

THE GARDENS ON SPRING CREEK  
**2020 ANNUAL REPORT**



**THE GARDENS**  
ON SPRING CREEK





## OUR VISION

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

## OUR MISSION

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



## FROM THE DIRECTOR MICHELLE PROVAZNIK

Never in my wildest dreams (or nightmares!) did I envision The Gardens closing its doors four months to-the-day after re-opening them to the public. And yet, that is exactly what happened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The momentum we had gained from the re-opening and all our plans for the expanded facility and programs came to a screeching halt.

As I reflect on 2020, with its ever-changing public health guidelines, COVID dials and the never-ending pivot, I cannot help but feel profound gratitude for a team of staff, volunteers and board members for their tireless efforts, creativity, flexibility and can-do attitude. I am thrilled that we were able to keep all our team employed throughout the year by quickly re-deploying staff where they were critically needed – many helping with garden maintenance and our Plant Sale during the closure.

We are extremely thankful for a community that supported us throughout this year with their time, talent and treasure in ways too numerous to list. The number of guests who expressed their gratitude to us for our beautiful gardens, safe programs and events and for just a “little bit of normal” was truly overwhelming.

And through it all, I was fortunate to witness firsthand the power and resiliency of mother nature; the beauty, hope, inspiration and respite our gardens provide; and its ability to build community – even at six feet apart. While 2020 had its challenges, our mission of enriching the lives of people through horticulture was never more relevant or necessary.

# FRIENDS OF THE GARDENS ON SPRING CREEK

The Friends of the Gardens on Spring Creek is the non-profit (501c3) partner of 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.

For the first time in The Gardens history, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the City of Fort Collins and the Friends of the Gardens outlining roles and responsibilities and financial obligations from The Friends to the City for Gardens operations. This was a tremendous milestone that solidifies the importance of this long-standing partnership.

One result of the Memorandum was The Friends creation of a new website highlighting their role with membership and fundraising activities for The Gardens. In addition, new financial processes were created to support this role.



## DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

The Friends of the Gardens executed two highly successful fundraising activities to support Gardens operations. First, was a re-envisioned Garden a'Fare that transformed into "Date Night at The Gardens"- a series of five intimate dinner and live music events in August and September. With a limited capacity of up to 125 guests each night, all evenings sold out and more than \$37,000 was raised. For most, it was the first opportunity to see live music in months.

The second was the Annual Campaign which coincided with Colorado Gives Day. In recent years, the Friends has raised an average of \$25,000 to support various Gardens programs. The 2020 Annual Campaign more than doubled this amount with nearly \$60,000 raised to support Gardens operations during the pandemic crisis. We are grateful to our community for its support.

The Gardens also re-started its Bricks and Benches memorial tribute program, bringing in \$15,000 in a limited time frame.





## EDUCATION GOES VIRTUAL

Within two weeks of closing in March, the Education Team secured a Zoom account and began re-imagining all things education. Five virtual field trips were created in place of field trips and shared with teachers free of charge, reaching 2,344 students. A new program called Camp in a Box was developed to help families with learning in the virtual space. Adult programs quickly shifted to Zoom with hundreds learning about gardening online.

Simultaneously, staff developed health and safety policies and protocols to meet state and county health guidelines for in person programming. This was essential when the facility re-opened in early June, resulting in socially-distanced yoga and tai chi programs on the Great Lawn; continuation of Garden to Fork cooking programs; eight weeks of Summer Camp that served 52 families with safe, fun learning curriculum and much-needed child care; and 1,347 participants in our popular preschool program, Read and Seed.



[We were so grateful to have] a summer camp outside where the staff were appropriately trained, had an educational component, and did all they could to keep us safe during the pandemic. I appreciate the City having The Gardens available and open during this difficult time. My child has built upon multiple years of your educational programs, during the school year and the summer. We can tell her appreciation for nature and the environment is amplified with what we do at home because of your classes. Thank you."



## GARDENS FOR ALL

Gardens for All is a multi-faceted 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 primarily grant and donor funded with some additional support provided by the City of Fort Collins.

In 2020, 2,301 guests accessed our gardens through the Gardens for All program. We are proud to have partnered with the following organizations in the implementation of this program:

- Poudre School District
- Poudre River Library
- Wellington Library
- Larimer County Workforce
- SummitStone Health Partners
- Respite Care
- Ramstrength
- Partners Mentoring Youth
- The Family Center La Familia
- Foster and Adoptive Program
- Foothills Gateway
- Dementia Together
- ChildSafe
- Alternatives to Violence
- Matthew's House
- Housing Catalyst

# VOLUNTEERS GIVE BACK

Throughout 10 weeks of closure, volunteers were not allowed on site at The Gardens. With 12 acres of gardens – five of them brand new – and a Spring Plant Sale to execute, we have never felt the loss of our beloved volunteers more. Besides the essential work they do, staff missed the energy, positivity, camaraderie and passion they bring to each shift.

Because volunteers are essential to the work we do, The Gardens led the way for the City of Fort Collins organization being the first department to welcome volunteers back. Once again, new health and safety protocols were created, and the volunteers followed them faithfully. Despite the closure and modified events and programs, 257 volunteers contributed 4,151 hours of time at The Gardens, a tremendous number. Our sincere gratitude to each of The Gardens volunteers – we are honored to have you on the team.



## GROWTH IN HORTICULTURE

As new gardens such as the Prairie and Foothills grew and filled in, opportunities for smaller gardens in key locations came to forefront. With the help of donated funds, two new projects were undertaken.

### THE COLOR WALK

Planting beds along the main walkway through the Café Grove and Great Lawn and near the stage were intentionally left blank in the design process so we could determine the best use of these high-profile spaces. Midway through construction we realized the unique showpiece these spaces could become and came up with the concept for a Color Walk.

This garden features areas with small shrubs, perennials and bulbs to provide year-round interest combined with planting pockets of show-stopping annuals that will change throughout the seasons. In its first year of planting, the garden was a huge success generating many comments and lots of family photos.



### THE WELCOME GARDEN

Once construction was completed on the Friends Gardens Pathway and Visitor Center, we had a problem. The first garden guests would see as they entered had just been a construction zone – it was time to act. A plan was designed by horticulture staff that incorporated new mosaic benches made by local artist, Joe McGrane, and feature favorite plants of The Gardens team.

As the season progressed, benches, pathways and other stonework was completed. New plantings were installed in the fall. The Welcome Garden will be completed in 2021 – a beautiful way to greet all guests to our Northern Colorado botanic garden.



## PUBLIC EVENTS REIMAGINED

Despite significant challenges resulting from the COVID-19 global pandemic, 2020 proved to be a successful, busy year for public events at The Gardens. Apart from the High Plains Landscape Workshop, which took place before the pandemic began, every single special event was re-imagined to comply with state and local COVID-19 safety guidelines and to ensure a safe experience for guests, volunteers and staff.

The Gardens created written COVID-19 event management plans for every on-site event, which were approved by the Larimer County Department of Health and Environment. Event plans included strategies for managing venue capacity, sanitization, spatial planning for layout and flow, facial covering policies, staff protective measures, ticket refund policies, communication and signage, and contact tracing.

Event numbers were impressive with a total of 56 event days, engaging a total of 20,884 individuals, and bringing in a total of \$354,107 in revenue. Amazingly, without exception, all on-site events had their best year to-date.



## SPRING PLANT SALE GOES ONLINE

With thousands of plants growing in the greenhouse and nursery area, and a long shutdown looming, it became quickly apparent that we needed a new way to sell our merchandise – the idea to take the sale online was born.

In just six short weeks, Gardens staff took on the herculean effort to make it happen by researching and procuring an online shopping platform; inputting all data, photos and inventories into the website; developing a plant fulfillment strategy; forming a new communications strategy and creating a curbside delivery process.

The event ended up being the best Spring Plant Sale in the history of The Gardens. It spanned 18 days of pulling and delivering orders with more than 28,000 plants sold totaling \$118,000 in sales.

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## CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION SUPPORT

The strength of The Gardens stands solidly with our active partners in the community. Thank you to the following for their continued dedication to a shared vision and mission in 2020.

American Public Gardens Association	Fort Collins Nursery	Pedersen Toyota
Associates in Family Medicine	Fort Fund	People and Pollinators
Audubon Rockies	Harrell's	Plant Select
Beth's Bees	Hartford Homes	Poudre Pet & Feed
Bohemian Foundation	Headwater's Institute	Ptarmigan Country Club
Cline Williams, P.C.	KUNC	Rainbird
Colorado Allergy & Asthama	Lindgren Landscape	Rocky Mountain Publishing
Colorado Garden Foundation	Nature in the City	Savory Spice Shop
Community Foundation of Northern Colorado	North Forty News	Stanley Smith Horticulture Trust
Ed Carroll Motor Co.	Northern Water	Valpak
Ent Credit Union	Nutrien	Wild Birds Unlimited
Fiona's Deli	Odell Brewing	Windsor Gardener
Fish's Liquor	OtterCares Foundation	Zak George Landscaping
	Outpost Sunsport	

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## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Ability in Motion	Headwaters Institute	Schools and Outdoor Learning Environments
Alliance for Suicide Prevention	High Plains Environmental Center	Summitstone Health Partners
Butterfly Pavilion	Housing Catalyst	Sunshine House
CARE Housing	La Familia	The Arc of Larimer County
Cargill	Larimer County	The Center for Family Outreach
ChildSafe	Loveland Youth Gardeners	The Cooking Studio Fort Collins
City of Fort Collins Departments	Matthew's House	TriHydro
Colorado State University	Natural Resources Research Center	UC Health
Crossroads Safehouse	Neighbor to Neighbor	Vegetable Connection
Dementia Together	Northern Colorado Daylily Club Partners	Veterans for Food Bank
Denver Botanic Garden	Poudre River Library District	Weld RE4 School District
Food Bank for Larimer County	Poudre School District	Wellington Library
Foster and Adoptive Program	Respite Care	Wild Birds Unlimited
Foothills Gateway		

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## REVENUE

City of Fort Collins:  
\$851,859

Earned Revenue:  
\$452,008

Contributed revenue:  
\$272,036



# THE GARDENS BY THE NUMBERS

## HORTICULTURE

- 2,705 bulbs planted in the new Color Walk
- 29,172 plants grown for Spring Plant Sale
- 1,000+ plants added to the Rock and Prairie Gardens
- 40 tons of rock installed in the new Welcome Garden
- 2,416 pounds of produce grown in the Garden of Eatin'
- 46,996 pounds of produce donated through the Plant it Forward program
- 842 vegetable and herb seedlings donated to organizations serving low-income populations

## BUTTERFLY HOUSE

- 42 different species
- 9,370 lepidopterans
- 18 volunteer trainings

## PUBLIC EVENTS

- 56 event days
- 20,884 participants
- \$354,107 in revenue
- Two sold-out concerts held
- 19,228 tickets sold to Garden of Lights

## PRIVATE EVENTS

- Eight weddings held
- 25 meetings and retreats held
- Five on-site birthday parties

## EDUCATIONS PROGRAMS

- 2,344 virtual school tour participants
- 158 high school students onsite for botany labs
- 800 grab-and-go kits utilized by Poudre School District and Housing Catalyst families
- 1,347 participants in Read and Seed
- 52 families served through Summer Camps

## MEMBERSHIP

- Eight Member Mornings
- 1,388 memberships sold
- \$96,601 membership revenue
- 12-page edition of Dig-In introduced
- \$111 average member impact, in addition to their membership



## DEVELOPMENT

- \$62,200 in sponsorship
- \$50,800 in grants awarded
- \$58,000 in annual campaign gifts
- 333 donors
- Volunteers
- 257 volunteers
- 4,151 hours contributed
- Gift Shop
- \$55,741 in sales
- 12 state / local vendors featured

## COMMUNICATIONS

- 22,524 e-newsletter subscribers
- 5,552 Facebook likes
- 2,891 Instagram followers
- 55 articles written about The Gardens or by Gardens staff in regional media
- Three issues of NoCo Bloom published in partnership with Colorado State University and Larimer County Extension

## VISITATION

- 208 Colorado zip codes represented by guests
- 46 states represented by guests
- 45,138 virtual and on-site visitors and program participants

## MISCELLANEOUS

- 79 days closed due to COVID-19 pandemic
- Two days closed due to poor air quality from Cameron Peak Fire
- One day closed due to snow (includes one night of Pumpkins on Parade canceled)