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'Rain Stones' becomes new Bayer Plant Science Building centerpiece sculpture

Texas Tech University System's Public Art Committee selected **Rebecca Thompson** as the commissioned artist for the Bayer Plant Science Building. The sculpture, called "Rain Stones," is made from Texas sandstone and incorporates bronze elements.

The art piece located at the center of the building's new courtyard is described as "an interactive experience designed to integrate with the courtyard space while highlighting the importance of our Earth's natural resources." **Emily Wilkinson**, Texas Tech's Public Art Manager, said visitors are encouraged to walk between the sculptures through the courtyard path and view the ancient past of soil that is revealed on the west face.

During a rain event, the art piece's bronze waterway will direct water to the handmade bronze bowl, which then flows to the landscape nearby. This is a meditative reminder of sustainability, erosion, and the important event of rain, she said. Primary Texas crops are illustrated on the bronze relief, including cotton, sorghum, sunflowers, and grapes.

Separately, the new Bayer Plant Science building includes a Spanish Renaissance garden enclosed by an arcade, said **Cynthia McKenney**, Tech's Rockwell Endowed Professor of Horticulture in Plant and Soil Science. The garden draws inspiration from the new addition's architecture, and includes several environmentally appropriate features to demonstrate how to construct a garden that conserves water.

"The garden elements include a shady esplanade inviting you to enter the garden itself," she said. "The interior garden has a dry stream bed lined with river cobble stone to catch and carry water." The beds in the garden are designed to be rain gardens, and are planted with drought tolerant grasses, shrubs, and forbes. Included in the central area is a

masonry seating wall, allowing students to congregate. This area could also serve as a classroom or area for a departmental function when weather permits.

Eric Hequet, chairman of Tech's Department of Plant and Soil Science, said the Bayer Plant Science Building project adds 21,122 square feet of new construction, and includes 2,440 square feet of renovation and exterior upgrades to the existing home of the university's Department of Plant and Soil Science. The building project is funded by donations to Texas Tech, including lead contributions from Bayer CropScience.

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