

DIG iN

FALL 2021
NEWSLETTER



FRIENDS OF
THE GARDENS
ON SPRING CREEK

UPCOMING CALENDAR



November

- > Garden of Lights tickets on sale! (Thurs. 4)
- > Closed Thanksgiving Day (Thurs. 25)
- > Cyber Monday Membership Flash Sale (Mon. 29)
- > Adult Education Classes

December

- > Winter hours begin (Wed. 1)
- > Colorado Gives Day (Tues. 7)
- > Garden of Lights (Dec. 10-26)
- > Closed Christmas Eve & Christmas Day
- > Closed New Year's Eve
- > Adult Education Classes

January 2022

- > Closed New Year's Day
- > Spring Break Camp Registration opens (Fri. 14)
- > Adult Education Classes

February

- > School's Out Day Camps
- > Adult Education Classes

March

- > Winter Hours end (Tues. 1)
- > Summer Camp registration opens (Tues. 1)
- > High Plains Landscape Workshop (Sat. 5)
- > School's Out Day Camps
- > Adult Education Classes





Friends of The Gardens Board President

TOM SATTERLY

Thank you to everyone for such a memorable summer at The Gardens! From adult classes and summer camps to the return of Date Night at The Gardens and the launch of the summer concert series, we are truly grateful for your continued support.



UPDATED BYLAWS AND NEW POLICIES APPROVED

Behind the scenes, our Friends Board was busy with many internal operations items. We recently approved updated organizational bylaws and non-discrimination policy and created new financial and endowment policies. Each of these items are laying solid groundwork as we continue to grow and support The Gardens.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Several of you answered our call for additional board members in the last issue of Dig In. As a result, last month we welcomed two new board members, Beverly Shaw and Shannon Westcott (read more about them on Page 5). We are excited to have them join us and look forward to the unique perspectives they provide.

As we wrap up the growing season, we wish you a bountiful harvest and a joyous holiday season.

Gardens on Spring Creek Executive Director

MICHELLE PROVAZNIK

Is it just me, or has 2021 been a bit of a blur? Where did the time go? It was a very busy growing season at The Gardens. Some of the highlights include:



THE INAUGURAL SEASON OF THE LIVE AT THE GARDENS CONCERT SERIES

It didn't matter what the attendance cap was (250, 500 or 1,500) every concert sold out. Every. Single. One. Needless to say, we learned a lot along the way—tweaking operations with each show. Thank you to our partners at the Lincoln Center and The Armory for sharing their expertise and curating a fantastic variety of performers helping make our inaugural season a huge success.

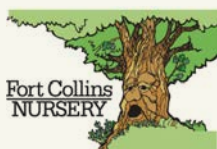
SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS RETURNED

It's a joy to have students of all ages back for school field trips. We are thrilled to provide nearly 1,600 students with safe learning opportunities in our gardens in 2021. Watching them engage with nature, learn about the plant world and delight in discovery is inspiring.

NEW GARDENS PLANTED

Plantings in the Welcome Garden were finished and looked stunning throughout the year. In addition, we planted nearly 100 ornamental trees and shrubs to the new Flowering Tree and Shrub Border along the parking lot fence. As both of these gardens mature, they will greet our guests with year-round color and interest.

As you can see, thanks to your support 2021 was the year we blossomed. We look forward to continuing to bloom and grow with you.



**SPECIAL THANKS
TO OUR OFFICIAL
SPONSORS**

Garden of Lights



SANTA RETURNS!

Don't miss the return of Santa to Garden of Lights! Make plans to join us for one of Northern Colorado's favorite holiday traditions! Garden of Lights returns on Friday, December 10 through Sunday, December 26 from 5-9 p.m. each evening (except December 25).

Take a stroll through our whimsical, twinkling winter wonderland, a half-mile loop of illuminated flower beds, huge sculptural flowers, grapevines, butterflies, holiday village and other favorite garden creatures. All constructed of more than 200,000 LED lights!

Additionally, the Color Blossom Show on the Great Lawn features 700 lighted blossoms, adding vibrant color and movement to your experience as you wait to see Santa on the Everitt Pavilion.

Santa visits nightly through December 23, and every evening features additional rotating entertainment such as the Sugar Plum Furrries Dog Troupe, LED Circus Entertainers and Holiday Carolers. Keep warm with our full bar and festive holiday drinks available nightly (and the Kaleidoscope Café is open on select nights).

While you enjoy the lights and magic, do a little holiday shopping! Our gift shop features varieties of

poinsettias and holiday cactus grown at The Gardens as well as holiday gifts, home décor, ornaments, jewelry and stocking stuffers. Are you a Member? Members receive 10% off all gift shop merchandise!

<i>Garden of Lights</i>	<i>Dec 10-26 from 5-9 p.m.</i>
<i>Santa Visits</i>	<i>Dec 10-23</i>
<i>Tickets</i>	<i>Required, kids under 5 free</i>
<i>Christmas Day</i>	<i>Closed</i>

Garden of Lights will once again feature timed entry, with tickets going on sale Thursday, November 4. Members receive 20% off admission, and children under five are free to attend (no ticket needed). Purchase your tickets early as we expect many time slots to sell out.

On Christmas Eve, The Gardens is closed during the day and reopens at 5 p.m. for the Garden of Lights. On Christmas Day, both The Gardens and Garden of Lights are closed to allow staff time to celebrate with their families.

We look forward to celebrating with you!



WELCOME TO OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

Welcome, Beverly and Shannon! Beverly Shaw and Shannon Westcott were unanimously approved as new members of The Friends Board at the September meeting.

Both share a deep passion for The Gardens, and we look forward to working with them to continue our mission of cultivating a world-class botanic garden that is community-oriented, educational, experiential, and sustainable.

Anyone with interest in joining The Friends should send a résumé to Craig Russell, The Friends Vice President of Board Recruitment, at friendsgosc@gmail.com.



Bev Shaw

Bev comes to Fort Collins and The Friends by way of West Lafayette, Indiana, where she worked for 15 years as the Quality of Life Manager for the city. During her time

there, she spearheaded multiple initiatives ranging from public art installations to historic preservation and university relations to greenspace management and city forestry.

She holds an undergraduate degree in Horticulture from Purdue University, co-authored a book on gardening in the Midwest and works part-time at Plant Select. In addition to regular shifts as a volunteer, Bev is also a Member of The Gardens and looks forward to bringing her energy and enthusiasm to the Membership Committee.



Shannon Westcott

Shannon has been a small business owner in Fort Collins for more than 15 years. Starting with Hops and Berries and continuing with Equinox Brewing Company. Shannon has worn “all

the hats” during her time in private industry and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to The Friends—not to mention all the relationships she’s built from 10 years of brewery ownership!

Never one to sit still, Shannon is also a certified yoga instructor, photographer and commercially sells her own sourdough bread on a nano-scale.

LEAVE A *Living* LEGACY

AT THE GARDENS

What does “legacy” mean to you?

At The Gardens, we are the collective sum of thousands of legacies—joined together at different moments in time and in various capacities since 1986—to create the beautiful gardens you see today. Staff, Friends board, City Council members and Gardens Members, volunteers and donors alike have all contributed in their own way.

Create your own legacy at The Gardens by joining our new Evergreen Legacy Society. Society members are individuals or couples who voluntarily declare they have included The Friends or The Gardens in their will or estate plans. Membership is non-binding (as changes in life situations can and do happen) and allows us to appropriately recognize your intentions. A gift from your estate will ensure we are able to continue our mission of enriching the lives of people and fostering environmental stewardship through horticulture for generations to come.



**EVERGREEN
LEGACY SOCIETY**

If you have already included The Gardens or The Friends in your will or estate plan, or for more information, contact Michael Coleman, The Gardens Development Officer, at 970.224.6106 or mcoleman@fcgov.com or visit www.friendsgosc.org/legacy.



PLANT SELECTIONS FROM THE **PRAIRIE GARDEN**

Salvia farinacea Selection

Bryan Fischer, Horticulturist

We often think of plants as static (or near-static), inanimate features of our landscapes. There seems to be an expectation that, once planted, they should remain like pieces of furniture to adorn our yards and streetscapes. While it's true plants have little to no mobility as individuals, they do have a trait helping them compensate for this limitation: an incredible degree of promiscuity.

Since plants can't "get up and walk away" from an environment that no longer suits them, one of their most important tools for adaptation is to maximize the genetic diversity in a given population. An integral part of this strategy, as referenced above, is producing offspring with any other plants within pollination range.



This happens occasionally in nature where plant ranges overlap. When several species are planted together in the same space, like our Prairie Garden, individuals that are hybrids between species occasionally occur.

Just last year, a hybrid *Liatris* showed up in the Prairie Garden. Believed to be a product of two species of *Liatris* grown in the garden, both native to the northern Front Range, this individual had a size and form intermediate to both of its parents. This plant is showy—multiple spikes of fuzzy, magenta buttons arise from linear, dark green foliage—and at three feet tall, is an ideal size for use in a classic garden border.

Suspected to be the product of a cross between *Liatris ligulistylis* (meadow *Liatris*) and *Liatris punctata* (dotted *Liatris*), our two locally native *Liatris* species, this plant shows a lot of promise. Highly attractive to butterflies, especially monarchs thanks to its *L.*

HOW **HYBRIDS** CAN HAPPEN



Liatris ligulistylis

Seen here with *Eryngium yuccifolium* (rattlesnake master), *Liatris ligulistylis* mixes well with other tall plants that perform well in soils with moderate moisture regimes and full sun. Though populations do exist in moist meadows on the Front Range, the species is more common in the tallgrass prairie of the Midwest. Plants produce one to few large flower spikes when in bloom, by which point they routinely surpass five feet in height in cultivation.



Liatris punctata

Thriving on only 15 inches of precipitation a year, *Liatris punctata* is adapted to the shortgrass prairie. Small in stature, at only one to two feet tall, these plants are long-lived and very deep-rooted. Their roots have been documented at well over 10 feet into the soil profile. Typically, *L. punctata* produces numerous, short (one foot) flower spikes.

ligulistylis parentage, there is also potential the plant will exhibit potential for use in xeriscapes; its other parent, *L. punctata* prefers to be grown quite dry.

Occasionally, an individual plant will show up in an otherwise homogenous population that is different in appearance (phenotype) from the rest of the population. This can occur due to a chance mutation or a recombination of genetics during fertilization, among other factors. Such is the case with a *Salvia farinacea* individual in our Prairie Garden two years ago. A lovely plant, this mealy cup sage is largely held back horticulturally in the region due to not being winter hardy. So, it is used as a bedding annual.

One cultivar, however, called 'Texas Violet' is hardy to USDA zone 6, and marginally hardy here in Fort Collins (zone 5). This cultivar grows three to four feet tall, with



***Liatris* hybrid discovered in Prairie Garden**

Intermediate in height compared to both of its suspected parents, this *Liatris* hybrid attained a height of about three feet last year, producing numerous, showy flower spikes. While the form of this plant looked coarsely similar to *L. punctata*, the button-shaped flower heads along its stems were large and held on short stalks of their own, like *L. ligulistylis*. We hope that this individual will prove to have the drought tolerance and longevity of *L. punctata*, as it has already demonstrated a showiness comparable to that of *L. ligulistylis*. Only trial will tell!

a white calyx and purple flowers and has been grown as a perennial on our site by Lauren Springer for years. When, I installed the Prairie Garden, I planted more than 30 of these.

One individual that overwintered in the garden was shorter, at two to three feet tall, and had a purple calyx in addition to purple flowers—clearly it was unique genetically. This plant was also one of only a few individuals to make it through that winter alive in the harsh Prairie Garden, suggesting possible extra cold hardiness compared to 'Texas Violet'. I made a selection of this plant by recognizing its unique

phenotype and propagating it by cuttings, which were sent to Denver Botanic for trial in the Plant Select program. If reliably hardy, this plant could help to open up mealy cup sage as a perennial for our region, rather than just as a bedding annual.

Photos courtesy of the author, Bryan Fischer



BOARD NEWS

DATE NIGHT RAISES \$40,000!

Thank you to everyone who supported Date Night at The Gardens this year! It remains one of our most popular events since its debut last summer and raised more than \$40,000 in 2021. We want to particularly thank our presenting sponsors: Dellenbach Motors, Fiona's Deli and Odell Brewing Company. Stay tuned for exciting announcements regarding next year's event, and thanks again for your support!



CYBER MONDAY FLASH SALE

On Cyber Monday (Nov. 29), enjoy 13 months of membership for the price of 12 when you renew your membership, become a Member or purchase a gift membership for someone special this holiday season. This offer is available online at www.friendsgosc.org or by phone at 970-416-2486. Military and senior discounts on Individual, Individual Plus and Family memberships are available by phone only. We hope you take advantage of this great holiday offer and then use your membership to receive 20% off Garden of Lights tickets!



GARDENS LAUNCHES NEW PROGRAM: **DEEPLY ROOTED**

The Gardens expanded its educational programming to provide therapeutic horticulture classes for our elderly community living in assisted living facilities. This four-week series, called Deeply Rooted, is designed to contribute to the participants' dignity and quality of life by providing hands-on, garden-based group activities to help promote social skills, reduce isolation, foster team building and stimulate cognitive abilities through new experiences.

Each Deeply Rooted session includes horticultural activities like tabletop and raised-bed gardening with seeding, growing, transplanting, watering, deadheading and harvesting selected plants. Activities are modified to fit participant needs and abilities. Research shows exposure to the natural environment has significant and wide-ranging health benefits. Additionally, in studies done specifically with adults living in nursing homes, researchers found horticulture therapy resulted in a significant increase in participant's motivation to care for themselves, as well as increased motor functions and lowered blood pressure. Participants also showed an increase in self-concept and a decrease in psychological distress from caring for plants.

This fall's successful pilot program cemented our goal to roll out a full season in 2022 to reach five different assisted living facilities and up to 50 participants.





2021: THE YEAR WE BLOSSOMED

Mary Atchison, Fundraising Chair

Throughout 2021, The Gardens blossomed in every way possible: our gardens flourished, onsite programming expanded and visitors from across the country enjoyed all we have to offer. With the many challenges last year presented—and, perhaps because of them—The Gardens was primed and ready to meet the promise of our envisioned botanic garden, blossoming for all to see.



Early on, we knew 2021 was going to be a busy year. The online Spring Plant Sale set yet another sales record, beating last year's record total. The inaugural season of Live at the Gardens Concert Series was a complete sellout. We provided virtual and onsite education programs to more than 5,000 children and 2,000 adults. Weekends were extremely busy as out-of-town visitors returned. More than 400 volunteers donated thousands of hours to make our gardens, events and programs shine.

Much like last year, we are heading into the holiday season with the wind at our backs and smiles on

our faces. We share much of this success with you. At countless moments during the previous 18 months, you answered our calls for help. Whether by volunteering your time to make sure order fulfillment went smoothly for the online Plant Sale, renewing your membership or becoming Members for the first time or by making a financial contribution to shore up our budget during an unprecedented pandemic, you were there for us time and again, and we are deeply appreciative of your support.

Your support enabled us to make critical investments in seasonal staff, horticulture initiatives and education programming—each contributing to the stellar remarks we receive for customer satisfaction and guest experience. Expanding on those investments will prove critical in 2022 as we expect 75,000+ visitors. If you are in a position to make a gift this holiday season, we ask that you consider Friends of the Gardens on Spring Creek in your year-end giving plans. Colorado Gives Day is December 7. Visit www.coloradogives.org to learn more. Donations can also be made any time at www.friendsgosc.org or by making a check payable to Friends of The Gardens at 2145 Centre Avenue, Fort Collins, 80526.

Because of you, The Gardens blossomed in 2021. And, together, we'll make 2022 a year to remember. Thank you for supporting the Gardens on Spring Creek. Have a wonderful holiday season!

A SNEAK PEEK AT PLANS FOR THE NORTHWEST GROVE

Rita Jokerst, Horticulturist

The Northwest Grove was conceived as part of our expansion as a buffer between The Gardens and our residential neighbors to the west. Twelve large native conifers acquired from the former Hughes Stadium grounds were planted as part of initial construction, and in the past few years, some mixed additions of shade-loving perennials have helped define a small walking path in the grove.



However, more than 10,000 square feet remain as an untapped opportunity for The Gardens to highlight another sector of Colorado's flora, alongside the impressive ecosystem-like gardens of the Foothills, Prairie and Rock gardens. Building on the foundation of the existing landscape, we propose a Colorado mixed-conifer forest garden for the area. These types of forests boast a wide variety of stately pines, firs, eye-popping spruces and junipers, which we will use in addition to a few specialty evergreen trees for horticultural interest.

The understory shrubs planted in the grove will mimic the naturally occurring species in both Colorado conifer forests and open canopy forests. Such plants may include prickly and wild roses, buffaloberry, bearberry, common juniper, bitterbrush, rabbitbrush, serviceberry, wax currant, red-osier dogwood, shrubby cinquefoil, *Carex* spp., Parry's goldenrod, wild strawberry, bellflowers, fireweed and dusty penstemon.

In particular, the fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*) will be a spectacular addition to the forest edges along



the Sherwood lateral that runs through our site. The channel is burned yearly to ensure proper water flow, but the population won't be bothered by this disturbance as individual plants can produce up to 80,000 seeds each year! Where the fire doesn't rage, we will allow dropped natural materials such as evergreen needles, cones, and leaves to remain in place. By allowing litter to build up and decompose in place, this forest over time will start to resemble a natural woodland more closely, allowing us to reduce our inputs.

Beyond the plants in the Northwest Grove, a gathering area, multiple picnic areas and ADA-compliant looped paths will be created, making this little corner of the Gardens an important explorative, event and accessible area. As we know from the Children's Garden, kiddos of every age love to hop in and out of tree stands, hide behind burly tree trunks and make their own little nooks under dense canopies. The Northwest Grove will provide a secondary location for children to let their imaginations run wild.

As it grows in, the site will also become a contemplative area, supporting the themes of mindfulness, meditation, forest bathing, mental health and connection to nature, all of which are ripe for educational programming. As a unique event space, the Northwest Grove will be a special area for engagements, weddings, renewals and memorials as its relative seclusion lends itself to a sense of privacy. Finally, for folks whose physical limitations might prevent them from going on a rigorous hike on unkempt trails across the state, the Northwest Grove would provide them an accessible pocket forest within the community.

A Chinese proverb wisely says, "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now." We couldn't agree more at the Gardens and can't wait to get our hands dirty on this project. In all likelihood, this will be a multiyear project. It is currently under review for grant funding by the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust, and if selected, this project will get a much needed financial and timeline boost.





THE TRAIN GARDEN CHUGS BACK TO LIFE

Jacob Mares, Horticulturist

The Children's Garden Train Garden is one of our most beloved attractions for children and adults alike. Built and designed by members of Northern Colorado Garden Railroaders, this 11 foot by 15 foot train garden was completed in the summer of 2013.



The area features two trains running on separate loops activated by pressing buttons located on the perimeter. A third button activates the gondolas which run back and forth between "Horsetooth" and the garden. The mountain with its train tunnels was constructed from stucco and wood cabinetry and serves as a storage area for the trains when not in use. The entire Train Garden is surrounded by a plexiglass fence to keep curious onlookers from disturbing the display.

The past eight years have taken their toll and this aging along with exposure to our climate has degraded some of the Train

Garden's essential components. It was time for some much needed maintenance.

First up was upgrading the existing plexiglass fence (broken in several places) with 1/4-inch thick acrylic glass. This heavy-duty material is able to withstand temperature fluctuations and will not degrade in harsh sunlight. Next was improving the track. We re-leveled the track and pruned existing plants for a smoother operation. After all, trains must be on time! Lastly, staff cleaned and serviced the main engines and their cars.

The first test drive was a little rough but with a few small adjustments the trains are running top notch! The tuned-up Train Garden is now ready for engineers young and old and staffed by amazing volunteers throughout the week.

As we transition into the winter months keep an eye out for more repairs. Plans are underway to repaint the town's small buildings and structures and repair the wood structures on the upper track. Many thanks to the volunteers and staff who revitalized the Train Garden. We continue work to bring it back to its former glory. All aboard!



*Winter Hours begin
December 1!*

The Gardens on Spring Creek is open daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. December 1 - February 1.

For more information on ticketing or to plan your visit, please visit fcgov.com/gardens.

CONTACT US

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