

DENVER BOTANIC
GARDENS

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



OUR MISSION

The mission of Denver Botanic Gardens is to connect people with plants, especially plants from the Rocky Mountain region and similar regions around the world, providing delight and enlightenment to everyone.

The four core values of the Gardens – **transformation**, **relevance**, **diversity** and **sustainability** – spell out the Gardens’ intentions in the years ahead. These core values, along with the Gardens’ brand platform, strategy, icon and capital campaign, are cohesive and serve as a map to chart our course. With the support of friends, we set out to ensure Denver Botanic Gardens will forever flourish.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

There are years that take on an everlasting meaning. They usually signal major historic shifts, like 1066 or 1776. Sometimes they are just unusually difficult, like 2020. And then there are those years that serve a particular function. For the Gardens, 2023 was the year of the new foundation.

After an incredible effort to blast through the difficulties of 2020, the Gardens' team was poised and ready to go. By 2023, the Freyer – Newman Center finally reached its true use, chock full of classes, exhibits, movies, eager library users and scientists in the labs and herbaria.

In fact, many records were set in 2023 – highest annual attendance, largest household membership, largest operating budget, biggest number of amazing volunteers, and highest, well every indicator, at Chatfield Farms.

With the support of the citizens of the City and County of Denver, as well as generous donors, we completed three reenvisioned habitat gardens on the south side of the York Street location. And on the sustainability front, we made huge headway with water savings. First, by relining the waterfall and stream connecting Monet Pool and the Japanese Garden, we are now conserving over a million gallons of water. Then, remarkably, simply by removing most of the lawn along the east side of York Street and replacing it with xeric plants, we are saving 100,000 gallons a year.

And the engine behind all this progress? The Gardens' staff is a truly exceptional team, who continuously build a culture of caring, respect, kindness, forgiveness, and, yes, love – love for the people and mission we serve, love of possibilities and the healing power of nature. That is the power behind a record number of community partners we now celebrate – over 200. With each, we strive for authentic and reciprocal support of one another, and the results give our team a deep sense of purpose, which is a pretty wonderful way to live.

Now we see big visions for 2024 and beyond, with the underlying dream of a better world.

Onward.

Brian Vogt
CEO

BY THE NUMBERS

VISITORS	
Total annual attendance	1,434,573
MEMBER	
Member households	55,503
STAFF	
Full-time, part-time and seasonal	362
LIVING COLLECTIONS	
Families	246
Genera	2,283
Species	11,186
Taxa	20,238
Accessions	38,945
INDEX SEMINUM	
Institutions from which seeds were received	5
Accessions	34
<i>Denver Botanic Gardens did not have a seed offering in 2023 through Index Seminum</i>	
PLANT DISTRIBUTIONS	
Distributions made	717
Institutions that received distributions	36
<i>International recipients France, U.K. and Australia</i>	
PCC seed lot distributions from Tajikistan	425
Institutions that received distributions	13
PCC seed lot distributions from Uzbekistan	189
Institutions that received distributions	9
Seed lot distributions from <i>Quercus welshii</i> expedition (Utah & Arizona)	71
Institutions that received distributions	12
Accessions of <i>Syringa</i> for cultivar preservation	10
Institutions that received aquatic plant divisions	3
Seed lots shared with University of Dundee, Scotland	32
THERAPEUTIC HORTICULTURE	
Total number of people served	509
Total volunteer hours to program	171
Participants in Rocky Mountain Cancer Center Walks, 1 per season	40
Participants in Rocky Mountain Cancer Center Bonsai program	12
Participants in Shuttle Program, Cutting Garden	36
Participants in 12 SPARK! Alzheimer's Association programs	60
Participants in 12 offsite visits to Kavod Senior Living	60
Participants in 14 Sensory Adventures programs	206
Participants in 3 Sensory Adventures on the Road programs	75
Vocational trainees from Joshua School	6
Vocational trainees from REVEL	4
Vocational trainees for Garden Autism Services	9
Vocational trainee for Self-Determination Village (DPS)	1
URBAN FOOD INITIATIVES	
Community Garden pounds of produce donated	1,200
<i>Recipient: SAME Café</i>	
Community Garden gardeners	108
Total number of Community Garden plots	90
Individuals who received free or donation-based produce from Mariposa Grow Garden	827
<i>Recipients: Sun Valley and Mariposa neighborhoods</i>	
Pounds of produce donated	3,250
Community Supported Agriculture Pounds of produce grown	70,000+
15% donated to low/no-cost partnerships	
<i>Recipients: SAME Café, We Don't Waste, Denver Housing Authority, Metro Caring and more</i>	
HERBALISM PROGRAM	
Participants in 2 introductory classes	140
Participants in 23 certificate program classes	23
Participants in 4 Sip and Stroll Herb tours	60
CHATFIELD FARMS	
Total attendance	204,252
<i>3% increase over 2022</i>	
CHATFIELD FARMS HORTICULTURE	
New plant locations mapped	1,243
Unique accessions	1,009
Butterfly House visitors	23,119
<i>21% increase over 2022</i>	
SPECIAL EVENTS	
Spring Plant Sale	
Total attendance	14,672
Individual plants sold	57,700+
Gross revenue	\$564,579
Summer Concert Series & Evenings al Fresco	
Total concerts	10
Total concert attendance	27,472
Total Evenings	10
Total Evenings attendance	11,601
Lavender Festival	
Total attendance	12,573
<i>New record</i>	
Total vendors	70
Gross revenue	\$175,444
Fall Plant & Bulb Sale	
Total attendance	9,362
Individual plants sold	13,934
Gross revenue	\$131,174
Hop Festival	
Total attendance	1,092
Corn Maze	
Total attendance	60,663
Gross revenue	\$506,448
Pumpkin Festival	
Total attendance	39,082
Pumpkins sold	26,540
Total vendors	55
Gross revenue	\$666,416
Glow at the Gardens™	
Total attendance	22,020
Gross revenue	\$548,836
Blossoms of Light®	
Total attendance	195,000+
Gross revenue	\$4,194,536
<i>14% increase over 2022</i>	
Trail of Lights	
Total attendance	44,287
<i>New record</i>	
Gross revenue	\$600,615

PRIVATE EVENTS	
York Street	
Total events	505
Gross revenue	\$1,925,148
<i>New record</i>	
Total attendance	66,913
Chatfield Farms	
Total events	151
Gross revenue	\$580,940
RESEARCH & CONSERVATION	
Total accessions across natural history collections	103,166
New accessions	3,919
Number of newly planted trees surveyed, High Line Canal	272
BLM GRASSLAND RESTORATION EXPERIMENT CHATFIELD FARMS	
Number of length measurements taken	1,688
Number of plants observed to be flowering	30,468
Gigabytes of <i>Ericameria nauseosa</i> genomic data sequenced	678
BLM GRASSLAND RESTORATION EXPERIMENT CAÑON CITY	
<i>Artemisia frigida</i> seedlings counted in Cañon City restoration plot	
	5,501
<i>From 186,000 seeds sown in 2022</i>	
SEED CONSERVATION	
Number of species collected	10
Number of plants collected from	671
Number of seeds collected	32,183
RARE PLANT DEMOGRAPHIC MONITORING	
<i>Astragalus microcymbus</i> , number of fruits counted	2,976
<i>Sclerocactus glaucus</i> , number of flowers counted	1,619
<i>Penstemon harringtonii</i> , number of fruits counted	7,151
<i>Penstemon harringtonii</i> , number of rosettes counted	1,280
Number of GitHub repositories created or updated	21

SCHOOL OF BOTANICAL ART & ILLUSTRATION	
Number of online and onsite programs	203
Total number of students	2,722
LEARNING ENGAGEMENT	
Scheduled tours	362
Total tour attendance	2,210
Private tours	56
Private tour attendance	1,048
Visitors engaged by roving volunteers	7,759
Visitors who engaged with Science Chats and Learning Carts	30,957
Nerdy Naturalist Instagram videos	43
35 in English, 8 in Spanish	
Unique views	1,417,500
EDUCATION	
Participants in adult education programs	17,000
<i>New record</i>	
Total number of schoolchildren served	23,957
Total number of schools served	364
Number attending programs at Chatfield Farms	5,000
Number attending programs at PCC	3,000+
Number served at schools	30,000+
Participants in Family and Children's programs	13,000+
Attendance at Strolling Stories at Chatfield Farms	500+
Family and homeschool programs at PCC	1,000+
Total attendance to Ghosts in the Gardens	4,169
EDUCATION (continued)	
Gross revenue Ghosts in the Gardens	\$128,090
Pounds of produce donated by PCC heirloom garden	509
<i>Recipients: Aurora foodbanks</i>	
Pounds of produce used in onsite programming	100
HELEN FOWLER LIBRARY	
Interlibrary loans received	37
Interlibrary loans provided	57
Items checked out	3,076
Items renewed	1,007
Items used in library	2,159
Journals accessed (JSTOR)	1,361
Other e-resources used	267
New eBook registrations	97
New items added to collection	993
New patrons	388
Reference and general questions	410
Archives questions	53
Study and reading room reservations	509
Visitors to the library	10,161
COMMUNICATIONS	
Total pageviews for botanicgardens.org	12.6 million
Website visits via mobile device	68%
Botanic Buzz monthly e-news subscribers	132,000
Total email subscribers	163,000
Total social media impressions	30 million
Total press stories	5,000





Breaking Ice performance, Pillsbury House Theatre, 2023 American Public Gardens Association Conference

IDEA CENTER FOR PUBLIC GARDENS

The IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility) Center for Public Gardens™ is an initiative between Denver Botanic Gardens and the American Public Gardens Association (the Association), with support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, to help public gardens become places for all. In 2023, the Center graduated two cohorts, totaling 31 organizations in the U.S., Canada and the U.K. The third cohort launches in June 2024.

Additionally, the Center offered financial support. It awarded more than \$10,000 in scholarships to attend the Association’s annual conference and \$15,000 in IDEA internships to help diversify employment opportunities at the Gardens.

Articles published by the Center appeared in the Association’s magazine, *Public Garden*; *Sibbaldia: International Journal of Horticulture*; and *Botanic Gardens Conservation International’s* education review, *Roots*.

Lastly, the [resources page](#) on the Center’s website launched, which includes case studies and toolkits from cohort program projects.

INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

In February, board member Papa Dia led a trip to Senegal with three staff members: Phillip Douglas, director of horticulture and Center for Global Initiatives; Jennifer Riley-Chetwynd, director of marketing and social responsibility, co-director One World One Water Center (OWOW); and Billy Kanaly, film director. The team explored opportunities for Denver Botanic Gardens to assist in the development of a botanic garden and sustainable agriculture systems. OWOW partners with the U.N. Food & Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG). Meetings the following week with the U.N. FAO’s Dakar office and participation in the WASAG conference in Praia, Cape Verde, identified potential technical and financial support for this project.

The Taiwanese Academy of Ecology invited Phillip Douglas and representatives from the International Oak Society, Global Conservation Consortium for Oaks, Westonbirt Arboretum, Alliance for Conservation Tree Genomics and Botanic Gardens Conservation International to visit forested areas of Taiwan with great diversity in the family *Fagaceae*. Participants held a symposium in Taipei advocating for conservation strategies to protect vulnerable forest systems. A statement of support for these conservation measures was presented to both the president and legislature of Taiwan.

Douglas and Mike Bone, associate director & curator of steppe collections, traveled to Argentina in November to meet with staff from the Instituto Nacional De Tecnologia Agropecuaria (INTA). The Gardens secured a new agreement with INTA that allows for joint plant breeding and introduction.

Additionally, the Gardens shared 32 seed lots with University of Dundee in Scotland to build a North American plant collection focused on the shortgrass prairie.



Austrocactus bertinii, Argentina. Photo: Mike Bone



Baobab tree, Senegal. Photo: Jennifer Riley-Chetwynd



HORTICULTURE

The American Public Gardens Association-U.S. Forest Service Tree Gene Conservation Grant for *Quercus welshii* was successfully completed after a third trip to Utah and Arizona and further collaboration with local experts. Eight accessions of acorns and two accessions of cuttings of *Quercus welshii* were taken. Two accessions of *Quercus turbinella* were collected. Vouchers were collected from four additional non-fruiting sites. Acorns are growing in the Gardens' greenhouse for future planting or distribution to collaborators, in addition to 71 seed lots shared with 12 institutions.

As part of the [Sustainable Landscape Services program](#), turf along York Street at the Gardens was replaced with water-smart landscaping. The program also worked on various design projects with municipalities, nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Among the 18 organizations served in 2023 were the Clyfford Still Museum, Resource Central Garden in a Box, City of Castle Pines, Colorado Department of Public Health, Parkwood Meadows HOA, Cottonwood Plains Elementary School and others.

National Public Radio featured the Gardens' work propagating a rose plant discovered at Amache National Historic Site.

A viral TikTok video tested the strength of the Gardens' *Victoria amazonica* waterlily leaves. Multiple public gardens and zoos around the world joined in and a much larger 2024 Waterlily Weigh Off is planned.



URBAN FOOD INITIATIVES

Denver Botanic Gardens is committed to increasing access to fresh, healthy food through multiple community-based projects. The Temporary Grow Garden in Sun Valley was completed in August, positioned perfectly behind Sun Valley's People's Hub where residents come for a variety of workshops and community events. Though the garden wasn't in production, the farmstand served more than 30 individuals weekly, with mustard greens and collard greens being the most popular item at the stand. A pollinator garden and overwintering habitat were also planted and will continue to be developed in 2024.

For its eighth year, the [Beginning Market Farmers Certificate](#) course ran from May – September, and had six participants, most of whom were women of color. Students attended a series of lectures and hands-on workshops throughout the season taught by Gardens and CSU staff as well as area farmers. Workshops are held on farms to expose participants to as many different farming models as possible.

[The Chatfield Farms CSA](#) contributed in-kind support to various organizations. Educational farm tours, free admission and facility use for special events and fresh lavender was donated to Frontline Farms, a local food justice and farmer advocacy group. Tours, outreach events and youth engagement were organized for Spirit of the Sun, an Indigenous-led nonprofit, as was cold storage support for the organization's fresh produce delivery program. Lastly, event space was donated to Mile High Farmers' Producers Summit, an annual conference that educates and supports Denver farmers and producers.



Open Air Chapel meadow. Photo: Erik Geyer

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE, RESTORATION & ARBORICULTURE

Chatfield Farms' compost program diverted more than 100 tons of organic matter from the landfill, 25% more than in 2022.

The second year of a soil-mapping project with interns from University of Colorado Denver was completed. A series of physical soil tests was conducted to evaluate the soil's water absorption and retention capabilities, and the results were mapped to compare the effects of regenerative versus traditional soil management. This annual project culminated in a worm count (an indicator of healthy soil). The results revealed 392 worms, nearly three times the amount found in 2022 over the same 20 datapoints.

Microscopy assessments of soil and compost were conducted, quantifying and recording populations' beneficial bacteria, fungi, nematodes and protozoa.

Phase four of a multiple-year restoration project surrounding the Open Air Chapel was completed. Once finished, the 1.5-acre meadow will support native grasses and wildflowers not only for aesthetics, but also as a habitat for pollinators and other beneficial insects.

Assistant Manager of Natural Areas and Arboriculture Erik Geyer spoke at the Colorado Native Plant Society and the International Society of Arboriculture's annual conference. His article "Trees, Water, and Native Plants" was published in Arborist News magazine.



THE HELEN FOWLER LIBRARY

2023 was the year the library was rediscovered by members, staff and the public at large. The positioning in the Freyer – Newman Center, which is accessible without an admission ticket, and services helped drive overall visitation up 37%. Visitors appreciated the availability of the study rooms (80% reservation increase), asked more questions (41% increase) and used more e-resources (43% increase). This was also the first year since the Freyer – Newman Center opened that Colorado Master Gardeners returned to in-person hours at the new the Gardening Help office.

The library collaborated with Colorado Public Radio's Turn the Page with Colorado Matters, hosting Colorado author Camille Dungy. Her discussion with host Ryan Warner about her book, "Soil: The Story of a Black Mother's Garden," attracted an audience of Gardens members, CPR listeners, Rocky Mountain Land Library supporters and Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library patrons.

In addition to its own **programming** (like Nature Tales Story Time, Meet a Rare Book and Literature of the Land), the library also participated in Creative Convenings in April, hosted the Arbor Day Poster contest winners with Colorado Tree Coalition, offered a Teen Takeover with Gardens Teen Leaders and supported Raptor Day with the Raptor Education Foundation. Lastly, the Botanicycle made its debut on Earth Day, raising awareness for the library and bringing books into the Gardens for visitors to enjoy.





RESEARCH & CONSERVATION

Research revealed an undescribed species of thistle endemic to the La Sal Mountains of Utah. The newly described *Cirsium tukuhnikivatsum*, or La Sal thistle, is named for Mount Tukuhnikivatz, part of the La Sal Mountain range. Tukuhnikivatz is the Ute word for “where the sun sets last,” thus the name pays tribute to the legacy of use of the La Sal Mountains by indigenous people.

Through collaboration with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and more than a decade of studying population dynamics, the federally listed cactus, *Sclerocactus glaucus*, was found to be stable and resilient to both climate change and threats from energy development. As a result, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service recommended delisting, thus removing it from the Endangered Species Act. This delisting garnered a lot of regional press. The Gardens will continue to monitor the species for a minimum of 10 years.

A new project commenced in 2022 to assess genetic appropriateness of native species for large-scale restoration efforts, specifically focused on grasslands. Seed from of four native species was grown in a large common garden experiment at Chatfield Farms. The adaptive potential of species to respond to climate change was tested through warming and watering experiments. In 2023, data was collected on the second year of growth, survival, phenology and reproduction. These data will help in understanding the ability of restored populations to adapt to future environmental change.

A large collaborative project was initiated to study the effectiveness of transplanting a rare plant out of harm’s way. Expansion of a road for power line maintenance in western Colorado threaten the endangered species *Penstemon penlandii*. Over the next three years, monitoring will be done regarding the survival and growth of transplanted individuals relative to plants not transplanted.

Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) makes use of natural features, namely vegetation and soil, to hold or move stormwater in ways that benefit both humans and the environment. GSI along the High Line Canal in Denver was studied to explore whether naturally occurring plant communities can slow, spread and sink water to achieve desired GSI function. Initial results found that canal vegetation stabilized soils, and shrubs promoted deep-water infiltration.





COLLECTIONS

The *Cirsium funkiae*, or funky thistle, was the 100,000th specimen accessioned into the [natural history collections](#) of the Gardens.

By the end of the year, 16 months had been completed of a 20-month IMLS grant (MA-251823-OMS-22) funding the creation of a new acquisition system for the [living plant collections](#). The first phase developed a program to collect data associated with wild collections using a tablet. This new program was used to collect wild data for both international and domestic expeditions during the last quarter of 2023. The second phase, which is the creation of a web tool for collecting plant-ordering information, was in development and early testing at the end of the year.

Horticulturist Elena Shtern, Director of Outreach & Senior Curator Panayoti Kelaidis and Director of Horticulture and Center for Global Initiatives Phillip Douglas joined Johan Nilson of Gothenburg Botanic Garden on a plant collecting expedition to Uzbekistan. Partnering with the National Academy of Sciences in Tashkent, staff collected geophytes and other herbaceous perennials to add to the Gardens' steppe plant collections.

Twelve artworks in a variety of media were accessioned to the [art collections](#). Four were from exhibiting artists, five from Land Line Artists in Residence and three from private donors. An enhanced and integrated environmental monitoring system was installed throughout gallery and non-living collections spaces. A new From the Vault program series launched to introduce visitors to permanent art collections.

Two major technical systems in the Helen Fowler Library were updated and replaced. The electronic catalog was replaced with a modern system, creating a more user-friendly web experience. The entirety of the [library collection's](#) records was transferred to the new system. The circulating collection received RFID tags, like those adopted by many public libraries, to be compatible with the new system. Each book or volume required a tag affixed by a librarian and connected to the item record. The tagging took 184 hours. These updates are expected to keep the collection accessible to members for years to come and are already saving money in annual operating costs. Despite this ongoing technical work, the collection grew on pace with 2022.



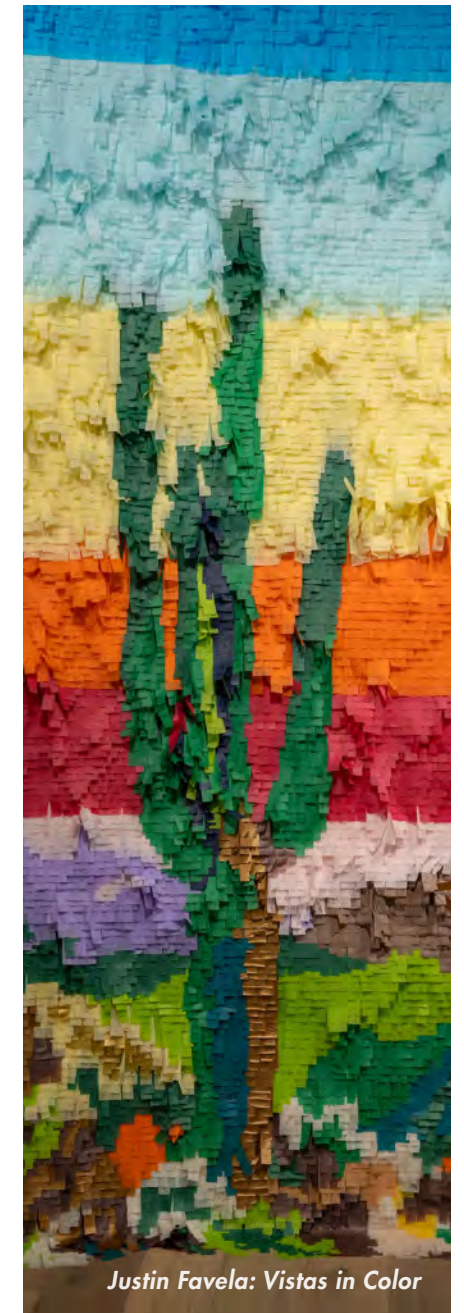
Tamara Kostianovsky with her sculpture *Redwood*

ART EXHIBITIONS

Eight exhibitions were presented in the Freyer – Newman Center galleries: *Melanie Yazzie: Peace Walking*; *Ansel Adams: Early Works*; *Renewal: Sculptures by Tamara Kostianovsky*; *Justin Favela: Vistas in Color*; *Indigo*; *Golden Legacy: 80 Years of Golden Books*; *Tropical Paintings of Manabu Saito*; and *Tanya Marcuse: Laws of Nature*.

Five traveling exhibitions organized by the Gardens circulated to other institutions in Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois and Wyoming—including *La Calavera Catrina*, *Golden Opportunity* and *Fares Micue: Dreams in Bloom*. Viewing stones were presented in a pop-up exhibition in partnership with the Rocky Mountain Bonsai Society.

The Science Pyramid was augmented with a custom display behind the Science Chat desk, offering additional space for specimen display and enhanced promotion for educational activities.



Justin Favela: *Vistas in Color*

ART & LEARNING ENGAGEMENT

In partnership with local nonprofit The Word for Diversity, the Exhibitions Department co-hosted the annual kickoff event in September for the National Endowment for the Arts' Big Read campaign, with live music, slam poetry, free books and vendors. More than 300 people attended. The Gardens also participated in Denver Arts Week's Night at the Museums. The Freyer – Newman Center was open and free for all from 5-10 p.m. with engaging activities, live music, films, cooking lessons and art demonstrations.

The Gardens' guide on Bloomberg Connects launched in November, joining an international network of more than 400 museums and cultural institutions on the free mobile app. Staff presented as part of the Cities Summit of the Americas Urban Live Lab symposium, as well as at the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) conference. Gardens exhibitions were featured in AAM's Museum magazine and Public Garden magazine.

The Land Line artist residency program hosted six resident artists: Kiki Gaffney, Yojiro Imasaka, Aisha Imdad, Cherish Marquez and Marcia Stuermer. The artists in residence created works in a variety of media including photography, watercolors and emergent technology.

(Continued on next page)



Indigo exhibition



Graduates from the School of Botanical Art & Illustration

The **School of Botanical Art & Illustration** (SBAI) expanded offerings to include bilingual courses and brought in out-of-state visiting instructors. Six students received certificates in botanical illustration. SBAI graduates displayed their work in a dedicated showcase.

The new program Gallery to Greenery paired an art curator with a horticultural curator to lead an intersecting conversation with visitors, examining the similarities and differences of how they view one another’s disciplines.

Community collaborations with the Nerdy Naturalist Instagram series included posts with Tyler Thrasher and the Denver Museum of Nature & Science’s Paleobotany Department, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, Longmont Museum and Agricultural Heritage Center (as part of the multi-location exhibition *agriCULTURE: Art Inspired by the Land*).

New interpretive signage included Willow Glade: In Celebration of Brandon Mandelbaum as well as multiple locations at Chatfield Farms—the Oak Savanna restoration project, compost demonstration site and climate change-related signage throughout the property among them.

SPANISH/BILINGUAL INITIATIVES & LATINO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Nerdy Naturalist Nature Walks debuted with casual science communication in Spanglish at city parks and on Mount Goliath. Free tours of York Street in Spanish were available throughout the year. Eight Spanish language Instagram reels were published, with “Chocolate en Español” gaining 61,500 views on TikTok. 42,272 English words were translated into Spanish for signage, interpretation, exhibitions, marketing and events.

The new series *Yo Soy* (I Am) was introduced. This year-long curation of exhibitions and events served as a platform to showcase the multifaceted aspects of Latino cultures, locally and globally. The Gardens hosted a variety of programs that included art exhibits, workshops and activities, both onsite and within the community. One highlight was *Yo Soy Arte: Calacas y Catrinas*, a partnership with Aurora Public Libraries featuring displays of the Gardens’ catrinas and related programming at library branches and onsite at the Gardens. Another was *Yo Soy Comunidad*, a partnership with Soccer City in Aurora celebrating Día de los Muertos, which engaged nearly 50,000 community members through programming, events and art exhibitions.



Yo Soy Arte: Calacas y Catrinas



DEVELOPMENT

More than 2,300 people donated over \$1,600,000 to support the Gardens' general operations. A single gift of \$500,000 named the new Willow Glade in honor of Brandon Mandelbaum. Donors dedicated 21 benches for a total of \$275,000. The Mordecai family matched Colorado Gives Day gifts up to \$60,000, and multiple donors contributed to double fall campaign gifts, increasing donations to \$155,000.

Contributing Memberships reached a record of 101 members, resulting in \$462,590. The program has seen a 28% increase in membership between 2020-2023, a testament to the growing support from individual donors.

Corporate Partnerships experienced remarkable growth: Corporate memberships surpassed 140, including 40 nonprofit organizations, fostering greater community engagement. New sponsors included eBikes USA and Denver Water. Steadfast supporters like UMB Bank, Xcel Energy, CU Medicine, Polestar Denver and more enriched visitors' understanding of environmental stewardship, health and wellness through aligned messaging and onsite presences. Corporate revenue soared to over \$665,000, supplemented by invaluable in-kind donations exceeding \$150,000 from companies like United Airlines, Elevated Third, Butler Rents and Halcyon, a hotel in Cherry Creek. Together, these partnerships empowered the Gardens to expand reach and deepen community impact.

Confirmed legacy commitments through wills and revocable living trusts (RLTs) grew to total an anticipated \$1.9 million and an additional \$2.5 million in identified gift intents received through an online tool supported by a partnership with FreeWill. Individuals who share with the Gardens their planned gift intentions may join the Gardens' legacy society, Perennial Friends. The generosity of Perennial Friends helps ensure Denver Botanic Gardens' stability for future generations.

Fête des Fleurs raised \$512,920 to support the Gardens' core outreach programs through the generosity of corporate sponsors, including GH Phipps, Andrisen Morton, Polestar Denver and attendees.

FUNDRAISING FOR CHATFIELD FARMS

More than \$4.75 million was raised for the Chatfield Farms Master Development Plan. This included a gift from Robert and Judi Newman to name the Welcome Center and a matching gift from board member Cory Freyer that raised over \$500,000. This funded Phase 1 of the project (construction for the Welcome Center, new parking areas, Market Square and new public restrooms, which began in early 2024).

The Denver Department of Health and Environment (DDPHE) funded operations at Chatfield Farms with a three-year grant for \$87,046, underwriting the organization's ability to store and deliver more produce to outreach partnerships. This support ensured that deliveries ran on a timely schedule, provided for more staff support and expanded cold storage for Urban Food Initiatives.

Following the successful conclusion of a planning grant for the rehabilitation of Hildebrand Ranch, the Colorado State Historical Fund granted additional funding of \$250,000 for Phase 1 of the rehabilitation process. The phase includes the stables, milk barn and granary and will conclude in summer 2024.



Rendering of Market Square, Chatfield Farms Master Development Plan



SPECIAL EVENTS

Music at the Gardens, produced in partnership with Swallow Hill Music, featured the Summer Concert Series and Evenings al Fresco for 20 nights of live music. Headlining the Summer Concert Series were artists such as Fitz and the Tantrums, Andy Grammer, Esperanza Spalding and Santigold. Evenings al Fresco, more intimate in size, featured local artists that celebrated Juneteenth, Pride and the AAPI communities.

Fall events were met with success. Pumpkin Festival at Chatfield Farms was called one of the best pumpkin patches in the U.S. by Wide Open Country. Glow at the Gardens™ continued to be a tour de force and all six nights sold out nearly a month in advance. "Glow Before Dark" launched, offering daytime guests the chance to view the décor. Additionally, the path was extended, with five new décor areas added, including Medusa's Garden, Rock Alpine Apparitions and Dinosaur Graveyard.

New records were set. At Chatfield Farms, the new Hop Festival contributed to the largest attended opening weekend of Corn Maze. This event featured samples of beer from Colorado's favorite breweries, live music, food and chances to learn about the hops and crops growing on the farm. Blossoms of Light® hit record highs for both revenue and attendance. The holiday lights event received national press on CBS' broadcast of the Broncos and Patriots Christmas Eve football game; was featured on the TODAY Show as part of holiday travel highlights across the country; included in U.S. News & World Report list of best holiday lights; was featured in House Beautiful; and among Denver Post's Top 10 Light Displays.





Educator Evening on the Farm

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Educational programs had a standout year. Adult programs performed particularly well, setting a record with 35% more registrations. Those with the most growth were Japanese Tea Ceremonies, health and wellness classes, and Ghosts in the Gardens. The Rocky Mountain Gardening certificate program increased by 500 registrants. Two large symposiums took place March 10 and 11 – the Tree Diversity Symposium and New Gardener Boot Camp—resulting in 449 symposium students served in just 48 hours.

School program registration increased 23%. About 30% of participating schools benefited from reduced costs through the Gardens' school access program. At the second annual Educator Evening on the Farm, teachers learned about the Gardens' programs while exploring Chatfield Farms, the butterfly house and booths presented by partner organizations.

Garden Camp registration sold out within an hour of opening and Farm Camp within one week. Openings for Spring Break Camp were increased to accommodate more children, and Spring Break Camp returned to Chatfield Farms for the first time in several years.

Family and children's programming grew 22%. The Nature Journaling Homeschool Program debuted at Chatfield Farms and its success ensured a return in 2024. The Gardens partnered with National Wildlife Federation's Early Childhood Health Outdoors (ECHO) program to host a booth at the Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference. More than 350 early childhood professionals visited the booth to learn about integrating nature into early childhood settings.

Attendance at [Plains Conservation Center](#) (PCC) programs grew by more than 50%. The PCC team co-hosted the second annual Agriculture Festival with the City of Aurora in September and also held a community art show and reception, with more than 120 artists represented.

The success of increased registration resulted in a 20% increase in revenue over 2019's (pre-pandemic) numbers, allowing the Gardens to maintain vigorous programming as costs rose.





OPERATIONS

Sustainability and water savings remained top priority. A new water filtration system was enabled to reduce water waste generated by the reverse osmosis process used to supply pure water for many of the greenhouse plants. The new charcoal bag filtration saves hundreds of gallons of water daily.

The ongoing work of upgrading HVAC and electrical systems throughout the York Street campus over the last five years continued in 2023. Replacement of the final few rooftop units neared completion. All systems will be tied into one centralized control system.

The renovation of wood trim in Mitchell Hall, which began in 2022 with the stage surround, was completed, tying the room into the overall historical presentation of Boettcher Memorial Center.

As the Gardens became even busier, safety and security protocols adjusted to provide for the best possible visitor experience, while also ensuring the safety of all visitors and staff. Updated policies included reduced use of golf carts front of house during business hours and locked-down access points into the Gardens.

Large-scale construction projects commenced for Boettcher Memorial Center roof replacement and solar installation, HVAC replacement in the Tropical Conservatory and the modernization of two elevators. These projects will be completed in 2024.

THE SHOP AT THE GARDENS

The Shop at the Gardens presents a compelling first impression for visitors to the York Street location, but it is also an increasingly important revenue generator for the Gardens. Sales approached an all-time high of nearly \$2.5 million in 2023, more than an 11% increase from 2022. With a diverse product mix in terms of price points and offerings, the Shop's annual sales per square foot (\$1,170) compared quite favorably to what is "typical" for retail (for example, a typical department store rate is \$435).





VOLUNTEERS

Total Active Volunteers:	2,095
Total Volunteer Visits:	21,717
Total Volunteer Hours:	65,127



HOURS BY DEPARTMENT AND AFFILIATE VOLUNTEER GROUPS

Horticulture:	14,245
Special Events:	14,176*
Research & Conservation:	3,362
Chatfield Farms (CSA, horticulture, greenhouse and occasional programs):	5,447
Chatfield Farms (visitor experience):	521
Children's education and school groups:	1,322*
Adult education:	1,048
Learning engagement:	1,419
Summer teen program:	1,446*
Gardens Teen Leaders:	430
York Street Ambassador and Visitor Experience Programs:	4,591
Docent program:	3,411*
Helen Fowler Library:	1,633
Development:	155
Marketing:	1,118
Volunteer engagement:	1,499*
Plains Conservation Center:	500

*Includes hours from York Street and Chatfield Farms

HOURS BY AFFILIATE VOLUNTEER GROUPS

Denver Botanic Gardens Guild:	5,496
Garden Club of Denver:	1,024
Rocky Mountain Weavers Guild:	1,280
Master Gardeners Garden Help:	638

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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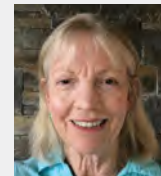
Melissa Eliot



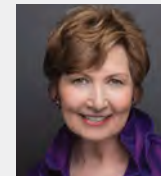
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MESSAGE FROM THE 2023 BOARD CHAIR

As we highlight our achievements of the past year, I'm reminded of the incredible impact Denver Botanic Gardens has both in our local community and around the world. We welcomed over 1.4 million visitors to the York Street location and over 200,000 to Chatfield Farms. Our plant collections have grown to over 38,000 accessions representing more than 11,000 species. We provided educational opportunities for over 30,000 students and 17,000 adults. Our impact extended from an urban agriculture consultation in Senegal to the Gardens' guide launching on Bloomberg Connects; from the renovation of existing gardens at York Street to laying the groundwork for Chatfield Farms' Master Development Plan. Denver Botanic Gardens continued its broad interpretation of connecting people with plants. This mission is fulfilled each year in countless ways, but regardless of the audience or the manner in which the Gardens pursues these connections, they are always genuine and lay a path toward environmental and social advancement.

CEO Brian Vogt's unwavering leadership infuses each endeavor with an enthusiasm that is contagious. His steadfast stewardship remains the Gardens' cornerstone, inspiring the dedicated leadership team and staff as they undertake fresh initiatives to engage and enrich our communities.

Our board of trustees is strengthened by our diversity and engagement, reflecting the community we serve. This group of thoughtful, committed and talented individuals guide the Gardens toward its vision of creating spaces and experiences for all people.

None of our achievements would be possible without the incredible support of our members, donors, staff and volunteers. These collectively allow us to strengthen our institutional position at the intersection of art and science.

With sincere appreciation for your meaningful engagement,

Mike Imhoff
Board Chair



TREASURER'S REPORT

The accompanying financial statements include the accounts of Denver Botanic Gardens Endowment Inc. ("DBGE") a separate nonprofit organization established in 1991 that holds a majority of the Gardens endowment funds and also includes the accounts of the Denver Botanic Gardens Guild, an affiliated volunteer organization that works for the betterment of the Gardens by providing volunteer assistance and financial aid.

In 2023, the Gardens continued its mission of connecting people with plants with an operating budget of \$37 million, a 12% increase from 2022.

Non-operating activity included: endowment and capital gifts of \$5.5 million; investment gains on the endowment (net of distribution) and other holdings of \$5.0 million; and capital expenditures of \$5.5 million. Under the operating agreement with the City all capital improvements become assets of the City and as such are not reflected as the Gardens' assets in the accompanying financial statements. These capital improvements, however, are central to our mission and the experience of visiting the Gardens.

Total expenditures for program services, which include our core programs in horticulture, research, education and Chatfield Farms, amounted to \$32.3 million.

Endowment net assets increased from \$42.4 million in 2022 to \$47.2 million in 2023 after contributions, realized and unrealized losses, and a \$1.5 million distribution to the Gardens' operating budget. Endowment investments are stated at fair market value each year and for 2023 the change in fair value resulted in a gain of 16%. In accordance with the endowment's investment policy, determined by the DBGE Board of Directors, the portfolio is diversified to limit risk. Since its inception in July 1992, the portfolio has earned a compound annual growth rate of 7.7%.

During 2023 the finance committee of the board of trustees, the chair of the board, the CEO and the CFO met regularly to review financial statements and results. This committee also approved the annual operating budget, the Internal Revenue Service Form 990 and made recommendations on various policy decisions to the Board of Trustees and the CEO.

On behalf of the Gardens, I would like to thank the members, donors, the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) the City and County of Denver, and the staff and volunteers for their foundation of support as we endeavor to ensure that the Gardens will forever flourish.

Abe Rodriguez
Treasurer, Board of Trustees

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (DECEMBER 31, 2023)

Assets	2023	2022
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$7,556,287	\$9,688,948
Short-term Investments	13,323,796	7,940,207
Long-term Investments	47,180,290	42,435,741
Supplemental Lease Payment Fund	977,584	964,539
Accounts Receivable	2,223,821	2,467,902
Employee Retention Credit Receivable	—	3,081,876
Contributions Receivable	5,001,846	1,438,772
Prepaid Expenses	369,916	341,087
Inventory	405,710	411,988
Leases - Right of Use Asset	483,114	—
Property and Equipment, Net	1,172,406	868,944
Total Assets	\$78,694,770	\$69,640,004
Liabilities	2023	2022
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	\$2,765,143	\$2,703,323
Deferred Revenue	4,705,794	5,537,038
Lease Liabilities	483,114	—
Total Liabilities	\$7,954,051	\$8,240,361
Net Assets	2023	2022
Without Donor Restrictions	\$33,854,458	\$31,834,275
With Donor Restrictions	36,886,261	29,565,368
Total Net Assets	\$70,740,719	\$61,399,643
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$78,694,770	\$69,640,004



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES (DECEMBER 31, 2023)

Operating Revenues, Gains and Support	2023	2022
SCFD	\$6,640,198	\$6,544,008
Membership Dues	4,494,290	3,968,200
Admissions	3,943,849	3,802,288
Special Events and Facility Rentals	8,245,770	7,472,178
Contributions and Grants	5,980,930	4,082,095
Chatfield Farms	2,913,989	2,693,477
City and County of Denver	1,145,078	1,122,625
Educational/Public Programs	1,370,464	1,061,798
The Shop at the Gardens	1,172,144	1,049,482
Endowment Distribution	1,459,991	1,314,563
Other	1,193,789	525,386
Total Operating Revenues, Gains and Support	\$38,560,492	\$33,636,100
Operating Expenditures	2023	2022
PROGRAM SERVICES		
Horticulture, Science, and Conservation	5,923,828	5,329,905
Education and Outreach	6,449,384	5,799,305
Chatfield Farms	4,066,359	3,560,522
Visitor Experience	8,786,999	8,030,711
Operation & Maintenance	7,061,271	6,227,959
Total Program Services	\$32,287,841	\$28,948,402
SUPPORT SERVICES:		
General and Administrative	2,891,803	2,378,370
Fundraising	1,928,153	1,666,540
Total Support Services	\$4,819,956	\$4,044,910
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES	\$37,107,797	\$32,993,312
Change In Net Assets From Operating Activities	\$1,452,695	\$642,788
Non-Operating Activities	2023	2022
Endowment and Capital Campaign Contributions	5,503,804	4,206,638
Capital Projects	(5,511,691)	(1,608,954)
Bond Proceeds	2,942,333	57,667
Investment Returns	4,953,935	(6,460,988)
Total Nonoperating Income	\$7,888,381	\$(3,805,637)
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$61,399,643	\$64,562,492
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	\$70,740,719	\$61,399,643

2023 GIFTS & DONATIONS

\$25,000 and Above

Citizens of the Scientific & Cultural Facilities District
Bank of America
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Christina Brickley
Mrs. Cameron Burn
Mr. and Mrs. Richard K. Clark
Mrs. Edward Connors
Denver Botanic Gardens Guild
Denver Public Health and Environment
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Estate of Sylvia Knobloch Brown
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UMB Bank
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Shan and Steven Ring
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Marc and Amity Cooper
Pete and Marilyn Coors
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Emily Counley
John and Kay Cowling
Polly Cox
Katherine Coyle
Vanessa Craig and
Eric Thompson
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Landscape Architecture
Toni and David Curran
DALYTE
Sheila Davaney
David B & Gretchen W Black
Family Foundation
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Dianne and Dale Dawson
Patricia Delano
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Dr. Lisa Schilling
William DeMars
Monica and John Denler
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Michael R. Bares
David and Anne Diamond
Fred Dierksmeier
Katherine Dines and
David Miller
Joy and Chris Dinsdale
Ms. Robin Doerr
Ann W. Douden

Molly Doyle
Megan and Andy Draper
Melissa and Alex Drayer
Kathryn and Gary Dudley
Ben Dukes and Mary Dukes
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Dilek and Mathew Eccles
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Victoria and Stephen Eppler
Edward Erickson and Dea Shea
Trent Erway
Fairfield and Woods, P.C.
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Teresa and Kelly Ferguson
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Nagel Family Fund
Shaw Charitable Trust
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