

# DIG iN

FALL 2024  
NEWSLETTER



FRIENDS OF  
**THE GARDENS**  
ON SPRING CREEK





# THIS COLORADO GIVES DAY, HELP PLANT THE SEEDS FOR A LIFELONG LOVE OF LEARNING!

## Upcoming CALENDAR

If a class is sold out, make sure to join the waitlist! Spots often open up, email [GardensEducation@fcgov.com](mailto:GardensEducation@fcgov.com).

### November

- 1 Garden of Lights tickets go on sale!
- 9 Watercolor Journaling: Holiday Inspiration
- 9 Embodied Climate Action: Gratitude for Grieving
- 16 Full Moon Release Insight + Sound Workshop
- 28 Thanksgiving, Gardens closed

### December

- 5-8 Garden of Lights
- 7 Holiday Wreath Making
- 10 Colorado Gives Day
- 12-15 Garden of Lights
- 19-23 Garden of Lights
- 25 Christmas, Gardens closed
- 26-29 Garden of Lights
- 31 New Year's Eve, Gardens closed



### January

- 1 New Year's Day, Gardens closed
- 14 Spring Break Camp registration opens
- 20 Martin Luther King Day, Gardens open

### February

- 20 Summer Camp registration opens



**Read and Seed** is offered most Mondays and Tuesdays at 10:15 and 11:15 a.m. throughout the year.

Join the the biggest 24-hour giving movement in the state and help support The Gardens on Spring Creek. Any gift made between Nov. 1 and Dec. 10 counts towards our Colorado Gives Day total and supports our efforts in:



- » Programing and Education
- » Community Events
- » World-class Horticulture
- » Connecting People to Nature
- » Environmental Sustainability
- » Accessibility



Friends of The Gardens on Spring Creek is the nonprofit support group of The Gardens on Spring Creek, a City of Fort Collins cultural services facility.







# GRATEFUL GREETINGS!

Dear Members,

As we close out another year at The Gardens, I'm incredibly grateful for all we've accomplished together. Membership provides essential support for everything we do—whether it's the care of our stunning plant collections or the educational programs that inspire and connect our community. By being a member, you affirm:

- » The power of nature to connect, inspire, and educate.
- » The enrichment of our community through access to lifelong learning.
- » A commitment to environmental sustainability for future generations.

Because of these shared values, The Gardens continues to thrive as a premier cultural institution in Northern Colorado. Your dedication and commitment make all of this possible—thank you!

In this final 2024 issue of *Dig In*, there's plenty to explore. Don't miss the feature articles by our expert staff! Horticulturist Kelly Kellow will guide you through everything you need to know about growing for poinsettias, while Kyla Flatley and Brionna McCumber from our Butterfly House team share their top tips for keeping pollinators safe through the winter months.

Finally, as we enter the holiday season, I wish you joy and merriment. And if you need a little help getting into the holiday spirit—Garden of Lights is back starting Dec. 5. There's nothing quite like a stroll through The Gardens during this festive and enchanting celebration. This year's schedule is a little different, so be sure to read all of the back page for important updates. I hope to see you there!

With gratitude,

**MARY ATCHISON**

*Friends of The Gardens  
Board President*



THANK YOU TO OUR PROPAGATION PARTNERS





# HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT POLLINATORS IN THE FALL

*Kyla Flatley and Brionna McCumber*

Fall is here! Gardeners in Colorado are preparing for the arrival of colder weather. Most gardeners strive to support native pollinators through the spring and summer months. Did you know that you can support pollinators through the cold months, too? Not all pollinators migrate to warmer climates in preparation for the winter. Most remain here, in your backyard!

## PILE ON THE LEAVES

These important animals rely on leaf litter and plant debris to create suitable overwintering shelters. When preparing your home and gardens for the winter months, consider raking or electric blowing leaves rather than mowing or chopping them. Late-season plant material not only supports overwintering pollinators but also provides crucial erosion control, acts as a mulch for your gardens, and supports a plethora of organisms in the earth.

Leaf debris plays a critical role in ecosystem health. Microorganisms, fungi, and invertebrates feed on decaying organic matter. Removing yard debris and

bagging in plastic not only removes habitat and food for native species, but also prevents the matter from breaking down and returning the nutrients into the soil. Allowing end-of-season materials to break down naturally in your garden feeds the detritivores, which in turn feeds the soil and your plants for the next season. Instead of collecting and bagging decomposing plant material, consider using it to create designated pollinator overwintering spots in your garden.

## CREATING A SHELTER

Creating a designated pollinator overwintering shelter in your garden is easy! All you need to do is relocate fallen leaves, dried stems, sticks, and other end-of-season materials and place them in a location where they can sit undisturbed through the winter. Piles of fallen leaves and other plant matter provide shelter for butterflies who have laid their eggs, caterpillars who hide amongst the leaves, and butterfly and moth pupae who need a safe place to withstand the harsh winter. Native bees also utilize plant debris for shelter to overwinter, often inhabiting hollow stems and caverns with their eggs. Larvae will develop inside of

★★★★☆ Wow, I give this place 3 stars! Comfy, clean and cozy!

★★★★★  
4 stars! Lots of leaves and sticks! Really quiet, too! See u next year!





these spaces, pupating in the late fall or early spring to emerge as adults come warmer weather. Queen bumblebees are the only members of their species who survive from one year to the next. They must find a suitable place to hibernate through the winter, often in compost piles and other dry enclosed spaces.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Half of North America's native bumblebee species can be found in Colorado. In addition to bumble bees, there are over 900 species of solitary bees that must survive the winter. Native bee species pollinate plants 2-3 times more effectively than European honeybees, and almost 90% of all flowering plants rely on animal pollinators for their survival. Creating these safe spaces for local pollinators supports them through the winter so that they are ready to pollinate your gardens come springtime.

If you see a chrysalis or overwintering pollinator, consider allowing it to overwinter as it would naturally outside. These animals rely on temperature and light cues from the natural world to guide their development or hibernation process. Please allow wildlife to be wild without human interference.

### WHY IS IT CRUCIAL TO SUPPORT POLLINATORS DURING THE WINTER?

Of all food that we eat, 30% relies on animal pollinators! This accounts for around \$235 billion annually. Over 100,000 species of invertebrates, and over 1,000 species of vertebrate animals provide pollinating services for our planet. 16.5% of all vertebrate pollinators and over 40% of invertebrate pollinators are facing the risk of extinction globally. Your simple actions around your own garden and home can help save these species and preserve healthy ecosystems for plants, animals, and us!

# WINTER GUESTS AND THEIR NEEDS



PILES OF LEAVES



LOTS OF STICKS



MOURNING CLOAK BUTTERFLY



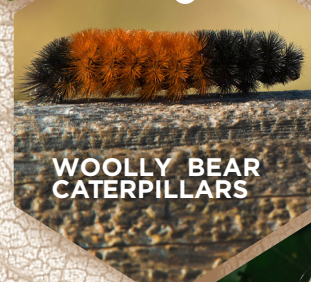
LONER BEES



BUMBLEBEES



BUTTERFLY CHRYSALIS



WOOLLY BEAR CATERpillARS



COCOONS

★★★★ Bee-utiful!





# BOARD NEWS



The Friends Board continues to grow. Meet our newest members!

## JANET PETERSON



Janet joins The Gardens with 35 years of experience in product development, team optimization, and organizational development, as well as a Master's degree in organizational change. She has served on several boards in the Fort Collins area.

After completing her Master Gardening certification, she has enjoyed The Gardens often as a patron, learner, and volunteer. She looks forward to utilizing her experience to help us in our upcoming years of growth and change. When Janet is not out hiking, biking, skiing, or spending time with her three sons, she is volunteering with the CSU Extension office, or running around town with her husband and two dogs.

## CAROL LANG



Carol moved to Northern Colorado in 1996 to pursue a career opportunity at Hewlett-Packard Company, now HP Inc. She thrived during her 27-year career from which she retired in August 2023. Carol has been a lifelong active

and vocal champion for diversity, representation, and equity. She is actively engaged with CSU's Society of Women in Engineering chapter.

Carol graduated with honors from Oakland University, Rochester, MI, where she earned a Bachelor of Science, in computer science with minors in chemistry and applied math. She continued her education with graduate work in applied math and chemistry. More recently, she completed the CSU Green School program and is pursuing undergraduate studies in philosophy and ethics.

In her free time, Carol enjoys spending time with her husband of 34 years, her family, including her three grown children, cycling, swimming, reading, and of course, gardening. Carol joined the Friends of The Gardens on Spring Creek board in July 2024.

## THANK YOU, MARY ATCHISON!



After six transformative years, Mary Atchison is stepping down as Board President, with Peter Boyle assuming this vital role. During her tenure, Mary guided the Board through the challenges of the pandemic, played a pivotal role in our fundraising efforts, and deepened the partnership between the Board and the City.

*"Mary is a highly respected community leader who has brought decades of knowledge, connections, and expertise to her role as Board President. Her steady leadership, innovative ideas, and warm personality have left an indelible mark. On behalf of the entire board, I can say her presence will be deeply missed. Mary's dedication to the Gardens is unmatched, and we owe her a tremendous debt of gratitude for her contributions over these past six years." –Peter Boyle*



## VOLUNTEERING WITH US

From weeding and gardening to event and program support, our volunteers do it all! Thank you for an amazing year!

So far in 2024:

- **86** new volunteers
- **12,511** hours contributed
- **347** ongoing volunteers
- **18** corporate and community groups
- **4,101** completed engagement opportunities
- **5** departments served: events, horticulture, education, guest experience, and Butterfly House
- Over **56%** of our ongoing volunteers volunteered over 10 hours

Are you interested in volunteering? To explore available opportunities, visit [fcgov.com/gardens/volunteer](https://fcgov.com/gardens/volunteer).



*On Sale Nov. 22*

# DON'T FORGET FLOWER POWER FOR THE HOLIDAYS!



Did you know The Gardens grows and sells poinsettias every year? We asked Greenhouse Horticulturist Kelly Kellow about her process of bringing these vibrant and memorable blooms to fruition.

## TIMELINE IS KEY!

From the time of planting to the time they are sold, the poinsettias grown in our greenhouse are on a strict schedule to produce that perfect and beautifully-colored plant that everyone is looking for during the holidays. There are three types of poinsettias to choose from: long season (10-12 weeks to develop), medium season (8-9 weeks), and short season (6-7 weeks). Medium season poinsettias work best for me here at The Gardens.

The first thing I do before I buy poinsettia plugs is to pull out the previous year's calendar to remind myself of the prior season's schedule. Then I begin to make my plan and buy my plants. Working backwards from when I want them ready for selling, I count out the weeks and create goals for each period to ensure I get a nice crop. Here's how the growing season breaks down:

### PHASE ONE - PLANTING

Aug. 26: The clock starts ticking the moment my plugs are planted in their final pots. This is also when I start a hearty fertilization program. Poinsettias require a lot of fertilizer while they grow. I have found the perfect mix for poinsettias includes a general-purpose fertilizer, epsom salt, and calcium nitrate.

### PHASE TWO - PINCHING

Sept. 9: Our poinsettia plants get pinched two weeks after fertilization, when the plants are fully rooted. A critical step, pinching poinsettias is the process of counting branch nodes (the points where leaves and

branches grow from the stem) from the bottom and pinching off the top of the plant. Doing this creates a bushy plant with (hopefully) five bracts that turn colors.

### PHASE THREE - TURN UP THE HEAT

Sept. 23: Two weeks after pinching, I raise the greenhouse temperatures. Poinsettias are native to Central America and prefer a nice warm environment. As our outside temperatures fall, we need to pay more attention to the temperature we're creating in our greenhouse.

### PHASE FOUR - SPACING

Oct. 21: Four weeks after temperature raising, I space the plants. Creating space promotes healthy growth that results in lush and dense foliage with more bracts per plant.

### PHASE FIVE - HARDENING

Oct. 31: Now we're just waiting for the bracts to begin their color change. This typically starts around Halloween with the change finishing around Thanksgiving. From there, the poinsettias get hardened off from heat and fertilizing.

Once they're ready, we keep them healthy and happy until they're bought and taken home to a new loving family! Poinsettias are quite easy to care for; with occasional watering and lots of appreciation, you can enjoy them for 2 or 3 months!

Be sure to stop in starting in late November to snag your own Gardens-grown poinsettia!





**OPEN DAILY!**  
TICKETS REQUIRED

Members receive free admission during normal business hours.

The Gardens is open daily from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. during winter. For more information, please visit [fcgov.com/gardens/admissions](http://fcgov.com/gardens/admissions).

**CONTACT US**

Phone: 970-416-2486  
Email: [gardens@fcgov.com](mailto:gardens@fcgov.com)  
Web: [fcgov.com/gardens](http://fcgov.com/gardens)

Facebook  
[@GardensOnSpringCreek](https://www.facebook.com/GardensOnSpringCreek)

Instagram  
[@gardensonspringcreek](https://www.instagram.com/gardensonspringcreek)



2145 Centre Ave. Fort Collins CO 80526

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Fort Collins, CO  
Permit No. 2

THIS DECEMBER LET YOUR HOLIDAY SPIRIT SHINE AT  
**GARDEN OF LIGHTS!**



Explore The Gardens on Spring Creek's whimsical half-mile loop, glowing with colorful grapevines, towering flowerbeds, dancing blossoms, and vibrant displays. You won't want to miss this magical experience—where every step illuminates a world of wonder!

**EVENT DATES**

Thurs, Dec. 5 – Sun, Dec. 8  
Thurs, Dec. 12 – Sun, Dec. 15  
Thurs, Dec. 19 – Mon, Dec. 23  
Thurs, Dec. 26 – Sun, Dec. 29

**EVENT TIMES**

5–9 p.m.

**EVENT PRICING**



- **Members receive 20% off regular price!**
- General (12+): \$12
- Child (5–11): \$8
- Ages 4 and under are free