



“Maybe it was the smell of ripe tomatoes... It just came to me in a wash of happiness that made me laugh out loud, startling the chickadees who were picking at the sunflowers, raining black and white hulls on the ground. I knew it with a certainty as warm and clear as the September sunshine. The land loves us back. She loves us with beans and tomatoes, with roasting ears and blackberries and birdsongs.”
 - Robin Wall Kimmerer

January - February 2024

A Snowy Day Meditation on Seeds

It's snowing hard in Colorado Springs as this newsletter is coming together on a Sunday afternoon in early February and it's a perfect time to curl up with some seed catalogs (or go online to browse some seed company websites). Let's think a little more about seeds.

Availability. Local garden centers are already displaying racks of seeds for gardeners who have spring fever. Now is the time to plan your garden and get the seeds you may start growing at home under lights in March and April as well as the seeds that you will plant directly in the ground when the garden opens. Because vegetable gardening has been increasingly popular, seed racks in local garden centers will soon be picked over and "Out of Stock" notes will appear on the more popular items on seed grower websites.

It's also a good idea to order plants and bulbs right away, before the popular varieties are spoken for. Nourse Farms <https://noursefarms.com/> is where several BCGA gardeners order "Mara des Bois" strawberry plants in the spring.

This variety, developed as a cross between wild and domestic strawberry plants, is intensely flavored, sweet and very productive. An expert source for onions, leeks and shallots (both plants and bulbs) is Dixondale Farms in Texas: <https://dixondalefarms.com/>

Seed Companies. Accompanying this newsletter is a memo listing favorite seed companies. All are available online and some are carried in local garden centers.

Just for fun, click on this link to a recent *Seattle Times* article titled "Sowing Hope: The Secret World of Seed Catalogs" <https://bit.ly/3Otz9vg>. (Be aware that this was written for gardeners in the moist Pacific Northwest. Much of it is helpful, but some of the advice is not a good fit for our high and dry Colorado gardens.)



Sugar Magnolia Snap Pea
 - Botanical Interests

Seed Savers Exchange. At a time when large seed companies like Monsanto have taken over an increasing share of the market and have significantly reduced the number of seed varieties available for gardeners while promoting use of Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) seed by farmers, Seed Savers Exchange in Iowa <https://seedsavers.org> has been working since 1975 to preserve and promote hundreds of varieties of heirloom vegetable seeds.

In addition to selling heirloom seeds, Seed Savers enables its members to exchange seeds with each other. The \$50 membership fee includes a copy of the beautiful 2024 Seed Savers Yearbook. The home of Seed Savers, Heritage Farm in Decora, Iowa, is open to visitors in the summer months.

Seed Preservation at Svalbard. Alarm over the decrease in seed varieties caused by the consolidation of seed production in mega-companies like Monsanto triggered a dramatic protection effort in 2008 when the Svalbard Global Seed Vault was established on the remote Arctic island of Spitsbergen in Norway. The history of the Svalbard Vault is described

Plots are Available Now

Plots are available in the Charmaine Nymann Community Garden for new gardeners each year because there is always turnover of gardeners.

Returning gardeners will soon receive an invitation to register online and must register by February 29th to claim their plots.

Individuals interested in joining the garden should call Todd Hegert at (719) 329-8873 as soon as possible to get registration information.

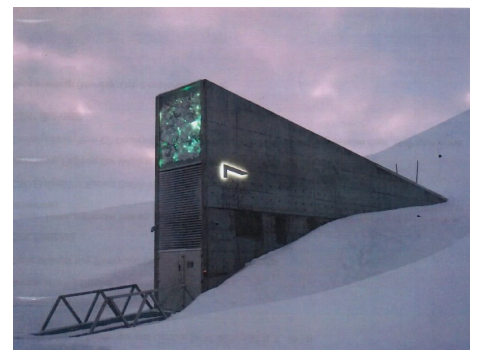
Plots are assigned to new gardeners on a first come-first served basis.

Plot sizes and fees are:

20 feet x 20 feet (half plot) \$75.00
 20 feet x 40 feet (full plot) \$120.00

The plot fee includes water and spring and fall tilling. First year gardeners pay a \$25.00 cleanup deposit which is refunded if the plot is appropriately cleared at the end of the season.

The garden is scheduled to open on Saturday, April 20.



Svalbard Global Seed Vault
 Spitsbergen, Norway

in a 2015 article titled "The Doomsday Vault: The Seeds That Could Save a Post-Apocalyptic World", published in *The Guardian* at: <https://bit.ly/3ul8oCm>.

The Vault protects and preserves 1.2 million seed samples from all kinds of disasters, whether related to the economy

(Continued on page 2)

Garden Calendar

February 25—Winter Potluck—12:20 p.m. Gold Hill Mesa Community Center, 142 Raven Mine Drive.

March 9 — BCGA Public Garden Class — 9:20—11:30 a.m. at Bear Creek Nature Center.

April 13 — New Gardener Orientation Saturday morning at Bear Creek Nature Center

April 20 — Garden Opens — Returning Gardeners come in morning, New Gardeners in afternoon as scheduled.

Way to Go, Rick's!

Rick's Garden Center is ramping up its classes this spring and (we heard a rumor) will be working to provide quality tomato plants to help fill the void left by the closing of the Good Earth Garden Center last fall.

Get on its email list and go to its website for more information (seed starting class on February 17!) The website also features an interview with our local vegetable gardening legend, Larry Stebbins. www.ricksgarden.com

A Meditation on Seeds

(Continued from page 1)

my, weather or war. Governments (and Seed Savers Exchange) continuously donate seeds for preservation.

To read more about Svalbard and take a virtual tour of the facility, see this *Smithsonian Magazine* article published on its 15th anniversary in 2023: <https://bit.ly/3OrXaD5>. Click on the Guide's pointer on the lower right of the screen to start the tour.

Bear Creek Garden Association

BCGA runs the Charmaine Nymann Community Garden (CNCG) located in Bear Creek Regional Park in Colorado Springs, Colorado. It is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt nonprofit corporation.

Individuals can rent plots to grow vegetables for personal use and for donation to friends and charities.

Contact: Todd Hegert (719) 329-8873

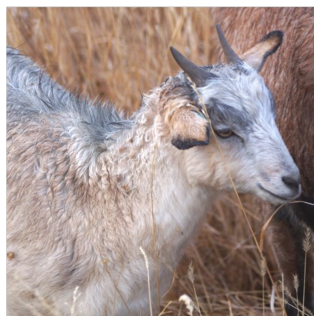
Email: hello@bearcreekgardens.org

Website: www.bearcreekgardens.org

Facebook:

Bear Creek Garden Association

Handbook: <https://bit.ly/3SxHZt6>



Where are the Goats?

Lani Malmberg, her son Donny Benz and his wife, Kaiti, are overwintering in the high country near Silt, Colorado, with two herds totaling 1,200 cashmere goats. The nannies were bred and they currently have a bunch of new babies.

We do not yet know when the herd will make its way back to the Front Range for a visit to Bear Creek.

The Zone Map Has Changed

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced changes to its Plant Hardiness Zone Map in November 2023.

The Charmaine Nymann Community Garden (located in zip code 80904) is now listed as Zone 6a rather than Zone 5b as a consequence of global warming. To learn more about the Zone Map and its significance, see <https://bit.ly/3OrENOI>.

The 2023 Garden Badges Are Still Good for Discounts

Returning gardeners can continue to show their 2023 garden badges at checkout to obtain discounts on spring purchases at Rick's Garden Center on Uintah Street (10%), the ACE Hardware store in Uintah Gardens (15%) and ACE Hardware on South 8th Street (10%) until the 2024 badges become available on Opening Day. (Be aware that the other ACE stores do not provide discounts for BCGA).

When getting tools ready for the new season, keep in mind that ACE in Uintah Gardens also gives us a very generous 50% discount on sharpening our hand tools.

Facebook

It's fun to follow the "Colorado Springs Gardeners" page on Facebook. It's a big mixed bag of opinions and advice!

Winter Potluck February 25

Join us at the Winter Potluck on Sunday, February 25th to see those garden friends you have been missing since the garden closed last fall!

Returning gardeners, their families and helpers are invited to join us at 12:30 p.m. at the Community Center at Gold Hill Mesa, 142 South Raven Mine Drive. This is a potluck, so please bring both a main dish and a salad or dessert to share. BCGA will provide plates, cups, utensils, napkins, coffee and hot cocoa.

Bring Your Extra Seed Catalogues

The experienced BCGA gardeners who will be teaching a spring garden class on March 9th at the Nature Center always hand out seed catalogues to participants. If you have some catalogues that you can donate to the class, please bring them to the potluck.

It doesn't matter if they are from previous years – they are colorful and informative, and they're very much appreciated by the participants in the class.

"Organic Gardening - Tips for Success"

On Saturday, March 9th from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., experienced BCGA gardeners will teach a public vegetable gardening class at Bear Creek Nature Center, 245 Bear Creek Road.

Online registration is available at <https://bit.ly/3I79hmd>. The fee is \$4.00. A discounted fee of \$3.00 is available for current BCGA gardeners who call the Nature Center at (719) 520-6387 and register with a staff member.

Dan Hopper of Rick's Garden Center will discuss Organic Pest Control and Fertilizers. BCGA gardeners will cover Seed Starting Under Lights, Early Spring Plant Protection, Favorite Tools and Square Foot Gardening.

Donate to the Plant/Tool Sale!

If you are planting seedlings under grow lights at home, please plant extras and donate them to the BCGA Plant and Tool Sale which will be held at the garden on Saturday of Memorial Day Weekend.

Gardeners also donate garden tools and equipment to the sale, so give the garage or tool shed a spring cleanout and donate items you are no longer using. Books on gardening are welcome too!