

INSIDE THE GARDENS

FALL 2025 A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR
MEMBERS OF DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS



Reap What You Sow: The Argument for Volunteering

What is the “busy” season for a botanic garden? The easy answer is summer. That’s not necessarily incorrect — summer does see our highest daily visitation numbers and features such crowd-pleasers as the Summer Concert Series, Evenings al Fresco and Lavender Festival. And, of course, the horticultural displays are at their best. But there is a compelling argument to be made for fall.

This becomes evident with the number of volunteer opportunities at York Street and Chatfield Farms this time of year, nearly as varied as the permutations of pumpkin-spice flavoring! From this vantage point, we have Hop Festival at Chatfield Farms in the rear-view mirror. In front of us are Corn Maze, Pumpkin Festival and Trail of Lights at Chatfield Farms and Glow at the Gardens™, Glow Before Dark, Ghosts in the Gardens and Blossoms of Light® at York Street. If you have joined us for one of our stellar events, your experience has been touched by a volunteer. None of these events could happen without our 2,000-strong volunteer community.

This fall edition of Inside the Gardens celebrates the harvest. Our institution is bountiful because of the support and dedication of our volunteers, who lend their time, talent and heart to these large-scale public events but also to the daily operation of our horticulture and agriculture programs and pretty much every other touchpoint with visitors. We welcomed more than 1.45 million people across our multiple sites in 2024; we are on course to welcome that many again in 2025, making us one of the most visited public gardens in North America year in, year out.

For those of you who count yourself among those 2,000 volunteers, thank you! For those of you who are curious to learn more about how you can expand the Gardens’ impact through a few hours every season or even a regular weekly shift or two, check out the [Volunteer](#) section of our website. We have event-specific, ongoing and even teen opportunities available.

If you want to get started right away, our fall events could always use a hand. Connect with us and help the Gardens flourish.

Jennifer Riley-Chetwynd
Denver Botanic Gardens Interim CEO



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COVER:
Blossoms of Light®
40th Anniversary,
see details [page 7](#).



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.



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INSIDE THE GARDENS

ISSUE 4, 2025

Denver Botanic Gardens

1007 York St., Denver, CO 80206
Hours through Nov. 17: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., last admission 4 p.m.
Holiday Hours: Nov. 18 – Dec. 31, 2025, 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., last admission 2:30 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](#)

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Cover Art: Nick Elias

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.

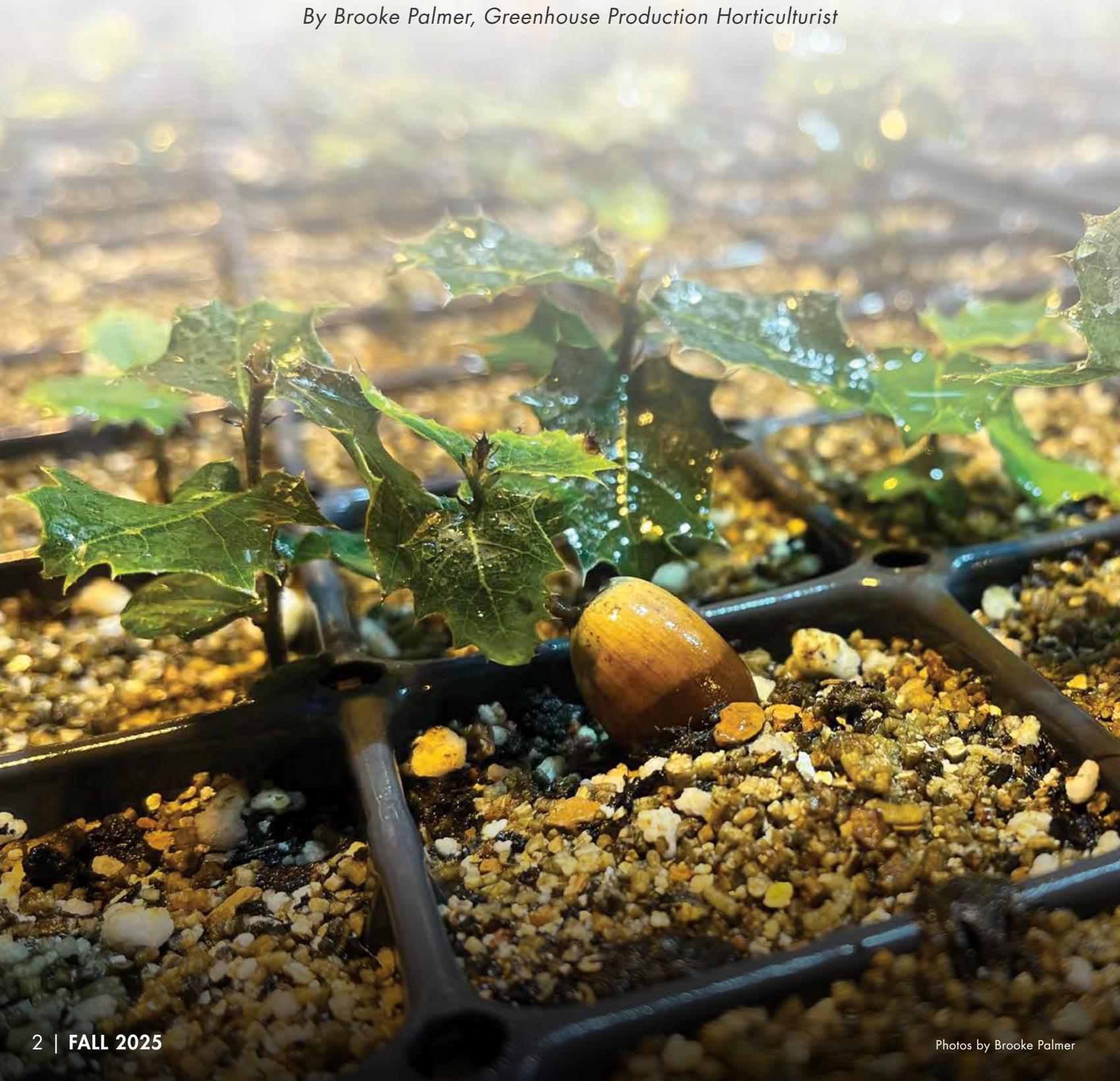
**DENVER BOTANIC
GARDENS**

[botanicgardens.org](#)

A HARVEST FOR THE FUTURE:

The Journey of a Seed

By Brooke Palmer, Greenhouse Production Horticulturist



Photos by Brooke Palmer

As we celebrate the bounty of the fall harvest, the horticulture team often reflects on a different kind of harvest. This harvest happens year-round and forms the very foundation of our work and secures the future of the Gardens. The spectacular beauty of our Gardens begins with a single, tiny seed.

Our seed harvest starts with collection, a journey that can take our staff to remote landscapes as far as Central Asia and Southern Africa or lead them to the familiar paths of our own grounds. Once collected, these precious seeds are brought back to be meticulously cleaned and dried, the first crucial step in preparing them for their future.

Most seeds then move into production. Here, we work to "wake them up" and encourage germination. This often requires research, as many seeds have complex dormancies that must be broken before they can sprout. These resulting seedlings are grown on for two important destinations: our living collections, which beautify the Gardens for all to enjoy, and the Grown at the Gardens division of our popular plant sales.

But what about the extra seeds? Any seeds not immediately used are carefully stored in our onsite seed bank. This repository acts as a vital insurance policy, safeguarding the genetic diversity of our living collections for years to come.

Fall is a time to appreciate harvests of all kinds. For me, it's a powerful reminder of the tiny fruits of our ongoing harvest, near and far. These seeds are the promise of the collections you enjoy today and the special plants you can bring home tomorrow.





Photos by Henry Basile

PONDEROSA NIWAKI: ADVANCING TREE DESIGN IN SHOFU-EN

By Henry Basile, Assistant Curator Japanese Garden

“Why do these trees have rope attached to them?”

In Western tree care, we are not as used to seeing manipulation of branch position, and when we do, this usually takes the form of cabling to reinforce weak structure rather than fine-tune positioning. This question—one of the most frequent I hear from visitors—serves as a fantastic segue to educate folks on the careful and creative manipulation of these *niwaki* or “garden trees”—particularly our ponderosa pines.

The main task we perform to manipulate branch position is the application of tension through ropes and knots—a long-used method of shaping in the nursery trade and “young” gardens in Japan. Taut-line hitches and larks-head knots are the primary knots used to apply this tension, using stronger lower branches or bamboo scaffolding as an anchoring point.

From an artistic standpoint, this method helps us to pull branches down to a position that best accentuates branch structure and creates negative space. As for the horticultural considerations, this practice can be used to move branches to points of more sunlight exposure and less density, encouraging vigorous growth from older branches that might typically be “limbed up” or naturally abandoned by the tree in favor of those growing vigorously near the crown. The practice is harmless and temporary. As the branches gain lignin, the tissue responsible for rigidity and woodiness in plants, the branches will begin to retain their position at their desired point.

The joy of working with these ancient trees is that you are keenly aware of the influence of nature and the garden keepers before you. It is this insight, as well as the figurative interpretation of the trees you most admire in nature, that informs how we choose to advance the design.



CORN MAZE AT CHATFIELD FARMS

Fridays – Sundays, through November 2, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

\$10-\$20, must purchase tickets in advance

Fly through twists and turns in this year's birds-of-prey-themed maze. Kids can also enjoy barrel train rides and a mini maze. On select Saturdays only from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., Nature's Educators will be onsite with live birds!



GLOW AT THE GARDENS™

October 21-26, 6-9 p.m.

\$26-\$34, must purchase tickets in advance

Celebrate 10 years of magic at Denver's most luminous celebration, Glow at the Gardens™! Venture through an immersive, illuminated path to discover enchanted landscapes animated by live performers with hand-carved pumpkin displays around every bend. Every single one of our ghoulish jack-o'-lanterns and larger-than-life sculptures is freshly carved from real, locally grown pumpkins. This event sells out weeks in advance every year, so be sure to get your tickets early.



PUMPKIN FESTIVAL AT CHATFIELD FARMS

Friday – Sunday, October 10-12, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

\$10-\$20, must purchase tickets in advance

A fall family favorite, Pumpkin Festival promises three days of fun. Purchase your pumpkins from our 10-acre patch, then enjoy carnival games, wagon rides, local vendors, live music, food trucks, and autumn-inspired beer and cider selections. Access to Corn Maze is included with Pumpkin Festival tickets. See website for live entertainment schedule.



BLOSSOMS OF LIGHT®

Nightly, November 21 – January 11, 4:30-9 p.m.

\$18-\$33, must purchase tickets in advance

Closed November 27 and December 25

Celebrate 40 years of Blossoms of Light®, Denver's beloved holiday tradition. This dazzling event transforms our winter gardens into an illuminated wonderland filled with vibrant displays, immersive installations and the warm glow of cherished memories—old and new. Wander vivid pathways that showcase our plant collections during the winter months. Continuously evolving over the decades, Blossoms of Light inspires awe and delight in visitors of all ages. Most nights sell out, so get your tickets early!



GLOW BEFORE DARK

October 18-20, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., October 21-26, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Included with admission, free for members

Nestled into gardens awash with autumn color, many of the decorations from our spectacular nighttime event are equally delightful in the light of day. Stroll through the Gardens and enjoy spooky scenes that embody the spirit of the season, including skeleton displays, a graveyard, a field of scarecrows and more.



TRAIL OF LIGHTS AT CHATFIELD FARMS

Nightly, November 21 – January 11, 5-8:30 p.m.

\$10-\$20, must purchase tickets in advance

Closed November 27 and December 25

Follow a winding path through illuminated forests, walk through tunnels of light and be delighted by displays that dance to music. **New this year:** a display that pays tribute to some of our mountain streams and the wildlife that call Colorado home. Thaw out in the warming hut then continue on the path. Don't miss our Holiday Market, which offers opportunities to purchase sweet treats and last-minute gifts for everyone on your list.

EDIBLE ANNUAL DISPLAYS ALL SEASON LONG

By Jennifer Lucas, Associate Director of Horticulture, Chatfield Farms



Designing containers has become one of my favorite aspects of working at Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms, where I've been for over a decade. Early in my career at Chatfield Farms, I focused solely on annual flowers, since my background was in ornamental horticulture. But as I learned more about vegetables and herbs from our farm team, I realized it made perfect sense to include them in our annual plant palettes—after all, we are a working farm.

I first experimented with two cabbage varieties—Ruby Perfection and Deadon—both purple, but with beautifully different leaf textures. They grow quite large, making them excellent filler plants. For height and bold texture, I often use Purple Redbor Kale and Silver Lacinato Kale. These selections are not only edible but also highly ornamental.

Since we change out our annual displays three times a year, I quickly discovered that adding cool-season vegetables to summer plantings meant they could seamlessly transition into our fall displays as well. By the time autumn arrives, these vegetables are already mature, saving us money, labor and resources, making the practice far more sustainable.

Several other edible plants perform beautifully from summer to fall, often lasting until the first light frost. Bright Lights Swiss Chard can be harvested throughout the season—just be sure to leave a few center leaves to encourage new growth. Bulb fennel provides height and fine texture, while bronze fennel fronds are delicious in salads. Dill is not only versatile in the kitchen but also serves as a host plant for swallowtail



butterflies. And for bursts of color, nasturtiums, pansies and snapdragons are edible options that enhance both the garden and the plate.

At Chatfield Farms, we aim to stretch our summer displays as long as possible before transitioning to a fall palette. Our go-to staples—pansies, mums, kale and cabbage—carry us through Pumpkin Festival season and until the first hard frost.

I invite you to visit our edible garden displays, where I hope you'll find inspiration to incorporate vegetables and herbs into your own gardens. Each season, my coworkers on the farm and in the gardens encourage me to try something new, and that constant inspiration keeps me excited for the next season's designs.



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



Nourished | Jazz Holmes, Étouffée, oil paint and rhinestones, 2025.



Xochimilco | Eduardo Robledo Romero, Carnaval, linocut print, 2023.

Current Exhibitions

[Agave: Symbol and Spirit](#)

Through March 22, 2026

Through works on loan from Museo de Las Americas, explore the many uses of agave, a succulent plant native to the Americas that has played an important role in Mexican culture for centuries.

[Nourished: Works by Jazz Holmes](#)

Through March 22, 2026

Discover the relationship between plants and beloved family recipes through the work of Jazz Holmes. Inspired by her Creole heritage, Holmes paints colorful odes to the foods that sustain her.

Coming Soon

[Xochimilco: Works by Eduardo Robledo Romero](#)

October 11, 2025 – March 22, 2026

Encounter the dream-like world of Eduardo Robledo, where Mexican culture meets the spiritual power of nature. Inspired by his personal experiences and roots in Xochimilco, a neighborhood in Mexico City, Robledo's art celebrates the vibrant traditions of this unique place.



[NEW! Botanically Bewitched](#)

October, various dates and times

Bubble, bubble, soil and shovel! Learn about boo-tiful plant adaptations for survival in a challenging world and the eerie legends that accompany them.

[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

Escape to the tropics any time of year with a tour of the Boettcher Memorial Tropical Conservatory.

[Art at the Gardens](#)

Various dates and times

\$20, \$12 member, \$10 student

Learn about artworks on view in accessible and entertaining ways, whether you are an avid art-lover or simply looking for an inspiring indoor activity.

[Natural History Collections](#)

Various dates and times

\$20, \$12 member, \$10 student

Peek behind the scenes of the Kathryn Kalmbach Herbarium of Vascular Plants, the Sam Mitchel Herbarium of Fungi and the arthropod collection.

[Curator Conversations](#)

Thursday, October 16 &

Thursday, November 13, 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.

\$22, \$15 member, \$10 student

Join us for a stroll through current art exhibitions with a curatorial staff member.

[Visitas guiadas: maravillas de la temporada](#)

Varias fechas, 11 a.m. – noon

Registro gratuito, incluye entrada general.

A lo largo del año, pasee por los jardines en esta visita guiada de una hora que resalta la belleza de la temporada.

[Visitas guiadas: arte](#)

Varias fechas, 2-3 p.m.

Registro gratuito, incluye entrada general.

Disfrute las exposiciones de las galerías en el edificio Freyer – Newman Center con un guía. Los Jardines Botánicos de Denver es líder en exposiciones de arte que destacan escultura, pintura, ilustración botánica y más.

School of Botanical Art & Illustration

Art at the Gardens Immersive Retreat

Friday – Sunday, October 24-26, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Each class: \$65, \$55 member
Optional daily tours \$20, \$12 member

Explore your creativity and immerse yourself in artmaking during three full days of classes for all skill levels. Classes are designed to be welcoming to both seasoned artists and newcomers alike.

Experiment with a variety of media and techniques like charcoal drawing and calligraphy, or fine-tune your professional art practice with advice from experts. Between classes and tours, take advantage of free open studio time. This retreat brings together a convenient concentration of classes, instructors and tours, making it the perfect weekend to try something new and cultivate your creative side.

Graduation Ceremony and Showcase

Sunday, December 7, noon – 2:30 p.m.

Join us to celebrate graduates of the School of Botanical Art & Illustration certificate program. View the graduate showcase and attend an artist talk with exhibiting artist Jazz Holmes for further inspiration.

Artist Talk: Jazz Holmes

Sunday, December 7, noon – 1 p.m.
Free with registration

Adult Programs

Ghosts in the Gardens

October 10-12, 17-19 & 30
\$34, \$29 member

Denver Botanic Gardens dares you to join us after dark for the spine-tingling stories of our haunted history. Stroll through the dark paths at your own pace as the storytellers share real staff encounters, security guard accounts and the intriguing history of the place that was formerly known as "The Boneyard."

Singing Bowls at the Gardens

Saturday, November 8 or December 13,
10-11:30 a.m. or 12:30-2 p.m.
\$25, \$22 member

Immerse yourself in the sounds and vibrations of singing bowls and gongs for a harmonious, healing meditation. Bring centering, awakening and blissful balance to your world.

Orchid and Air Plant Living

Sculpture Workshop

Saturday, November 15, 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
\$86, \$76 member

Since epiphytes don't need soil to grow, many can be mounted on wood, stone or other natural materials. They can be grown on a countertop or hung from the ceiling. Create living art for your home in this workshop.

Converting Lawn to Xeriscape

Tuesday, November 11, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
\$44, \$38 member

Do you want to beautify your landscape and save water at the same time? Learn in expert detail how to replace some of your Kentucky bluegrass lawn with water-smart perennial and ornamental grasses.

Journaling for Beginners

Friday, December 12, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
\$35, \$30 member

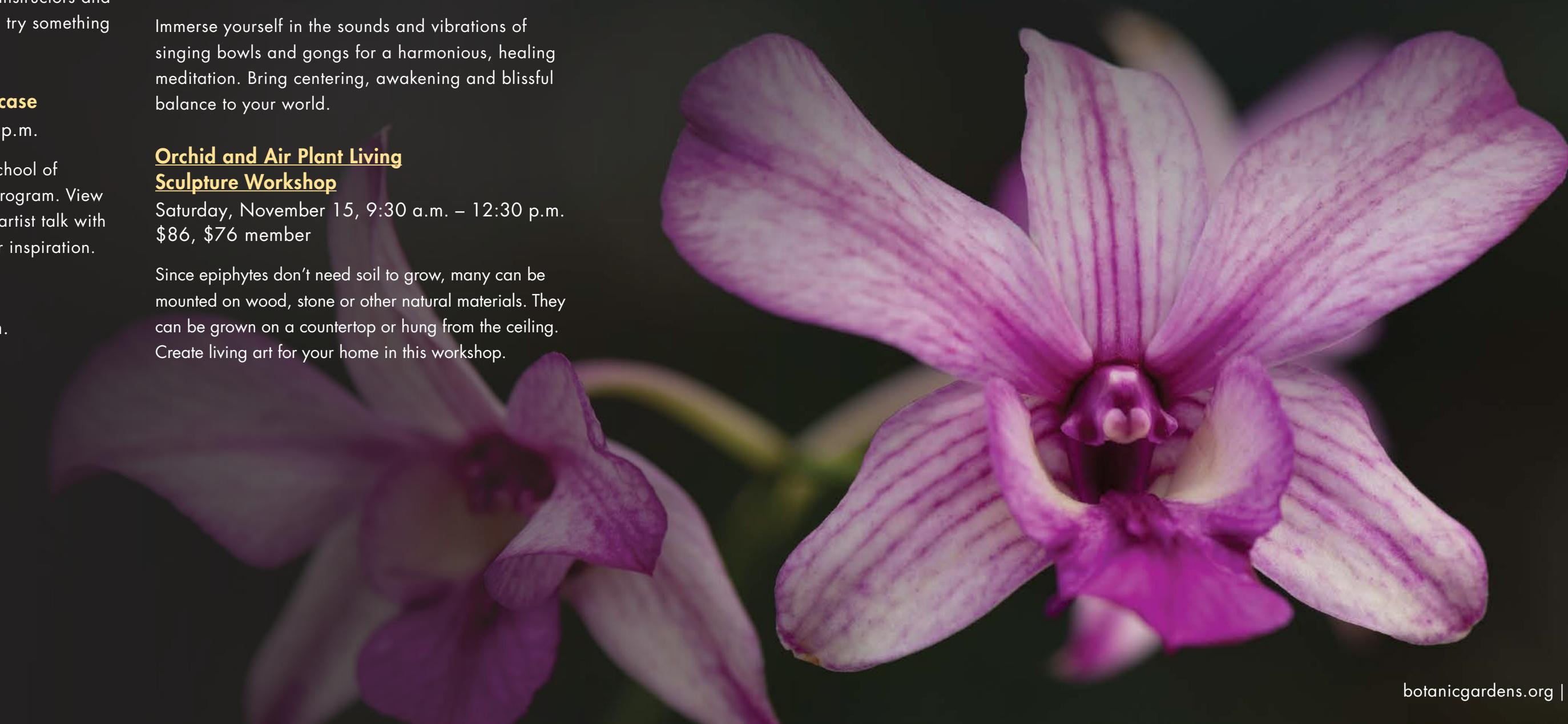
Learn how to start a journal, the many benefits and various types of journaling, such as bullet, daily, creative and tracking.

Children's Programs

Want to dig into the Gardens with your whole family? Or maybe it's time to enrich your child's homeschool experience? Explore programs tailored for families and homeschool students at the Gardens.

Spend time together as a family while exploring the wonder and enchantment of nature with the Gardens' Family Programs. Children and grownups grow in their knowledge of the natural world, build skills and spark curiosity. Topics connect science, art and nature.

Homeschool Programs are designed with opportunities for hands-on exploration with scientific tools and creative expression through process-based experiences. Programs take place at York Street, Chatfield Farms and the Plains Conservation Center.



MESSY, MAGICAL PUMPKINS!

By Helena Nitz, Family and Children's Program Coordinator

This harvest season, while carving or painting your pumpkins, don't toss out those gourd guts! Scoop out the insides and whip up some pumpkin slime for a hands-on sensory adventure that your kids will love.

You'll need:

- 1 pumpkin
- 1 5-ounce bottle of clear glue
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking soda
- Contact solution

Let's get slimy!

1. Use a spoon to help children scoop out all the pumpkin goop: pulp, fibers and seeds.
2. In a bowl, mix the pumpkin parts with glue, water and baking soda.
3. Slowly add contact solution and knead until your slime is the perfect stretchy consistency.

Now dig in! Encourage your little ones to squish, stretch and search for the seeds, pulp and fibers. Pumpkin slime can even be stored and explored in bags to keep the messy fun out of little ones' mouths.



Photo by bondarillia, Adobe Stock

HARVESTING CURIOSITY

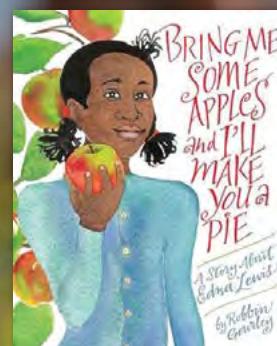
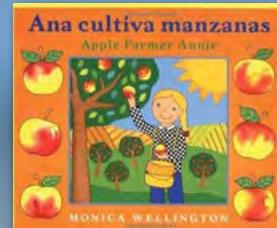
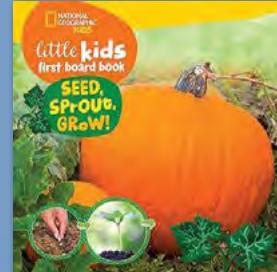
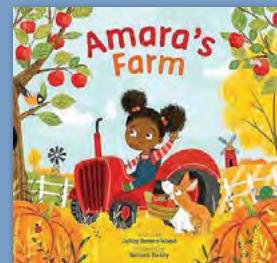
By Tisha Doppler, On Call Librarian

If you enjoyed the rewards of a vegetable garden in your backyard, or have been to local farmers markets, you've noticed that the vegetables available now are different from summer. Gourds, squash and apples are plentiful. These shifts are all part of the changing seasons, and children have a natural curiosity about how the seasons transform the foods we eat. The Helen Fowler Library has a variety of children's books that will help them understand these seasonal changes.

Start with "Amara's Farm" by JaNay Brown-Wood to learn more about all the foods grown on a farm (and have fun searching for missing pumpkins!). Then, learn more about the life cycle of a pumpkin with "Seed, Sprout, Pumpkin, Pie" by Jill Esbaum. The color photographs will give children a good look at how their jack-o'-lanterns are grown. Next is "From Pumpkin to Pie" by Lisa Owings, to learn how a pie is made. For the youngest set, check out the board book "Seed, Sprout, Grow!" by Ruth A. Musgrave, about this same process.

If it's apples you fancy, read about an apple farmer in "Ana cultiva manzanas/Apple Farmer Annie" by Monica Wellington and all the products she can make with the apples she grows. For apple recipes, pick up "Bring Me Some Apples and I'll Make You a Pie" by Robbin Gourley, about Edna Lewis, who grew up on a farm and became a world-famous chef.

We invite you to visit the library to see our "harvest" of books! The library is free and open to all. Members have check-out privileges.



CULTIVATING CHANGE: Growing Native Seed for Ecological Restoration

By Lyss Goldpenny, Native Plant Materials Production Specialist

Native plant communities are the backbone of our environmental stability. They are the drivers of water and nutrient cycles, the architects of soil chemistry and composition, the creators of essential habitat and forage for wildlife, and the indicators of ecological change from the micro to the macro level. This is why the increasing degradation of our natural areas is of growing concern.

What can we do to restore higher levels of diversity and stability to our native plant communities and the crucial roles that they play?

A major focus of conservation is to increase the stock of native plant seed for restoration projects, as there is currently a major deficit. Programs like the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Seeds of Success collect wild seeds from native plant populations. These collections are intended to be used for regional restoration to improve restoration success with locally adapted species.

However, recent years have shown that we can't keep up with the growing demand for native seeds

through wild collection efforts alone, as this puts more strain on healthy ecosystems. We have partnered with BLM to support the new Native Seed Increase program, which will relieve these pressures by shifting to seed collection through agricultural methods. With local seed collected through Seeds of Success, we are growing and harvesting seed from four native species: *Heterotheca villosa* (hairy false goldenaster), *Phacelia crenulata* (scorpion notchweed), *Sphaeralcea coccinea* (scarlet globemallow) and *Stanleya pinnata* (desert prince's plume). Our growing facilities, both greenhouse and field plots, are located at Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms, and the seed that we produce will be given to BLM to put into larger-scale seed production to be available for federal restoration projects post wildfire.

While we work with these species, we are testing out different strategies, from germination techniques to seed harvesting methods, to create a detailed growing protocol. This protocol will inform commercial growers of the most direct approach to the successful cultivation of these species and the ultimate mass production of



Photos by Lyss Goldpenny

native seed! The start of the Native Seed Increase program this year is just part of our restoration efforts. It is through growing locally collected native seed in these kinds of agricultural settings specifically for seed production that we have a real shot at tackling the current seed deficit and at truly amplifying the effectiveness of our restoration efforts.





Denver Botanic Gardens HERB GUILD

By Claire Shepherd Lanier, Ph.D. Associate Director of Development

Denver Botanic Gardens Herb Guild (the Guild) has embraced the growing and harvesting of herbs at the Gardens for more than 65 years.

This affiliate volunteer organization works closely with staff to maintain the abundant herb gardens at York Street, Chatfield Farms and the Plains Conservation Center. Thanks to the Guild's generous contributions, there is now a new, updated Herb Garden in front of the Hildebrand Ranch House at Chatfield Farms. This garden will serve multiple purposes: producing herbs for the Guild's many products, creating a space for young learners thanks to the Education Department and enriching visitors' experiences.

In addition to their financial support, the Guild donates time. They helped plant more than 1,500 herbs in the new space. The herbs will be gathered,

washed and dried in a shed near Deer Creek Stables on the ranch. They are then transferred to the Guild's workshops, where volunteers process them into products sold at the Shop at the Gardens. The Gourmet Committee within the Guild creates a delicious combination of herb products for cooking. Best-selling blends include Herb Salt, Pizza Pasta, Italian Blend, Salad Herbs, Veggie Roasting and Southwestern Herbs. These delicious blends are sold in jars, packets, grinders and a variety of tins. The Vinegar Committee, another talented group, creates Country Italian Vinegar, Signature Blend, Chive Blossom, Basil, Fig and Spicy Chili Garlic.

With fall upon us, dedicated Guild members are harvesting their aromatic bounty. Look for the delicious fruits of their endeavors in the gift shop.

EXPLORE THE WORLD with Denver Botanic Gardens

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



Photo by Reefs to Rockies

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 Yvonne Garcia Bardwell, associate director of community relations.



Donors of Distinction

Gifts Received May 1, 2025 – July 31, 2025

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