

SPRING 2020 NEWSLETTER

Dig in

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FRIENDS OF
THE GARDENS
ON SPRING CREEK



A MESSAGE FROM THE GARDENS

These last few weeks have been uncertain and unprecedented for all of us. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Gardens began with an indoor closure on March 15 and will remain fully closed to the public at least through April 30.

We are missing our Members and volunteers more than ever, as our staff prepares for our annual Spring Plant Sale and tends the grounds in anticipation of reopening after the COVID-19 pandemic ends.

Now, more than ever, our Members matter. You cultivate us. Through your generous support, we are able to continue to provide light, hope and peace to our community—albeit digitally rather than in person—and continue our mission of improving the lives of people and fostering environmental stewardship through horticulture.

During these challenging times,

we hope you and your families continue to explore at The Gardens and make the most of our current offerings:

- Horticulture articles shared through our partnership with *North Forty News*
- Photos of The Gardens, education tips and a little plant humor shared daily through our Instagram and Facebook channels
- Youth education opportunities, including a digital version of Read and Seed coming soon

The Gardens has always been a place of respite, rest and retreat. As you read this newsletter, we hope some of the content will manifest those same feelings.

We look forward to once again serving you in our capacity as stewards of one of the most popular cultural attractions in northern Colorado, and, like you, we patiently await the time when you can again walk the grounds to relax, immerse yourself in educational classes and celebrate the weddings and birthdays of loved ones.

Until then, we hope you are safe and healthy.

Tom Satterly
Board Chair
The Friends of the
Gardens on Spring Creek



Michelle Provaznik
Executive Director
The Gardens on Spring Creek



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





PLANT IT FORWARD IS BACK FOR THE SEASON!



As we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, now is the time to re-ignite Plant it Forward. For those Members who are new to The Gardens, Plant It Forward is a garden produce donation campaign led by The Gardens on Spring Creek and the Food Bank for Larimer County.



Gardening is something we all can do from home as we socially distance. So, we invite all gardeners to plant extra fruit and vegetable crops in their gardens this spring to fight hunger in our community. As demand for services continues to grow at the Food Bank, Plant It Forward donations can directly help children, families and seniors in need of food assistance in Larimer County.

This growing season, program partners aim to raise 50,000 pounds of fresh, locally grown produce. Help us reach that goal by dropping off your garden produce at The Gardens or at the Food Bank for Larimer County. As the current situation continues to evolve, please visit our websites for more information about produce harvesting and drop-off.

ONLINE SPRING PLANT SALE

Our annual Spring Plant Sale is going virtual! We are excited to bring you this year's plant sale, re-imagined to meet the current needs of our community. Plant orders placed through our online store will be fulfilled by our staff, packaged for you and can be picked up curbside at The Gardens. The plant list is now online—start making your plans now.

The Gardens on Spring Creek and our partners at Colorado State University's Horticulture Department are hard at work growing plants and getting our online shopping experience ready for you. Stay tuned for our online sale dates, details on priority access for our members, and other important sale information.

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR OFFICIAL SPONSORS



TIPS FOR THE GARDENS THIS SEASON

WHAT TO WATCH



cowboy's delight



*Bryan Fischer, Horticulturist
The Gardens on Spring Creek*

Tangible embodiments of patience and idealism, we could stand to apply lessons from our gardens to our greater lives. When planting a new space, like those in our recently completed five-acre buildout, any good garden designer knows that they likely won't fully see their concept reach its peak for three years. Some plants in our newer gardens—even some leafy, herbaceous ones—won't really start to look mature until closer to four or five years of age. Should a plant fail, or a design prove ineffective, one of the first things blurred out

by many horticulturists is often “better next year!” We are optimists, at least when it comes to our gardens.

With that in mind, sometimes it's worth considering “the now.” After all the hard work put in by staff and volunteers, we deserve to enjoy these new gardens as they come into their own. Consider keeping an eye out for the following this year:

PRAIRIE GARDEN

Known for employing a conservative growth strategy some refer to as “sleep, creep, leap,” prairie plants often mature in the garden over a three-year period. That being said, a few existing vignettes are filling out quickly, and I expect them to really pop this year.

Among these is a tallgrass serpentine of narrow, but 3-5 feet tall *Sorghastrum nutans* 'Thin Man' (Indian grass), with *Salvia azurea* 'Nekan' (fittingly named azure sage). Interplanted are a few *Oenothera gaura* (*Gaura biennis*) plants, set to explode mid-summer as white clouds made of hundreds of tiny, four-petaled flowers, rising up from the ocean-blue streak of *Salvia*. Expect a light bloom of complimentary yellow from the aptly named *Solidago* 'Fireworks' (goldenrod).

Also keep an eye out for a massive stand of deep purple flowering *Penstemon strictus* interplanted with the fine-textured, silver colored *Artemisia frigid* (fringed sage), a combination reminiscent of many locales in the North Park area. Located in the shortgrass section of our prairie, the bloom in this stand of plants will likely peak in late spring. Should you visit during our Wednesday evening hours, you could also catch the two dozen or so *Oenothera caespitosa* (tufted evening primrose) plants situated in this area, four-inch, fragrant, white, crepe-paper textured blooms that open in the evening and are a feast for sphynx moths.

FOOTHILLS GARDEN

Many plants in the Foothills Garden are set to fly off the rails this year. Typically establishing more quickly than the root-heavy prairie plant palette, I fully expect that the Foothills Garden will be a riot of color and accompanying insect life. Look for classic and unique columbine species alike, including *Aquilegia coerulea* (Rocky Mountain Blue Columbine, and our state flower), the orange-yellow *Aquilegia barnebyi* (oil shale columbine), *Aquilegia corymbosa* (golden columbine), and the rare *Aquilegia laramiensis*, a dainty, white-flowered rock-crevice specialist known only from granite outcroppings in the northern Laramie Mountains of Wyoming. Last year this columbine (*Aquilegia laramiensis*) provided a delightful bloom of white flowers in abundance while scarcely surpassing six inches in height.

CHILDREN'S GARDEN

Under new care since last spring, our Children's Garden has undergone a substantial renovation. Josh Cornell has made significant progress in growing the garden forward to match the rest of the enlivened spaces on our grounds. Visitors should expect to see a complete refresh of the first public green roof in Northern Colorado, located at the south end of the garden's lawn. On the roof, a new underlayment, media and irrigation system will provide an improved environment for a curated selection of plant species. The stars of this planting were chosen for their cohesiveness with other designs on the grounds, in addition to their suitability for a challenging growing



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRYAN FISCHER

environment and include the cheery yellow *Ratibida columnifera* (Mexican hat flower), the aforementioned *Artemisia frigida* (fringed sage), *Sphaeralcea coccinea* (cowboy's delight) with its hunter's orange, cup shaped blooms, *Penstemon ambiguus* (sand penstemon) and a blend of suitable grasses.

Also shifting to a more regionally appropriate plant palette, the Children's Train Garden received a complete rework. The track has been upgraded and redesigned, thanks to the hard work and donated time from the Northern Colorado Garden Railroaders. They also made sure the trains and gondola are running like new again. Not only have the mechanics of the garden been touched up, but the garden received a full replanting with a variety of smaller *Penstemon* species, sedums, and hardy, jewel toned *Delosperma* cultivars (ice plant).

Additionally, the Secret Garden has received a much needed replanting. New columnar *Juniperus scopulorum* 'Blue Arrow,' that were originally intended in the design, have been planted along the maze-like path.

Perhaps most immediately noticeable, visitors should keep an eye out for re-worked annual displays. Instead of classic marigolds, annual beds in the Children's Garden will feature bright-faced *Mimulus* (monkey flower), fantastical, mask-like *Nemesia cheiranthus* 'Masquerade' and other eccentric selections. Many of these cultivars are new to our grounds, so we are quite excited to see how they perform! They are sure to benefit from the cover cropping these beds received from fall-spring of this year, as enlivened soil makes for high-performing annuals.



NANCY FRANK: WHY I'M A MEMBER

Nancy Frank and her husband moved to Fort Collins in April of 2008. "Two weeks later, I saw a small ad in the paper asking for volunteers to help with an upcoming plant sale," Nancy recalls. "I called, went in for an interview and that was my start as a volunteer and soon after, a Member."

Having lived in Littleton for 30+ years, Nancy previously belonged to Denver Botanic Gardens and Hudson Gardens.

"The potential friendships, gleaning of gardening knowledge and just being among the growing plants was my inspiration for joining and volunteering with The Gardens on Spring Creek," she explains.

Nancy wears many volunteer hats around The Gardens, but she is most known for her work with succulents. She propagates starts from the large succulents in our greenhouse and repots them to be sold in the gift shop. "Working in the greenhouse is my favorite volunteer activity, especially the succulent project," Nancy says. "But I still love working the plant sale."

During the last six holiday seasons, Nancy has taught a natural wreath class. "Seeing the joy it brings people and watching their creativity flourish is very special to me," she says.

Looking ahead, she is eager to see the new gardens mature, but the Rock Garden will always be her favorite. "Be sure to visit often to see the Rock Garden change every couple weeks through the growing season," she recommends.



Rock Garden

THE RETURN OF GARDEN A'FARE!



Michael Coleman, Development Officer,
The Gardens on Spring Creek

We are very pleased and incredibly excited to announce that after a two-year hiatus, Garden A'Fare will return in 2020!

Though it deeply saddened us to cancel last year's event due to our construction, we promise it will be worth the wait.

This August, explore the gardens in full bloom, enjoy garden-inspired bites and your favorite beverages from local purveyors and bid on unique silent auction items while live entertainment creates a garden party atmosphere. This isn't the same old Garden A'Fare, it's reimagined for a new decade of growth, expansion and excitement at The Gardens.

Look for further updates in our e-newsletters and expect to see tons of exciting news coming out in the upcoming weeks and months about our event schedule once COVID-19 has passed—including the Halloween Enchanted Garden, which is also back after a two-year break!

From all of us here at The Gardens, please continue to take care of yourselves and your families, and we look forward to seeing you soon.





BEHIND THE SCENES: GARDEN PLANNING



Selena Kunze, Horticulturist,
The Gardens on Spring Creek

Curious how our gardens come to fruition? Long before the blooms, our horticulturists spend hours planning. Here's a sneak peek at my process.

Expect these plans to come to life over this year's growing season as we make updates to the North Patio!

Start with a base map—many times, it's a saved image or screenshot from Google Earth or Google Maps.

1 + 2 I overlay this with graph paper and trace the outline of the area I'm working on. Using a measured feature (the width of the sidewalk, for instance) I can figure out what length the grids on the graph paper represent.

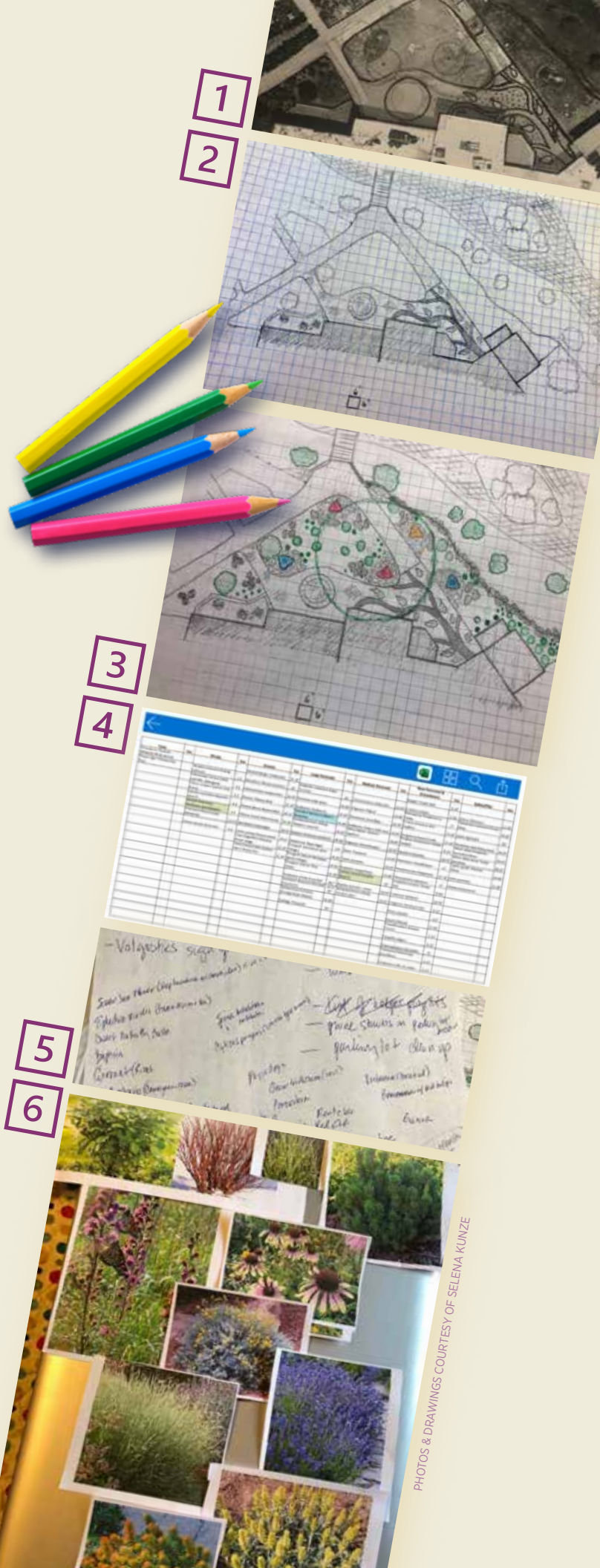
3 I then make copies of this base drawing and start throwing ideas down on paper. I start with locations of hardscaping and art, along with trees, shrubs and large grasses. Color-coding the drawing helps me visualize it in my head. This is a preliminary sketch of the new patio area.

4 + 5 To start filling out the design, I then develop plant lists. These lists can take multiple forms, depending on the day.

6 Sometimes I'll use cut-out pictures like puzzle pieces to put together combinations that I like.

Finally, when it comes time to get things in the ground, I'll lay out the plants according to my drawing, but often will move stuff around until I'm satisfied with the layout.

This is what works for me...how do you do it?



PHOTOS & DRAWINGS COURTESY OF SELENA KUNZE

CURRENTLY CLOSED!

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are closed. Normally we open daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Check our website for news and reopen date!

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