

INSIDE THE GARDENS

FALL 2020 A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS OF DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS



It was probably an illusion, a broad sense that we had a handle on what to expect in the future. Some people map out their life in segments, with very specific benchmarks. Others, like me, are always on the lookout for serendipity. However, for much of our society and within most institutions and businesses, the ability to plan for at least the next few years has been foundational. Even in an era of constant technological and social change, we seemed to know pretty much what to expect.

Then came 2020. Many veils have been pulled back, and each of us is contemplating our own role in the world and our obligations to the future. Speculation and even conspiracy theories abound. Only one thing is certain: Our collective action will shape the years ahead, for good or ill.

So why not focus on persevering toward a better age?

There is something happening at the Gardens every day as visitors arrive, bearing the weight of the world, and then walking lighter as they stroll through tableaux of nature. Maybe this new world will inspire a stronger and more respectful relationship between humankind and our earth. Plants are a great arbiter.

The Gardens' work over the past decade on diversity and inclusion issues has accelerated because of a broad awakening to the need for social justice. We seek to create gardens for all people; why not make that a universal concept?

We have experienced shortages and scarcity. Maybe we can take that as a lesson about sustainability. As an example, many take unlimited water availability for granted; while simultaneously more and more people have realized water's sometimes scarce and precious role. [The One World One Water Center](#), our project with Metropolitan State University of Denver, exists to educate and inspire people all over the globe to protect access to this essential element of life itself.

It's notable that vegetable gardening became a trend during the pandemic, but why not continue to grow more of our food locally and use more public spaces while we are at it? Our [Urban Food Initiatives](#) team has been leading that charge for years.

The list goes on, and it will be different for each of us, our families, organizations and communities. We have choices every day that truly matter. The more we lean in on work to make the future brighter, the better the chances for it to happen.

Brian Vogt
Denver Botanic Gardens CEO





INSIDE THE GARDENS

ISSUE 4, 2020

Denver Botanic Gardens

1007 York St., Denver, CO 80206
September 28 – Mother’s Day 2021,
9 a.m. – 5 p.m., last admission 4 p.m.
Pre-purchased tickets and advance member
passes only.

Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms

8500 West Deer Creek Canyon Rd.,
Littleton, CO 80128
9 a.m. – 5 p.m., last admission 4 p.m.
Pre-purchased tickets and advance member
passes only.

Contact Us

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

[Gardening Help from Colorado Master Gardeners](#)

[Kathryn Kalmbach Herbarium](#)

[Sam Mitchel Herbarium of Fungi](#)

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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

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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.

BUILDING BOTANICAL BONDS with Afghanistan

By Sarada Krishnan, Ph.D., Director of Horticulture & Center for Global Initiatives

Afghanistan is one of the few countries that does not have a botanical garden. This gaping hole was brought to the forefront when difficulties arose after seeds and saplings from the Green Legacy Hiroshima (GLH) campaign were sent to Afghanistan. The lack of botanical gardens severely hinders Afghan researchers and scientists in their efforts to preserve and improve the country's biodiversity in the long term. To address this, the Afghan Fellowship Legacy Project (AFLP) of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) along with Emerging and Developing Economies Network (EDEN) Seminars have formed an initiative to catalyze the creation of a botanical garden network in Afghanistan. Assisting with this initiative are experts from Denver Botanic Gardens, San Diego Botanic Garden, Botanic Gardens Conservation International and other renowned botanical and conservation experts.

The initiative's vision is to form a network of botanical gardens dedicated to the research of plants relevant to food, medicine, horticulture and ecological integrity in Afghanistan.

Key factors for this project to be successful and self-sustainable over decades—even centuries—will be in making these botanical gardens resilient, low-cost and easy to maintain, even when resources are lacking. This network of botanic gardens will be operated by universities, and to date, three universities in Afghanistan have signed up to participate: Paktia University, Bamyán University and Kabul University.

An [inaugural seminar](#) on botanic garden networks for Afghanistan was held at the third EDEN Seminar at the Shizenkan University in Japan on January 31, 2020. Following that, an international advisory committee was formed. The committee was to have met in Tokyo in May this year, but due to COVID-19, a webinar was held on May 14.

These past few months as we have grappled with the societal impacts of the pandemic, the importance of our connection to nature and plants has never been more vital. Looking to the future, we hope through this project to connect the Afghani people with their natural heritage.



THE HORTICULTURAL FORTUNE TELLER

By Sonya Anderson, Horticulture Specialist – Plant Select® & Pollinator Gardens

(Low music plays. The lights are dim.) Now that we have the proper atmosphere, let's gaze into our crystal ball. What does Plant Select® have for us in 2021...? At first, I see only fog. But then it clears, revealing a lovely mounding plant covered in dusty pink flowers—so many I can't see the leaves! A foot tall and a little wider, it's in bright sun with very little water. I'd swear it's Spanish snapdragon (*Antirrhinum sempervirens*), but strangely the flowers are pink, not white. This must be something new, unusual, maybe some kind of folly.

(Now the fog returns, and moments pass.) I can see something new emerging. Shiny green foliage, about two feet tall. Lots of sun, little water. It's Rocky Mountain penstemon (*Penstemon strictus*). I'd know it anywhere. Well, pollinators are going to love it! But hang on, white flowers? Rocky Mountain penstemon is blue. And the flowers are so big.

The image in our crystal ball is changing... Is that Blanca Peak I see in the distance? Curious... (The fog swirls as more moments pass.) The clouds obscure Blanca Peak, but then fade. New mountains appear, big, but different. Ah ha! The Maloti range in South Africa. And what's that? A little shrub is appearing. Silvery, with dense foliage. It's sprawling but upright and tidy, too, with sunny

yellow strawflowers at the tips. Definitely hardy, in full to partial sun, with little supplemental water. The plant looks to be two to three feet high by maybe four feet wide. But what is it? Shhh, I can hear something, a word. It's unfamiliar. It sounds like "Hokubetsi." Yes, that's it. Hokubetsi. That must be its name.

So many new plants revealed for 2021!

Drew's Folly™
Hardy Snapdragon
Antirrhinum
sempervirens 'P020S'

Blanca Peak® Rocky
Mountain Beardtongue
Penstemon strictus
'PWWG06S'

SteppeSuns®
Hokubetsi *Helichrysum*
trilineatum 'P021S'



THE FUTURE OF CHATFIELD FARMS



By Larry Vickerman, Director of Chatfield Farms

I have had the pleasure of being the director of Chatfield Farms for the past 15 years. During that time, I have seen the exciting transformation of an undiscovered gem of a property into a multi-disciplinary showcase. Few public places combine agriculture, horticulture and restoration, especially where they can be practiced side by side. That is what makes Chatfield Farms so unique. The plant sciences tend to be divided into smaller study areas for more detailed research, but that can sacrifice the synergy of discovery and collaboration. I can think of few places where you can see well executed larger scale farming, detailed naturalistic ornamental landscape plantings and small-scale intensive vegetable/fruit farming in the context of a historical farm. Couple that with prairie and riparian restoration and you can develop a diverse view of the applied plant sciences.

Just as exciting is that the Chatfield Farms Committee and staff have spent the last year re-imagining and creating a new

Master Development Plan to enhance the visitor experience and to provide more insight and education about the site. Plans include: better parking with new visitor services facilities; a new rental venue; education center with direct access to the Hildebrand Ranch; and (eventually) a farm-to-table restaurant. And improved paths will increase access to bird and wildlife watching. Currently, a drying shed for lavender, herbs and dye plants is underway, and we hope to soon add a still for extracting essential oils.

High-intensity farming techniques will continue to improve, and overall water conservation strategies will continue. More prairie restoration will enhance habitat for all important pollinators and other invertebrates. Lastly, one of the most fascinating projects of the last five years has been the restoration of the hydrology and habitat along the Deer Creek riparian corridor, which will continue to increase water quality and support wildlife.

Selecting PLANT SELECT[®]



By Mike Bone, Curator of Steppe Collections and Associate Director of Horticulture, and Jameson Coopman, Horticulture Research Associate

Every year [Plant Select[®]](#) promotes and introduces great plants for Colorado and similar steppe regions. These plants originate from many different places. We receive plants from local growers. Some come from national plant breeders. Plants even come from the breeding efforts of our own staff. With a watchful eye, a trained horticulturist can spot mutations and find unique plant traits that add diversity to our gardens. Selecting and introducing plants is a global tradition that Denver Botanic Gardens has been involved in for decades. Plant Select is the showcase for this work.

For a plant to make it into the program it must meet certain criteria. The main criteria Plant Select looks for in potential plants are the ability to thrive with less water, to grow in a variety of conditions and to have resilience in challenging climates. These plants must be unique, resist diseases and pests, provide long-lasting, multi-season beauty and be unlikely to escape cultivation.

The trial gardens at Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms is where potential introductions are evaluated. This location is tucked away from public spaces to protect potential proprietary plants. These plants are established in rows and observed for

anywhere from one to 10 years, most plants averaging three years before a decision is made whether to include it in the Plant Select program. Throughout those years, plants are subjected to intense Colorado conditions. The soil is heavy clay, the plants are watered minimally (sometimes not receiving any supplemental water at all in a season) and plants are not fertilized. This certainly provides the opportunity to observe plants in a challenging environment. Plants that can survive this garden will thrive in this region.

At regular intervals, plants are photographed to track phenology (the study of seasonal changes, such as blooming in the spring and leaf color changes in the fall, which are influenced by climate). Observations are recorded regarding plant size, pollinator visitation, pests and diseases, and if the plant spreads heavily via seed. That last one is especially important for plants that don't come from Colorado. We make sure they do not spread via seed or any other method heavily enough to escape cultivation. These trial gardens are at the cutting edge of horticulture in Colorado and the steppe. Keep an eye out for all of our exciting advances.

SAVE THE DATES

TRIPS & TRAVEL

Garden of the Gods: A Springtime Journey to the Greek Islands

April 22 – May 3, 2021

Greece in spring is a magical experience. It's the time of the year when the entire country becomes a vast natural garden. Greece is home to a stunning number of plant species, comprising the richest flora in Europe. More than 6,000 species thrive in the country, of which about 10 percent are endemic and can be found nowhere else in the world. On this springtime journey we will witness the beautiful display of wildflowers that cover the land among ancient sites, old villages and notable islands. Tour leader is Dr. Sarada Krishnan, director of horticulture and the Center for Global Initiatives at the Gardens.

Celebrate La Guelaguetza in Oaxaca

July 18-24, 2021

Join us next summer for the most important festival in Oaxaca – the annual celebration of La Guelaguetza. Guelaguetza comes from the Zapotec word *guendalezaa*, which means to give or share, or offer a service to someone. This annual celebration brings together the most diverse communities in the state to showcase music and dances as well as exhibitions, concerts, and other events of cultural importance. Tour leader is Yvonne Garcia Bardwell, community relations manager.

Botanical Wonders of Brazil's Estrada Royal

October 3-11, 2021

This trip to Brazil offers a rich cultural and botanical experience, exploring 17th-19th century architecture, local cuisine, natural history, art, culture and landscapes. The journey will trace the Estrada Real, which opened in the 18th century to support gold mines. It was officially declared a tourist route in 1999 and is the most important tourist destination in Minas Gerais, encompassing historical cities, woodland parks, mountains, rivers, waterfalls and lakes. Tour leader is Nick Snakenberg, curator of tropical collections and associate director of horticulture at the Gardens.

Immerse yourself in the culture and traditions of Día de los Muertos in Oaxaca

October 28 – November 3, 2021

Denver Botanic Gardens and Reefs to Rockies offer another unforgettable trip to Oaxaca, Mexico, during its most important celebration of the year – Día de los Muertos. This eight-day journey takes you to Mexico City, Puebla and Oaxaca. Combining these three cities offers visitors a unique opportunity to explore the rich history and long-standing traditions of this beautiful celebration. Tour leader is Dan Johnson, associate director of horticulture and curator of native plants.



KETCHUP (or catch up) WITH COUCH TOMATOES

By Erin Bird, Communications Manager

Check out our new [Instagram Stories](#) series of witty, bite-size interactive science lessons about plants, fungi and their associated animals. Join Vanessa Callahan, learning engagement assistant (aka the Nerdy Naturalist), as she chases bees, pets fuzzy plants, tackles plant reproduction and looks at hidden plant parts under the microscope. Every Wednesday, see a new episode and get to know a few plants up close (or even under the lens).



PRIVATE TOURS at York Street, Chatfield Farms or Plains Conservation Center

Looking for a special experience for your group of five or more? Schedule a private guided tour at [York Street](#), [Chatfield Farms](#) or [Plains Conservation Center](#) with at least three weeks' notice. For more information, contact info@botanicgardens.org or 720-865-3500.

Includes admission.

Docent-led: \$14 per person, \$5 student
Staff-led: \$17 per person, \$5 student
Plains Conservation Center: \$10

CORN MAZE

**Fridays – Sundays,
September 18 – October 31**

September: 9 a.m. – 7 p.m.,
last entry 6 p.m.

October: 9 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.,
last entry 5:30 p.m.

Must pre-purchase tickets; no tickets sold onsite.

Celebrate the 20th anniversary of Corn Maze!

Wind your way through seven acres of corn, view the maze from two 15-foot-tall bridges and for those ages 10 and under, explore the mini maze. In October, pick the perfect pumpkin in the 10-acre pumpkin patch.

Pumpkin patch hours:

Monday – Thursday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.,
must pre-purchase Chatfield Farms general admission tickets

Friday – Sunday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.,
must pre-purchase Corn Maze tickets

Note: Due to COVID-19 constraints, there will not be a Pumpkin Festival this year.

VIRTUAL DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS CELEBRATION

Join the Gardens' annual celebration of Day of the Dead with online workshops, virtual programs and entertainment providing at-home learning and celebrating for students, families and the entire community.

VIRTUAL FALL PLANT & BULB SALE

September 25-27

The key to a colorful spring garden is planting bulbs in the fall! This year, our online sale will feature hundreds of flowering bulbs, garlic and Grown at the Gardens plants, as well as new offerings including unique seed mixes and Plant Select® selections. Shop online from the comfort of your home, then pick up your order in person at the Gardens. Online store will be open September 25, 10 a.m. – September 27, 5 p.m., (subject to close if supplies run out). Order pick-up is October 1-3.

GLOW AT THE GARDENS™

October 20-25, 6-9:45 p.m.

Member ticket presale: October 2-4, 10 a.m.
Public tickets on sale: October 5, 10 a.m.

Reimagined for 2020, enjoy an eerie evening at the Gardens surrounded by luminous displays and live performers. Wander a one-way path through a spooky, illuminated landscape as musicians, dancers and performing artists bring spirits and specters to life. Bring your face mask and a macabre mood for this enchanted autumnal experience. Tickets must be purchased in advance and are expected to sell out; don't wait to get yours.

BLOSSOMS OF LIGHT™

November 20 – January 3,
5-9:45 p.m., Closed

Thanksgiving

Member ticket presale: November 6-8, 10 a.m.
Public tickets on sale: November 9, 10 a.m.

Ranked for several years as one of the best holiday light shows in the nation, Blossoms of Light once again illuminates the chilly winter nights at our York Street location. Enjoy majestic displays of light and color as you stroll a mile-long path through a twinkling winter wonderland that brings delight to visitors of all ages. Tickets must be purchased in advance and are expected to sell out; don't wait to get yours!

TRAIL OF LIGHTS

November 27 – December 13,
Fridays – Sundays

December 18 – January 3,
nightly; 5-9 p.m.

Trail of Lights returns to Chatfield Farms!

Walk a wintry, winding path glistening with lights that illuminate the Colorado countryside, illuminated antique and model tractors on display, seasonal decorations and hot, non-alcoholic drinks and kettle corn available for purchase. Tickets must be purchased in advance.

THE SHOP AT THE GARDENS

Start your holiday shopping today at the online Shop at the Gardens! Find artisan bath & body products, locally made home and garden décor, gift box sets, educational items and more. Gardens members save 10% on purchases.



DEVELOPMENT

Cultivating a Vision: THE SUMMERHOME GARDEN

By Johanna Kelly, Director of Development

In the Washington Park neighborhood, you will find a gem. SummerHome Garden is the vision and creation of Gardens' member and volunteer Lisa Negri, Horticulture Specialist Kevin Williams and Horticulture Specialist-Plant Select® & Pollinator Gardens Sonya Anderson. This garden is a response to the increasing density there and throughout our city.

Lisa was inspired to create SummerHome Garden when a property contiguous to hers became available last year. In considering the ongoing building around her she asked herself, "How can I help?"

Having worked as a volunteer with Kevin and other members of the Gardens' horticulture team, she is very familiar with the different gardens on the York Street campus. Most familiar to her are the Steppe Garden and the streetscapes Kevin and others designed and planted along Josephine Street using native

and adaptive plants. When volunteering, Lisa routinely works in the Josephine Street gardens and has even used many of the same plants in the "hell strip" in front of her own home. This further inspired her vision with the question: "What is better than a garden?"

One of the benefits of being a significant donor to the Gardens is the opportunity to have a consultation session with a member of the horticulture team. Through this benefit Lisa and Kevin collaborated on the design of and plant selection for SummerHome Garden. Lisa says that Kevin's philosophy is to expand people's visions of a garden – to let it be wild and see where it goes. She wanted to bring this vision into her community to demonstrate the benefit of these native and adaptive plants. The plantings include redbud trees, red sage, California bluebells, yucca and agave, among many others. [SummerHome Garden](#) was finished in early August; once established, the plantings will thrive with natural rainfall.



FEBRUARY

JUNE

HORTICULTURE

Envisioning **THE SUMMERHOME GARDEN**

by Kevin Philip Williams, Horticulture Specialist

Through the Gardens' collaboration with Lisa, we set out to provide planting and landscape design to create an example of dynamic horticulture for the Washington Park neighborhood.

The naturalistic plantings of SummerHome Garden, implemented through a combination of planting and seeding, highlight the beauty and xeric utility of shrub steppes, bringing a Western colorscape of silvers and blue-grays to the forefront with seasonal shocks of hot hues rippling across the garden. Additionally, a crevice garden for cacti and succulents, natural stone benches, meandering pathways, pollinator hotels, sculptures and fountains are spread throughout the immersive plantings.

The layout itself has been modeled on an instance of graffiti found on a public utility box. Using this wild, open-source example of composition and expression as a jumping-off point for planting helps to alleviate the heavy-handedness of the designer and encourage acceptance of a wandering and competing plant community.

Although we may not know the shape of gardens to come, they will certainly need progressive vision, guidance and the support of a diverse community to manifest. We are hopeful that through creative examples and thoughtful experimentation, the Gardens can continue to be a helpful steward of future gardens.

SCIENCE AT THE GARDENS

Expanded Opportunities

*By Jennifer Ramp Neale, Ph.D.,
Director of Research & Conservation*

Examining fungal spores under microscopes, cutting DNA into thousands of pieces to then make millions of copies, growing plants in test tubes, cleaning and counting millions of seeds, carefully dissecting floral parts to describe a species—these are some of the scientific activities taking place in the Freyer – Newman Center for Science, Art and Education.

With the opening of the Center, we are expanding and enhancing our scientific capabilities. Scientific study is the pursuit of knowledge through documentation, observation and experimentation. Our team of staff scientists are engaged in documenting and observing the natural world, specifically plants and fungi.

The common thread in our work is the goal of enhancing our knowledge of the natural world. Whether our end goal is a report to a grant funder or publication in a scientific journal, we design our studies with transparency and replicability top of mind. Between 2015-2019, Gardens staff published more than 45 papers in scientific journals. Publishing our studies as an article in a peer-reviewed scientific journal adds weight and validation to our work.

The facilities provided in the Center expand our capacity to pursue scientific knowledge. The herbarium houses our natural history collections: the Kathryn Kalmbach Vascular Plant Herbarium and the Sam Mitchel Herbarium of Fungi have nearly 100,000 combined plant and fungal specimens representing biodiversity of the Southern Rocky Mountain region. Funding from an Institute for Museum and Library Services grant (award #: MA-30-18-0410-18) provides ample cabinet space allowing for 50 years of continued growth. The Bill and Alice Collister Herbarium Workspace offers abundant space for botanists, mycologists and botanical illustrators to work side by side opening opportunity for future collaborations.

The science labs, located on the second floor, more than double our capacity to pursue scientific observation and experimentation. The Ecology Lab provides space for mycological processing, seed cleaning, microscopy, biomass and soil studies. We are leading experimental studies at Chatfield Farms working to restore the habitat along Deer Creek. Samples collected there are then processed in the lab. The Genetics and Tissue Culture Lab is a sterile lab where genetic relationships among fungi or plants are assessed and population genetic assessments are pursued. Horticultural research assesses genetic diversity in key crops and wild relatives and develops new tissue culture protocols for propagation.

The numerous spaces allow for research to continue with social distancing efforts well in place. Teaching and mentoring now take place in a virtual landscape, using the collections and labs as the backdrop to create a rich experience for students of all kinds. New scientific discoveries will arise from our work in the Center. We look forward to sharing these, as well as our physical research spaces, with the public in time.

Visit the new indoor galleries in the Freyer – Newman Center with these inaugural exhibitions. Included with Gardens admission.

FROM THE VAULT

Wonders and Oddities from the Gardens' Collections

September 26 – November 8

From the Vault presents some of the most beautiful, interesting and unique objects in the Gardens' collections, most exhibited for the first time. The Gardens is home to much more than living plants; its collections also include paintings, pressed plants, rare books, dried fungi, historical photos and other objects. Highlights include a giant puffball fungus named Fred and a botanical illustration created during the time of Shakespeare.

PINK LEMONADE HOPE

Works by Koko Bayer

September 26 – December 6

Denver artist Koko Bayer installs printed images throughout Denver's urban landscape with wheat paste, making them naturally ephemeral. *Pink Lemonade Hope* is part of Bayer's "Project Spread Hope"—a series of installations created in response to the COVID-19 crisis as a reminder of the power of hope.

GARDEN & HAVEN

Botanical Art and Illustration

September 26 – November 8

In honor of its 40th anniversary, Denver Botanic Gardens' School of Botanical Art and Illustration highlights gardens as places of sanctuary and renewal through a special juried exhibition of works created by the school's students and graduates. *Garden & Haven* celebrates the capacity of the natural world to remind us that even through times of sadness and fear, spring and renewal will always return.

GHOST FOREST Works by Melanie Walker

September 26 – December 6

Melanie Walker's works on fabric are a contemplative reverie on our origins in nature and the landscapes that continue to sustain us. *Ghost Forest* offers a space to reflect on the memories that connect us to wild places, and to one another. Walker is a Colorado-based artist whose work draws on analog photographic processes, digital art and mixed media. This exhibition is organized in collaboration with Walker Fine Art, Denver.

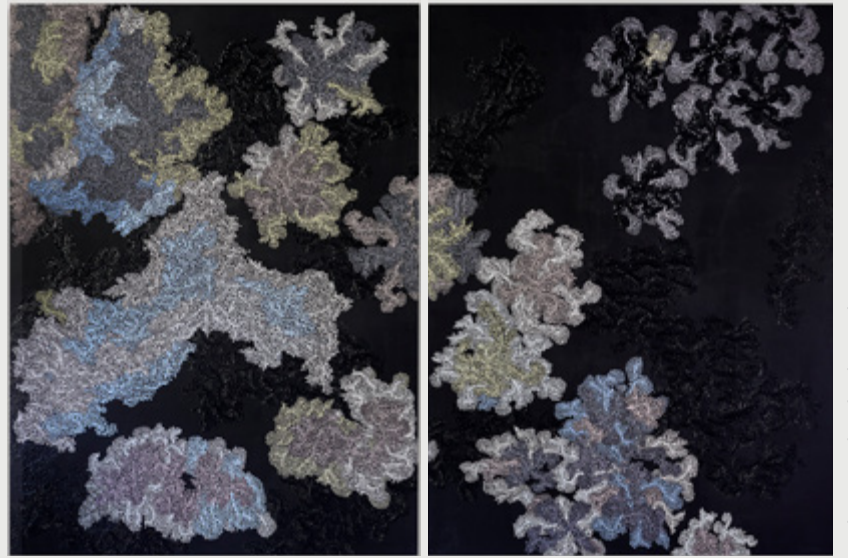
Tony Ortega, *Los Trabajadores*, 2019. Artwork © Tony Ortega. Photo courtesy of Tony Ortega.



RAÍCES Y RAMAS | ROOTS AND BRANCHES

November 21 – February 28

Tony Ortega's artwork celebrates identity and tradition to form a bridge between cultures in Mexico and the United States. *Raíces y ramas* explores the Chicano experience in U.S. culture, highlighting the role of place and landscape in connecting community. Inspired by his journeys across languages, cultures and ideologies, Ortega's work combines expressionist colors with urban and rural environments of the U.S. Ortega holds a MFA in drawing and painting from the University of Colorado and is currently a professor at Denver's Regis University. He is the recipient of the Colorado Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts and the Mayor's Award for Excellence in the Arts. His artwork can be found in the collections of museums including the Denver Art Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum, and his works have been exhibited throughout the U.S., Latin America and other parts of the world. This exhibition is organized in collaboration with William Havu Gallery, Denver.



Jody Guralnick, *how they grow*, 2019.

PRIMA LINGUA

First Words of the Earth

December 19 – March 14

Jody Guralnick explores the intersection of science and art, bringing to light the microscopic and often unnoticed structures of lichens, mushrooms, molds and more. For her, these tiny organisms are comparable to the first words of the earth—building blocks for nature's language. Her works seek to make visible the links between the human world and the realm of fungi and microbes, encouraging stewardship of the environment by highlighting the spaces that we share with microorganisms. Guralnick is based in Aspen, Colorado where she collects, interprets and creates with natural materials. She holds a BA from the St. Martin's School of Art in London, a MA from the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts, and a MFA from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY. Her works have been exhibited throughout the U.S., and she has been the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, including a Ford Foundation Grant and a Colorado Council for the Arts Visual Arts Fellowship.

PLANT PRESS FAMILY ACTIVITY

By Chelsey Bardgett, Family and Children's Program Instructor



There are many things we do in the moment that have future results. It might be planting a seed and watching it grow to get a flower or designing a space to develop the perfect garden. At Denver Botanic Gardens, our instructors work today to grow the future.

A special activity to do today that will have future results is pressing a plant. This activity creates a long-lasting dried specimen that might have sentimental meaning, be a piece of art or be used for scientific purposes. At the Gardens, we keep our dried specimens in a special space called an [herbarium](#). Check out how our own scientists [collect plant specimens](#).

Now is a great time for families to practice their own trips into the "field." Take a journey through an outdoor space, your neighborhood or even your backyard. Look for a specimen that is either on a plant you can safely collect from or already on the ground.

After working in the "field," you can begin the process of preserving your collection by creating a small DIY plant press.

Materials: plant specimens, cardboard (an old cardboard box works), paper or newspaper and rubber bands.

This project takes a little time, but it is well worth the wait for our family naturalists! Want a crafty version of a DIY plant press? Purchase this [Botany in a Box Family Activity Kit](#).

- 1 Cut cardboard into three 4" x 4" squares. The cardboard acts as firm support to flatten the plant specimen.
- 2 Place at least two sheets of paper or newspaper on two pieces of cardboard. The paper acts as an absorbent layer to help the plant dry quicker.
- 3 Using your fingers, carefully arrange the plant specimen on top of one of the papers so that the leaves are separate from each other but still connected to the stem. You may turn one leaf over to show the other side. Once you are happy with your arrangement, place the other paper on top of the specimen and a piece of cardboard on top of the paper. You just made a specimen sandwich! Repeat the process to create another layer.
- 4 Wrap rubber bands around the press, one in each direction so all parts are bound together. The rubber bands assist in exerting pressure on the plant specimens. You can increase the pressure by placing heavy objects on the plant press. It can take over a week for a plant to dry completely, so keep practicing patience during this project!



PANDEMIC PROGRAMMING PIVOT

By Matthew Cole, Director of Education; with contributions from Kirsten Bell, School and Camp Program Coordinator; Katelin Gaeth, Assistant Manager of School and Camp Programs; Chelsey Bardgett, Family & Children's Program Instructor; Helena Sizemore, Family & Children's Program Instructor; and Catharine McCord, Adult Program Coordinator

The Education Department prides itself on providing strong hands-on experiences for learners of all ages, through schools, in family groups and for adults wanting to connect with plants in many ways. The pandemic has challenged this, and as educators, we've had to be extra creative to reach audiences.

"Basically, we had to pivot," says Kirsten. "And I feel we did it well because, in conversation with other organizations, we were ahead of where they were. We were able to do it fast and make it fun and engaging, all from our homes."

It took a team effort to make new things happen without being physically together. Through a combination of modifying onsite programs to work in an online learning environment and developing new video components to enhance the classes, the pieces started to come together. "We began to feel we can make this work; we have engaging content," Katelin says.

School programs, toddler classes and adult courses all transitioned online, modified to fit Zoom. The result, educators note, was that people were grateful: "What we realized was that the pandemic was so new and so unsettling that online classes helped people," says Catharine. A new weekly offering,

Therapeutic Thursdays, was introduced to help people appreciate and connect to plants through the technologies that were available.

Participants returned, new students joined, and our reach expanded beyond Denver and Colorado; it almost begins to sound like virtual learning shows us the future. But we're also seeing that attention span and time are limited online. Zoom fatigue is a reality. As people become confident in their ability to go out safely, online classes seem less appealing. "What was so vital in the early days of the pandemic may now just be yet another thing we do on a screen," Catharine adds.

What's the lesson for the future of classes at the Gardens? Past years have shown that we need not just a match between people's interest and the class content, but in the format of the class. Currently, some students are comfortable being in public spaces while others are not. It's clear that to serve our audiences the best we can, we need to have the greatest variety of formats that we can sustain. Please check our program offerings, both online and in person, to see what is open for registration now.



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