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The magazine of
the Mizzou Alumni Association

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Alumni Profile

A career in full flower

Bill Ruppert has a mission. “I was born to plant flowers,” he says unabashedly. It seems that Ruppert, BS Ag ’80, also was born to design flower beds and orchestrate massive plantings of flowers where he sees a need. Since 2004, he has worked with several St.

Louis groups to organize landscape enhancement efforts downtown along Washington Avenue, Tucker Boulevard, Market Street and in Kiener Plaza.

Ruppert is also a natural at leading plant-related groups. He owns the St. Louis office of National Nursery Products, a plant wholesaler; is past-president of the Landscape and Nurserymen’s Association of Greater St. Louis; and is a leader in Gateway Greening, a nonprofit organization that fosters community development through gardening.

For his work downtown, Ruppert coined himself a title. “I’m the horticultural choreographer. I handle planting, design, recipes for soil improvement, and I procure and manage delivery of all plants,” he says. During the Market Street project, Ruppert arrived at 6 a.m. along with the delivery trucks containing 10,000 custom-grown plants for the 700-foot median. For two days, he worked with team leaders to execute the planting section by section.




In spring 2006, Ruppert’s design included an unusual plant: a 3-foot-tall Mexican petunia with large purple flowers. “Hummingbirds love the tubular flowers. We actually attracted butterflies and hummingbirds in Kiener Plaza because we created the right environment,” Ruppert says.

The two-legged fauna responded, as well, Ruppert says. “The Market Street median used to be a mulched island with honey locust trees. A few people went there to enjoy the shade, but there was no other reason to stop. Now when you cross Market Street, you see people pointing and discussing the plants. They never would have noticed that space before.”

bill ruppert

As a student at MU, Bill Ruppert helped construct the Woodland and Floral Gardens. Now, he is helping enhance the urban center of St. Louis by planting flowers. Photo by Tim Parker.

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*Published by MIZZOU magazine, 109 Reynolds Alumni Center, Columbia, MO 65211 | Phone: 573-882-5916
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Last updated: Feb. 15, 2013