

## Michael Daniel – Brooks Landscape

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

What do you see when you scan the landscape? It could be a virtual scan, or it might be actual trees, grass, woody plants and flowers. Today we will learn about a rural Kansas company which is working daily to improve the landscape. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Michael Daniel is owner of Brooks Landscape LLC and its retail store, Brookscape Gardens. Michael was born into a military family that traveled the country. When he was 12, his folks settled near Inman, Kansas. After service in the Navy, Michael took a position with the public utility in McPherson. At church, he met and ultimately married Arlene, who had grown up on a farm near Mullinville. She works at the refinery in McPherson and helps at the family business.

Michael and Arlene have four children. In 1997, he started a landscaping business on the side. It began with lawn mowing but developed into an outdoor design and improvement business. "My husband has a vision for these things," Arlene said. "He can visualize the finished product." Using an old family name, they called the business Brooks Landscape. They were storing materials at a shop in town.

One day Michael noticed a farm for sale along old Highway 81 south of McPherson. "I had driven by this place when I was a kid," Michael said. He realized it could be a place to store their equipment, and maybe even become a retail outlet. "We were buying plants anyway," Arlene said. "We figured we could let people come out here and pick out their own." In 2004, they bought the place, which included an abandoned farmstead.

"It was a total mess," Arlene said. "We took several years to clean it up." They chopped weeds, planted trees, and repaired buildings.

In 2007, Michael retired from the utility company and went full-time with Brooks Landscape. After years of work, he and Arlene opened their retail outlet on the farm in 2012. It is called Brookscape Gardens.

Today, an attractive native stone sign surrounded by pretty plants is displayed along old Highway 81 at the Brookscape Gardens entrance. The gardens display a wide variety of beautiful plantings. The old garage is now a retail store. The dairy barn has been converted into an office.

"We wanted to create a special place," Michael said. A beautiful wooden pergola has been constructed along with attractive stone patio work. The old silo now has buckets from a grain elevator hung along the side, with pretty flowers growing in them. This old farmstead never looked so good.

Michael and Arlene's two older sons went to K-State, and the youngest son is in high school. Their daughter Abigail became a nurse. When she got married, the site she chose was Brookscape Gardens.

Michael and Arlene continue to upgrade the location. They have acquired a former railroad baggage building which stands nearby. They plan to move it in and repair and repaint it to be a sandwich and coffee shop. Longer term plans could include a pond and an amphitheater.

The store is open from March until just before Christmas. Of course, products will change with the season. Last year Michael and one son drove to North Carolina so as to pick up the freshest Christmas trees.

Brookscape Gardens is located between McPherson and Moundridge at the rural community of Elyria. Elyria is an unincorporated community with an estimated population of 24 people. Now, that's rural.

Michael and Arlene are proud of their state. "We love Kansas," Michael said. "Kansas is awesome. We've met people who moved here from both east and west coasts and now call Kansas home; they think this is the greatest. It's the gentleness of the landscape and its people who make it special," he said.

For more information, go to [www.brookscape.com](http://www.brookscape.com).

What do you see when you scan this landscape? I see pretty flowers, shady trees, and attractive wood and stone accents. Beyond that, I see hardworking Kansans who care about their state and are enhancing their community. We commend Michael and Arlene Daniel of Brooks Landscaping and Brookscape Gardens who are making this attractive landscape even better.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.