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For Immediate Release: October 25, 2016
"2016 Green Leaf Landscape Award for Businesses Recipient"



Road construction, drought, sewer pipe installation and a major flood made it a challenge for Ron Deets to do much with landscaping at his business, Deets HomeStore, on 2010 South 13th Street.

Trees were planted and landscaping was eventually completed. This year the City of Norfolk Tree Advisory Board recognizes the Deets HomeStore for their efforts with the 2016 Green Leaf Landscape Award for business.

The store, located just south of the viaduct on South Highway 81, was built in October 1997. A horse barn was moved off the location and 4500 truckloads of fill was brought in to raise

the building site above a 100 year flood level. A few blue spruce trees, barberry bushes and crab trees were planted around the building. During subsequent dry years the sprinklers were shut off to conserve water.

Then came 2010. First, new traffic lights were put in at the intersection of Monroe Avenue and Highway 81 which changed the store's lot size. Then on June 16, 2010, the Elkhorn River rose nearly five feet above flood stage and river water came out of its banks flowing from the north under the viaduct and towards the Deets' store. Thanks to the truckloads of fill they had brought in before construction, the water came up to within inches of the front door but never got in the store.

"Where we sit was once a river bed that wound through Ta-Ha-Zouka Park. We didn't get any water in the building but we did get a lot of silt, gullies and weed seed after the water receded," owner Ron Deets said.

Then a new sewer line came through the property. Finally, it was time to make some real landscaping decisions. Kevin Bruening of Bruening Landscape and Turf Management was hired to shape up the area and make it attractive to customers, employees and the hundreds of cars that pass by each day.

"Our biggest concern was erosion so rather than digging things up we eliminated the weeds, overseeded and shaped the grounds so that the water coming off the roof went down a gradual slope to a drainage ditch," Bruening said.

Trees and plants of different heights and different colors were brought in to break up the broad side of the Deets building facing the highway. River birch, different varieties of maple, columnar oak, spruces, ninebark, buckthorn, sumac, spirea, red cherry and dwarf burning bushes were planted around the building. Landscaping rock was placed here and there. Decorative pots with plants were set near the entrances.

“We’re part of the south entrance to Norfolk. Our motivation is to make the consumer experience memorable which includes curb appeal,” Deets said.

The Tree Advisory Board presents the Green Leaf Award each year to one resident and one business with outstanding landscaping, ongoing maintenance, diversity of plantings and water management.

