

NoCo Bloom

JULY 2025



LARIMER COUNTY
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



THE GARDENS
ON SPRING CREEK



SOWING SERENITY: Gardening for Peace of Mind

**FIREWISE
GARDENING**

SUCCULENTS

**TYPES OF
MULCH**



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LARIMER COUNTY
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

CSU EXTENSION IN LARIMER COUNTY
1525 Blue Spruce Dr., Fort Collins, CO 80524-2004
970-498-6000 | larimer.gov/extension



**THE GARDENS
ON SPRING CREEK**



**THE GARDENS ON SPRING CREEK
CITY OF FORT COLLINS**

2145 Centre Ave., Fort Collins, CO 80526
970-416-2486 | fcgov.com/gardens

NoCo Bloom

PLEASE NOTE: If you are a gardener living in Weld County and needing help, visit www.WeldMasterGardeners.org or email the Weld Garden Help Desk directly at weldmastergardeners@outlook.com.

As we enter the height of summer gardening, many of us find ourselves deep in the familiar rhythm of tending, weeding, and watering—sometimes battling not just the elements, but our own stamina and motivation. It's in these moments that it becomes especially important to pause, breathe, and reflect.

Why did we begin gardening in the first place? For many of us, it wasn't just about productivity or aesthetics. It was about creating something beautiful, finding moments of respite, and nurturing our connection to the natural world.

This second 2025 issue of NoCo Bloom is dedicated to the garden's quieter gifts—the ones that nourish our mental well-being. From inspiration for sensory gardens to a deep-dive into firewise plant options that bring peace of mind as well as beauty, we've gathered ideas to help you cultivate not only your garden, but your inner calm.

We hope this issue serves as a gentle reminder that some of gardening's greatest benefits can't be seen. They live in the stillness, the satisfaction, and the simple act of being present outdoors.

As you read through this collection of articles, may you find yourself inspired to stop and smell the roses.



Water-Saving Tactics for Your Lawn



When faced with a need or desire to reduce lawn irrigation, people often first think of changing the species of grass—usually from Kentucky bluegrass to “something else.” While changing grass species can eventually result in water savings, the process of switching can be labor-intensive, expensive, time-consuming, and frustrating.

Instead of changing the type of turf, consider improving the efficiency of your irrigation system. Significant water savings can be achieved using advanced—yet still relatively easy-to-install—irrigation technology.

Installing rain, wind, and frost shutoffs will prevent irrigation when weather conditions aren't optimal for efficient watering. Smart irrigation controllers that use local weather data to refine the amount and frequency of water application can greatly reduce your water bill and pay for itself in 1–2 growing seasons (consider the excellent Rachio controller from the Colorado-based company, Rachio.com).

Switching pop-up spray nozzles on your irrigation heads with stream rotors will improve your system's efficiency and reduce or eliminate runoff into the street. The Rachio company also sells an ingenious leak detection device that will tell you if a station is using more water than it should be, but it's still up to you to find the broken head or cracked/broken pipe that's wasting the water.



by Tony Koski, Professor and Extension Turf Specialist, Colorado State University, Dept. of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture

Install soil moisture sensors (all of the big irrigation companies sell them) to turn your system on and off based on soil moisture levels—it's like setting the thermostat in your home for heating/cooling.

Finally, try reducing run times on each of your system's stations by 1 or 2 minutes. Most lawns are receiving more water than is needed. For example, by changing a station's 20-minute run time to 18 minutes, you will immediately enjoy 10 percent water savings! See how many minutes you can shave off without reducing the greenness of your lawn.

You'll find that using relatively inexpensive technology and slightly reducing irrigation run times can add up to significant water savings—all without going through the expensive process of changing the type of grass in your lawn. 🌱



events 'n classes

COMMUNITY WIDE RESOURCES

Grow and Give Program - Grow Food & Share The Harvest
Colorado State University Extension, growgive.extension.colostate.edu (includes vegetable growing tips)

City of Loveland Farmers' Market Master Gardener Q&A Booth June 8, July 13, Aug. 10, Sept. 7 and 14, 700 S. Railroad Ave., 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Free, lovgov.org/services/parks-recreation/events/farmers-market

Larimer County Colorado Master Gardener Q&A Booth at the Extension Office Every Tuesday and Thursday, to Oct. 16, larimermg@gmail.com or 970-498-6000, 1525 Blue Spruce Drive, Fort Collins, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., Free, LarimerExtension.org

Larimer County Colorado Master Gardener Q&A Booth at the Larimer County Farmers' Market Every Saturday, May 17 to Oct. 25, 200 W. Oak Street, Fort Collins, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Free, LarimerCountyFM.org

Master Gardener Q&A Booth at Greeley Farmers' Market Every Saturday from July 12 to Sept. 6, Union Pacific Depot, 902 7th Ave., Greeley, 8 a.m. – noon, Free, greeleygov.com/activities/fm

Master Gardener Q&A Booth at Milliken Market Days
Saturday July 19 and Aug. 16, Union Pacific Depot, 1109 Broad St., Milliken, 3 – 6 p.m., Free

Master Gardener Q&A Booth at Windsor Farmers' Market
Every Saturday July 12 to Sept., 110 N. 5th St., Windsor, 8 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Free, recreationliveshere.com/213/Farmers-Market

Town of Berthoud Farmers' Market Master Gardener Q&A Booth June 21, July 19, Aug. 16, and Sept. 20, 200 N. 7th St., 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Free, berthoud.org/1430/The-Berthoud-Market

Weld County Master Gardeners Help Desk Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday until Oct. 31, Walk-ins welcome during Help Desk hours, 525 N 15th Ave., Greeley, weldmastergardener@gmail.com, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Free, WeldMasterGardeners.org

COMMUNITY WIDE EDUCATION

Extension Gardening Webinars Archive

Recordings of previous gardening webinars are available at any time, Free, planttalk.colostate.edu/webinars

July 9 » **Managing Lawns in a Warming Climate webinar (via Zoom)** Presented by Dr. Tony Koski from CSU, noon, Free, registration required, planttalk.colostate.edu/webinars

July 10 » **CSU Extension: Water Bath Canning** Extension Food Preservation Webinars via Zoom, noon – 12:45 p.m., Free, registration available on website, larimer.gov/foodpreservation

Aug. 1 » **CSU Extension: Jams, Jellies, & Fruit Spreads** Extension Food Preservation Webinars via Zoom, noon – 12:45 p.m., Free, registration available on website, larimer.gov/foodpreservation

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events n' classes

Aug. 13 » **Best of Demonstration Garden Plants from the Western Slope webinar (via Zoom)** Presented by Mollie Freilicher from the CSU Extension Office in Grand Junction, noon, Free, registration required, planttalk.colostate.edu/webinars

Aug. 15 » **CSU Extension: Pickling Vegetables**
Extension Food Preservation Webinars via Zoom, noon – 12:45 p.m., Free, registration available on website, larimer.gov/foodpreservation

Sept. 5 » **CSU Extension: Basics of Preserving Food Safely**
Extension Food Preservation Webinars via Zoom, noon – 12:45 p.m., Free, registration available on website, larimer.gov/foodpreservation

FORT COLLINS

Larimer County Farmers' Market

Every Saturday, May 17 to Oct. 25, 200 W. Oak Street, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., Free admission, larimercountyfm.org

July 7 » Xeriscape Walking Tour

Old Town Fort Collins, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., Free, sign up on website required, fcgov.com/utilities/water-conservation-events

July 9 » Gardens Bilingual Storytime

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m., Included in admission, fcgov.com/gardens/read-and-seeed

July 10 » **Down to Earth Speaker Series—Notes from Underground: The Roles of Fungi in Fields and Forests**
Center for Creativity, 200 Mathews St., 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., \$60 General | \$54 Members, <https://www.fcgov.com/gardens/speaker-series>

July 11 » Trace Bundy concert w/Max Mackey & Christine Alice (Benefit for The Vegetable Connection)

Fort Collins Nursery, 2121 E. Mulberry St., 6:30 p.m., \$30 ADV/\$35 Door/ Kids 12 & Under Free, fortcollinsnursery.com

July 12 » Tai Chi

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 8 – 9 a.m., \$15 or \$100 for 10 punch pass, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

July 16 » Storytime with the Poudre River Public Library District

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 3:30 – 4 p.m., Included in admission, fcgov.com/gardens/read-and-seeed

July 16 » **Cultivating Connections Garden Tour: Get to know your Gardens and Community** The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 6 – 7:30p.m., \$25.00 per person, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

July 18 – July 20 » Summer Perennial Sale

Fort Collins Nursery, 2121 E. Mulberry St., fortcollinsnursery.com

July 18 » CSU Extension: Water Bath Canning

Larimer County Extension Office, 1525 Blue Spruce Dr., 12:30 – 3:30 p.m., \$25, registration available on website, larimer.gov/foodpreservation

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The Science Behind Nature's Power

Important note: The following information should not be used as a substitute for regular physical or mental healthcare. Rather, gardening is a supplemental tool to add in to your wellbeing practice!

Growing up in the Adirondack mountains, nature has been my constant companion in this life—the mountains have often been the best audience for my troubles. In more recent years, when the going gets tough, I have also turned to putting my hands in the soil of my garden. There is something about tending to something live and growing that is uniquely soothing. In recent years, mounting scientific evidence has supported what many of us anecdotally feel. Specifically, interacting with nature (including gardening) can improve numerous mental wellbeing outcomes (for review see Frumkin et al., 2017; LoTempio et al., 2023).

To understand how nature and gardening can influence people, scientists have conducted experiments where some people were exposed to nature interventions, while others were not. For example, here in Colorado, researchers at the University of Colorado Boulder conducted a study where they assigned some people to participate in a community gardening program and compared them to a group that did not participate. They found that the gardening group experienced significant reductions in perceived stress and anxiety (Litt et al., 2023) compared to the non-gardening group. They also found that the gardeners ate healthier as well (what else are you going to do with all that produce you grew?! This finding has been backed up by other

researchers as well. Recently, scientists at the University of Utah reviewed every study that has ever examined the effects of a nature intervention on mental health, finding that across dozens of studies, nature tends to improve mental health (Bettmann & Hanley, 2024).

Overall, the evidence suggests that nature, including gardening, can boost mental health and wellbeing. Why this happens is still mysterious. For example—does it boil down to how much you like nature or feel a connection to it? Is it something about the fractal patterns that exist visually in nature, or does it more have to do with getting away from our daily life stressors? These questions and others are ones that my research lab, and our collaborators across the world, seek to answer.

For the meantime, however, get your hands dirty. Water a plant. Pull a weed. Admire flowers and the pollinators who visit them. Every moment that you nurture the soil may be a moment that you also nurture your mind. 🌿

References

Bettmann, J. E., Speelman, E., Blumenthal, E., Couch, S., & Schmalz, D. L. (2024). 16(3), 174-190.

Frumkin, H., Bratman, G. N., Breslow, S. J., Cochran, B., Kahn Jr, P. H., Lawler, J. J., ... & Wood, S. A. (2017). 125(7), 075001.

Litt, J. S., Alaimo, K., Harrall, K. K., Hamman, R. F., Hébert, J. R., Hurley, T. G., Leiferman, J. A., Li, K., Villalobos, A., Coringrato, E., Courtney, J. B., Payton, M., & Glueck, D. H. (2023). 7(1), e30-e39.

LoTempio, S., McDonnell, A. S., Nadkarni, N., Walker, S., Gallegos-Riofrío, C. A., Scott, E. E., ... & Strayer, D. L. (2023). 10(2), 247-255.



by Sara LoTempio, PhD, Colorado State University
Assistant Professor in Human Dimensions and Natural
Resources and Colorado Master Gardener volunteer

Weird, Wild, and Water-Wise

They're coming. You've seen them around. Once they only dotted the city, now they can be found on innumerable street corners and in hellstrips throughout the area.

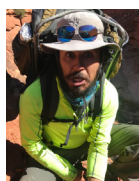
They're succulents! And not your grandma's stonecrop either. From ground-hugging iceplant types to towering cacti and tree form yuccas. NoCo has begun to embrace these wondrous weirdos. Once radically underused yet spectacular in form and function, succulents serve as the structural extension of the foundational rock formations in my gardens and now, many other spaces in the area. From their powerful floral displays and unparalleled forms to their low effort functionality and fire resistance, these plants provide an enviable amount of beauty and carefree maintenance! Worry not, I've put together a few peak choices for show stopping potential and garden reliability so you don't have to miss out.

Let's start with the iconic lotuses of the American deserts, agaves. Everyone should plant the New Mexico century plant, *Agave neomexicana*. Available in grey-blue or green skin, red or black spines/teeth, as well as a variegated cultivar. Give this 2' x 3' stunner room to spread or keep easy access points to remove runners and look forward to 8'+ tall flower stalks that go off like slow fireworks of thousands of yellow flowers.

If you're not growing hedgehogs in your gardens, rejoice, for I am now about to fill that hole in your heart that you've been trying to fill for ages. *Echinocereus* is a genus of cacti with many cold hardy treasures for our northerly gardens. In the top slot is *E. reichenbachii*, or the lace hedgehog cactus. Pound-for-pound, no other plant delivers the absurdly one-sided ratio

of flowers to plant material that this little hedgehog does. Add to that an adorably small size and lacy, easy-to-touch spines and you end up with an absolute jewel for an outdoor pot, trough, or rock garden.

No matter your experience with cacti you've likely formed at least a few opinions about *Opuntia*, aka, prickly pear. Toss those out because their unflappable nature, mind-numbingly beautiful flowers, delicious fruits, and charismatic winter colors can turn even the most jaded head and melt even the coldest heart. Of the many notable varieties, like the one planted in the medians along Harmony Road in Fort Collins or the miniatures I grow in my own garden, my personal favorite is *Opuntia* 'Wavy Gravy'. It's a sporadically reblooming plant from the Walk In Beauty line of hybrids that carries peachy-persimmon colored flowers on top of wavy-shaped, seafoam green pads. 🌵



By Jacob Berken, Owner/
Operator at Sun Skin
Landscapes

Find me @sunskinsucculence
on Instagram for more!



events 'n classes

July 19 » Tai Chi

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 8 – 9 a.m., \$15 or \$100 for 10 punch pass, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

July 19 » Yoga in the Gardens: Hatha Yoga

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 9:15 – 10 a.m., \$15, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

July 19 » Watercolor Journaling: Mid-Summer Gardens

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., \$70, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

July 19 » Embodied Climate Action Workshops

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m., \$10, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

July 20 » Melanie Yazzie Artist Workshop

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m., \$150, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

July 23 » Gardens Bilingual Storytime

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m., Included in admission, fcgov.com/gardens/read-and-seed

July 24 » Twilight Garden Series: Perennials for Sun and Shade

Held at the CSU Trial Gardens, 1401 Remington St., 5 p.m., \$15, Registration: fcgov.com/gardens/twilight-garden-series

Aug. 2 » **CSU Flower Trials Public Evaluation Day:** Public is invited to vote for their favorites and provide feedback for breeders and retailers. Free tours, kids can plant and take home a flower for free. CSU Trial Gardens, 1401 Remington St., 9 a.m. – noon, Free admission, Flowertrials.colostate.edu

Aug. 2 » CSU Extension: Jams, Jellies, & Fruit Spreads

Larimer County Extension Office, 1525 Blue Spruce Dr., 12:30 – 3:30 p.m., \$25, registration available on website, larimer.gov/foodpreservation

Aug. 5 » Xeriscape Walking Tour

Old Town Fort Collins, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., Free, sign up on website required, fcgov.com/utilities/water-conservation-events

Aug. 6 » Storytime with the Poudre River Public Library

District The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 3:30 – 4 p.m., Included in admission, fcgov.com/gardens/read-and-seed

Aug. 9 » Yoga in the Gardens: Hatha Yoga

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 9:15 – 10 a.m., \$15, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 9 » Colorado Native Plant Society Gardening with Native Plants Talk @ Poudre RiverFest

New Belgium Brewing Company, 500 Linden St., Free, poudreriverfest.org

Aug. 9 » Garden to Glass Mocktails

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 2 – 3 p.m., \$35, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

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CULTIVATING PEACE OF MIND WITH FIREWISE GARDENING

With increasing uncertainty surrounding seasonal weather patterns and our long-term climate future, not to mention the rising frequency of catastrophic wildfires across the West, firewise gardening has rapidly become one of the topics of greatest interest to home gardeners in our region. Selecting the right plants for a firewise garden can be a challenge, especially when research is still limited and often competes with the emotional desire to create and care for a beautifully curated space.

The best firewise plants are those that don't ignite easily and don't spread fires by throwing embers—while still offering creative value through to the space through new shapes, textures or extended periods of bloom. Native plants aren't always a slam-dunk, as many have adapted to encourage and endure regular, low-intensity wildfires as part of their natural cycle.

So, what's a gardener to do? When seeking firewise plants, focus less on whether a plant is native and more on its flammability. The best information on this topic often comes from University Extension services (CSU has a growing body of advice on the topic available online) and non-profits (including Plant Select® and Idaho Firewise). Top picks include plants with compact growth habits, minimal leaf and stem material, high moisture content, low resin levels, and good drought tolerance. Plants that remain lush and green through the growing season are ideal, though many conifers are quite flammable due to the resinous pitch in their tissues. These criteria favor succulents, cacti, smaller perennials, bulbs, and select trees and shrubs for firewise landscapes.

FIREWISE GARDENS ARE TYPICALLY STRUCTURED INTO THREE MAIN ZONES:

ZONE ONE: UP TO FIVE FEET FROM THE HOUSE

Ideally this area contains no plant material to minimize the possibility of ignition. Some gardeners choose to include succulents and other exceptionally fire-resistant, low-growing plants in this zone, provided they do not touch one another or the house itself.

PLANTS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- *Petrosedum* cultivars 'Angelina', 'Rice Creek', and 'Turquoise Tails' (all sold under the common name sedum)
- *Delosperma* 'Granita Raspberry' (ice plant)
- Low growing penstemons, like *Penstemon virens* (blue mist penstemon) can be good additions to this zone.

If in any doubt, save the plants for Zone Two.



ZONE TWO: FIVE TO THIRTY FEET FROM THE HOUSE

Plants in Zone Two can be taller and planted in more generous numbers, though they should still be placed thoughtfully, with breaks between groups, and rated as fire resistant. Avoid large trees and shrubs in this zone, ; focus on low-growing perennials, well-kept lawns, and hardscape features, like rock gardens, patios, and walkways to add interest.

PERENNIALS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- *Penstemon strictus* (Rocky Mountain penstemon)
- Low-growing *Oenothera* species, including *O. caespitosa* (tufted evening primrose) and *O. macrocarpa* (Missouri evening primrose)
- *Bergenia cordifolia* (pigsqueak)

SMALLER SHRUBS FOR CONSIDERATION:

- *Rhus trilobata* 'Autumn Amber' (three-leaf sumac)
- *Amelanchier utahensis* (Utah serviceberry)
- *Philadelphus lewisii* (Cheyenne® or Lewis' mock orange)

Trees in this zone must be rated to have good fire resistance, and planted so that their canopies are never within ten feet of your home or shrub plantings (which can act as ladder fuels to encourage their ignition).

SMALLER TREES FOR CONSIDERATION:

- *Populus tremuloides* (aspen), so long as it is not drought-stressed

Remember, all Zone One plants remain good picks for Zone Two.



ZONE THREE: FARTHEST FROM THE HOUSE

This zone offers the most flexibility with plant choices and services to slow and reduce the intensity of an approaching wildfire. Consider blending smart land management (in the case of naturalized and existing plants and trees) with a bit of garden stewardship.

TIPS FOR ZONE THREE:

Grasses, even ornamental grasses, can be used in this zone but are best cut short when dormant.

Shrubs can also be used, but should be kept in small groups and away from tree bases and canopies.

Trees can work here—just keep a generous 10 or more feet between canopies as in Zone Two. Limbs on trees are best removed to 10 feet off the ground as tree maturity allows (never more than 1/3 of tree height) to reduce the likelihood of ignition from ground fires.

Firewood may be stored in this zone; not in Zone One or Two.

Plants and trees in this zone can include natives, including occasional conifers if they are spaced appropriately and maintained with fire risks in mind. Often, this zone extends beyond the property boundary.



Bryan Fischer, Curator of Plant Collections at The Gardens on Spring Creek

TIPS FOR ALL ZONES:

Remove dormant and dead plant material promptly and regularly.

Keep the ground free of organic debris, like dried leaves and pine needles.

If possible, adding a gravel mulch is a wise move in Zones One and Two.

Do not use weed barriers or wood or synthetic mulches, all of which are flammable.

Watering deeply periodically can help to increase the drought and fire resistance of landscape plantings—well hydrated plant material is less flammable than drought-stressed plant material.

Firewise landscaping is gaining both attention and research—and recommendations will likely evolve as we learn more about how to better integrate our home gardens with the natural environment. In the meantime, we can use what we know to create beautiful, firewise landscapes that still bring us joy and peace. 🌿

STAY FIRE SAFE!

events 'n classes

Aug. 11 » **Garden to Fork: Cooking with The Three Sisters**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 5:30 –8 p.m., \$80, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 12 » **Garden to Fork: Cooking with The Three Sisters**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 5:30 –8 p.m., \$80, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 13 » **Gardens Bilingual Storytime**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m., Included in admission, fcgov.com/gardens/read-and-seed

Aug. 13 » **Garden to Fork: Cooking with The Three Sisters**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 5:30 –8 p.m., \$80, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 16 » **Birding 101: A Beginner's Guide to Birdwatching**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 9 –11 a.m., \$30, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 16 » **Yoga in the Gardens: Hatha Yoga**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 9:15 –10 a.m., \$15, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 16 » **Watercolor Journaling: Late Summer Gardens**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., \$70, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 18 » **Garden to Fork Berries and Stone Fruit: Bursting with Flavor**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 5:30 – 8 p.m., \$80, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 19 » **Garden to Fork Berries and Stone Fruit: Bursting with Flavor**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 5:30 – 8 p.m., \$80, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 20 » **Gardens Bilingual Storytime**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m., Included in admission, fcgov.com/gardens/read-and-seed

Aug. 20 » **Garden to Fork Berries and Stone Fruit: Bursting with Flavor**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 5:30 –8 p.m., \$80, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 20 » **Cultivating Connections Garden Tour: Get to know your Gardens and Community**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 6 – 7:30 p.m., \$25, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 23 – Sept. 1 » **Yard Sale**
Fort Collins Nursery, 2121 E. Mulberry St., fortcollinsnursery.com

Aug. 23 » **Beginning the Wind Down—Fall and Winter Management**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m., \$23, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 25 » **Garden to Fork Chillies: Sweet and Spicy**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 5:30 – 8 p.m., \$80, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 26 » **Garden to Fork Chillies: Sweet and Spicy**
The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 5:30 – 8 p.m., \$80, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

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events 'n classes

Aug. 27 » **Garden to Fork Chilies: Sweet and Spicy**

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 5:30 – 8 p.m., \$80, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Aug. 28 » **Twilight Garden Series: Winged and Wild Gardens**

Held at the The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Avenue, 5 p.m., \$15, Registration: fcgov.com/gardens/twilight-garden-series

Aug. 29 » **CSU Extension: Pickling Vegetables**

Larimer County Extension Office, 1525 Blue Spruce Dr., 12:30 – 3:30 p.m., \$25, registration available on website, larimer.gov/foodpreservation

Aug. 30 » **Yoga in the Gardens: Hatha Yoga**

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 9:15 – 10 a.m., \$15, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Sept. 2 » **Garden to Fork Tomatoes: Sweet and Savory**

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 5:30 – 8 p.m., \$80, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Sept. 3 » **Garden to Fork Tomatoes: Sweet and Savory**

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 5:30 – 8 p.m., \$80, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Sept. 6 » **Tai Chi**

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 8 – 9 a.m., \$15 or \$100 for 10 punch pass, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Sept. 6 » **Yoga in the Gardens: Hatha Yoga**

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 9:15 – 10 a.m., \$15, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Sept. 6 » **Backyard Composting 101**

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m., \$10, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

Sept. 6 » **Introduction to Watercolor**

The Gardens on Spring Creek, 2145 Centre Ave, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., \$90, fcgov.com/gardens/adult-classes

LOVELAND

Native Plant Sale (April - Sept.)

High Plains Environmental Center, 2698 Bluestem Willow Dr., 180+ species of native plants available, Order online, pickup in person, suburbitat.org

July 12 » **Guided Trail Walk with Restoration Ecologists**

High Plains Environmental Center, 2698 Bluestem Willow Dr., 9 – 10:30 a.m., Donation, suburbitat.org

July 15 (and repeating every other Tuesday through Aug.) »

Colorado Native Plant Society Weeding Sessions

River's Edge, 960 W 1st St., 8 – 9 a.m., Free, register through website, offero.cityofloveland.org

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

The Magic of Sensory Gardens

Close your eyes and picture a garden—not just any garden, but one designed to awaken your senses. The soft rustling of leaves, the scent of lavender drifting through the air, the velvety touch of lamb's ear beneath your fingertips. This is the essence of a sensory garden space where nature isn't simply observed, but deeply felt.

Sensory gardens are more than beautiful landscapes; they are havens of healing and connection. As a horticultural therapist, I have seen the profound impact these spaces can have—on children discovering the joy of gardening, on older adults rekindling memories through scent, and on individuals seeking sanctuary from the stresses of life. Science backs these experiences, with research showing that engaging with sensory-rich environments can improve mood, reduce stress, and enhance cognitive function (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Ulrich, 1991).

Whether designed for therapy, education, or mindfulness, a sensory garden invites us to pause, breathe, and experience nature in a way that touches the soul. Here's how to create one that nurtures both the land and the heart.

Designing a Sensory Garden with Intention

A truly immersive sensory garden engages all five senses in harmony. Consider these elements as you design yours:

Flow & Exploration: Invite movement with meandering paths, cozy nooks, and interactive spaces. Ensure accessibility so everyone can fully experience the magic of the garden.

Texture & Touch: Soft, smooth, rough, feathery—every plant and structure should encourage engagement. Imagine the contrast of lamb's ear against crisp rosemary sprigs, or the feeling of moss beneath your fingertips.

Soundscapes of Nature: The gentle babble of a water fountain, the rhythmic rustling of bamboo—sound plays a vital role in relaxation and engagement. Studies suggest that incorporating natural sounds can improve mental well-being (Ulrich, 1991).

Scent & Memory: Fragrant flowers and herbs carry powerful emotional associations. The scent of jasmine on a warm evening, the peppery aroma of basil, the nostalgic sweetness of roses—each breath is a moment of connection.

Seasons of Discovery: A sensory garden should evolve, offering delights year-round. Spring brings hyacinths and tulips; summer explodes with sunflowers; autumn whispers through rustling grasses.

Plant Safety in Sensory Gardens

While sensory gardens invite interaction, it's important to ensure that plants are safe for their intended audience. Even plants commonly deemed non-toxic should never be consumed unless they are explicitly edible. For gardens accessible to children or vulnerable populations, consider avoiding plants with poisonous parts—such as toxic berries, irritant sap, or strong allergens.

Always label plants clearly and provide guidance on safe engagement. If an edible section is included, ensure that visitors understand which plants can be tasted and which should only be enjoyed through scent, touch, or visual appreciation.

Final Thoughts

A sensory garden is not just a collection of plants, it's an experience, a refuge, a celebration of life's simplest yet most profound joys. Whether welcoming children for discovery, offering therapeutic benefits to those in need, or serving as a personal sanctuary, these gardens remind us to pause and fully engage with the world around us.

Isn't that what nature has always asked of us? To listen, to touch, to breathe, and to be present in its embrace.

So, dig in and plant with purpose, design with heart, and create a garden that speaks to the soul. 🌸

Planting for the Senses

To create a truly immersive space, select plants that stimulate all five senses. Thoughtful planting ensures a garden that engages, inspires, and comforts.

Sight – A Celebration of Color & Movement

SUNFLOWERS – Bold, joyful, and bursting with energy.

COLEUS – An artist's palette of foliage in striking hues.

MAPLES – Leaves that shift through seasons, painting the landscape.

BLACK-EYED SUSAN – Warm golden blooms that feel like sunshine.

Sound – Nature's Gentle Symphony

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES – Swishing blades that dance in the wind.

ANGEL'S TRUMPET – Large, fluttering blossoms adding movement.

NIGELLA SEED PODS – Delicate rattling when dried.

LUNARIA – Papery seed pods creating a soft melody.

Touch – Textures That Invite Exploration

LAMB'S EAR – Soothing, velvety leaves that beg to be touched.

SUCCULENTS – Thick, waxy surfaces with intriguing textures.

MOSS – Plush and grounding, cool against the palms.

CELOSIA – My favorite is the cockscomb celosias—they look like brains!

Taste – A Garden You Can Savor

STRAWBERRIES – Sweet bursts of flavor with engaging growth habits.

MINT – Refreshing, invigorating, and endlessly versatile. Be aware of mint's invasive nature and keep it in a container. Try chocolate mint or pineapple mint for something different.

THYME – A fragrant herb that enhances every dish.

LEMON BALM – A citrusy, uplifting addition to teas and recipes.

NASTURTIUM – Both flowers and stems are edible and have a delicious peppery taste.

Smell – Aromas That Stir the Heart

ROSE – Fragrant elegance woven into memory and tradition.

BASIL – Peppery, herbal richness that stimulates appetite and creativity.

LAVENDER – A wash of purple, offering visual beauty and aromatic delight.

PINEAPPLE SAGE – Scarlet flowers. When leaves are crushed it smells like pineapple.

CHOCOLATE COSMOS – With deep, velvety burgundy petals, this exquisite flower releases a warm, bittersweet cocoa fragrance when the sun warms it, adding a touch of indulgence to the garden. Or plant chocolate flower, a Colorado native, that exudes scents of Hershey's.

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By Erica Wharton, Horticulture Therapist-Registered and CSU Extension Master Gardener in Larimer County



events 'n classes

July 19 (and repeating every other Tuesday through August) » **Colorado Native Plant Society Weeding Sessions**
Sunset Vista, 1323 W 57th St., 8 – 9 a.m., Free, register through website, offero.cityofloveland.org

July 19 » **Chapungu Garden Tour**
Chapungu Sculpture Park, 6105 Sky Pond Dr., 10 a.m. – noon, Donation, suburbitat.org

July 21 – July 25 » **Rugged Research Camp (ages 7-12)**
High Plains Environmental Center, 2698 Bluestem Willow Dr., 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., \$250/week, ruggedresearch.org

Aug. 2 » **Bird Banding & Bird Walk**
High Plains Environmental Center, 2698 Bluestem Willow Dr., 9 – 11 a.m., Donation, suburbitat.org

Aug. 9 » **Guided Trail Walk with Restoration Ecologists**
High Plains Environmental Center, 2698 Bluestem Willow Dr., 9 – 10:30 a.m., Donation, suburbitat.org

Aug. 23 » **Garden Tour at Chapungu Sculpture Park**
Chapungu Sculpture Park, 6105 Sky Pond Dr., 10 – noon, Donation, suburbitat.org

Aug. 30 » **Rocky Mountain Raptor Presentation**
High Plains Environmental Center, 2698 Bluestem Willow Dr., 9 – 11 a.m., Donation, suburbitat.org

Sept. 6 » **Bird Banding & Bird Walk**
High Plains Environmental Center, 2698 Bluestem Willow Dr., 9 – 11 a.m., Donation,

WINDSOR

July 16 » **The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Pollinators and Other Insects**, presented by Weld County Master Gardeners
Treasure Island Demonstration Garden, next to the Eastman Wetlands Experience at 1524 7th St., 10 – 11 a.m., Free, recreationliveshere.com/248/Treasure-Island-Demonstration-Garden

Aug. 6 (and every first Wednesday until Oct.) » **Windsor Lunch & Learn**, taught by CSU Extension Staff or Master Gardeners
Hosted by Windsor Clearview Library, 720 3rd St., noon – 1:30 p.m., Free, clearview.libnet.info/events

Aug. 20 » **Is it Ripe?: Harvesting Vegetables**, presented by **Weld County Master Gardeners**
Treasure Island Demonstration Garden, next to the Eastman Wetlands Experience at 1524 7th St., 10 – 11 a.m., Free, recreationliveshere.com/248/Treasure-Island-Demonstration-Garden



Compiled by Kathleen Atkins, CSU Extension Master Gardener
Event information is welcome at nocobloomevents@gmail.com

ORGANIC vs. INORGANIC MULCH

INORGANIC (made from non-living materials) **ORGANIC** (made of once-living material)



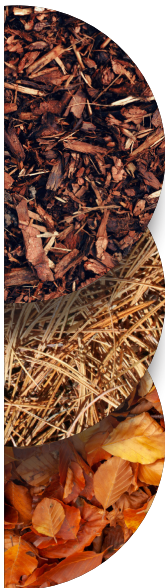
Pros: Inorganic mulches help to improve water infiltration and retention in the soil, reduce temperature swings, reduce weed pressure, and reduce runoff.

Types: Examples include pea gravel and crushed granite (sometimes called squeegee).

Application: Inorganic mulch should be applied one to three inches deep. Deeper will result in greater soil temperature and moisture moderating qualities and less weed pressure but will reduce the self-sowing of desirable plants. Many xeric perennials and shrubs grow best in gravel mulches.

Tips: Synthetic mulches, like rubber mulches, can be found but they should be avoided; they break down into your soils and are highly flammable.

1 - 3" DEEP



Pros: Organic mulches provide all of the benefits of inorganic mulches with the added property of breaking down into the soil, increasing its organic matter.

Types: Examples include pine needles, leaves, and arborist mulch (shredded tree trimmings).

Application: Apply wood mulches two to three inches deep in perennial beds and up to four inches deep in shrub beds, keeping mulch away from plant crowns. Organic mulch can be a good thing for vegetables and many perennials but is not necessarily helpful for xeric perennials. Use organic mulches in beds with classic garden perennials, in shade gardens, and in shrub beds.

Tips: Often, arborist mulch is available for free (like from the City of Fort Collins at the Timberline Recycling Center and at The Gardens on Spring Creek). Contrary to popular opinion, pine needle mulches will not significantly acidify soils in the Northern Colorado area. 🌸

2 - 4" DEEP

melanie yazzie

peace walking

paz andante

This summer, explore *Peace Walking* at The Gardens on Spring Creek. This stunning exhibition organized by Denver Botanic Gardens features six large-scale sculptures by contemporary Diné (Navajo) artist Melanie Yazzie, and is on display through Aug. 17.



THE GARDENS
ON SPRING CREEK





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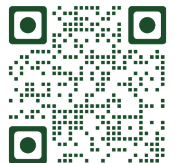
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JULY IS SMART IRRIGATION MONTH!

Follow these tips to take the stress out of watering your landscape.



City of
Fort Collins



Make sure to check with your water provider for rebates when purchasing new water-saving irrigation equipment. Find out more about how to water wisely at

[FCGOV.COM/WATER-WISE-LAWNCARE](https://www.fcgov.com/water-wise-lawncare)



1. USE SMART IRRIGATION CONTROLLERS

These controllers can adjust watering schedules based on weather conditions and plant needs, optimizing water usage.



2. WATER DEEPLY & LESS FREQUENTLY

When you water, soak the soil thoroughly to encourage deep root growth and make plants more drought tolerant.



3. MULCH AROUND PLANTS

Mulch helps retain soil moisture, reduces weed growth and moderates soil temperatures, lowering watering needs.



4. INSPECT CONTROLLER ZONES

Regularly check zones while they're operating for leaks, breaks and pressure issues, and repair any problems.