



Member Profile Snapshot

Eubanks Environmental

David Eubanks

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by Meta L. Levin

For 30 years, David Eubanks, founder and owner of Eubanks Environmental, has been an environmentalist, ecologist and native plant designer.

In 1997 he started his own consulting firm to focus on ecological restoration, native landscape design and shoreline erosion control using bioengineered plant solutions.

"I struck gold with my first client, the Chicago Botanic Garden," he says. For three years, Eubanks

worked on lagoon shoreline restoration, using native plants as a bioengineered solution.

Eventually, he sold his consulting business, which became Tallgrass Restoration. But, he wasn't through yet.

He re-invented his business. Now Eubanks Environmental, is a boutique firm, doing residential, municipal and commercial design, installation and maintenance, still single mindedly concentrating on the environment and native plants. He works with prairie, woodland and wetland species and has a staff of seven





or eight people in season. “They are wonderful landscapers,” he says. He also has an on-call family of stonemasons.

Initially, he did all the work, hiring crews from other landscape companies when needed. By 1998, he realized he needed his own and hired three people, who he trained to do the work the way he wanted it done. “Most other landscape companies don’t understand native plants,” he says.

He also contracts with John O’Lear, a landscape architect, recently retired from the Will County Forest Preserve District. O’Lear has a background in erosion control and shade and sun plantings. “He is integral to the work I do,” says Eubanks, designing formal gardens around homes and plant beds. “He knows his stuff.”

Eubanks seeks to increase his clients’ connection to nature with every project. His services include landscape planning, plant selection and hardscape design with sustainability and environmental stewardship, as well as incorporating eco-friendly principles in mind every step of the way.

Based on the request of many of his clients, Eubanks has added hardscaping to his offerings, still with ecology in mind. He has installed permeable driveways, patios, fire pits and the like.

While some of his clients want to do their own upkeep, most have found that, at least initially, it is not easy. “It’s a misnomer to refer to prairie installations as maintenance free,” says Eubanks. “It takes three to four years before native plants repel weeds.”

He is proud that he remains available to his clients for questions and consultation. “I never leave a client behind,” he says.

Not all of his installations are 100 percent native plants. Planting them on large estates can get expensive, so many clients ask that he integrate seeded natural areas with more conventional plants.

In practice, he does a lot of perimeter planting for his residential clients. “I love native shrubs,” he says. “A lot are beautiful and can screen property.”

In addition, Eubanks Environmental will provide prescriptive burn services to keep invasive small woody plants from growing.

Eubanks crafted a masters level program in environmental planning at DePaul University, completing his coursework with mentors in the field through the School of New Learning, but life got in the way before finishing his final paper. He did, however, learn what he needed to start and run his own business.

Now, more and more traditional landscape contractors are dabbling in native plants. “I’m hoping to see more now that it is becoming more of a trend.”

From DePaul, he went to the Openlands, as well as working on conservation policy and connecting greenways for the Cook County Forest Preserve District.

In 1997, he decided to start his own business. “I never looked back,” he says.

Now, among other things, he works with Lake Forest Openlands, Hainesville, Green Oaks, Ryerson Woods and others. In each place, there were unexpected good results. In Ryerson Woods, for example, where he worked on a volunteer basis, as soon as he installed St. Johns Wort, the bees showed up. With another installation, Scarlett Tanengers arrived.

Eubanks is enthusiastic about the future of his company. “We are small, but mighty,” he says. ■