

# THE GARDENS ON SPRING CREEK 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



**THE GARDENS**  
ON SPRING CREEK

City of  
**Fort Collins**





## OUR VISION

To enrich the lives of people and foster environmental stewardship through horticulture.

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## OUR MISSION

To be a world-class botanic garden that is community oriented, educational, experiential and sustainable.

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **KIM MANAJEK**

2023 was a year of growth and opportunity at The Gardens on Spring Creek. As the new Executive Director, starting my tenure in April, I have been overwhelmed by the gracious welcome I received from staff, members, donors, and the community! I am also incredibly proud of the work we have done over this time of transition, from expanding our Gardens for All accessibility programming to the amazing amount of work completed on our plant inventory.

Just this year, we welcomed visitors from nearly every state and 297 Colorado zip codes! What a thrill to watch locals and tourists alike, exploring the beauty and tranquility that our grounds provide. Through our education, our community events, and our community partnerships, we are continuing to be a place that people can find connection to the natural world and to each other.

While we reflect on what 2023 has been, we also look to the future and how we can grow. Thank you for being a part of our journey!

*Kim Manajek*

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# PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

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## GARDENS FOR ALL

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Gardens for All is a multifaceted equity and access program to ensure everyone in our community has access to the benefits and experiences available at the Gardens on Spring Creek. Gardens for All is grant and donor funded, with significant support provided by the City of Fort Collins through the American Rescue Plan Act through 2024.

2023 was an incredible year of growth for Gardens for All. We increased our Library Memberships from 4 to 7, launched our Membership Scholarship program and deepened our relationships within our diverse community. We successfully hosted the Latiné-Hispanic Heritage Celebration and initiated conversations with Indigenous Peoples to host a garden plot onsite at The Gardens on Spring Creek.

2023 also saw growth within our Education Team as we hired a Community Engagement Assistant to help build bridges between The Gardens and the Spanish speaking community.

In 2023 we saw growth in all of our Gardens for All programs, providing free or reduced access to The Gardens for 5,273 community members in need.

## ADMISSION PROGRAMS

**Ability Pass:** For disabled visitors who require caregivers, there is a \$3 admission for clients, and caregivers are admitted free. In 2023, we provided 377 discounted visits.

**SNAP Pass:** 454 community members who qualify for SNAP benefits visited during the day and during Pumpkins on Parade and Garden of Lights for \$1 admission.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

We provided \$19,210 in scholarships for 764 participants, a 165% increase from 2022. Scholarships are for youth education programming and school field trips.

## HORTICULTURE

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2023 was another busy year for horticulture at the Gardens. The talented and expert staff continued to manage our 12 acres of gardens. Curatorial staff also marked over half the grounds with plant identification signage, with the remainder on the way for 2024 installation. The team also succeeded in conducting plant inventories in half of the existing gardens on site, which significantly enhances the value of our plant records.

Our annual Spring Plant Sale remained in high demand, with over 34,000 plants moving out the door and into local gardens. Among these were 21,280 organically grown veggies and 12,336 perennials grown right here at The Gardens.

Later in the season, our own Prairie Garden was the honored subject of a Digging Deeper program, brought to Fort Collins by the nationwide Garden Conservancy. Nearby, horticulture staff also began installation of a new garden on our site between our Undaunted and Prairie Gardens, made possible by donor funding.

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## EDUCATION

The Gardens on Spring Creek's educational programming strives to deepen connections between Northern Colorado and their cultivated ecosystems to foster community, improve health and inspire stewardship.

2023 was a banner year for our education programming. We saw the return of Family Programming, which had been on hold since early 2021. We expanded our Summer Camp offerings from two groups per week to three and offered a specialized Allergy Aware Cooking Camp. We formalized our Career and Service-Learning Tour, engaging with 190 students during 12 different tours. In total, The Gardens education programs taught 9,346 students of all ages and garnered \$148,395 in gross revenue.

- **Youth Programs:** \$100,487 in revenue and 6,776 participants
- **Adult Programs:** \$45,834 in revenue and 2,570 participants

### PROJECT HORT: A Teen Volunteering Experience

Project Hort, short for horticulture, is a full summer stewardship and volunteer program for teens entering seventh through 12th grade who are passionate about gardening, plants, animals or the environment. Generously supported by OtterCares, this program provides participants opportunities to make new friends, practice professional skills while volunteering and learn all about philanthropy while designing, writing grants and implementing a community impact project.

In 2023, 20 local teens from 11 different schools volunteered over 2,702.25 hours collectively. Participants in the program impacted our community through planting a new garden, hosting a new garden animals themed event, coordinating a mental health class, and creating a new activity backpack for families to use while exploring The Gardens. Teens reported an increased belief in their ability to make a difference, growth in their openness to others' points of view, and growth in their connection to their community.

“*Project Hort provided the opportunity for our teen to serve and work on projects as a team member and a leader. He learned time management skills and the value of service learning in a fun, nurturing yet professional environment.*”

- Project Hort Parent





## VOLUNTEERS

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Volunteers are a gift to our organization. Without their support, we would be unable to provide the caliber of gardens, education, programming, and guest experience that we offer.

### VOLUNTEERS

2023 was an incredibly successful year for volunteer engagement. Over 13,500 hours were logged from individuals and groups. 563 individuals and 465 corporate and community group volunteers gave of their time to help The Gardens grow!

### INTERNS

In 2021, we received a Larimer County Workforce Innovation Grant to launch a comprehensive paid internship program. Through this grant, totaling just under \$150,000, The Gardens is offering up to 26 paid internships through 2024.

Larimer County Economic & Workforce Development awarded over \$1.6 million in **competitive grants** to help fund impactful solutions to the region's biggest workforce challenges, focusing on employment, training, and skills development.

This year, we hosted 16 paid interns across our Education, Events and Horticulture teams. The internships are open to college students and to adults looking to diversify or improve job skills.

The **Workforce Innovation Grant** is a collaboration between the Colorado Workforce Development Council, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, Larimer County, Larimer County Workforce Development Board, and Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development.

This City of Fort Collins Internship program is being 100% funded in the amount of \$149,559 by federal award number SLFRF0126, awarded to the State of Colorado by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

## PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EVENTS

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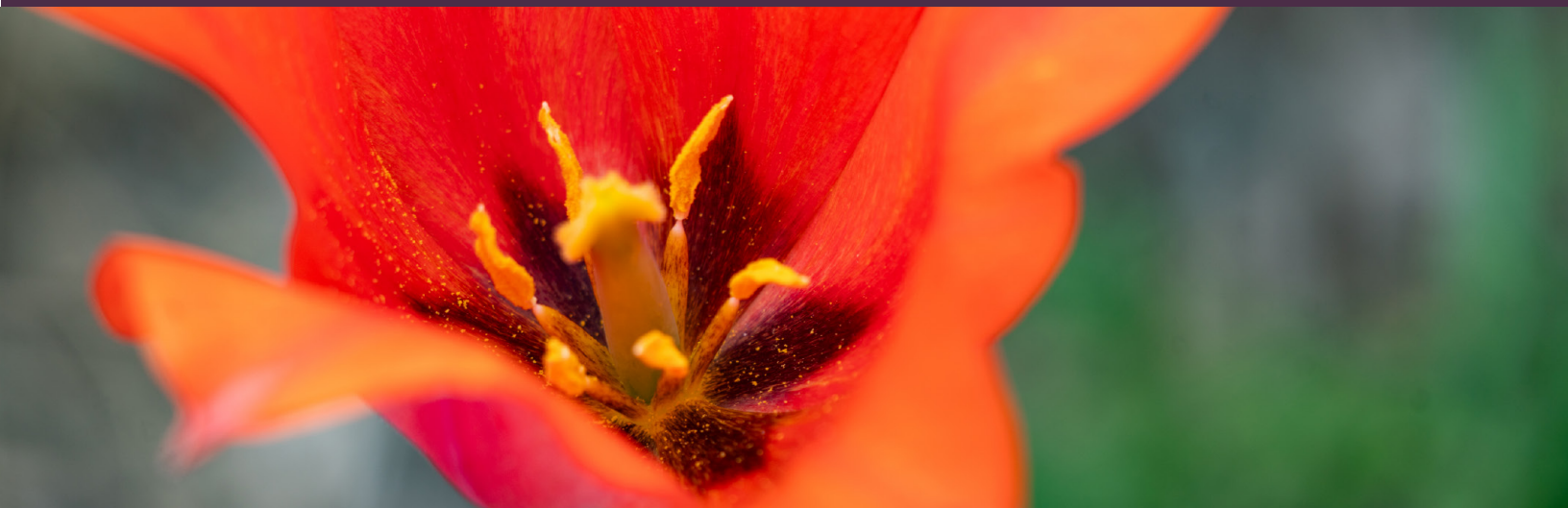
Our beautiful botanic gardens continue to provide our community with an abundance of engaging public and private event opportunities while raising critical operational funds. During the past year, The Gardens hosted a wide variety of public and private events, including several multi-day public event series, fundraisers supporting our non-profit partner, and dozens of private rentals. We saw 117 event days, welcomed 43,732 event attendees, and brought in a total of \$657,500 in revenue and \$510,062 in net revenue.

# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The strength of The Gardens stands solidly with our active partners in the community.

**Non-Profit Partners:** The Gardens partners with local organizations serving community members experiencing hardship to provide passes to the Gardens and Garden of Lights. This year we worked with our community partners to provide 883 passes to the event.

**Library Passes:** Select libraries offer check-out day passes to The Gardens. Anyone with a library card can check out a family pass for regular daytime admission to The Gardens. In 2023 we increased our library passes from three to seven!



## We are proud to have partnered with the following organizations in the implementation of these programs:

Best Buddies	Loveland Library
CARE Housing	Partners (powered by Partners)
CASA of Larimer County	Poudre School District Early Childhood Education
ChildSafe	Riverside Library and Cultural Center
Dementia Together	Partners (Our House Inc.)
Foothills Gateway	Poudre River Public Library District
Foster & Adoptive Families of Larimer County	Poudre School District
Glenn A Jones MD Memorial Library	Respite Care
Housing Catalyst	SummitStone
La Familia	The Arc of Larimer Co
Larimer County Benefits and Community Support Division, Department of Human Services	The Jacob Center
Matthews House	Thompson Valley School District
Boys and Girls Club	VA Peer Support
Longmont Public Library	Wellington Public Library



# CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION SUPPORT

The Gardens on Spring Creek and the Friends of the Gardens Board are grateful to the many local businesses and foundations that provide in-kind services and cash donations to our organization. Their support is critical to the success of our horticulture and education programs and community events.

Many thanks to our 2023 supporters.

## PROPAGATION PARTNERS

Fort Collins Nursery  
Fossil Creek Nursery  
Nutrien  
Rodahl and Co. CPAs  
Valpak  
Zak George Landscaping

## CORPORATE MEMBERS

Blue Federal Credit Union  
Blue Spruce Horticulture  
Hadfield, Stieben & Doutt  
Madwire  
The Mantooth Company  
Odell Brewing Company  
Northern Water Conservancy  
SummitStone Health Partners  
Trozan Insurance Agency

## EVENT SPONSORS

Ace Hardware of Fort Collins  
Alpine Gardens  
Blue Spruce Horticulture  
Bohemian Foundation  
Colorado Allergy & Asthma  
Dellenbach Cadillac  
Ed Carroll Motor Company  
Ent Credit Union  
Fiona's Deli  
Fish's Liquor Mart  
Fort Collins Nursery  
Fossil Creek Nursery  
Lindgren Landscape  
Mountain Valley Bank  
Nature in the City  
Northern Water Conservancy  
Odell Brewing Company  
People and Pollinators  
Plant Select  
Poudre Pet & Feed Supply  
Rainbird  
Rocky Mountain Ace Stores  
Savory Spice Shop  
Soukup, Bush & Associates  
The Women's Clinic  
Trozan Insurance  
Windsor Gardener  
Zak George Landscaping

## GRANTORS

Bohemian Foundation  
Fort Fund  
OtterCares Foundation

## MEDIA PARTNERS

KUNC  
North Forty News  
Rocky Mountain Publishing



# MEMBERSHIP AND FUNDRAISING

## GARDENS FUNDRAISING AND DEVELOPMENT

Gardens' operations are supported in-part by the generosity of individuals in this community. Over the past year, we received philanthropic funding from the following sources:

- \$25,610 gift of appreciated stock to support community gardening and the Undaunted Garden
- \$25,000 gift to support the Cactus Garden and horticulture operations
- \$51,400 in total gifts to our year-end appeal

In 2023, The Gardens and The Friends received more than \$130,000 in philanthropic support from 152 donations.

**GARDEN A'FARE** At the 11th hour, we had to scramble to protect Garden a'Fare from the remnants of a Pacific hurricane that drifted over the Front Range. Despite that very odd weather phenomenon, Garden a'Fare completely sold out for a second consecutive year and raised more than \$57,000.

Garden a'Fare supports Friends of The Gardens on Spring Creek, whose mission is to support The Gardens through fundraising and advocacy.

**MEMBERSHIP** Friends of The Gardens on Spring Creek have offered annual memberships to The Gardens since 2007. 2023 was a watershed year for membership as more than 3,000 individuals and families purchased memberships, resulting in revenues of more than \$250,000. Membership supports operations at The Gardens on Spring Creek and enables The Friends of donate more than 150 memberships to families enrolled in Early Childhood Education in the Poudre and Thompson School Districts.

**CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT** The Gardens and The Friends engage the local business community through three distinct engagement opportunities: Propagation Partners, Event Sponsors, and Corporate Membership. Each program presents companies with unique benefits designed to meet their strategic business objectives.

## WITH GRATITUDE:

The Gardens would not be where we are today without The Friends of the Gardens on Spring Creek. The Friends is the non-profit (501c3) that supports the Gardens on Spring Creek, a City of Fort Collins Cultural Services facility. The Friends is a member-based organization led by a volunteer Board of Directors. Its mission is to cultivate a world-class botanic garden through fundraising and advocacy. In 2023 they made a significant contribution to the success of The Gardens on Spring Creek.

## REVENUE

- City of Fort Collins | 1,015,941
- Earned Revenue | \$1,037,420
- Contributed Revenue | \$525,760\*

\* Includes \$150,000 Friends of The Gardens on Spring Creek contribution from membership revenue.





# BY THE NUMBERS

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## HORTICULTURE

- Grew 4,110 herbs, 3,031 annuals, 12,336 perennials, and 21,280 vegetables for the Annual Plant Sale
- Lit up The Gardens for our annual Garden of Lights celebration with over 1,300 light strands and 100,000 light bulbs

## COMMUNITY GARDEN OUTREACH PROGRAM

- 5,713 pounds of produce grown in Garden of Eatin' donated to Food Bank for Larimer County
- 58,545 pounds of produce donated to Food Bank through the Plant it Forward program
- 2,393 pounds of produce dropped off at The Gardens for the Plant it Forward program
- 167 in-ground plots & 4 raised beds rented to community members through the Community Gardens program
- 700 volunteer hours contributed by community gardeners to maintain the gardens
- At the close of the community garden season there were 82 people on the waitlist
- Three incredible partners: Food Bank for Larimer County, The Vegetable Connection and ARO Senior Group

## BUTTERFLY HOUSE

- 11,527 butterflies flew through the Butterfly House
- 42 different species represented
- 3 butterfly suppliers
- 119 days longest lived butterfly was a Julia longwing (*Dryas iulia*)
- 684 butterflies tagged & released as a part of our longevity study
- 27,847 guests to the Butterfly House

## PUBLIC EVENTS

- 31 event days
- 41,028 event attendees
- \$608,766 revenue raised
- 34,901 plants sold at Spring Plant Sale
- 6 sold-out concerts held, with 9,000 tickets sold total
- 431 tickets sold to Garden a'Fare
- 5,935 tickets sold to Pumpkins on Parade
- 22,232 tickets sold to Garden of Lights

## PRIVATE EVENTS

- 86 private events held
- 2,704 guests at private events



## EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- 2,396 students served via school tours
- 2,728 Read & Seed participants
- 169 families served through Summer Camp programs
- 2,570 adult students learning onsite and virtual
- 155 Girl Scouts earned their badges at our annual Girl Scout Day

## MEMBERSHIP

- 4 member mornings held with 293 attendees
- 3,087 memberships sold
- \$252,222 membership revenue
- 62.2% renewal rate

## DEVELOPMENT

- \$137,910 from Propagation Partners and Event Sponsors
- \$135,667 grants awarded
- \$48,910 in Annual Campaign + CO Gives Day gifts

## VOLUNTEERS

- 563 individual volunteers
- 465 corporate and community group volunteers
- 13,550 total hours contributed
  - 11,673 ongoing volunteer hours
  - 715 one-time volunteer hours
  - 1,162 corporate/community group volunteer hours

## GIFT SHOP

- \$139,143 in sales
- 21 state/local vendors featured

## COMMUNICATIONS

- 9,600 Facebook Followers
- 5,100 Instagram followers
- 27 articles in North Forty News
- 12 blog posts written
- 3 issues of NoCo Bloom published with more than 50,000 issues each
- \$50,000 in donated media

## VISITATION

- 297 Colorado zip codes of guests
- 50 states represented by guests plus Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico
- 80,424 total visitors, including 24,810 paid admissions

## GARDENS FOR ALL

- 4,900 community participants
- 377 Ability Pass participants
- 454 SNAP Pass Participants
- 223 free PSD and TSD Early Childhood Education family memberships

## EXHIBITIONS

- 9 metal sculptures featured around the grounds as part of the exhibition A Journey of Growth and Transformation by Jodie Bliss

