

Dig in

FALL/WINTER 2025
NEWSLETTER



FRIENDS OF
THE GARDENS
ON SPRING CREEK



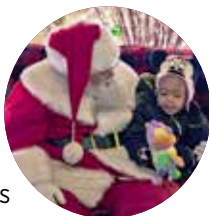
Upcoming CALENDAR

Visit fcgov.com/gardens or call (970) 416-2486 for more information and to register.

If a class is sold out, you can put yourself on a waitlist by emailing GardensEducation@fcgov.com.

November

- 15 Embodied Climate Action Workshop
- 15 Watercolor Journaling Series: Holiday Inspiration
- 15 Holiday Plants: Winter's Bright Spot
- 15 Tai Chi
- 22 Bioactive Terrarium Workshop
- 22 Tree Pruning
- 22 Tai Chi



December

- 4-7 Wreath Making Classes
- 12-28 **Garden of Lights**
(select nights, see Page 4)

January

- 10 Tai Chi
- 10 Garden Peace Poles
- 11 Mindfulness Series Informational Session
- 17 Plant-Based Eating 101
- 17 Winter Vegetable Gardening Indoors
- 18 Mindfulness for Life Series Week 1

- 19 School's Out! Volunteer Day
- 24 Gardening with Backyard Chickens
- 24 Natural Dye with Local Plants
- 24 Handmade Beauty: Lotion Bars Made Easy
- 25 Mindfulness for Life Series Week 2
- 31 Tai Chi
- 31 Spindle Apple Trees: Grow Apples in Small Spaces

February

- 1 Mindfulness for Life Series Week 3
- 1 Project Hort Applications Open
- 7 Native Seed Propagation
- 7 Underused Plants for Front Range Gardens
- 7 Mending Workshop
- 7 Tai Chi
- 7 Firewise Landscaping for Colorado Gardens: Beauty, Resilience, and Safety at Home
- 8 Mindfulness for Life Series Week 4

- 14 Valentine Succulent Arrangements
- 14 Intro to Orchids
- 15 Mindfulness for Life Series Week 5
- 16 School's Out! Volunteer Day
- 21 Tai Chi
- 21 Mixed Media Abstract Florals
- 21 Our Indoor Landscape: House Plants – Selection, Care, and Proper Maintenance
- 21 Wildlife Gardening
- 22 Mindfulness for Life Series Retreat
- 28 Resilient Rose Gardening
- 28 Project Hort Applications Close
- 28 Bright Spots: Garden Journaling with a Creative Touch
- 28 What the Turf? Sustainable and Functional Lawns
- 28 Tai Chi



Read and Seed – Mondays and Tuesdays (ages 2-4 years old)



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.





AS THE DAYS GROW SHORTER...

and the air turns crisp, The Gardens once again remind us how special this place is—a living, breathing sanctuary that brings joy, inspiration, and connection to all who wander its paths. Whether enjoying early morning walks, evening hours, live music, or one of the many learning opportunities, the beauty of nature and shared experiences have strengthened our community.

One of the true highlights of the year was Garden a'Fare, despite an unexpected twist from Mother Nature, which prompted us to move the event to the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery. Laughter, friendship, and gratitude filled the evening as we shared great music, delicious food, and our collective love of The Gardens. We owe a heartfelt thank you to the Museum of Discovery and Gardens staff for their flexibility and support, to our musicians, sponsors, and plein air artists for their adaptability, and to all who attended for making it an incredible evening under unusual circumstances.

Our successful Member Insider Events also wrapped up for the year! New times and topics enabled record participation and enthusiasm from members eager to connect more deeply with The Gardens. These gatherings continue to embody the spirit of the Friends community—shared curiosity, appreciation, and belonging.

As we look toward the new year, we are preparing for an important evolution in our partnership with The Gardens on Spring Creek. For many years, the Friends and Gardens teams have partnered closely to nurture and grow membership. Now, as our partnership continues to mature, it is the right time

to entrust the membership program to The Gardens' care, allowing it to thrive and evolve as part of the next chapter in our shared story. Beginning in 2026, The Gardens team will assume full management of the membership program and member benefits, and in the months ahead, both the Friends and Gardens teams will be reaching out to share more details. Our members mean so much to us, and this change strengthens the long-term health of The Gardens' membership community and The Gardens themselves.

The Friends of The Gardens are proud to continue to stand alongside The Gardens as trusted and enduring partners. We will remain deeply involved in advancing key initiatives, cultivating community, and continuing to grow our endowment—which will continue to support the horticulture programs that make The Gardens such a vibrant and inspiring place—through advocacy, fundraising, and strategic partnerships. We are excited for the future.

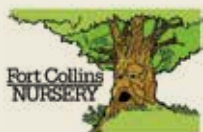
Thank you, as always, for being part of the Friends community. The extraordinary flourishing of The Gardens on Spring Creek is made possible through your continued support.

PETER BOYLE

*Friends of The Gardens
Board President*



THANK YOU TO OUR PROPAGATION PARTNERS



LET YOUR HOLIDAY SPIRIT SHINE

*Garden
of
Lights*

**WINTER HOLIDAY
LIGHTS FESTIVAL
DEC. 12-28**
(CLOSED DEC. 25 & 26)

Explore our beautifully transformed botanic gardens as you stroll along a whimsical half-mile loop, glowing with colorful grapevines, towering flowerbeds, dancing blossoms, and vibrant displays.

Visit with Santa (onsite nightly through Dec. 23) and enjoy other live entertainers while you warm up with a hot cocoa or beverage from our full bar. New this year, don't miss our Ice Forest, where you may catch a glimpse of the magical Ice Queen herself on select nights.

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

- Visit with Santa nightly through Dec. 23 from 5-8 p.m.
- Enjoy live musical acts nightly from 5:30-8 p.m.
- Meet the Sugar Plum Furries dog troupe nightly Dec. 26-28 from 5-8 p.m.
- See the Ice Queen in action select nights from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

TICKETING INFORMATION

Timed admission entry to Garden of Lights is between 5 to 8 p.m. with the event ending at 9 p.m. Purchase tickets early for best prices and to ensure your preferred date and time!

Member Admission Price

- Members (12+)
\$9.60 in advance or \$11.20 at the door
- Children (5-11) Ages
\$6.40 in advance or \$8 at the door
- Ages 4 and under are free

General Admission Price

- General (12+)
\$12 in advance or \$14 at the door
- Children (5-11)
\$8 in advance or \$10 at the door
- Ages 4 and under are free

You won't want to miss this magical experience—where every step illuminates a world of wonder!
Purchase tickets at fcgov.com/gardens.





WINTER TREE-AGE:

HOW YOUR TREE CAN SEE SPRING



Andrew Scott, Horticulturist

Putting plants in the ground just to have them die in a month is a bummer. Perennials not popping back out of the ground in the spring is a drag.

Having that plant be a young tree can feel downright disastrous. Whether they're in containers or ball and burlap (B&B), investing a little extra time before winter comes can be what makes or breaks that tree you dropped \$500+ on.

The most fatal mistake is assuming that you don't have to water your tree once snow starts falling. After all, snow is water, right? Mother Nature will provide and the melting snow will percolate into the tree's roots, right? Actually, no. In Colorado, intense sun and wicking winds can sublimate the snow before it even gets the chance to melt, much less infiltrate the soil. Combine this with low humidity and the air can snatch away even more soil moisture, further desiccating your tree.

In our climate, you should water the root zone of your tree at least once a month between November and April. Choose a day where temperatures are expected to be around 50°F and deliver 10 gallons of water per inch of tree diameter into the soil. You're not actually watering the tree itself, but the soil around it, so make sure to move the hose every 20-30 minutes to ensure adequate coverage. During the winter, the tree is dormant and isn't taking up water, but the air and soil is still trying to reach an osmotic equilibrium, drawing water out of the roots. A 2-3 inch thick layer of mulch over the root zone can also help buffer soil temperature and moisture.

Besides desiccation, intense sun is another tree killer, both beating down from the sky and reflecting off snowy surfaces. Most young trees will benefit from being wrapped with light-colored crepe paper, but thin barked trees like maples, lindens, willows, fruit trees, and redbuds especially need protection. A good rule of thumb is to keep trees wrapped from Halloween through Easter. Unwrapped, these trees are susceptible to sunscald (also called southwest injury) and frost cracks. Sunscald occurs when the warming sun prematurely breaks trunk cell dormancy only for those cells to freeze at night, rupture, and die, creating a large crack that insects and disease can get into. Frost cracks are a similar ailment but occur when there are broad temperature swings from day into night—the tree's tissues expand in the warmth of the day, but the bark rapidly cools at night, pressing against the still warm cambium and splitting open.

Preventing desiccation is 90% of the battle against winterkill. Winter watering is a mostly passive monthly task that takes half an hour, and wrapping your tree takes all of five minutes, so there's no excuse for your tree to not make it through this harsh season!



A newly planted tree wrapped in crepe paper with a watering bag around the trunk.

PANSIES



PRIMROSE



WITCH HAZEL



OREGON GRAPE



HELLEBORES



GLOOMY WINTER? NO, BLOOMY WINTER!



Andrew Scott, Horticulturist

This time of year is when the gloom and bleakness of winter really sets in. Maybe you're already thinking of dragging the lights down from the attic to add a splash of color to the cold? There are

actually a few perennials that bloom when the snow flies and can add color to your landscape before you put up lights and after you take them down.

FALL AND WINTER (AND SPRING) BLOOMERS

Winter pansies (*Viola hiemalis*) are classic fall and winter bloomers that come in a wide range of warm and cool colors, depending on if you want to contrast or complement the dormant landscape you add them to. In our climate, they'll usually go dormant after a hard winter freeze, but I've seen them keep blooming through December if the weather is mild enough.

Primroses (genus *Primula*) get their Latin name from "primus" meaning "earliest one," referring to their ability to bloom in late winter in milder climates, although they tend to bloom in February and March in Colorado. These flowers emerge from a ground hugging rosette of leaves and can be a range of colors like red, blue, purple, pink, yellow, and white to bring pops of color to the yard.

Hellebores or Lenten roses (genus *Helleborus*) have several cultivars that are easy to find in

the trade. Despite their name, they're actually a member of the buttercup family *Ranunculaceae*, and put out cup-shaped blooms similar to clematis and pasque flowers. Emerging around February and March, these cuties range in color from white, yellow, pink, peach, red, purple, and even green, usually with speckles or striations.

WINTER FLOWERING SHRUBS

A few shrubs also flower during the snowy months, like **witch hazel** (*Hamamelis sp.*) and **Oregon grape** (*Mahonia repens*). Both put out bright yellow flowers, with witch hazel in bloom from October to February depending on species and cultivar, while Oregon grape blooms in early spring. It also has the added benefit of holly-like leaves to double down on the holiday appeal.

WINTER BULBS

Ephemeral bulbs like **tulips**, **daffodils**, **crocus**, **winter aconite** (*Eranthis hyemalis*), and **snowdrops** (*Galanthus sp.*) offer pops of color and life in late winter as they pop their little heads out of the snow.

While it's a little late to get these plants in the ground now, it's a great time to consider adding winter and spring ephemerals to your landscape to lengthen your bloom season. With these plants, it may feel like spring isn't too far off.



SNOWDROPS



CROCUS



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



Join the biggest 24-hour giving movement in the state and help support The Friends of The Gardens on Spring Creek. Any gift made now through Dec. 9 counts towards our Colorado Gives Day total and supports The Friends mission to cultivate a world-class botanic garden through fundraising and advocacy.



It only takes a little to make a big impact! Set up a new monthly donation on ColoradoGivesDay.org, and Colorado Gives Foundation will match your first gift up to \$100. Monthly recurring donations provide The Friends with steady, reliable support. Even small contributions add up to make a big difference.



Donate using the payment method that works best for you. Give with a major credit card, bank account, PayPal, IRA Charitable Distributions, donor advised funds and many other forms of payment. See the Colorado Gives page for more information.





RARE BUMBLE BEE SPOTTED IN THE GARDENS SIGNALS HOPE FOR AT-RISK POLLINATORS



Laura Lukens, PhD Student,
Graduate Degree Program in
Ecology, Colorado State University

Colorado is home to just over 1,000 species of native bees, yet many face serious challenges. Although the European honey bee is often celebrated as a pollinator ambassador, it's not native to North America and can sometimes harm local bee populations by competing for resources and spreading pathogens.

At Colorado State University, the Forest & Rangeland Stewardship Bee Ecology & Extension Lab studies bee ecology across forests, urban areas, and fire-affected landscapes, combining genetics, fieldwork, and social research to turn science into action. This summer, I led a project exploring how urbanization shapes bumble bee communities and population health here in Fort Collins.

Bumble bees live in annual colonies founded by a single queen each spring. Colonies grow through the summer, producing female workers, males, and new queens, before dying out in the fall. Only the newly mated queens survive winter to start the cycle again. These pollinators are crucial for both wildflowers and crops, yet many species are declining due to habitat loss, disease, pesticides, and climate change. Three Colorado natives—the western bumble bee (*Bombus occidentalis*), Morrison's bumble bee (*Bombus morrisoni*), and the Southern Plains bumble bee (*Bombus fraternus*)—were added to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species and are undergoing status reviews for listing on the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

My team and I surveyed 40 sites across Fort Collins, from natural areas to residential neighborhoods, including the Foothills Garden at The Gardens on



Spring Creek. We observed more than 1,500 bumble bees of 13 species. At The Gardens alone, 175 bees of 7 species were recorded in just two visits—including the only sightings of the vulnerable Southern Plains bumble bee (*Bombus fraternus*).

The team has now moved from the field to the lab, where we are processing and analyzing genetic samples to assess population health. However, community data suggest some bumble bee species are thriving in urban areas with abundant flowers. Seeing vulnerable species like the Southern Plains bumble bee in these urban gardens gives us hope that cities can provide important refuges for at-risk pollinators.

WANT TO HELP BUMBLE BEES IN YOUR OWN YARD?

You can make a difference too! Planting a variety of flowers that bloom from spring through fall provides food and nesting resources for native bees. Bumble bees at our study sites especially favored wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseosa*), purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), common sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), Rocky Mountain bee plant (*Cleome serrulata*), blue giant hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*), milkvetch (*Astragalus species*), and purple prairie clover (*Dalea purpurea*). By adding these plants to your yard, you can create a pollinator-friendly oasis that supports local bumble bee populations, as well as other insects, birds, and wildlife. You can also contribute to citizen science projects like *Bumble Bee Atlas* or *iNaturalist* to help track and conserve native pollinators.

A CHANGING OF SEASONS

GOODBYE SUMMER,
HELLO WINTER SQUASH!



Kate Watson, Garden of Eatin' Gardener

Tucked behind our gorgeous Nutrien Outdoor Teaching Kitchen is one of The Gardens' largest gardens, the Garden of Eatin'. While the array of curated and ornamental blooms in our other

spaces is undoubtedly stunning, the Garden of Eatin' showcases a variety of beautiful and unique fruit and vegetable species, all while producing thousands of pounds of food for the **Food Bank for Larimer County**.

Our Garden of Eatin' is undergoing some changes. You may notice our small fruit bed, featuring elderberries and bush cherries, had some plants removed in order to control disease and pathogens. It will get reinvigorated this coming year with the addition of new small fruit selections. Stay tuned for this!

As the care of this garden goes through a transitional period, some of the vegetable production beds will be planted with cover crops. The "soil builder" mix we primarily use includes peas, triticale, crimson clover, and vetch. The use of cover crops improves the soil health by adding organic matter and nutrients. An unforeseen benefit of increased cover cropping will be more food for the rabbits, diverting them from our vegetables.

Going into our fourth year of collaboration, the Garden of Eatin' continues to partner with local

indigenous community members to grow traditional plants and vegetables in the Native Community Garden bed. This year's Native Community Garden Caretaker worked with a local artist to inspire new signage for this garden, including educational signs and labels. Keep an eye out for these next season!

As the season of summer veggies winds down, our cool season crops start ripening. A fun new addition this year was winter squash. With the holidays and warm flavors in mind, we planted pie pumpkins, kabochas, North Georgia candy roasters, dumpling and zeppelin squash. There are many types of sweet winter squash that make delicious pumpkin pies, which are not all true "pumpkins!"

Planting your seeds early enough in the season and consistent watering is key for producing good winter squash. With adequate garden space, you can save the seeds from this year's Jack O'Lanterns and grow your own for next year!

As this garden grows into its next era of food production, be sure to stop by to discover different types of vegetables you've never seen before. With 32 types of peppers, 15 types of tomatoes, 10 eggplant varieties, 12 different cabbages, and dozens of cucurbits and root vegetables, the Garden of Eatin' will help inspire your next vegetable patch.

TOTAL PRODUCE DONATED
(IN POUNDS) TO THE FOOD BANK
OF LARIMER COUNTY

4,465

TOP PRODUCERS (IN POUNDS)

894

SUMMER SQUASH

516

PEPPERS

687

CUCUMBERS

365

TOMATILLOS

CONIFERS:

PINING FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT



Bryan Fischer, Curator

Evolving considerably earlier than flowering plants (angiosperms), conifers represent a long-lived and successful lineage of trees classified as gymnosperms. Gymnosperms were among the first true seed-bearing plants and evolved before pollinators existed, so they produce enormous amounts of very small, buoyant pollen carried by the wind rather than by an insect or bird. Seeds on these plants are produced between or on scale-like structures (think pinecone scales), rather than in fully enclosed structures, like tomato fruits. Gymnosperm, in fact, is Greek for “naked seeds,” so just imagine what that might imply for the origin of the word “gymnasium.”

Long-lived, adaptable and attractive year-round, conifers represent a silver bullet of sorts for our Colorado gardens. Sadly, the overuse of just a few species and cultivars of these plants has given them a bad name. Don't be put off—judicious use of conifers makes perennial plantings “pop” and provides structural bones during the fall and winter months. Read on to find a selection of underused, adapted, and attractive conifers appropriate for gardens in our region.

PINUS BUNGEANA

With bark that exfoliates in camouflage-patterned chunks of metallic greens, browns, and ambers, *Pinus bungeana* makes an exceptionally interesting bed anchor. These slow-growing trees mature to rounded specimens of 30 feet tall over decades.

As far as plant pairings go, anything providing contrast in color, form, or texture is a good bet to grow with these dark-green garden sentinels. I often turn to vivid perennials and grasses, whose tawny and texture—rich winter forms contrast the enduring presence of *Pinus bungeana*. That being said, regular pruning from a young age is wise to ensure the unique bark on this species remains visible later in life, which will influence the plant palette they complement.

‘SLIM WHITEY’ BOSNIAN PINE

Narrower spaces can easily be accommodated with the upright forms of ‘Slim Whitey’ Bosnian pine (now *Pinus heldreichii*; formerly *Pinus leucodermis*), or ‘Chalet’ Swiss stone pine (*Pinus cembra*). Both remain less

than six feet wide and attain modest heights. After over a decade in our Rock Garden, neither has exceeded 15 feet. *P. cembra* ‘Chalet’ remains a personal favorite of mine, with dense, richly textured foliage and sage-green needles bearing white accents.

DWARF CONIFERS

For small spaces, or to preserve a vista, dwarf conifers represent the best option of the group. Diversity can be found at local nurseries, but origin matters: locally grafted trees are more likely to succeed. Large growers, often on the West Coast, graft onto rootstocks that aren't well-adapted to our region, so ask for regionally-produced stock at your local nursery.

PINUS DENSIFLORA ‘LOW GLOW’

Absolutely smitten with *Pinus densiflora* ‘Low Glow,’ I managed to score one through a friend. With perpetually spring-green needles, this plant brightens my garden in all seasons. I'm excited to try apricot-orange *Papaver spicatum* in front for an eye-popping color duo. Slow growing, *P. ‘Low Glow,’* put on only a few inches of growth annually and end up wider than they are tall (up to five feet across). Equally tidy and more petite, single-needle piñon (*Pinus monophylla*) is a small cousin to the two-needle piñon we are all familiar with. *P. monophylla* comes in a variety of colors and shapes, from forest green to dusty blue and round to teardrop.

Requiring minimal care after establishment and tolerating periodic drought, conifers make wise additions to our gardens, imbuing them with structure, winter interest, and texture that herbaceous perennials just can't match. Just be sure to branch out from junipers and spruce!



Pinus cembra ‘Chalet’



Pinus heldreichii ‘Slim Whitey’



Pinus monophylla dwarf

WINTER HOURS

TICKETS REQUIRED

Members receive free admission during normal business hours.

Our hours vary by season. Now through February, we are open:

- Six days a week (closed Thursdays) 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- Last Butterfly House entry at 3:30 p.m.
- **From Dec. 12-28**
The Gardens daytime visiting hours are 1-4 p.m.
(closed Dec. 25 & 26)

For more information, please visit fcgov.com/gardens/admissions.

CONTACT US

Phone: 970-416-2486
Email: gardens@fcgov.com
Web: fcgov.com/gardens



FRIENDS OF
THE GARDENS
ON SPRING CREEK

2145 Centre Ave. Fort Collins CO 80526



Give the *Gift* of The Gardens

Remember The Gardens for your holiday shopping! Give the gift of membership or browse our unique gift shop for jewelry, ornaments, kids activities, poinsettias, holiday cactus, and more!