



The city of Helena partnered with Texas A&M University to bring an Earth-Kind Rose Confirmation Trial to the city. A ground-breaking ceremony will be held on Oct. 14. (Contributed)

# Helena partners with Texas A&M for rose trial



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By **GRAHAM BROOKS** / Staff Writer

**HELENA**—The city of Helena and the Helena Beautification Board has partnered with Texas A&M University AgriLife Extension to complete a full Earth-Kind™ Rose Confirmation Trial.

On Oct. 14, the Helena Beautification Board will host a ground-breaking ceremony to officially open the trial and to plant some 78 rose shrubs from 24 cultivars as a part of the Earth-Kind™ Rose Trial for the city of Helena.

“The Helena Earth Kind trials mark a significant investment in the future of garden roses across the United States,” said Chris VanCleave, a nationally known rose expert and current chairman of the Helena Beautification Board. “People want beautiful roses in their gardens to enhance the beauty of their yards and enrich their lives. What they don’t want are roses that require a lot of care and upkeep. This rose trial is a first step toward identifying cultivars that provide a beautiful garden presence, are disease resistant, drought and pest tolerant.”

“VanCleave and vice chairman Brian Puckett were instrumental in bringing a research trial of this magnitude to Helena and we were proud to partner with Texas A&M to bring this horticultural trial to Helena,” said Helena Mayor Mark Hall.

“This trial is conducted in less than perfect growing conditions, on purpose,” said Puckett. “The roses will be planted, watered in for the first season and then left to their own devices. We will monitor and evaluate per the rigorous guidelines set for us by our partners at Texas A&M. It’s this trial by fire that will reveal those ‘tough as nails’ cultivars that could ultimately join the list of other roses that have become Earth-Kind roses. The need to offer environmentally responsible plants is growing and the AgriLife program at Texas A&M under the direction of Dr. Steve George has conducted years of field research and evaluation that has now set the standard for how these types of trial are conducted and we are proud to be a part of this effort.”

The trial grounds are located along the drive leading up to the Helena Sports Complex. As the trial progresses and the roses begin to bloom, the board plans to schedule events at varying intervals to celebrate the success of the trials.

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