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Winter 2015 · No. 28

ROCKY MOUNTAIN GARDENING

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EDWARDS GREENHOUSE OFFERS CURE FOR WINTER BLUES, p. 68



5 COMMON TREE-PLANTING MISTAKES, p. 15

PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS, p. 22

CSU DEMO GARDENS, p. 26

ROAD TRIP: LEWISTOWN, MT, p. 30

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Display until February 29, 2016



FLOWERS BRIGHTEN LIFE FOR SENIORS

For those who spent their whole lives tending gardens and loving it, it must be hard to live in a home for seniors. One can see the flowers growing outside but dodgy backs, hips, and knees can prevent picking up a hoe or rake.

Thanks to two resident gardeners at Bozeman Health Hillcrest Senior Living in Bozeman, Montana, seniors can still enjoy the sight and scent of English-style cottage gardens. Two such plots frame the main entrance welcoming visitors and residents with displays of perennial flowers. Two more form the Community Garden nestled in between two wings of Aspen Pointe (independent living) and Birchwood (which is designated assisted living). Aspen Pointe provides balconies with each apartment and patios on the ground floor for those still able to nurture geraniums and *Lobelia* in summer.

The gardens, cleverly mapped out by former resident Suewiya Pickett, contain plants that are in bloom at all times during the growing season. Peonies, irises, and pasque flowers bloom early and then stay green until fall. These are followed by purple *Salvia*, oriental poppies in several colors, roses, and delphiniums ranging from blue to purple. During the

summer, when *Veronica*, *Dianthus*, *Gaillardia*, and *Rudbeckia* flower, sweet Alyssum covers the ground between perennials. It was planted from starts in just two little six-packs four years ago and has proliferated on its own from self-scattered seeds ever since.

According to Suewiya, when the new buildings were finished in 2000, the landscapers filled the front beds with a variety of *Coreopsis*, a low-growing plant also called tickseed “that was a pale, washed-out yellow. Horrible!” she wrote in an e-mail from the Chicago area where she now lives near her grandchildren.

“The head of housekeeping and I planted spring bulbs the following year,” she wrote. “The next year I replaced most of the *Coreopsis* with perennials, leaving space for annuals next to the concrete walkways.” Her only plan was to have blooms all season and to keep clashing colors apart with the tall ones at the back, she wrote.

This seemed to work well until some plants expired after a dozen years or so. One of the two current gardeners, Ilen Stohl, replaced them with white bloomers such as Shasta daisies, *Phlox*, *Campanula*, and a lovely white daylily with a red center to separate the more garish colors. “White is the peacemaker in a garden,” she says.



Photo: Dan Spurr

Pam Linn, author of this report, is one of the Hillcrest residents who tend the gardens. Most of the plantings are perennial flowers, she says, filled in as necessary with annuals.

Adjoining the Community Flower Garden on the south side is an herb garden for the kitchen’s use, and three small plots that are available to residents who still feel able to tend a few vegetables. Because these plots receive ample sunshine, a short row is set aside where one of the gardeners grows heirloom tomatoes. “I just can’t tolerate the taste of store-bought tomatoes,” she says. “They may travel well, but they taste like sawdust.”

Some years ago, a resident donated some woodland strawberries, so called because they grow wild in the forests. A pretty mound-shaped plant with white flowers and no runners, they produce very small but extremely sweet fruit. “They’re wonderful if you can beat the birds to them,” says one of the gardeners.

“Often, when I’m weeding or trimming, residents stop to see what’s going on,” says Ilen. “They always say how much they enjoy the flowers even if they can no longer grow them.”

Giving up one’s home and moving into assisted living can be a tough transition. If a cottage garden can make that easier, it’s well worth the effort.

—Pam Linn

GARDENS FROM GARBAGE

On June 1, 2015, Gardens from Garbage (GFG) began a new collaboration with North Central Montana St. Vincent de Paul (SVP), and the Boys & Girls Club. Michael Dalton, Executive Director of Great Falls-based GFG, tells me about FRESH Rescue, on an 80° July morning, at the Westside Orchard Garden.

The FRESH Rescue program keeps food waste out of the landfill, and also utilizes blemished produce, creating healthy food. “This is the final piece of our master plan to guide our community into becoming self-sustaining in the feeding and educating of our hungry kids,” Michael says. “They learn about good nutrition, and self-accountability, as they grow their own food and bodies.”

FRESH Rescue takes produce donations from Albertson’s, 2 J’s Market, and IGA. SVP picks up produce from Albertson’s daily. GFG’s two 2015 summer VISTA associate program volunteers, Lisa Nguyen and Scott Omundson, sort the donated produce into two categories: fruits and vegetables that go into the compost pile, and blemished produce that can be eaten raw, or processed. Michael estimates that with 10 large grocery stores in Great Falls, approximately 500 tons of food waste piles up in the landfill each month.

GFG picks up the compostable fruits and vegetables and transports the food waste to the Westside Orchard Garden. Edible foods go to the Boys & Girls Club kitchen. The Boys & Girls Club serves fresh food to the 120–140 summer program kids Monday–Friday. During the 2014–15 school year, the Boys & Girls Club increased dinners for kids from one, to three times a week.

This morning, as the kids



Photo: Hillcrest

The flower beds are separated by a concrete patio where residents can find a shady seat to enjoy the views both near and far.



arrive at the Westside Orchard Garden, they boisterously water the strawberries, carrots, and squash. They all look forward to running through the sprinkler and then laugh mischievously as they hug the affable Michael.

Mary Jane Ahrendes, a GFG board member, spearheaded the first produce delivery from the Westside Orchard Garden in early July. The kids were excited to help harvest the lettuce and wanted to deliver it themselves. Many of the kids attended Head Start in the past, and Michael sees the sense of ownership the kids have in giving back.

Ireland, a Boys & Girls Club summer program attendee, tells me, “This garden (Westside Orchard Garden) is my happy place.” She has a garden at home, and says she’ll be back next summer.

Holding a heart-shaped rock he found to his chest, William enjoys looking at the breakdown in action as Michael paws through the compost bin. William is excited to hear that Michael will assign him a specific job at the garden. Katheren, also eager for a job, fills watering cans and waters some of the tomatoes. She says she loves gardening and has two garden beds at home. “I thought there was a pepper in the bed this morning, but my Mom told me we didn’t plant peppers. It’s a pumpkin!”

This is Cynthia’s third summer working at the Westside Orchard Garden. Her favorite part is “seeing all the plants grow.” Her favorite vegetables are carrots.

Kaitlyn Braulick is a Youth Development Professional for the Boys & Girls Club, and also runs a Type II diabetes prevention program called TRAIL (Together Raising Awareness of Indian Life). TRAIL has stopped selling soda at the Boys and Girl’s Club; operates a healthy snacks store; educates the kids about healthy eating;



Photo: Liz Allen

VISTA volunteer Lisa Nguyen sorts donated produce into two groups: compost and edible.

incorporates fresh veggies from the Westside Orchard Garden into snacks and meals; and does physical fitness activities with the kids. According to Kaitlyn, 120–140 kids attended the after-school program in the 2014–15 school year.

The Boys and Girl’s Club kitchen processes cases of apples, bananas, tomatoes, and other rescued food for future winter meals. They make applesauce, and mash and freeze bananas to make banana bread that the kids bake themselves. Tomatoes are cooked down to make chili.

When FRESH Rescue food is abundant, the Boys & Girls Club encourage parents to take food items home, like loaves of bread and cartons of strawberries, when they come to pick up their children.

Janet Cameron, Director of Charity/Outreach for SVP, says the SVP Food Bank rescued 3,800 pounds of produce in June 2015. “My mother was an organic gardener, I learned about

composting from her,” Cameron says, adding that SVP helped 779 families in the last quarter of 2015, and the Food Bank is staffed by volunteers Monday through Friday.

The City of Great Falls Parks Department recently approved the Westside Orchard Garden’s lease for five years, at \$1 a year. Chown Springs, a Great Falls Park closer to the Boys & Girls Club location, is being tabled as the City’s next community garden. GFG will help the Boys & Girls Club navigate the grant process, as well as coordinate 10–12 AmeriCorps volunteers in the design and implementation of the garden in 2016.

GFG, SVP, the Cascade County Extension Office, and the Boys & Girls Club are also working together to build a commercial kitchen, so they can deepen their impact in Great Falls.

—Liz Allen



Copying features of the White House, the 52-room mansion in Arbor Lodge State Historical Park and Arboretum, in Nebraska City, Nebraska, was built by J. Sterling Morton, founder of Arbor Day (March 12, 1874), and President Grover Cleveland’s Secretary of Agriculture.

Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha, Nebraska, and J. Sterling Morton’s estate in Nebraska City, Nebraska. His son, Joy Morton, who founded the Morton Salt Co. in 1885, used it as a summer home.

—Linda Sadler

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GARDEN CLUB NEWS

ROCKY MOUNTAIN OFFICERS GATHER IN MISSOURI

The National Garden Club divides membership among eight regions; Montana belongs to the Rocky Mountain region, along with Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, and Nebraska.

Last September, Rocky Mountain Region Director Darlene Skari, Montana Federation of Garden Clubs President Linda Sadler, and past President Phyllis White, now editor of the National Garden Club’s newsletter, *Keeping in Touch*, attended the Rocky Mountain Region Convention in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and the National Garden Club Fall Board meeting in St. Louis, Missouri.

They also visited the

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MONTANA FEDERATION OF GARDEN CLUBS

Live in Big Sky Country? Love gardens, flowers and beautiful landscapes? Do you want to share your knowledge or learn more? The Montana Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc., founded in 1937, is a non-profit educational organization with members statewide. There are many individual Montana garden clubs across the State. We are an affiliate of the largest volunteer gardening organization in the world, National Garden Clubs, Inc., and are one of eight states in the Rocky Mountain Region. www.mtfgc.org

To have your Garden Club News posted in Rocky Mountain Gardening in print or on our website, e-mail Dan Spurr at dan@rockymountaingardening.com.

MONTANA EVENTS

Helena Farmer's Market Gateway Center, Helena
Through Dec., Saturday before Christmas, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. This is the longest running farmer's market in the state!
www.helenafarmersmarket.com

Winter Farmer's Market Emerson Cultural Center, Bozeman
Oct. 17 - Apr. 16, select Saturdays 9:00 a.m. - 12 noon. Check website for specific dates. This market was created by farmers, for farmers, and to sustain those of us who thrive on fresh food year round!
www.bozemanwintermarket.com

Charlie Russell Chew Choo—2015 North Pole Adventure Lewistown
Nov. 28 - Dec. 19, Fridays and Saturdays, 5:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. \$25/person
Get on at the Hanover Boarding Station, 20 min. outside Lewistown!
www.montanadinnertrain.com

World Ski Joring Championships Whitefish
January
Ski joring is a winter sport where a person on skis is pulled by a horse, or a motor vehicle—quite entertaining!
www.whitefishskijoring.com

Whitefish Winter Carnival Whitefish
February; check dates

Based on the lore and history of Ullr, the God of Snow, this festival of 55 years includes a Penguin Plunge into Whitefish Lake.
www.whitefishwintercarnival.com

Red Lodge Winter Carnival Red Lodge
March 5
If you really want to know what makes Red Lodge tick, be here for Winter Carnival!
www.redlodgemountain.com/events/winter-carnival

Wild West WinterFest Bozeman
March, check dates. Skijoring, chili cook-off, dog sledging keg pull, and many other events!
www.facebook.com/gallatincountyfairgrounds

To have your event posted on the Rocky Mountain Gardening calendar, in print or on our website, either e-mail Adria Pope at adria@rockymountaingardening.com, or fill out the form online at www.rockymountaingardening.com.

FIND IT IN MONTANA!
Look for these other great stories about Montana in this issue!

BOZEMAN
MT Gardens, p. 12.

LEWISTOWN
Somewhere in the Middle of Montana, p. 28.

MISSOULA
The Pearl Café, p. 34

TWIN BRIDGES
Sturdy Girl Adventure-Ready Skin Products, p. 12.



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