victoria Regional Airport

**LIVE OAK** $5,000
Dr. and Mrs. Charles Borchers
Charla Borchers Leon

**BUTTERFLY** $250

**SOUTHERN MAGNOLIA** $2,500
Atzenhoffer - Milton Greeson Family
Easley Roofing
First Victoria
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**SILVER MAPLE** $1,000
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Knezek, Cliff & Nora - $15,000
Knezek, Cliff - $15,000
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Table 2. Seven Main VEG Chairs, 29 Garden Areas and Sub-Chairs (for 37 Demonstration Gardens) at Victoria Educational Gardens (VEG), 333 Bachelor Dr., Victoria County Master Gardeners, Cooperators, Victoria County TX, (2000 - 2009).
(Each Sub-Chair has 3 – 13 Master Gardener volunteers assisting with the project.)

1. Fran Kanak
   Butterfly - Barbara Buethe
   Sensory - Maria Sobczak
   Texas Native - Olivia Blanchard
   Birding - Diana Maley

2. Ken Knief
   Vegetable Garden - Gerald Bludau
   Garden Entrance - Kim Green,
   Kathleen Musselman

3. Roy Cook
   Greenhouse - Roy Cook
   Airport Entrance - Cliff Knezek
   Rainwater Harvesting - Glen Chilek
   Compost - Susan Cohen

4. Nancy Zaplac
   Patio Container - Martha Sawyers
   Water Features - Pat Plowman
   Tropical - Sandy Knief

![View of children’s garden on west side of Officers club.](image-url)
Labyrinth/Meditation - Ann Parks Hedrick
Red/White/Blue – Carmen Price

5. Pat Plowman
   Shade - Gerrie Van Toledo
   Terrace Herb/Groundcover - Mary Janak
   Seasonal/Annuals - Barbara Schmidt
   International - Kathy Chilek
   Iris - Virginia Ruschhaupt
   Antique Roses - Marie Graham
   Ornamental Grasses -

6. Suzann Herricks
   Xeriscape - Teresa Hulsey
   Perennial - Pat Miller
   Turf Grass - Charlie Neumeyer
   EarthKind Roses - Jerome Janak
   Day Lily - Doris Martinak
   Patriotic - Nancy Kramer
   Heirloom - Karen Renger

7. Ed Gregurek
   Maintenance/Construction
   Clean signs and kiosks
   Train roses and vines
   Mailboxes and maintain office - Carmen Price
   Prune privets and yaupons - Virginia Richter
   Where ever needed