Minnetrista adds green roofs

The Minnetrista gardeners, grounds department and myself unfortunately picked one of the hottest days of the year so far to install two new green roofs at Minnetrista — but we are happy to say that they are officially complete.

The first roof was installed over the center building's entryway arbor, opposite the current green roof. The second, more extensive roof installation, took place on the northeast side of the same building, facing the east lawn.

Green roofs do some really neat things for both the building in which they grow on and the surrounding environment. Green roofs do all of the following:

» Slow and manage stormwater runoff
» Reduce the energy demands of a building
» Add aesthetic appeal and wildlife habitat to an otherwise standard roof
» Extend a roof's life by preventing damaging sun rays from degrading its surfaces

The decision was made to expand Minnetrista's green roof project when the center building roof was in need of replacement. With funding provided by Vectren and Muncie Sanitary District, Minnetrista had the reason and means to move forward with the process.

The new roofs are a LiveRoof modular system. This system was chosen for its convenience and because it has been a success in the first Minnetrista green roof installation in 2008. At the time, this was the first green roof in Muncie.

The plant material in the modules are succulents, similar to the popular hens and chicks you might have in your garden. This plant material is chosen because it can survive intense heat and dry conditions that are inevitable on roofs, with little or no irrigation. And they still look good! I usually advocate the use of native plants, but in Minnetrista's case, native plants would require a deeper module that weighs more than the roof can support and would need more irrigation than succulents.

The most exciting part of this project, for me, is that you can come and see it for yourself! Interpretive signage is being installed throughout the small exhibit space, overlooking the green roof. This material will highlight all of the great ways our community is helping to manage stormwater runoff and reduce energy demands, while also asking you what steps you can take at home to do the same.

Come on by in the next few weeks and check it out!

Dustin Stillinger, an ISA certified arborist, is the horticulture manager at Minnetrista. He can be reached at (765) 287-3563 or dstillinger@minnetrista.net.