

**America in Bloom
2014 EVALUATION FORM**



Participant: *Echo, Oregon*

Population Category: *Under 3,500*

Visiting Dates *July 14 & 15, 2014*

Judges: **Jack Clasen and Melanie Riggs**

America in Bloom envisions communities across the country as welcoming and vibrant places to live, work, and play – benefitting from colorful plants and trees; enjoying clean environments; celebrating heritage; and planting pride through volunteerism.

All judging criteria will be adjusted to the climate and environmental conditions of the participant’s location.

The judges’ report is based on efforts in management, planning, maintenance, improvement, and innovation of each of the following criteria:

Criteria	Actual Points	Possible Points
1. Floral Displays	137.00	175.00
2. Landscaped Areas	142.00	175.00
3. Urban Forestry	121.00	175.00
4. Environmental Efforts	132.00	175.00
5. Heritage Preservation	146.00	175.00
6. Overall Impression	98.00	125.00
Total	776.00	1000
%	77.6%	
Bloom Rating	4	

Five blooms = 85% Four blooms = 72.50–84.95% Three blooms = 60.00–72.45% Two blooms = 45.00–59.95%
One bloom = <45.00%

Participant representatives met: (including email)

Name: Diane Berry	Title: Town Administrator	Email: ecpl@centurytel.net
Name: Darin Tull	Title: Public Works Director	Email: ecpl@centurytel.net
Name: Richard Winter, PhD	Title: Mayor	Email: ecpl@centurytel.net

General Comments and Suggestions:

Suggestions are indicated in italics.

Congratulations to Echo for participating in America in Bloom for the eighth year. The city continues to shine and make improvements each year.

Echo is located in the arid section of eastern Oregon and receives about ten inches of rain per year. Everything is irrigated including farmlands and downtown plantings. The small population of 715 does not stop this community from dreaming big and implementing their plans with quality.

Few towns of any size continue to make improvements to their downtowns like Echo. New planters, a water feature, and artwork in planters have been added to dazzle residents and visitors alike. It is amazing that a Public Works Department consisting of two people can accomplish as much as they do. Bravo.

City Administrator Diane Berry is very good at researching various grant opportunities as well as seeking creative solutions such as using materials like coffins for planters. She certainly thinks globally and acts locally. The America in Bloom program in Echo is driven by the municipality with encouragement from the business community and a small group of volunteers who make a big impact. Financial donors to the AIB effort are recognized in the city newsletter.

Echo has a bright future and will continue to be a model for the rest of the country. Thank you for participating in America in Bloom and we look forward to seeing you next year. Keep up the excellent work.

1. Floral Displays Flower beds, containers, baskets, window boxes. Arrangement, originality, distribution, location, diversity, balance, harmony, quality of maintenance. Use and integration of annuals, perennials, ornamental grasses, bulbs, and seasonal flowers.	Max points	Actual Score
Municipal		
Leadership and plan of action for floral displays	20	19
Concept and design, variety of plantings, overall effect	20	18.5
Maintenance and quality of displays	20	18.5
Design for all seasons	15	11
Business		
Concept and design, overall effect	15	12
Maintenance and quality of displays	15	12
Residential		
Concept and design, overall effect	15	11
Maintenance and quality of displays	15	11
Community Involvement		
Volunteer involvement in design, planting, and maintenance of floral displays	20	12
Financial and in-kind contributions to floral displays	20	12
Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them)	175.00	137.00

Comments and suggestions:

The planters are top notch in Echo, Oregon. They are overflowing with colorful bright flowers; these planters demonstrate a superior use of good design. This wonderful display of flowering planters in the heart of Echo are planted and maintained by the staff of the city with Diane Berry as the driving force of this program to plant and maintain flowers throughout the city. The centerpiece of the flower boom is City Hall where hayrack planters and hanging baskets adorn the building overflowing with bright colorful annuals.

The team has thoughtfully and creatively placed floral displays throughout the city. Hanging baskets are on the new light posts; free standing planters with horse head motifs are along the main streets; in-ground planting beds with unique artifacts all provide welcoming festive spots of color. The flower plantings are well cared for and most are on automatic watering systems. There is a nice mix of perennials, annuals, bulbs, grasses, succulents and colorful foliage plants in all of the plantings.

The entry welcome gateways into the city have a beautiful old-fashioned logo with well-defined signage structure with a complimentary planting using interesting plants. *We suggest improving the plantings at these entry signs to have a more dramatic effect. Reduce the height of the planting at the Theilson and Main Streets so that the shrubs do not block the sign.*

We loved the horse theme on the planters, benches and the hitching posts that have been added throughout the town giving a unique feeling of sense of place. *A story about the horse theme should be displayed somewhere so visitors can get greater insight into the reason for the theme.*

A new 'galvanized' garden of plants in galvanized watering cans and containers has been added to the City Hall planting in addition to a raised bed vegetable garden where everyone is encouraged to harvest the produce. *These new planters should be put on an auto drip watering system.*

This space would benefit from the addition of benches. Perhaps the wooden benches could be refurbished and used in this location.

Put a sign on the vegetable garden to invite people to harvest.

The eight new round planters on Main Street make a dramatic addition to the streetscape. The large planters feature vintage bicycles as sculptures and modern wheat sculptures sited in them. They are excellent additions to the streetscape. The addition of annual flowers, perennials, and grasses adds a nice diversity of plant material that will display well throughout the season.

We encourage you to plan a spring planting. Pansies or cool weather vegetable crops like spinach and lettuce can be planted by the end of March, then harvested just before the annual flowers need to be planted. The vertical sides of these planters need to be improved. Currently the cement on the lower vertical walls is messy looking. Either remove the messy cement or blend it in.

We noticed a limited use of native species in the planters. *We suggest that some native species be used in some of the planters. We recommend partnering with the new greenhouse project at the high school and engaging them to explore learning about and using native plants in ornamental landscapes. This could be a good project to combine horticulture, natural sciences and the environmental ecology for one of the school horticulture projects. Perhaps a small native species demonstration garden could be sited on the school property.*

2. Landscaped Areas		
Overall design and suitability of landscape, turf and ground covers. Use of native plants. Overall design and suitability for location/use; good use of design principles (i.e., balance of plant material and constructed elements, harmony, color, texture, shape, etc.). Sustainability. Integration of hardscapes, lighting, site features, sculpture. Maintenance (weeds, mulching practices, edging); site rejuvenation and rehabilitation. Efforts in strategic planning. Community gardens, children's gardens, public gardens and zoos.	Max points	Actual Score
Municipal		
Overall design and planting of landscape, turf and groundcovers	15	13.5
Environmental management of sports fields and turf	15	12.5
Quality of landscape maintenance	15	13.5
Sustainable management, naturalization and eco-design	15	12
Business		
Overall design and planting of landscape	15	12.5
Environmental management of turf and groundcovers	10	8.5
Quality of landscape maintenance	15	12.5
Residential		
Overall design and planting of landscape	15	11
Environmental management of turf and groundcovers	15	11
Quality of landscape maintenance	15	12
Community Involvement		
Volunteer involvement in funding, planting, and maintenance of landscaped areas	15	11
Participation in future planning (committees, councils, and advisory boards.)	15	12
Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them)	175.00	142.00

Comments and suggestions:

The Echo Golf course is fortunate to have a dedicated garden enthusiast who designs, plants, weeds and waters. The blooming flowers raise the interest of golfers who want to know 'what's the name of that flower?' *It is suggested you label one bed of the plants so that visitors will know what the names of the plants are. Use old golf clubs for the labels; a fun unusual low budget label, marking them with either a sharpie marker or paint to write the name of the plant.*

Packets of flower seeds are given away at City Hall. *Perhaps a little printed information sheet could be given away with these packets so that people know where to plant the seeds and how to care for them. Also identify what seeds are in the packet.*

Many stately and beautifully landscaped homes in different neighborhoods display nice flowering beds using flowering annuals, roses and other landscape plants. We saw a variety of residential gardens of high standards including rose gardens displaying many different rose cultivars; pond gardens complete with a waterfall, fish and sculpture; vegetable gardens with compost bins and automatic irrigation systems. *It would be a great idea to get a grant or somehow to encourage some of the other neighborhoods to take*

more pride in their neighborhood by planting. Perhaps try to establish neighbor planting groups.

In lieu of looking at the environmental management of turf we focused on the agricultural farmlands. The agricultural landscape reflects a high-level and good environmental stewardship of the farmland. Vineyards are using beneficial insects to control many different vineyard insect pests and weeds. New crops such as peppermint are being grown to the highest quality standards. Organic fertilizers and mulches are being explored and used. The round irrigation set-ups have their spray heads mounted under the equipment so as to conserve water.

We commend the farmers in the Echo area and encourage them to explore new and more perennial crops that can be grown. Also consider small fruit crops, herbal and medicinal plant crops.

George Park, in the middle of downtown, is a welcoming park established and maintained by the city. It is a green garden oasis-bursting full of shade producing trees, interesting shrubs and perennials.

As garden projects expand, finding ways to reduce the maintenance required should be high on the city of Echo's to do list. One way to decrease the requirement of annual mulching is to plant low maintenance durable ground covers. *Some of the plants in George Park have gotten a little overgrown. Try to establish a once a year volunteer effort of pruning in the park and whenever additional plants are added make sure that they are slow growers that do not need a lot of pruning.*

Have the student participate in a "done in a day" yard makeover for the resident(s). Have a service club or the Quarterback Club purchase the plants for the makeover.

3. Urban Forestry Distribution, variety and suitability of trees; new plantings; urban tree program; qualified personnel or access to trained individual(s); inventory or database; frequency of tree surveys; care and maintenance programs; preservation of heritage trees and woodlots; scheduled succession plantings. Efforts in management, planning, maintenance, improvement, and innovation. Written policies, by-laws and regulations, long and short term plans.	Max points	Actual Score
Municipal		
Overall plan of action, tree planting programs, variety of species, inventory	20	16
Tree maintenance	15	12
Preservation and restoration of natural areas	15	10
Tree protection/planting regulations and by-laws	15	13
Business		
Overall planting program	20	13
Tree maintenance	15	8
Residential		
Overall planting program	20	15
Tree maintenance	15	10
Community Involvement		
Volunteer involvement in funding, planting, and maintenance of trees	20	12
Volunteer involvement of youth in tree programs (i.e., Arbor Day, etc.)	20	12
Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them)	175.00	121.00

Comments and suggestions:

Tree planting is an ongoing force of the Echo in Bloom program. It is wonderful to experience the green leaves of trees that soften and cool the village in this native prairie vegetative type where trees are few in the natural landscape. A thoughtful core of residents with Diane Berry at the forefront of the tree loving citizens wants to see trees for future generations. New trees are being planted along city streets, parks and in the Echo Cemetery.

Trees are treasured at the historic Echo Cemetery where beautiful mature evergreen trees welcome visitors to this marvelous site. Over a dozen new deciduous trees have been added this year using a larger size tree; replacing older trees that had to be removed. *We recommend that new trees be added to the cemetery on an ongoing basis. Encourage families of loved ones buried at the cemetery to donate a tree or give money to a tree fund for the cemetery.*

The lush green trees along Theilson Street are a welcome refreshing contrast after driving along the beautiful hillsides filled with prairie vegetation. We like the use of many different species planted here. *We recommend a regular maintenance tree-pruning program be established before the trees become larger.*

George Park is an oasis with tall majestic trees and smaller growing species in this public space adjacent to city hall. *The trees here need to have the dead wood removed as it can be hazardous and all the trees should be limbed up so that a tall person can walk under the tree canopy.*

The newly planted columnar hornbeam trees that line Main Street are a great addition to the visual appeal of the town. The columnar hornbeam trees which are recommended as street trees were chosen because their naturally narrow profile will allow the historic buildings sited on the street to be seen. The trees have a nice dense winter profile. *Limbing up these hornbeam trees will be an ongoing project with the first pruning needed within the next year.*

What a unique way to celebrate Arbor Day this year. It was exciting for the students using seven stations with tree related activities to bring awareness about trees to everyone. *We would like to see a tree/ sapling prize awarded at this celebration. We recommend a tree planting at the Echo school for each graduating class.*

The Echo Arboretum is a gem. It is an outstanding collection of trees featuring an enormous variety of valuable ornamental specimens where residents can come to view mature trees of many different cultivars or just spend the day wandering among beautiful trees. *Pruning at the arboretum should focus upon shaping the trees that are being overcrowded so they don't become misshapen. A new labeling technique needs to be installed. Consider adding a column to the newsletter about one tree in the arboretum each month.*

4. Environmental Efforts	Max Points	Actual Score
Sustainability practices. Recycling (paper, glass, metal, plastic, electronics, etc.), policies and by-laws, sustainable development strategies, waste reduction, hazardous waste minimization and collection (oil, paint, chemicals, used batteries, etc.), water quality and conservation, energy conservation, environmental cleanup activities, reducing carbon footprint, environmentally friendly transportation, LEED certification, air, noise and light pollution, rain gardens and rain barrels, composting, energy efficiency, youth programs, etc. Events such as Earth Day, Recycling Days, Bike to Work Days, etc.		
Municipal		
Leadership in environmental initiatives	25	20
Effective communication of environmental strategies and initiatives	25	20
New programs, improvement and innovation	25	19
Business		
Participation in environmental efforts	20	15
New programs, improvement and innovation	10	8
Residential		
Participation in environmental efforts	20	14
New programs, improvement and innovation	10	6
Community Involvement		
Volunteer involvement in environmental efforts	20	15
Youth participation in environmental activities	20	15
Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them)	175.00	132.00

Comments and suggestions:

Echo has many environmental initiatives, from a puncture vine bounty to reuse of building materials to good communication with residents with helpful information. “Kill a Watt” energy use monitors can be checked out of the library for greater awareness of energy use. The golf course is increasing the size of the rough to reduce mowing.

The area receives very little rainfall so everything planted needs to be irrigated. The city has been aggressive in their use of drip irrigation. Less water is used and the plantings all look great.

There is a nice rain garden across from the high school. *Consider expanding the size of the garden area to reduce mowing, save fuel and reduce the need for irrigation.*

The rain garden mentioned above could have signage explaining what a rain garden is and why it is important.

Curb cuts on Thielsen Street allow storm water to run across the sidewalk to the tree row where it is slowly absorbed in the ground rather than flowing into the sewer drains.

City Hall and the Public Library recycle cardboard and newspaper. *Encourage businesses to recycle cardboard by bringing it to the recycling center in the middle of town.*

Challenge the residents to increase their recycling rate. *Publish the current rate in the local paper and set a*

higher goal for 2015.

Young people who learn about recycling in school are more likely to continue their awareness and support for environmental initiatives. Students develop lifelong habits in elementary school. *Have the teachers coordinate a curriculum which includes recycling in each grade.*

Many teachers report that fifth graders are the most receptive to new ideas and behaviors such as recycling. *Consider developing a school recycling program headed by fifth grade students. They could collect cans in the cafeteria and increase their goal each month during the year.*

5. Heritage Preservation	Max Points	Actual Score
Historical, natural, agricultural, and cultural heritage. Preservation and restoration of buildings, homes, churches, cemeteries; heritage sites and/or monuments; heritage parks, historical gardens and heritage trees; artifacts; historical society; heritage advisory committee, museums, archives, history books, and interpretative programs; ordinances and policies. Resource availability. Farmers markets, festivals and parades.		
Municipal		
Leadership in preservation and restoration initiatives	25	22
Legal protection of heritage sites	25	22
Resource availability for preservation and restoration	25	21
Business		
Conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of properties	15	13
Participation in and support of heritage/cultural activities	15	13
Residential		
Conservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of properties	15	12.5
Participation in and support of heritage/cultural activities	15	12
Community Involvement		
Volunteer involvement in cultural, historical, and natural heritage activities	20	16
Youth involvement in heritage activities	20	14.5
Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them)	175.00	146.00

Comments and suggestions:

The city has a museum plus the Fort Henrietta Park as major historic sites. The Fort has excellent interpretive signage. Local buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places as well. Over half of the buildings in downtown were built in 1920 or before. *Consider developing a “Century” building program now and begin the process of developing plaques for owners who want the designation. Place the year built and the original purpose of the building on the plaque.*

Echo is working toward the Oregon Heritage All Star Community designation.

The new concept of creating heritage learning stations for student groups is exciting and should be continued if possible.

Lloyd and Lois Piercy have renovated five of the historic buildings on Main Street to maintain the historic nature of Echo. They do an excellent job of reusing original materials and construction design as well as tastefully incorporating imported historic items into the overall design. They have long range plans to bring tourism to Echo with wine tasting of the excellent wines they produce in the area.

The Echo Museum has a trust so money is not an issue. Of greater concern is staffing the facility and developing an inventory of their artifacts. *Consider having a group of volunteers charged with deciding what should be kept and what might be de-accessioned. Also, go through the collection of photos and see if the*

Piercy's would like to use some photos in their wine tasting shop, new Bed and Breakfast they are currently renovating, or in another location they own in downtown.

6. Overall Impression Cleanliness, lack of litter and graffiti. Maintenance of public open spaces, medians and boulevard strips, streets, sidewalks, walking and biking trails, curbs, ditches, road shoulders, unattended and vacant lots, buildings, garbage receptacles; lack of weeds, dog waste policies and receptacles, notices/posters appropriately displayed, vandalism not evident. Maintenance of the hardscape: walls, lamp posts, benches, playgrounds, etc. Appropriate use and placement of graphic elements such as banners, signs and murals.	Max points	Actual Score
Municipal		
Overall cleanliness	10	8
Maintenance of public roads and shoulders	10	8
Condition of public buildings and properties	10	8.5
Impact of graphic elements - banners, signs, murals, etc.	10	8
Business		
Overall cleanliness	20	16
Condition of buildings and properties	20	16
Residential		
Overall cleanliness	10	6.5
Condition of buildings and properties	10	6.5
Community Involvement		
Participation in clean up efforts, adopt-a-spot, annual cleanup days, etc.	15	12.5
Recognition of volunteer efforts	10	8
Total (the fields automatically calculate – do not type in them)	125.00	98.00

Comments and suggestions:

The city is very clean with attractive entrance signs and a small park full of antique farm equipment. There is no graffiti or vandalism evident. The entrance signs give Echo “a sense of place” and are unique to the city.

The city recognizes volunteers and donors to America in Bloom in the city newsletter. Their support is greatly appreciated.

The city recognizes winners of the garden contest with plaques for the winners each year which hang in the hallway as you enter city hall.

The students have an annual service day where they usually collect trash and litter around town. *Consider selecting the home of a senior citizen who has difficulty getting outside to take care of his/her/their yard. Select a senior on a very tight budget who needs repairs such as a deck or rail that needs repair or a house in need of a fresh coat of paint. Have adult volunteers do this during the student’s annual service day. The result will be a sense of community that is rare but very fulfilling for everyone involved.*

Clean up week is an annual event in the beginning of April allowing residents to haul up to 454 pounds per load to the transfer station.

Way finding signs are especially important in towns that are promoting tourism. *Conduct a thorough evaluation of the current signs and develop a ten year plan for making needed changes.*

Fort Henrietta is a well done historic destination but the visitor needs a guide to realize the full extent of the grounds. *Way finding signs should encourage visitors to go to City Hall to obtain the brochure for Fort Henrietta or a kiosk with brochures should be set up at the site so visitors can see it when they approach the park. The judges were not aware of the extent of the facility when they toured it and would have missed much of it without a guide.*

Bright LED lights are being used more and more in advertising signs. These can be a distraction and look out of place in a community such as Echo. *Develop an ordinance to ban LED lights before the need for an ordinance arises.*

Checklist for Judges and Participants:

Yes	No	N/A	
X			Were the judges given a community profile, itinerary, and map prior to their arrival?
X			Did the itinerary provide for seeing a representative cross-section of the participant?
X			Were the guides knowledgeable about the participant and horticultural aspects?
X			Were the judges able to modify the schedule if needed?
X			Did the judges meet with the media?
X			Did the judges meet with municipal leaders?
	X		Were the judges asked to give presentations?
X			Were the judges able to meet with and talk to volunteers?
X			Was enough time allotted to complete the evaluation form in a quiet place?

Comments:

DEFINITIONS

Municipal: City hall and other municipal properties, parks and open spaces, roads, roadsides, sidewalks, cemeteries, schools and sports facilities, empty lots and brownfields, libraries, hospitals, assisted living, churches, universities, and colleges

Business: Commercial and industrial sectors, shopping centers, stores, office buildings, restaurants, mixed use developments, service stations, railway and bus stations, plant nurseries/garden centers

Residential: Single family residences, condominiums, town houses, planned communities, apartment buildings, gated communities, manufactured home communities, trailer parks, residential developments, neighborhoods, graduated care facilities

Community Involvement: Volunteer efforts by individuals, clubs, youth groups, church groups, civic organizations, and social clubs for community enhancement



2014 Special Mention

Participant: Echo, Oregon

General description of the recognized criterion (200 words max)

Floral Displays

The planters are top notch in Echo, Oregon. They are overflowing with colorful bright flowers, and these planters demonstrate a superior use of good design. While Diane Berry is the driving force of this program to plant and maintain flowers throughout the city they are planted and maintained by city staff.

The centerpiece of the flower 'boom' in this town of Echo is City Hall where hayrack planters and hanging baskets adorn the building and are all overflowing with bright colorful annuals. They have also thoughtfully and creatively placed floral displays throughout the city. Hanging baskets are on the new light posts; free standing planters with horse head motifs rein along the main streets; in-ground planting beds with unique artifacts all provide a welcoming festive spot of color. This year art was added to the planters. Eight 20" square custom planters were created for the downtown by artist Chris Huffman. Echo's planters are top notch.

Special Project or Initiative (50 words max) -- Downtown Art

The city is beginning a new project to incorporate more artwork in downtown. They are off to a good start with the incorporation of art objects in some of the downtown planters. This project is sure to blossom just as other initiatives have been successful in the recent past.

America in Bloom ... Planting Pride in Our Communities
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