PRESIDENT’S LETTER

Dear Friends of the Yampa River Botanic Park,

The bulbs are blooming and spring is coming back as a yearly gift of color. The ice in Peter’s Pond has melted and we are raking the leaves left over from last fall.

Observing the rebirth of the Park, I cannot think of anything else other than the gratitude we all have for so many people in our community. In the recent months, hospital workers, law enforcement, fire fighters, city employees, grocery store workers, truckers, post office workers, educators and parents and so many others made sure we all had everything we needed to live our daily lives. Many thanks to all of those who are working so hard when we need them the most.

We are filled with hope. The ospreys came back and are in their nest up high. What a daily show they put on! The new membership benefits have attracted more members to join and our supporters keep growing. The membership card allows you to enter other botanic gardens for free but your generous donations keep us free to the thousands who visit the Park every year.

New benches and some gardens are up for adoption, which is the best gift you can give to a special person in your life or to celebrate a meaningful occasion. Please think of us when you consider your legacy gifts. Call Jennifer to reserve your adopted garden, tree or bench!

Did you check out our new website? Please do, www.yrbp.org and stay up to date with the news of the Park.

You can also follow us on Instagram and Facebook at #yampariverbotanicpark. You will see weekly videos of what blooms and tips on gardening at altitude.

As you can see, this newsletter looks a little bit different. We thank our new editor Derek Maiolo. We hope you enjoy the articles and pictures.

Bob Enever just finished his new book “Birds of Steamboat Springs and Northwest Colorado,” which is already available. Finally, we will all be able to recognize the birds by their names! Our Children’s Activity books are again available for all children who visit the Park thanks to a repeat matching grant.

The Penstemon Garden inaugurates its first year as the re-designed Penstemon Garden. A must see!

Make plans to visit us often, we change every week. We will follow the safety guidelines required to make your experience free of worries. Check out the signs at both entries.

May the serenity and tranquility of the Park bring you and your loved ones strength and happiness as well as good health from now on.

See you at the Botanic Park!

Sonia Franzel, President
NATIONAL PUBLIC GARDENS WEEK

National Public Gardens Day was created in 2009 to drive local and national exposure to the importance of building vibrant, relevant gardens committed to community enrichment and environmental responsibility through community engagement, sustainable practices and conservation. In 2019, National Public Gardens Day became National Public Gardens Week!

National Public Gardens Week is May 8-17

Visiting public gardens is not just a matter of observing nature’s beauty in managed landscapes; it awakens our sanity, optimism, and happiness. Now, more than ever, is a time to celebrate the Yampa River Botanic Park and the many ways it impacts the community. Connect with us and our mission “a place of serenity, celebrating the trees, shrubs, plants and birds of the Yampa Valley” by visiting the Botanic Park during this celebratory week and following the Park on Facebook and Instagram #yampariverbotanicpark.

BIRDS IN THE PARK: THE SANDHILL CRANE Photos and text by Bob Enever

Once heard, you’ll never forget the sound of Sandhill Cranes calling. It’s called bugling but Ted Floyd* describes it as a throaty kr-r-r-ruck, and when the birds fly they repeat the sound continuously. The sound carries for a mile, so you will hear them before you see them. You are hearing the sounds of the Pliocene age, at least 2.5 million years ago when the species originated, and when 300 pound meat-eating Terror Birds inhabited the Americas and sharks grew to 50 tons.

By today’s standards Greater Sandhill Cranes are big birds, 4.5 to 5 feet tall, with a wingspan more than 6 feet and weight over 10 pounds. Their feathers are mostly gray but cranes preen themselves on iron-rich mud which turns their wing feathers brown. These birds mate for life and breed in Routt County and nearby areas. They eat seeds, grains and aquatic vegetation, but they readily snap up frogs and small animals for protein.

The flock that summers in Routt County flies with its young to winter in southeastern Arizona, in lakes and wetlands south of Willcox, in New Mexico. Other populations of Sandhill Cranes winter in the southern states and converge on the Platte River near Kearney, Nebraska in late February to fatten up for mid-April flights to their nesting sites, which are spread from Alaska to Hudson Bay and inside the Arctic Circle. If you go to this crane staging area in Nebraska in March and early April you will see and hear 600,000 cranes fly in tight formations around you and bugle for an hour before sunset; a deafening sound. When the light is almost gone from the sky they land in the shallow waters of the Platte River and the show is over for another 24 hours. If you are interested in Nature, those are sights and sounds you will never forget.

*Ted is editor of Birding Magazine and a leading expert on bird sounds. He leads birding walks in the Botanic Park during Crane Festival weekend.

ANNUAL FAIRY GARDEN HOUSE CONTEST SPROUTS UP AT YRBP

Contest Delivers Fun and Creative Activity for Youth During School Closures

This spring, the Yampa River Botanic Park will once again host its annual Fairy Garden House Contest. The contest is open to children of all ages, but one builder must be under 12 years of age. Entries are due no later than June 11, 2020. Judging will take place at 12:00 p.m. on Friday, June 12 by the Yampa River Botanic Park Design Committee. Winners will receive an annual membership to the Yampa River Botanic Park and other special prizes. All the submissions will be featured in the park’s Fairy Garden throughout the summer.

Visit www.yrbp.org for information office@yrbp.org | 970-846-5172
PLANT WHISPERER  By Sandi Molen

Meet Gayle Lehman, the Yampa River Botanic Park’s very own plant whisperer! Gayle has been with the Park for 23 years as Park Supervisor and most recently, Lead Horticulturist. Or in Gayle’s own words, “I’m in charge of all things growing!”

A third generation Coloradan, Gayle lives and breathes plants.

“I understand plants,” Gayle said. “I like to watch them grow, give them what they need to flourish, and sometimes they tell me!”

In spring, once the snow melts enough to navigate the Park’s walkways, Gayle will be one the first people in the Park, pruners and clippers in hand, checking for storm damage, checking for new growth, checking for that first pop of color from early spring bulbs.

Gayle proudly refers to herself as a tree hugger; many of the trees you see in the park were planted by Gayle.

“There are different rewards from watching an annual have an entire life cycle in one season, and hugging a tree that is big enough to hug that you planted 20 years ago,” she said.

Gayle, who is from Denver, moved to Steamboat Springs 40 years ago for “the winter” and like many Steamboat Springs residents, stayed for the summer. Gayle holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Interpretation from CSU College of Forestry and Natural Resources in Fort Collins (now known as the Warner College of Natural Resources).

Gayle learned to love the earth and the art of growing from her grandparents who were avid gardeners. As a young girl, Gayle spent summer months on long walks with her grandparents amongst the wildflowers in Colorado.

“Grampa had his veggies,” she said. “Granny had her flowers. She taught me the flower names. They got me hooked early.”

Like a mother who doesn’t play favorites, Gayle says she does not have a favorite plant or flower but when pressed she will tell you, “If I must pick only one, it is the Fairy Slipper Orchid (Calypso bulbosa). It grows here in the forest. It’s not tamable, it’s wild forever.”

Gayle says her biggest challenge working in the Park is coming up with fresh, new designs for the “Annuals Garden” each year. Gayle, who would be a watercolor artist IF she wasn’t a horticulturist, says working in the Rose Garden is her favorite way to spend time at the Park.

If Gayle had one wish for the future of the Park, she’d wish for a gift shop. “I would like to end up as the person in charge of the gift shop and sit and paint while doing that, like sort of retired,” she said.

Gayle’s role at the Park is more than just a job to her. “I have been able to help create a beautiful place in the world,” she said. “Who gets to do that!” “I hope my legacy will be my contribution to this special place.”

HERITAGE CIRCLE  By Jennifer MacNeil

The Botanic Park created a Heritage Circle for members who have demonstrated their commitment to the long-term sustainability of the Park through a bequest. If you have made arrangements for a planned gift, please let us know so we can welcome you to the Heritage Circle and ensure your intentions are honored. Membership in the Heritage Circle makes you a member of a small group of people who have taken an important step to ensure the Park’s long term future.

There are many ways that your philanthropic giving can blend financial needs and tax planning. Together, with your legal and tax advisors, the Yampa River Botanic Park can help you plan for tomorrow while receiving maximum benefit today. To discuss endowment funds, bequests, specific gift plans or membership in the Heritage Circle, please contact Jennifer MacNeil at jmacneil@steamboatsprings.net.
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* = Garden Sponsor
After years of overseeing the Yampa River Botanic Park's newsletter, two longtime board members are passing the pen to new leadership while keeping an active role in the park's operations.

Georgianne Nelson and Carol Dowden have worked together to compile and edit the bi-annual newsletter, which offers updates on the gardens and teaches readers about the plants and animals they might see there. From regular features, like Gayle Lehman’s News from the Shed, to unique stories, the publication has been a way to connect with the public and encourage more people to visit.

Carol has been volunteering with the Park since she stopped by on a bike ride in the summer of 1999. She and her husband had recently moved to Steamboat, and she was delighted to discover the gardens bursting with blooms of all colors. “It’s such a gem in this town,” Carol said of the park.

Georgianne has been a board member since the fall of 2007 and took over the newsletter about a year later. Carol soon joined her, and the two soon found they made a great team. Their different personalities were an ideal balance that kept them organized and creative. If one of them felt stressed, the other could find a way to calm the situation.

They also enjoyed their working relationship with Northwest Graphics, the local business that designs and prints the newsletter.

Under the two women’s leadership, the newsletter has doubled in size, and members seem more eager to contribute their writing and photos. For the members of the park who do not live in Steamboat, the publication provides a way to feel connected to what is going on and get updates on any changes.

The newsletters also help to reach residents who have lived in the area for a long time but may not know the park exists.

“A lot people still happen upon it and are amazed that something like this exists in Steamboat,” Georgianne said. “When they see the scope and the beauty of the Park, they are very happy and vow to come back — and become a member, we hope.”

Asked what prompted the decision to step down as the newsletter editors, the two women said they wanted someone to offer new perspectives and ideas.

While they have passed the baton on the newsletter, Georgianne and Carol will remain familiar faces around the Botanic Park. Both sponsor their own gardens, which they upkeep throughout the season. Carol cares for Dorothy’s Garden, a collection of mostly native plants that is popular among pollinators. Georgianne works in Doris’ Arbor Garden, which was created using a grant from the Colorado Garden Show.

The gardens are among their favorite spots in town for a stroll, a chat or a moment of relaxation.

Georgianne especially enjoys the quieter times at the Park when she can hear the bird songs and peruse the flowers uninterrupted. Carol appreciates the early mornings and late afternoons when the sunlight casts a gold, radiant glow on the plants and over the green lawns.

Both find delight in the ever-changing nature of the Park, how the gardens change from one week to the next and the life cycles of various birds and animals, from the resident ospreys to chatty squirrels, are on full display before their eyes.

Jennifer MacNeil and Derek Maiolo have taken over as the new editors of the newsletter. They look forward to putting their own creative touches to the publication while continuing the legacy of Carol and Georgianne’s hard work.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Due to COVID-19 all activities and programs are subject to cancellation and will follow the public health order. For more information on these programs and for up to date information on possible cancellations, please check our website and social media pages.

Yoga on the Green
Meet on the Green.

Guided Walking Tours of the Botanic Park
Wednesdays mid May – mid September, 10 am.
You must pre-register and wear a face mask.
Groups are limited to 9 people.
Meet at the Main Gate on the Botanic Walk.

Social Gardening
Stay tuned for plans to allow for volunteers in mid May under strict guidelines.

Children’s Storytime
Storytime is unfortunately cancelled for the season

Music on the Green
Is unfortunately not happening this season due to the Strings Music Festival’s summer cancellation.

Piknik Theatre Festival
July 27 – 30 and August 3 – 6, 5:30 – 7:30 pm.
Meet on the Green. Bring a blanket and picnic.

Glow in the Park
August 2, 6:30 pm. Meet by Peter’s Pond.

Annual Meeting and Celebration
A Members Only event, by invitation only. September 13, 4 – 7 pm.

Fall Bulb & Peony Benefit
Members Only Hours September 13, 4 – 7 pm.
Open to the public September 14 – 18, 8 am – 4 pm.
Trillium House.

GAYLE’S NEWS FROM THE SHED

By Gayle Lehman

Greetings from the new Horticulture Office located in the loft at the Trillium House. For this first installment of my new News, I am going to fill everyone in on the Plant Select® program. Plant Select® is a nonprofit collaboration of Colorado State University, Denver Botanic Gardens and professional horticulturists. Their mission is to seek out and distribute the very best plants for landscapes and gardens from the intermountain region to the high plains and beyond. Plant Select® is offering plants that provide more beauty with less work so gardeners of all levels can achieve smart, stunning and successful gardens using fewer resources and with a more positive environmental impact.

Plants chosen for program exhibit these eight attributes:
• Tough and resilient in challenging climates
• Thrive in a broad range of conditions
• Flourish with less water
• One of a kind/unique
• Long-lasting beauty
• Habitat-friendly
• Resist disease & insects
• Non-invasive

The Yampa River Botanic Park has been involved with the Plant Select® program for many years. I was approached by Panayoti Kelaidis of the Denver Botanic Garden and he suggested to me that we should become a member of this program. At my first Plant Select Annual Meeting they asked if we would like to trial plants for them. That meant free plants! Eagerly I agreed and the first flat of plants came home with me. After growing them for a full year, including our brutal winters, I would then report back on survival of the plants. This has happened more years than not. Many have done very well for us. We have a large patch of Zauschneria garrettii, Orange Carpet Hummingbird Trumpet, in our Orange Garden. There are also 3 species of Manzanita growing well in our Water Wise Garden. We were growing these before they were available in nurseries.

This program has introduced over 150 new plants to the nursery trade. Currently we are growing 39 species of Plant Select® plants. They are located all over the Park in various gardens. This brings me to our garden renovation project for this summer. In an effort to showcase these very cool plants, we will be constructing a garden with mostly Plant Select® plants. This will happen at the corner of the Green. With assistance from the Colorado Garden Foundation grant of $5,000 we will start construction this spring. See you in the gardens!
Membership Renewal Reminder

To donate by Visa/Mastercard, please visit www.yvcf.org/park and click on Donate Now.
To Donate with a check, please send your check with this form to:
Yampa River Botanic Park, P.O. Box 776269, Steamboat Springs, CO, 80477.

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In Honor / Memory of: ____________________________  □ Check here to subscribe to our E-Newsletter

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□ Gardening  □ Serve on the Board  □ Guided Tours  □ Plant Inventory
□ Plant Labeling  □ Events  □ Tool Care  □ Music on the Green

DONATION LEVELS:
□ Penstemon - $10,000+  □ Sunflower - $500+
□ Forget-Me-Not - $5,000+  □ Trillium - $250+
□ Sego Lily - $2,000+  □ Columbine - $100+
□ Shooting Star - $1,000+

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