

This year's LCCC garden to celebrate solar eclipse

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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GODFREY - The 2017 design for the **Lewis and Clark Community College (LCCC)** gardens was revealed at a small gathering in the fifth floor of the **Math and Science Building** late last week.

This coming year's theme will be "**Solar Flair**." The theme was chosen to celebrate a complete solar eclipse taking place Aug. 21. The St. Louis area will be in an area of total coverage, meaning the moon will completely overtake the sun during the eclipse and create something known as the "Ring of Fire." Such an event has not been seen in St. Louis by any European explorers; it occurred in 1442. It is the first solar eclipse able to be viewed from North America since the 1990s.

To commemorate that event, LCCC worked with Terra Design Studios to create a garden with cosmic themes, such as the sun, moon, stars and planets. It is designated as a Signature Garden by the Missouri Botanical Gardens. The gardens will work in conjunction with an artist gallery set to be displayed in Hatheway Hall from Aug. 21-Sept. 22. LCCC Professor of Artistry and Culture Jim Price announced the celestial work of Chicago-based artist Michiko Itatani would be displayed to honor the theme of the gardens and the coming eclipse. He described her work as "celestial libraries" and "utopian mindscapes."

"She has a long history of exhibitions from Tokyo to Genevea," Price said. "Her work is very sought by collectors."

Rob Thompson of Terra Design Studios gave a presentation of the 10 different areas and themes of this year's gardens. The theme begins outside the Math and Science Building and continues throughout the college. Those sections are as follows:

1. Named after the Latin word for "sun," the Solis gardens will be around the Math and Science Building and will feature plants named in honor of the sun, including sunflowers.
2. The Sun's rays gardens will line the Trent Bridge and will be chosen based on their flowing colors. Thompson said reds, yellows and oranges will be picked.
3. A Planetary Pathway will take students on a path through the solar system. It will feature pavement indications of the planets in the solar system illustrating distances at a scale of one foot for every 4 million miles. It will feature plants with cosmic names.
4. A River of Color garden will feature plants with lunar names.
5. A geometrically-themed garden will feature two forms of sundials; an archaic one made famous in English Victorian gardens, and a more accurate one with pavement indications allowing passersby to act as the hands of a clock.
6. In the shady area outside Wade Memorial Hall, where the Madison County Transit bus stops and nearly a third of visitors to the college see, a permanent garden featuring shade-craving plants will be installed.
7. Stars of Navigation will be the theme of a garden near the Godfrey Bosque. The garden will showcase nine stars the Columbia expedition of Lewis and Clark using dark and light flowers to simulate the night sky.

8. Solar-powered plants will enshrine an area near the moving solar panels by Trimpe Hall. That garden will feature beloved edibles that seem to chase the sun by moving throughout the course of the day, such as sunflowers. Those plants are actually avoiding the sun's harmful UV rays, Thompson said. Those rays damage the genetic material in the plants' pollen.
9. Outside Hatheway Hall, a garden based on Itatani's Starry Nights series of paintings will be a living wall based on her color choices in those pieces.
10. At the entrance to the gallery is what Thompson described as "the party garden," which will be a garden full of plants only blooming in the late night or early morning hours, such as morning glories.

The gardens at LCCC have consistently had themes since Terra Design Studios began working with the college. In 2012, "Bold and Beautiful" contrasted tropical plants with local bulbs. The Menagerie in Bloom garden of 2013 featured a theme of plants named after animals, like lamb's ear, dragon's breath and tiger lilies. Beedazzled, the 2014 theme, celebrated the essential pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Garden of Eaten connected students with their stomachs in 2015, when the college was full of edible plants. Last year, LCCC and Terra Design studios celebrated the 150th anniversary of Lewis Carroll's "Through the Looking Glass" by comparing old and new styles of gardening.

LCCC President Dale Chapman, who introduced the reveal party, said the gardens are just one of many ways LCCC is celebrating its place in nature and the community. From the student lounge on the fifth floor, he proudly spoke of new pavement throughout the campus to prevent pollutants from running into nearby watersheds during heavy rains. He also spoke of the bioswales being planted around the college, which prevent runoff a step further using native plants.

Godfrey Mayor Mike McCormick, who was in attendance at the Thursday afternoon reveal, said the college's efforts are working.

"Whenever a visitor comes to my office, I tell them to take a drive through the campus before they leave," he said. "Their responses are always over the top."