

The background of the entire cover is a close-up photograph of numerous pink flower buds, likely from a species of Allium, arranged in dense, rounded clusters. The buds are in various stages of development, with some showing more color than others. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the texture of the buds. In the top right corner, there is a white rectangular box containing the magazine's title.

# INSIDE

## THE GARDENS

SUMMER 2025 A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR  
MEMBERS OF DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS



Just over 14 years ago, I got a phone call from Brian Vogt. He had read my cover letter expressing interest in the director of marketing role at Denver Botanic Gardens. That was a life-changing moment for me as it led to my moving back to Denver (I had grown up here) to join Brian in his quest to change the world.

Brian had a blue-sky approach to fulfilling the Gardens’ mission of connecting people with plants. He encouraged staff to pursue their passions and channel them into meaningful impact through our core values: sustainability, diversity, relevance and transformation. My personal and professional passion is water advocacy. Having spent eight years overseeing water-oriented corporate social responsibility for the irrigation company Rain Bird, I worked regularly with public gardens across the U.S. and the world. I joined the American Public Gardens Association board and would regularly hear about the amazing culture Brian Vogt was creating at Denver Botanic Gardens.

It was the can-do, optimistic culture Brian developed that created the opportunity for Denver Botanic Gardens to effect positive change regionally and globally in countless ways. This edition of Inside the Gardens showcases how water stewardship was just one manifestation of this impact.

Some highlights of the Gardens’ [water-related work](#) over the years:

- We’ve educated Colorado on its global “steppe” connections.
- We’ve grown Plant Select® (a partnership with Colorado State University) into the trusted source for plants that thrive in our semi-arid region.
- We’ve launched a regenerative agriculture program built around soil management for increased water retention.
- We’ve partnered with Metropolitan State University of Denver to manage the One World One Water Center.
- We’ve married art and science through water-themed exhibitions and engagement in the Science Pyramid and the Freyer – Newman Center.
- We’ve partnered with the UN Food & Agriculture Organization to incorporate nature-based solutions developed at Chatfield Farms into urban agriculture projects in Senegal.
- We’ve continued to serve as an official precipitation monitoring station to aid state and federal agencies.
- We’ve trialed new technologies including solar-powered atmospheric water harvesters.
- We’ve launched the Sustainable Landscape Services program to aid municipalities and others in converting landscapes from water-intensive turfgrass to low-water-use plantings.

Brian left his imprint on these past and ongoing initiatives, and he helped plant the seeds of those to come.

Now serving as the Gardens’ interim CEO, I’m forever grateful for that phone call years ago and for the years I worked with him in my capacity as the director of marketing and social responsibility here. The ripple effects of Brian’s time at the Gardens are never-ending.

Jennifer Riley-Chetwynd  
Denver Botanic Gardens Interim CEO



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# INSIDE THE GARDENS

ISSUE 3, 2025

**Denver Botanic Gardens**  
1007 York St., Denver, CO 80206  
Hours through September 1,9 a.m. – 9 p.m., last admission 8 p.m.

**Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms**  
8500 West Deer Creek Canyon Rd., Littleton, CO 80128  
Pre-purchased tickets and advance member passes only.  
Hours: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., last admission 4 p.m.

[Check the website for early closures](#)

**General Information:** 720-865-3500  
**Class Registration:** 720-865-3580  
**Donations:** 720-865-3528  
**Gift Shop:** 720-865-3595  
**Membership Services:** 720-865-3525  
**Private Events:** 720-865-3551  
**Volunteering:** 720-865-3609  
**Helen Fowler Library:** 720-865-3570

**Visit Our Website for More Information:**  
[Gardening Help from Colorado Master Gardeners](#)  
[Kathryn Kalmbach Herbarium](#)  
[Sam Mitchel Herbarium of Fungi](#)

**Editor:** Tiffany Coleman  
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**Photographer:** Scott Dressel-Martin

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.

DENVER BOTANIC  
GARDENS  
botanicgardens.org



The Gardens is grateful for funds from the Scientific & Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), which enable us to expand services and enhance the quality of our programs and exhibits.





# RETHINKING LAWNS:

## Prairie Restoration as a Water-Smart Solution

*By Larry Vickerman, Director of Chatfield Farms*



Photos by Larry Vickerman



As Colorado continues to grow and our water resources become increasingly scarce, conserving this precious resource has never been more important. In response, state lawmakers have passed several new laws aimed at reducing the use of thirsty turfgrass in our neighborhoods, businesses and public spaces. One of the most notable, House Bill 22-1151, even offers financial incentives to help people swap out their traditional lawns for more sustainable landscaping.

So, what comes next after bluegrass and fescue? That's the question we're exploring at Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms through a partnership with Denver Water. Together, we're reimagining what low-water landscapes can look like—specifically through the use of native wildflower meadows.

It sounds idyllic, right? Just scatter some wildflower seeds, scratch the soil and boom: A meadow bursts into life! If only it were that simple.

In reality, creating a successful meadow takes planning, patience and a solid understanding of prairie ecosystems. Over the past 20 years at Chatfield Farms, I've been working on just that. Thanks to generous funding from Denver Water, we're now building on that knowledge to create step-by-step guidelines for

establishing and maintaining wildflower meadows that are both beautiful and cultivated to endure the test of time—and inevitable drought.

Here's a glimpse into what we're focusing on:

- **Soil prep and weed control:** These are the foundations of any successful planting. Get them right, and you're well on your way.
- **Weed management before and after seeding:** It's not a one-and-done effort. Ongoing care is key.
- **Smart seed mixes:** Combining native grasses with annual and perennial wildflowers helps ensure long-term health and color.
- **Timing your seeding:** Whether it's spring with pre-chilled seeds or a fall dormant planting, timing matters.
- **Long-term maintenance:** Once your meadow is established, how do you keep it healthy, diverse and blooming from spring through fall?

By combining prairie restoration principles with practical landscaping needs, we hope to inspire a new vision for Colorado's yards and public spaces—one that's resilient, water-wise and full of life.



# MAKE A SPLASH WITH A LOWER WATER LANDSCAPE

By Marissa Sterrett, Manager of Sustainable Landscape Services



Photos by Marissa Sterrett

Whether you are ready to wade into water-smart gardening or commit to the full plunge, here are two ways to help you get started.

## High and Dry: Swap out thirsty plants

A low-water garden can be both beautiful and sustainable. When selecting plant material for a low-water landscape, choosing Colorado native and adapted species is a good place to start. These plant species tolerate harsh conditions, including our relatively low amounts of natural precipitation. There are hundreds of native and adapted plants to choose from when designing a low-water landscape. One I like is *Cotoneaster soongoricus*, the Sungari redbead cotoneaster. This medium-sized shrub puts on a lovely display of white flowers in the spring followed by showy berries in the fall and is incredibly drought tolerant. Another durable and dependable choice is *Echium russicum* (red feathers). Native to the Asian Steppe, this small-growing wildflower has striking burgundy blooms and attracts pollinators.

## Treading Lightly: Update maintenance practices

So, converting your Kentucky bluegrass lawn to a species with lower water requirements isn't an option yet. You can still conserve water by changing your lawn maintenance. Large Kentucky bluegrass lawns often have areas that are either underutilized or not utilized at all. Cutting back the frequency with which you mow from once weekly to once monthly will allow the grass blades to grow long and flop over. The long turfgrass blades will naturally create a thicker mass, slowing the evaporation typical with a mown lawn and significantly reducing the amount of water you need to use.

Test the waters and see the difference a sustainable landscape can make.

# WATER-SMART READING LIST

By Sean Grimes, On Call Librarian

Explore the Helen Fowler Library for resources to help make your garden water-smart.

- **Xeriscape Handbook** is a comprehensive and indispensable look at xeriscaping. Derived from "xeros," the Greek word for dry, xeriscaping emphasizes drought-resistant, sustainable plants in garden design. Author Gayle Weinstein designed our **Dryland Mesa** garden in 1986. New plants introduced to this garden receive minimal hand watering to help them acclimate, but otherwise the garden has not received watering beyond natural precipitation since 1997.
- **Waterwise Plants for Sustainable Gardens** offers 200 choices for planting sustainable gardens in all climates. Designs by author Lauren Springer Ogden were used as guidelines for our **Roads Water-Smart Garden**. Established in 1995, the garden is composed of xeric plants with both local and global origins. This garden is sloped, and plants are grouped vertically according to their watering requirements, with thirstier plants located at the bottom.
- **The Wild Garden** by Violet Stevenson has examples of gardens modeled off local vegetation, and its index of native meadow grasses helps the reader move away from more water-dependent varieties. **How to Get Your Lawn Off Grass** by Carole Rubin is another resource for transitioning your lawn away from traditional grasses, this time with a focus on non-grass species entirely. **The Laura Smith Porter Plains Garden** demonstrates what Denver looked like before urbanization. Comprised of native species, this garden receives no watering beyond naturally occurring precipitation.
- Denver Botanic Gardens has two green roof gardens you can visit: the **Green Roof** garden above Offshoots Café and **Mordecai Children's Garden**. The plants in these gardens are selected for drought tolerance and little irrigation is supplied beyond natural precipitation. Green roofs help improve local water systems through filtering inclement weather, decreasing ambient heat and managing water runoff. Check out **Green Roofs in Sustainable Landscape Design** by Steven L. Cantor to learn the basics of green roof design, assembly and maintenance.





# GARDEN EVOLUTION

*By Dan Johnson, Associate Director & Curator of Native Plant Collection*

We all evolve over time, and so do our gardens, even the iconic ones that we consider “core” to the Gardens’ mission and aesthetics. The Roads Water-Smart Garden on the harsh south side of the Boettcher Memorial Tropical Conservatory is a prime example of this evolution. What started 60 years ago as a low-maintenance display of a few high desert natives has gradually evolved into a proving-ground for adaptable plants from Asia, Africa and Europe. A constant influx of “trial plants” ensued over the decades—sometimes with intentional design goals in mind, sometimes just squeezed in to any suitable open space.

As a result, a lack of structure emerged. The texture of some sections had become homogenous. It was difficult to make the best use of deeper areas toward the back, where labels were hard to read, and access was challenging. Some “trial” plants had thrived, but in the wrong place, and thus had grown out of proportion.

Time to apply intelligent garden design. Relocation, purging and replanting ensued, but as gardeners know, just using “good plants” is seldom enough. The addition of rustic stone paths improved access, offering entirely new



Photo by Dan Johnson



Photo by Dan Johnson

vantage points—but also created opportunities for more complex design in areas that had previously been simple background planting. The strategic addition of large boulders added essential structure. They also enhanced microclimates and enabled intimate vignettes that translate easily into home gardens. Improved labeling now highlights the plant diversity of this garden and helps visitors identify the plants they love.

Receiving only a fraction of the irrigation of traditional gardens, the Roads Water-Smart Garden continues to set a standard for gardening in semi-arid climates, with appropriate and exceptional plants from around the world. As we continually strive to connect people with plants, we hope the Water-Smart Garden is never a static display, but always a complex and evolving entity that continues to inspire best practices in beautiful yet water-thrifty gardens for the Rocky Mountain region.





EVENINGS AL FRESCO

Various dates July – August, 5-8 p.m.  
\$22-\$32, tickets must be purchased in advance.

Produced in partnership with Swallow Hill Music, Evenings al Fresco provides visitors with a cherished way to enjoy summer at our York Street location. Each night features a vibrant mix of talented local musicians performing unamplified against a stunning backdrop of peak summer blooms. Pack a picnic, gather your friends and family members, and wander the Gardens during the golden hour on these relaxing musical evenings.



CORN MAZE AT CHATFIELD FARMS

Fridays – Sundays, September 19 – November 2, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
\$10-\$20, tickets must be purchased in advance.  
Tickets go on sale starting September 3.

Fly through seven acres of twists and turns in this year’s birds-of-prey-themed maze. Track down the life-size birds of prey Denver Audubon has set throughout the maze. On select Saturdays from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Nature’s Educators will be onsite with live birds. Kids can enjoy the mini maze and barrel train rides. Climb into the life-size eagle’s nest for a photo op! Add on our puzzling escape room and then take a break with tasty treats like funnel cakes and kettle corn from one of our food vendors.



LAVENDER FESTIVAL AT CHATFIELD FARMS

Saturday & Sunday, July 19 & 20, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
\$7-\$17, tickets must be purchased in advance.

Chatfield Farms’ Lavender Garden sets the scene for this annual festival. Vendors will be selling everything lavender-themed, from food to candles. Live music, classes, kids’ activities and a chance to explore all the gardens make this festival a must for summer!

**New this year:** Check out our Market Square and Robert & Judi Newman Welcome Center. This festival continues to grow in popularity so be sure to get your tickets early.



HOP FESTIVAL AT CHATFIELD FARMS

Saturday, September 20, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
\$12 add-on fee with purchase of Corn Maze ticket.  
Tickets go on sale starting September 3.

Kick off the fall season at Hop Festival, Chatfield Farms’ beer festival. Sip samples from some of Colorado’s favorite craft breweries, including some brews made with hops grown at Chatfield Farms. Learn all about our hops, enjoy home-brew demonstrations, grab a bite to eat from food vendors and then get lost in our Corn Maze.



FÊTE DES FLEURS

Friday, August 22, 5:30-11 p.m.  
SOLD OUT

Enjoy an elegant black-tie evening, where vibrant florals set the stage for celebrating the 41st annual Fête des Fleurs and contributions raised support the Gardens’ core outreach programs. This elegant evening of cocktails, dinner, live music and dancing promises an extraordinary and memorable experience.



FALL PLANT & BULB SALE

Friday & Saturday, September 26 & 27, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
Free; advance reservations required.  
Reservations available starting September 3.

Your perfect spring garden starts in the fall. Explore hundreds of bulb varieties like hyacinths, tulips and daffodils plus garlic grown at Chatfield Farms. Chat with our horticulture staff to find the best bulbs for your garden and water-smart seed mixes that are guaranteed to thrive in any Colorado landscape. Liven up your living space with houseplants and succulents that can be enjoyed year-round. Members save 10% on all purchases.



CALLING VOLUNTEERS

Looking for a meaningful way to spend your summer? Join our vibrant volunteer community! Ongoing volunteer interest forms accepted through July or join us as a special event volunteer to support our amazing fall events. [Learn more](#) about the Gardens’ volunteer program and upcoming special event opportunities or email us at [vol@botanicgardens.org](mailto:vol@botanicgardens.org).

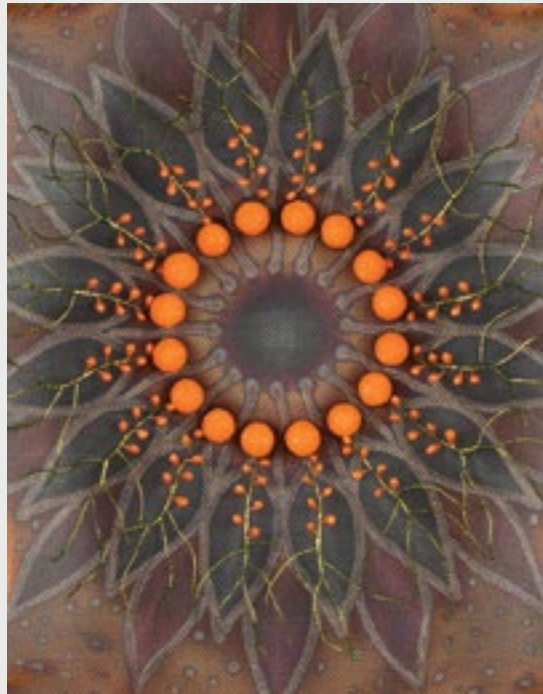


PREVIEW PARTY

Thursday, September 25, 4-6:30 p.m.  
\$60 in advance, \$65 at the door (if available)

Shop unique bulbs and plants first for the best selection while enjoying wine, beer and a spread of tasty treats.





**Contemporary Fiber** | Lanny Bergner, *Gaia's Crown* (detail), stainless steel mesh, copper wire, brass wire, silicone and acrylic medium, 2024.



**Blue Grass, Green Skies** | Granville Redmond, *California Poppy Field*, oil on canvas, ca. 1926. 40 1/4" H x 60 1/4" W. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Gift of Raymond Griffith.



**Agave** | Unknown artist, *Untitled*, paint on amate paper, mid-20th century.



**Nourished** | Jazz Holmes, *Sorrel*, mixed media with copper leaf, 2023.



## Current Exhibitions

### **Contemporary Fiber: Botanicals**

Through September 28

Explore *Contemporary Fiber: Botanicals*, presenting an array of contemporary artists expanding traditional textile artforms with nature as their muse. This international juried exhibition was created in partnership with Fiber Art Now magazine.

### **Blue Grass, Green Skies: American Impressionism and Realism from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art**

Through September 14

Discover American Impressionist artworks in this exhibition featuring artists including Mary Cassatt, Childe Hassam, William Wendt and more. In the gardens, seek out golden frames and imagine your own landscape compositions inspired by the artworks on view.

*Blue Grass, Green Skies* is organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and generous support for this project was provided by Art Bridges. **Art Bridges**

### Related Programs:

#### **The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism and the Garden Movement with Anna Marley**

Wednesday, July 16, 6:30 p.m.

[Onsite](#) and [Online](#)

#### **Cultivation and Canvases: Gardening and American Impressionism with Marta McDowell**

Thursday, September 11, 6:30 p.m.

[Onsite](#) and [Online](#)

#### **Impressionist Painting in Real Time with David Dunlop**

Thursday, August 28, 6:30 p.m.

[Online](#)

## Coming Soon

### **Agave: Symbol and Spirit**

September 27, 2025 – March 22, 2026

Explore the symbolism and many uses of agave, a succulent plant native to the Americas. Learn how agave has played an important role in Mexican culture for centuries through these works on loan from Museo de las Americas.

### **Nourished: Works by Jazz Holmes**

September 27, 2025 – March 22, 2026

Discover the relationship between plants and beloved Southern family recipes through the work of Jazz Holmes. Southern-born and Colorado-based, Holmes paints colorful odes to the foods that sustain her.



## School of Botanical Art & Illustration

### Wild for Wildflowers on the Western Slope

July 11-20

The School of Botanical Art & Illustration ventures into the mountains to join the Crested Butte Wildflower Festival. For nearly 40 years, the Crested Butte Wildflower Festival has invited plant lovers from all over the world to explore the beauty of the Western Slope in bloom. The School of Botanical Art & Illustration will offer a variety of classes at this year’s gathering, covering the basics of botanical illustration, as well as fun opportunities for art exploration. Take a hike with Nerdy Naturalist Vanessa Callahan and learn to sketch your observations, or try something new like drawing *en plein air* or making a kaleidoscope from scratch. Whether you are a budding artist or a seasoned illustrator, join us to explore Colorado’s wildflower capital this summer.

Can’t make it to the Wildflower Festival?  
[Discover art classes online and onsite](#) at Denver Botanic Gardens.

## Adult Programs

### Know Your Colorado Garden Pests and Pals

Saturday, July 12, 19 or August 9,  
9:30-11:30 a.m.

\$44, \$38 member

Discover tricks for controlling pests in your garden while promoting beneficial insects and understand the significant role these little critters play in our ecosystem.

### Food with a Story – Presented by Marczyk Fine Foods

Tuesday, July 22 or Wednesday, September 10,  
5:30-7 p.m.

\$68, \$63 member

Step into a culinary adventure where every ingredient has a story. Don’t just learn how to cook – discover why these ingredients matter.

### Yoga Alignments: Explore and Refine

Thursday, July 31, August 28 or  
September 18, 5:30-7 p.m.

\$18, \$15 member

In this workshop-style class, we break down key yoga poses and movement mechanics to support alignment, stability and joy in your practice.

### The Native Garden – A Plant Design Course

Wednesday, September 10, 17, 24 &  
October 8, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

\$228, \$180 member

In this four-session course, learn how to assess and design a native perennial garden for your own home.

### Fall Flower Bulb Forcing Workshop

Saturday, September 20, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

\$56, \$51 member

Learn about forcing flower bulbs at home.  
The best part: Take home a pot of bulbs.



Discover art, gardens and more during tours with friendly guides.

### A Brush with American Impressionism

Various dates, 11 a.m. – noon  
\$20, \$12 member, \$10 student

Step into a world of color and light on this indoor gallery tour of *Blue Grass, Green Skies: American Impressionism and Realism from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art*.

### American Impressionism: Garden to Gallery

Various dates, 5:30-7:30 p.m.  
\$40, \$30 member, \$10 student

Nature’s awe-inspiring colors, textures and lines set the stage before moving into the art galleries. In the gallery, guided commentary connects the natural elements seen outside with the scenes captured by American Impressionist artists in the paintings on view.

### Art at the Gardens

Various dates and times  
\$20, \$12 member, \$10 student

Explore the latest art exhibitions in the Freyer – Newman Center, whether you are an avid art-lover or simply looking for an inspiring indoor activity.

### Seasonal Discoveries

Various dates and times  
\$20, \$12 member, \$10 student

No matter the time of year, botanical treasures await your discovery with these guided tours of gardens at their seasonal peaks.

### Tropical Trails

Various dates and times  
\$20, \$12 member, \$10 student

Immerse yourself in a multisensory experience of the lush greenery, humid air and stunning flowers of our historic conservatory.

[Explore more tours](#)



# MOTIVATED TO MAINTAIN A MUSEUM OF MUMMIFIED MUSHROOMS

By Andrew W. Wilson Ph.D., Associate Curator of Mycology

If you follow mushroom news, you might have heard that Colorado now has its own [state mushroom, \*Agaricus julius\*](#), adding one more reason to celebrate the natural world of the Southern Rocky Mountain region. However, the [resources](#) and [infrastructure](#) that we use to examine the natural world have been losing support. In facing these challenges, the Gardens and our [core values](#) provide a bulwark for studying the nature of the Southern Rockies through

the [Kathryn Kalmbach Herbarium](#) and the [Sam Mitchel Herbarium of Fungi](#) (SMHF). These collections hold value beyond offering a home to Colorado's state mushroom.

Mushrooms represent the *macro* fungi, which encompasses a subset of the entire fungal kingdom. Because they are "macro," they are the easiest fungi to collect. They are also incredibly diverse and engage in many important ecosystem services that support the plant communities within the Southern Rockies. It is this combination of diversity and ecological contributions that makes the SMHF at Denver Botanic Gardens, and all museums, important. [Without the SMHF](#), how would we ever be able to understand *what species are out there*, much less *what they are doing* in Colorado?

Graduate student Jess Loeffler is documenting the diversity of fungi associated with the "wintergreen" plants, *Pyrola asarifolia* and *Chimaphila umbellata*. Both exhibit a form of mycoheterotrophy where they receive sugar from fungi during part of their life cycle. Although she is collecting fungal DNA data, her ability to identify fungi is only as good as our DNA references. Collections like the SMHF help us to build these references so we not only identify fungi on roots, but we can better understand specific fungal contributions to plant health.

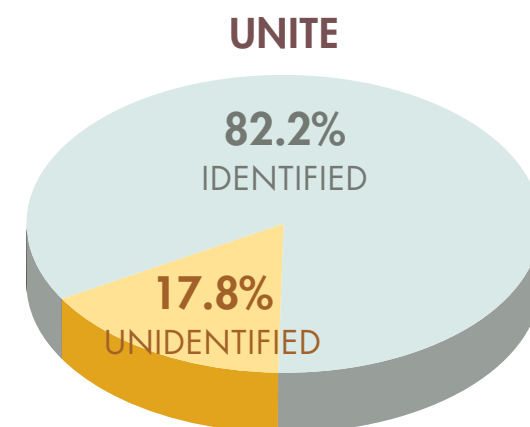
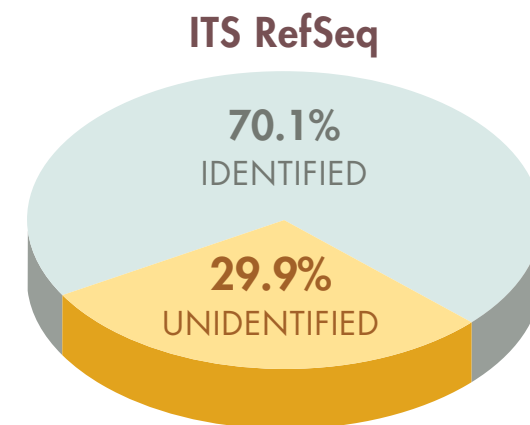
Given the importance of fungi, it makes sense to monitor species rarity much like we do for plants and animals. Until now, there has been no system or concerted effort to document rare fungi.



Photo by Andrew W. Wilson

## HITS ABOVE AND BELOW 95% MATCH

Identification of fungi using DNA is only as good as the reference data available. In comparing the DNA from Jess's research, two important databases are unable to identify large groups of fungi (yellow wedges).



Recently, we developed a method to produce a list of rare fungi in Colorado in collaboration with the [Colorado Natural Heritage Program](#). This effort leverages the information from collections to identify and list rare fungal species for biodiversity monitoring. This and many more examples demonstrate why fungaria, like the SMHF, represent important tools for studying fungi. This is why we collaborate with managers and curators from across the country to support fungal collections and ensure their specimens are available for the innovations of future generations.



## CHEERS TO OUR ROCKY MOUNTAIN WATER!

By Melissa Schaap, Corporate Partnerships Manager

Water is an essential element of both Denver Botanic Gardens and Molson Coors. Now, Molson Coors is working alongside the Gardens, giving back to the Rocky Mountain water that connects us.

In partnership with the Gardens, Molson Coors has launched Cheers to Our Rocky Mountain Water—a fundraising initiative to support water conservation and environmental stewardship across Colorado. The program will spotlight the importance of sustainable water use and help ensure the long-term health of Colorado's natural resources.

To kick off the fundraiser, Molson Coors is donating \$50,000 to the Gardens. Through community fundraising efforts, the program aims to raise an additional \$50,000, which Molson Coors will match dollar for dollar, up to \$50,000.

Molson Coors launched Cheers to Our Rocky Mountain Water in June at the first event of the Gardens' Summer Concert Series – Mary Chapin Carpenter. Throughout the year, Molson Coors will offer a range of community-focused initiatives in partnership with us to encourage engagement and giving, including educational events, donation roundups, volunteer events and other opportunities that actively empower local communities to contribute.

With our shared commitment to environmental stewardship, Molson Coors and the Gardens are thrilled to collaborate on this significant initiative. We hope you'll join us in celebrating and supporting Rocky Mountain water!



# PARTNERSHIPS WITH MONGOLIA

*By Mike Bone, Associate Director & Curator of Steppe Collection*

Colorado and Mongolia have a longstanding, historical connection, rooted in the many fascinating plant species that span the globe and link these two great steppe biomes. Denver is also home to a large population of Mongolian expats, likely because the similar climate and landscape make Colorado feel like home.

Some of the first noted botanical connections between the two regions were written about by botanist Asa Gray, who compared the flora of the Southern Rockies to the flora of the Altai Mountains. Several species occur in both locations.

In 2009 Denver Botanic Gardens staff travelled to the Altai mountains to rediscover what Gray had highlighted. This trip was a catalyst in building the Gardens' Central Asian steppe collection. It also sparked the idea for the book "Steppes: The Ecology and Flora of the World's Semi-arid Regions," published in 2015. Fast forward a few years and, in 2022, the Gardens held the International Steppe Symposium. Here, we hosted Professor Indree Tuvshintogtokh, Ph.D., from the Mongolian Academy

of Science, an expert on Mongolia's flora who has produced many works on the topic.

Connections like this open doors to education and collaboration opportunities. Since the symposium, staff have been working toward a collection trip to Mongolia to further study the relationship between Colorado's steppe and the great steppe there. Mongolia has vast, open steppes dotted with interesting mountain ranges that provide opportunities for plants to adapt and thrive in very harsh conditions.

This year, staff from the Gardens' Horticulture Department will travel to central Mongolia and work with Dr. Tuvshintogtokh and her team to study flora in the Khangai region. The goal of this collaboration is to further the understanding of steppe vegetation and to partner with our colleagues in ex-situ conservation collections. These global connections and collaborations are just one part of what make the Gardens such a special place and a home for steppe plants.



Photos by Mike Bone





# DRIPS AND DROPS OF TERRARIUM MAGIC

*By Helena Nitz, Family and Children's Program Coordinator*

**Wouldn't it be nice to have a plant that cares for itself?**  
**While many indoor plants need regular care, you can create a self-watering system with a terrarium. This is a fantastic way for your family to observe the water cycle in action.**

## HERE'S HOW:

1. Grab a clear container with a lid – upcycling is great!
2. Add soil, the base for your plant.
3. Pick a plant. Choose one that fits well.
4. Include decorations. Add small rocks or fun items.
5. Add a little water – just enough to moisten the soil.
6. Seal the container and place it in a sunny window.

Watch the magic unfold! With the sun's help, the water will evaporate, forming condensation on the container's sides and top. When the droplets get heavy enough, they'll fall back into the soil or onto the plant's leaves, ensuring they stay hydrated. This simple project is a delightful way to learn about nature.



# EXPLORE THE WORLD WITH DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS

## Magical Mexico: Mérida

October 29 – November 4

Experience the magic of Mérida with Denver Botanic Gardens on a journey blending rich Mayan culture, gastronomy and history. Celebrate Día de los Muertos, explore the legacy of salt and sisal industries, and discover the secrets of Yucatán's renowned honey production. This immersive trip offers a sensory feast, connecting you to the heart of Mayan Mexico. Hosted by Denver Botanic Gardens' Yvonne Garcia Bardwell, associate director of community relations.

## Botanical Wonders of Chile

December 2-10

Chile's Southern Patagonia is the last frontier of the American continent—a land of wind, wilderness and stunning landscapes. During this botanical expedition, led by two experts in the field, we'll have the opportunity to explore everything from temperate rainforests of the Lakes District to the rugged steppe of Torres del Paine, discovering a captivating range of flora in one of the world's most biodiverse regions. As we explore Patagonia's striking landscapes during the southern spring, we'll encounter the vibrant wildflower season in full bloom. Hosted by Denver Botanic Gardens' Panayoti Kelaidis, senior curator and director of outreach.

## Magical Mexico: Mexico City, Monarch Butterflies and Valle de Bravo

January 24-30, 2026

Immerse yourself in the vibrant heart of Mexico, where art, history and nature collide in a journey unlike any other. From the charming streets of Coyoacán and the intimate world of Frida Kahlo to the breathtaking expanse of the Zócalo, Mexico City's rich cultural tapestry comes alive. Marvel at the ancient grandeur of Teotihuacan from the skies in a sunrise hot air balloon ride, then stand amidst millions of fluttering monarch butterflies in the UNESCO-listed Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve. This journey takes you from the city's architectural wonders to Valle de Bravo's tranquil landscapes, offering a perfect balance of exploration, discovery and awe-inspiring beauty. Hosted by Denver Botanic Gardens' Yvonne Garcia Bardwell, associate director of community relations.

## Nepal's Natural Beauty and Tranquility

March 1-9, 2026

In the heart of the Himalayan mountains, plant and animal diversity abound in one of the world's most unique landscapes. Join the Gardens' Phil Douglas, director of horticulture and Center for Global Initiatives, on a 10-day guided tour through some of the most iconic regions of Nepal. Participants will experience the breadth of Nepal's flora and fauna through visits to the National Botanical Garden, day hikes in the Annapurna Conservation Area and a stay in the subtropical jungles of Chitwan National Park. With a focus on plants, animals and people, our guides will unveil the intricate ecosystems and unique cultures across this varied landscape.

[Get full details and register on our website.](#)



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