



# INSIDE THE GARDENS

SPRING 2024 A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR  
MEMBERS OF DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS

There is an oasis of natural beauty near the west end of the gardens at York Street. The Laura Smith Porter Plains Garden is nestled among high activity zones and at first blush seems a bit transitional. Upon closer examination though, you see a sweep of authenticity, plants that thrive in conditions that predate 200 years of ecological manipulation. To survive in the high plains, or steppe, regions of the world, all life must be extremely tough. There can be a temperature range of 120 degrees between a summer high and a winter low. Water can be scarce, fires can rage. Without a nearby stream or river, the accumulated soil can be a harsh combination of sand and clay.

And yet, countless plants flourish, ones that would die in damp, rich soil. Ruminants graze on those plants, migratory birds devour seeds, insects pollinate and propagate. It seems life adapts to conditions and creates dynamic biodiversity.

The shifting climate is shaking up human planning and expectations. We are getting used to dramatic descriptions of weather conditions – atmospheric rivers, bomb cyclones, polar vortexes – phrases unknown to most of us just a few years ago. Through this uncertainty, botanic gardens offer the public a chance to do more than relax and enjoy tableaux of diverse ecosystems. They provide real-time lessons about adaptation and survival.

When we have been hit by massive temperature swings or intense hailstorms, there are gardens that are decimated and others that simply shake it off. Steppe plants can handle harsh conditions and manage to maintain habitats and offer aesthetic value. As Colorado anticipates shifting temperatures and water access, the Gardens is focused on identifying and promoting the use of steppe plants for sustainable landscapes. Check out our website to read about [ideal plants and designs](#) that you can use in your own gardens. We have a team working with local governments and private businesses to replace turf with plants that can handle native soil and scarce water.

A signature program, [Plant Select](#)<sup>®</sup>, is a brilliant place to start. This alliance of the Gardens, Colorado State University and the green industry works together to find, research and deploy species that thrive in our steppe environment. There are numerous displays of these plants at both York Street and Chatfield Farms to spark your imagination.

The whole point is to engender a sense of stewardship, to recognize that we are not helpless, but can take action to do our part to sustain life, and to discover the satisfaction and joy that comes from taking responsibility.

Onward.

Brian Vogt  
Denver Botanic Gardens CEO



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ISSUE 2, 2024

### Denver Botanic Gardens

1007 York St., Denver, CO 80206  
Hours through May 11, 9 a.m. – 7 p.m., last admission 6 p.m.  
May 12 – Sept. 2, 9 a.m. – 8 p.m., last admission 7 p.m.  
Check the website for early closures.

### 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

**Tours:** 720-865-3539

### Visit Our Website for More Information:

[Gardening Help from Colorado Master Gardeners](#)

[Kathryn Kalmbach Herbarium](#)

[Sam Mitchel Herbarium of Fungi](#)

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**Graphic Designer:** Jessica Lammert

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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**

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.



# CONSERVING THE STEPPES

By Phillip Douglas, Director of Horticulture & Center for Global Initiatives



Colorado or not? Baysun Mountains of Uzbekistan.  
Photo: Phillip Douglas

In the pursuit of partnerships for plant conservation, the Gardens works in the steppe regions of the world. This year, the Gardens continues work with the Plant Collecting Collaborative, a partnership of 18 international public gardens that focus resources and expertise in the development of ex-situ plant collections. In April, members of the Collaborative join botanists from the Institute of Botany of the Academies of Sciences of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the ancient city of Tashkent. Together with these international partners, the Gardens and the Collaborative will reaffirm the Tashkent Accord, a joint agreement of all parties to conduct mutual research, plant exploration and conservation work in the steppe regions of Central Asia.

The Central Asian steppe contains an incredible diversity of flora and fauna, with striking similarities to the United States' own steppe region, the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains. The Gardens' work in the Central Asian steppe can be viewed any time of year in our Steppe Garden, where wild-collected accessions of plants from the region are maintained in ex-situ conservation collections. The Steppe Garden contains more than 2,000 unique plants collected from dry grassland ecosystems, with 703 from wild-collected origin.

Formally established in 2012, the [Center for Global Initiatives](#) brings international horticultural research and relevance to the Gardens through implementation of diverse and sustainable programs achieving global transformation by connecting people with plants.

## THE EVER-CHANGING STEPPE GARDEN

By Kevin Philip Williams, Manager of Horticulture

*"The joy of life consists in the exercise of one's energies, continual growth, constant change, the enjoyment of every new experience. To stop means simply to die."*

– Aleister Crowley

Gardens are places of perpetual change. Places to behold the cycles of life. Places to experiment with ideas and have conversations about the world around us. When the Steppe Garden opened in 2016, we didn't instate a completed vision, but instead offered a mutable space ready for the possibilities of the future. Every year we introduce new elements to the garden that allow us to connect our visitors more completely to the story of the steppes.

This year you'll notice two new features in the Steppe Garden, one big and one small, but both featuring exciting stonework. In a sizable change, the beloved plaza amphitheater bench will undergo a meticulous reconstruction using beautiful sandstone from Lyons, Colorado, to provide more comfortable seating and expanded planting and display space. On a smaller scale, the living stones bed will receive a thoughtful reimagining. Although southern African plants from Aizoaceae (fig-marigold family) will still be featured, they will now be set within a crevice garden structure crafted from locally sourced quartz, mica and granitic pegmatite. This alteration is designed to create intricate microclimates, mirroring the diverse habitats of the Knersvlakte, the quartz fields in the Succulent Karoo of South Africa.

Join us on this ever-evolving journey through the Steppe Garden as we refine, enhance and most importantly, continue to change.





Photo: Mike Bone

# ACANTHOLIMON

By Mike Bone, Associate Director & Curator of Steppe Collection

*Acantholimon*, or the prickly thrifts, are a group of fascinating species that grow in steppe regions. Mainly found in Central Asia, these plants are incredibly diverse. Most *Acantholimon* species have very sharp modified leaves and can range from silver to green. The flowers are often shades of pink and white but on some species the flowers can be quite dark. Most have attractive dried bracts that remain after the flowers are spent, giving them an extended season of beauty.

These plants have adapted to very dry and windy conditions and are mostly found on rocky slopes or other such disturbed or depauperate areas. There are currently 297 accepted species according to [The World Flora Online](#). Denver Botanic Gardens has

40 listed in our living collections. These plants are not readily found in plant nurseries or even often in other botanic gardens. Their adaptation to our dry steppe environment makes them a challenge to grow in wetter climates.

We are continually looking for sources and opportunities to add to the diversity of our living collection, and *Acantholimon* is one of our unique features. In the fall of 2023, some of our staff were part of a collection trip to Tajikistan where several new-to-the-United States species were collected. They are now in the capable hands of our propagation team, who are growing them to add to our alpine and steppe collections.

## STEPPE RESOURCES AT THE HELEN FOWLER LIBRARY

By Patty Wright, Public Services Librarian

Steppe regions contain a wealth of interesting flora, and a visit to the [Helen Fowler Library](#) can expand your knowledge of these plants. Here are some recommendations to get you started.

- In 2022, Denver Botanic Gardens' Center for Global Initiatives hosted the Global Steppe Symposium, with experts from around the world convening in Denver. The conference papers, published as "[2022 Global Steppe Symposium Proceedings](#)," are available for perusal.
- "[Sowing Beauty: Designing Flower Meadows from Seed](#)" by James Hitchmough includes plant lists from the world's major steppes and will show you how to design and sow seed mixes for dramatic effect in your landscape.
- Planning a trip to the Patagonian steppe? Check out "[Flowers of the Patagonian Steppe/Flores de la Estepa Patagónica](#)" by Lorraine Green and Marcela Ferreyra.
- Explore the eBook "[The Edge of Extinction: Travels with Enduring People in Vanishing Lands](#)" by Jules Pretty, which covers the people and land of the steppe in Tuva Republic, Russia.
- "[Steppes: The Plants and Ecology of the World's Semi-Arid Regions](#)" by Panayoti Kelaidis, Michael Bone, Larry G. Vickerman, Dan Johnson and Mike Kintgen shares terrific photos and in-depth information about steppes around the world—and was written by five of the Gardens' horticulturists.

We hope you'll visit the Helen Fowler Library soon to explore the steppes!



# ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONS

Photo: Kevin Philip Williams

By Kevin Philip Williams, Manager of Horticulture

In 2023, the Clyfford Still Museum unveiled [Abstract Expressions](#), an immersive installation with both sound and garden elements, which I was honored to create in collaboration with composer and artist Nathan Hall. This innovative project aims to illuminate the profound connections between Clyfford Still's life and art, his relationship with the natural world and the enduring influence of Abstract Expressionism in the realms of music and garden design.

The garden installations highlight the deep connection between Clyfford Still and the North American steppes. Having spent his formative years between

North Dakota, eastern Washington and Alberta, Canada, Still would have experienced a similar landscape in all locations, and subsequently, one that is kindred to Denver. The gardens are stylized versions of these steppes, featuring plants in common that naturally occur throughout all these locales.

On April 18 in the Freyer – Newman Center's Sturm Family Auditorium, I will present a lecture on this exciting project and explore how Abstract Expressionism and American artistic traditions intersect with naturalistic gardens, and what insights contemporary designers can draw from this artistic movement.

## RELATED LECTURE

### [Total Psychic Entity: The Gardens of Abstract Expressions](#)

Thursday, April 18, 6:30-7:30 p.m.  
Reception 7:30-8:30 p.m.  
\$15 public

Delve into the conceptual intentions and intricate creative journey behind the development of the gardens featured in *Abstract Expressions* at the Clyfford Still Museum. A reception follows, featuring delightful pies to sample—that all-American dessert era-appropriate for a mid-century artist.

## TRIPS AND TRAVEL

Travel with Denver Botanic Gardens. Guided excursions feature botanical highlights, geographical wonders, culture, food and history. [See full itineraries and register.](#)

### Coastal Carolinas' Savage Gardens and Botanical Hotspots

May 25-29

People have long been drawn to the unique and bizarre nature of carnivorous plants. The coastal Carolinas are the only place where Venus flytraps can be found in the wild. This is one of the country's best regions to observe a diversity of carnivorous plants in their natural habitat. Join Mae Lin Plummer, director of The IDEA Center for Public Gardens, along with local botanist Paula Gross and Ed Davis, associate director of UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens, for an unforgettable trip to delve into the unique world of carnivorous plants and explore the stunningly beautiful ecology of coastal saltmarshes, ancient bald cypress swamps and culturally rich Charleston, South Carolina.

### Magical Mexico – When Wine Meets Art

August 10-16

In the Mexican cities of Querétaro and San Miguel de Allende, wine and art converge in August – the time when the annual harvest in one of Mexico's most exciting wine regions coincides with San Miguel de Allende's Arts Festival. Join Denver Botanic Gardens' host Yvonne Garcia Bardwell for a sensory experience that combines the flavors of fine wine with the visual beauty of art in a region rich in history and culture.

### Botanical Wonders of Eastern Turkey

May 8-21, 2025

Explore the steppes of Turkey with Curator of Steppe Collections Mike Bone and renowned plantsman Christopher Gardener. Turkey is at a convergence of two different floristic regions, the Mediterranean and the steppes of Asia. The result is an incredibly diverse plant palette. Begin in Cappadocia with its ancient cultural and geological wonders and floral treasures. Then explore the montane steppe in eastern Turkey, where many transition zones give rise to wildflower displays. Travel through Turkic villages and explore mountains and fertile valleys in search of natural wonders.

# SPECIAL EVENTS



## EARTH DAY CELEBRATIONS AT YORK STREET AND CHATFIELD FARMS

**Sunday, April 21, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.**  
Included with admission.

What better way to celebrate Earth Day than at Denver Botanic Gardens? Get inspired by the natural world, learn how to support the health of your neighborhood's flora and fauna and be a steward of our planet's health. Enjoy free tours, art activities, gardening demonstrations, live music and more! [Get details online.](#)

## SPRING PLANT SALE



## SPRING PLANT SALE

**Friday & Saturday, May 10 & 11, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.**  
Member-only shopping hour, 8-9 a.m.  
Admission is free, reservations are required.

Join us as our York Street location transforms for Spring Plant Sale. Speak with our plant experts and horticulturists while shopping 15 different divisions spread across the Gardens. Extensive offerings include unique native, steppe and other adapted plants that are curated to thrive in Colorado's climate. Whether you want a variety of flora to reimagine your whole garden or one perfect houseplant, you'll find it here.

**Members save 10% on all purchases. [Get details and make reservations online.](#)**

## SPRING PLANT SALE PREVIEW PARTY

**Thursday, May 9, 4-7:30 p.m.**  
\$55 advance, \$60 at the door (if available)

Don't miss our early access Preview Party! Enjoy the first pick of plants along with tasty treats and beverages.



## BUTTERFLIES AT CHATFIELD FARMS

**Friday, May 24 member preview**  
**Saturday, May 25 open to public**  
Open daily 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
Included with admission.

This whimsical, seasonal habitat is home to hundreds of native butterflies such as swallowtails, monarchs, mourning cloaks and painted ladies. Learn what types of plants you can add to your own garden to attract butterflies and other pollinators. [Get details online.](#)



## BIG DAY OF BUGS

**Friday, June, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.**  
Included with admission.

Visit our York Street location to learn more about the importance of pollinators and what you can do to support pollinator habitats, health and biodiversity. Enjoy free tours, gardening tips, art activities, live music and information from community partners such as Butterfly Pavilion, Xerces Society, Colorado State University and The Pollinator Network. [Get details online.](#)



## SUMMER CONCERT SERIES PRESENTED BY UMB BANK

Experience performances by top recording artists in an unparalleled venue: the UMB Bank Amphitheater in the heart of the Gardens at York Street. Bring a picnic to enjoy on the lawn or purchase food onsite or in advance online. Leisurely stroll through the gardens before the show. Alcohol not available for purchase onsite; BYOB allowed. Produced in partnership with Swallow Hill Music.

**Tickets on sale now! [Get tickets and details online.](#)**



## EVENINGS AL FRESCO

**Select dates in June & July, 4:30-7:30 p.m.**  
\$32, \$22 member

Enjoy live music from local artists in an acoustic format at our York Street location. Each date features a vibrant mix of talented local musicians performing against a stunning backdrop of peak summer blooms. Pack a picnic, gather your favorite friends and family members, and wander the Gardens during the golden hour on these relaxing musical evenings. Alcohol not available for purchase onsite; BYOB allowed. Produced in partnership with Swallow Hill Music.

**Member pre-sale is May 15-17, based on membership level. Public ticket sales start May 20. [Get tickets and details online.](#)**

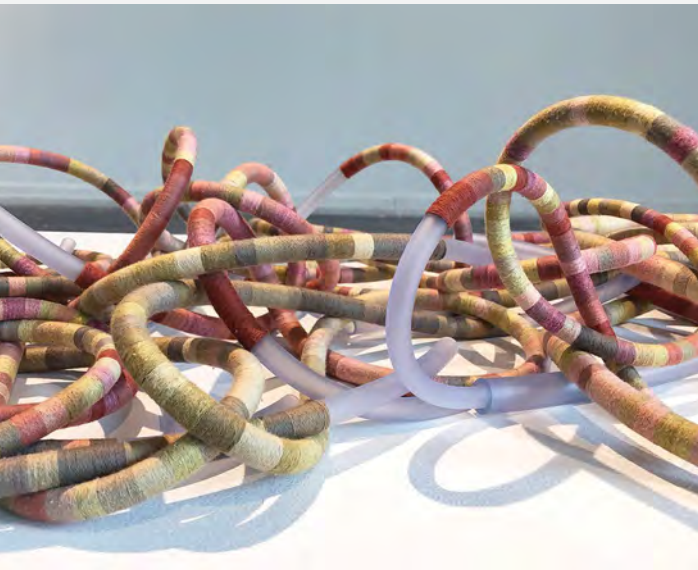


## LAVENDER FESTIVAL AT CHATFIELD FARMS

**Saturday & Sunday, July 20 & 21, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.**  
\$9-\$15, must purchase tickets in advance

Experience more than 2,000 lavender plants in peak bloom at this annual festival. Vendors sell all types of lavender-themed products from lotions and soaps to edible delights and wearable goods. Enjoy live music and food and drink vendors throughout the two-day event, plus demonstrations and classes. Chat with our gardeners and farmers. There are even activities for kids—so there's truly something for everyone. Be sure to purchase tickets early!

**Member pre-sale is May 15-17, based on membership level. Public ticket sales start May 20. [Get tickets and details online.](#)**



Tali Weinberg, *Bound*, temperature data for 300 places around the globe, petrochemical-derived medical tubing, plant fibers, plant and insect dyes, 2018. Photo by Philip Maisel.



Hung Liu, *Crossing the River: Chasing*, color lithograph, 2003. Photo CU Art Museum © Hung Liu.



Alexandra Kehayoglou, *Paraná de las Palmas River* (detail), textile wool, 2021. Photo by Alexandra Kehayoglou Studio.



Jacobo and María Ángeles, *Jaguar-Eagle*, fiberglass and acrylic paint, 2024.



Elliot Ross, *Portal*, digital exposure produced with archival inkjet, 2021.

## Current and Upcoming Exhibitions

### Tali Weinberg: The Space Between Threads

Through June 9

Experience weavings and sculptures about the connections between our own lives and the vast changes taking place all around us. Using data about our warming climate, Tali Weinberg's textiles weave together science and art to tell intertwined stories of land and water, people and landscapes, and ecological and human health.

### RELATED WORKSHOP

#### Weaving Data Into Landscapes

Sunday, May 5 or Monday, May 6, 10 a.m.  
\$135, \$115 member

Join artist Tali Weinberg for this workshop, which guides participants through the process of creating small weavings on a hand-held loom.

### Process Makes Perfect: Printmakers Explore the Natural World

Through July 28

Learn about contemporary lithographic printmaking through artworks exploring the beauty of nature. Featuring color lithographs and process works from the University of Colorado Art Museum's Sharkive, *Process Makes Perfect* presents works by Don Ed Hardy, Hung Liu, Emmi Whitehorse and Red Grooms.

### OPENING SOON

#### River's Voice: Textiles by Alexandra Kehayoglou

April 14 – December 8

Step into the fragile beauty of vanishing landscapes through monumental textile artworks. *River's Voice* features Alexandra Kehayoglou's carpet works highlighting the Paraná de las Palmas River in Argentina and the surrounding wetlands. Including a work that spills onto the floor, the exhibition invites visitors to remove their shoes and literally walk through the beauty of the Argentinian wetlands.

### Spirit Guides: Fantastical Creatures from the Workshop of Jacobo and María Ángeles

April 28 – September 8

Encounter fantastical creatures sited throughout the living galleries of the York Street gardens. Created by the workshop of Mexican artists Jacobo and María Ángeles, these brightly colored and richly patterned sculptures depict imaginary hybrid animals that act as both spirit guides and astrological embodiments of human character.

#### Elliot Ross: Geography of Hope

June 23 – September 29

Discover the resilience and beauty of Glen Canyon's ecosystem through the large-scale photographs of Elliot Ross. Dammed and flooded in 1963 to create Lake Powell, the desert walls of Glen Canyon have recently emerged from the water after two decades of drought in the American West. The reappearance of this vast canyon system and the ensuing ecological resurgence serves as both a stark reminder of climate change and a testament to nature's resilience.





Photo: Alexandra Kehayoglou Studio

# A RIVER'S STORY

By Moira Casey, Assistant Curator of Exhibitions

Opening April 14, the exhibition *River's Voice: Textiles by Alexandra Kehayoglou* invites you to step into the extraordinary beauty of the Paraná River Delta in South America, a network of islands and wetlands that play a key role in the continent's hydrology. Argentinean artist Alexandra Kehayoglou pays tribute to this unique environment, focusing on its beauty and the breadth of native flora and fauna that it supports.

Kehayoglou creates her artwork with a hand-tufting carpet-making technique, resulting in a tactile landscape that softly welcomes you as you explore it. The feature piece of the exhibit is a 40-foot by 14-foot carpet depicting a bird's-eye view of the delta. Visitors are invited to immerse themselves in this work by gently touching the carpet and walking on it. Additionally, a series of smaller works called *Prayer Rugs* focuses on details of the wetlands in various seasons and stages, offering visitors a contemplative space to connect with the landscape.

A hybrid ecosystem both aquatic and terrestrial, the Paraná Delta wetlands consist of over 5,400 square miles of lush, varied vegetation. Lagoons, streams, marshes, grasslands and riverside forests provide unique habitats for hundreds of birds, marsh deer, fish, capybaras, river otters and more. Located 30 miles from Argentina's densely populated capital, Buenos Aires, the wetlands are struggling in the face of destabilizing human-induced pressures. In addition to drought and wildfire caused by climate change, increases in pollution, deforestation and the introduction of invasive plants are destroying natural habitats and endangering wildlife. Through her unique depictions of the landscape's story, Kehayoglou defies hopeless messages of environmental doom—sharing instead a vision of beauty and strength that revitalizes our human connection to the land.

# THE CONFLUENCE OF ART AND SCIENCE

By Jennifer Riley-Chetwynd, Director of Marketing & Social Responsibility;  
Co-director, One World One Water Center

The Freyer – Newman Center was created at the intersection of art and science, employing both disciplines to connect people with plants. Several artists currently on view (including Kehayoglou, at left) approach the exploration of this intersection in fluid form by incorporating water themes in their works.

Given our location in the semi-arid steppe, Denver Botanic Gardens has a longstanding commitment to educating on water-wise horticulture and agriculture.

Since 2017, the Gardens has jointly managed an interdisciplinary water studies program – the One World One Water Center (OWOW) – with Metropolitan State University of Denver. If these water-themed exhibitions pique your curiosity to learn more, consider pursuing a water studies online certificate through OWOW. Gardens members receive a 10% discount... in addition to the ability to drop impressive water knowledge on future visits to the galleries.



Photo: Molly Thrasher



## SCHOOL OF BOTANICAL ART & ILLUSTRATION

**Intersections Lecture: Raise Some Heck**  
**ONSITE AND ONLINE**

Wednesday, May 8, 6-7:30 p.m.  
\$12, \$10 member

Tyler Thrasher, social media's most beloved mad scientist, returns with this artist's talk. Hear more about Tyler's artistic practice, plant hybridization techniques, social justice work and more.



## ADULT PROGRAMS

### Cheese 101

Tuesday, April 30, 5-6 p.m.  
\$35, \$30 member

Learn how cheese is made, the different categories and types of cheeses, try cheese pairings and get tips on how to make a delightful cheese tray.

### Backyard Chicken Keeping 101

Thursday, May 23, 5:30-7:30 p.m.  
\$33, \$28 member

Learn the basics: how to choose birds, coop/run prep and requirements, feed/treats, predator protection, egg production and health issues of chickens.

### Fairy Garden Terrarium Workshop

Saturday, June 8, 9:30-11 a.m.  
\$56, \$51 member

Create a whimsically decorated fairy garden terrarium bursting with color, magic and wonder. All materials are provided.

## UPCOMING SCOUT PROGRAMS

### Cub Scout Make and Take: Miniature Greenhouse Gardens

Saturday, April 13, 9:15 a.m., 10:45 a.m. or 1 p.m.  
\$12 per project

All levels of Cub Scouts are invited to join us in a spring seed planting project! Cub Scouts create a miniature greenhouse out of CD cases and plant seeds in eco-friendly seed starting pots.

### Hydro Heroes at Chatfield Farms

Saturday, April 20, 10 a.m. – noon  
\$12 per scout

Girl Scout Cadettes, Seniors and Ambassadors learn about water and the ecosystems in Colorado. Scouts use STEM techniques to examine water quality, learn how Coloradans get and use water and create hydro art.

### Girl Scout Juniors: Create a Garden Exploration Day

Saturday, May 18, 10:45 a.m. or 12:45 p.m.  
\$12 per scout

Girl Scouts learn the basics of garden design while exploring the Gardens. Create a miniature indoor garden to take home.

## PLAINS CONSERVATION CENTER IN AURORA

### Prairie Pup Adventures

Select Tuesdays, 9-10 a.m.  
\$8 per preschooler

Preschool-age children investigate a topic using hands-on science, art and nature exploration to learn about the animals, plants and people who call the prairie home. Upcoming themes: April 9, Reptiles; April 23, Flowers; May 7, Pronghorn; May 21, Cheyenne Native Americans.

### Family Workshops

Select Saturdays, noon – 1:30 p.m.  
\$10 per person

Fun, hands-on opportunity for families to enjoy a guided exploration of a theme, and a project for adults and kids to create together. Designed for families with children ages 5-10. Upcoming themes: April 13, Prairie Plants; April 27, Prairie Safari; June 8, Homestead Gardening.

Learn more about Plains Conservation Center and programs offered here.

# STEPPE INTO FUN

By Helena Nitz, Family and Children's Program Coordinator

Pop quiz! What exists on every continent except Australia and Antarctica? Steppes! Not like stairs or steps—steppes. Found in the rain shadow of large mountain ranges, steppes are a type of biome that have cold winters and hot summers.

Pop quiz again! Can you name a large mountain range in Colorado? That's right, the Rocky Mountains! The Rockies create a rain shadow, forming the Great Plains—a steppe region. Home to various grasses—like those seen in the Ornamental Grasses Garden or Laura Smith Porter Plains Garden—the Great Plains steppe is the perfect inspiration for creating a "grass head."

## MAKE A GRASS HEAD:



1 Collect some soil, grass seed and a cup or planting pot. The cup or pot will be the head.



2 Get creative: Add eyes, nose and a mouth to your cup or planting pot.



3 Once decorated, fill your container with soil, stopping about 1 inch from the top.



4 Sprinkle in a generous amount of grass seeds.



5 Gently cover your grass seeds with more soil and give your seeds a nice drink of water.



6 Depending on the grass seed, you'll see little grass "hair" in about a week. Let it grow or give your grass head a haircut.



# MOVING PLANTS OUT OF HARM'S WAY: THE ROLE OF TRANSPLANTING IN CONSERVATION

By Rebecca Hufft, Ph.D., Associate Director of Applied Conservation, and Michelle DePrenger-Levin, Population Biology Research Associate

Plant conservation can take on many forms. While conserving plants where they naturally occur is always the best choice, it isn't always possible. Historical, ongoing and planned land use activities can threaten individuals and whole populations of species. Additional management strategies that we use in such cases include ex situ seed collections (to preserve seeds in long-term, cold storage as a backup to any loss of plant populations in the wild), restoration (improving habitat, ecosystem functions and biodiversity) and transplanting (moving plants out of harm's way). For one rare plant that only occurs near Kremmling, Colorado, we are using this last method to try and protect plants threatened by a planned road improvement project.

Federally listed, rare plants are protected on public lands but there can sometimes be conflict between protection of these species and other land use needs. In such cases, the loss of individuals can be unavoidable. This conflict is occurring for an energy project in western Colorado where needed improvements to power lines threaten the endangered *Penstemon penlandii*. Roads that cut through *P. penlandii* habitat on Bureau of Land Management lands need to be widened and improved to update and maintain power structures. We are working with the utility entity and federal government to study the effectiveness of transplanting the impacted plants out of right-of-way impact zones to nearby suitable habitat.

The species occurs on shale badlands between Troublesome Creek and Sulphur Gulch, a patchy band of 1.5 by 0.5 miles. In 2008, we led a survey to estimate plant density and estimated a population of 10,000 to 100,000 individuals. While this large size puts the population at lower risk of extirpation, monitoring of five sampling sites by the Bureau of Land Management has documented declines in density from 2010 through 2021, likely because of drought. Due to its federal protection status, restricted distribution and the concern of population declines, mitigation of the plants that will be destroyed is required.



Photo: Michelle DePrenger-Levin

Conserving plant populations where they naturally occur is the preferred option because transplanting individuals is stressful to plants. We tested transplanting 100 individuals in the spring when there are cooler temperatures, wetter conditions and plants are putting their energy into growth and survival. Ninety-four percent of these plants survived their first month after transplanting. We moved another 100 plants in the fall when root systems are developed but plants may be putting their energy into reproduction instead of survival. Over the next three years, we will monitor the survival and growth of our transplanted individuals. This information will inform plans by the land managers and help determine if this is a viable option for similar situations.

# THE INCREDIBLE CREATURES OF CHATFIELD FARMS

*By Grace Johnson, Assistant Manager of Horticulture at Chatfield Farms*



Aside from beautiful native and xeric gardens, large swaths of sustainable farm fields and popular annual festivals, Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms has yet another asset: wildlife. Situated at the base of Deer Creek Canyon, the property includes many natural and restored areas. Spotting wildlife is a daily occurrence for staff and visitors alike.

Small ponds and a riparian area host a variety of aquatic bird species, such as Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Red-winged Blackbirds and even American White Pelicans. Many migratory ducks and double-crested cormorants appear early in the summer before taking their leave when temperatures drop. Swimming amongst the birds are muskrats, beavers, tiger salamanders and painted turtles. The northern leopard frog, a tier one species of greatest conservation need, is abundant in Chatfield Farms' wetlands.

In the wide-open spaces, it's common to see mule deer grazing, prairie dogs burrowing, and coyotes and bobcats on the prowl. Less common, although perhaps most captivating, are the black bears and elk herds of the foothills that find their way to the farm. Herds of elk have been seen near the pumpkin fields and mother bears with their cubs in tow periodically wander the creeks in search of chokecherries. These shy guests like to explore Chatfield Farms at the quieter times of the day and move elsewhere as the gates open to the public.

Pocket gophers, voles and field mice – typically considered garden pests – have a home at Chatfield Farms, although the farmers and horticulturists may grumble at their presence. Bull snakes, garter snakes and rattlesnakes do their part to balance the food web and seek out pests. Red-tailed Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Sharp-shinned Hawks and Great Horned Owls have all built nests and raised clutches in the shelter of the farm's tree canopy. Rufous and Broad-tailed hummingbirds build their tiny nests and raise their babies nearby, as they find a surplus of food among flowers and insects. Countless species of insects – bumblebees, tiger swallowtails, monarch butterflies, honeybees, metallic sweat bees, box-elder beetles and sphinx moths – all similarly thrive within the gardens here.

The diverse landscape of Chatfield Farms hosts a spectacular range of wildlife through its many landscapes. It is one of the many touches that make the property so special. The next time you visit, be sure to keep an eye out for these many charismatic creatures.



Photo: Grace Johnson



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