



“Until people truly grasp the importance of building healthy soil, they will struggle in the garden.”

- Daryl Beyers
New Gardener's Handbook (pub. 2024)
 New York Botanical Garden

March–April 2024

Gardening in the Golden Years at Bear Creek

“Gardening in the Golden Years: Growing Old and Staying Young” is the title of a March 19 *Gazette* article featuring senior gardeners at our community garden. The article was written by *Gazette* reporter and friend of the garden, Debbie Kelley.

She highlights the multiple emotional and physical benefits seniors get from participating in a community garden, including friendship and garden advice, homegrown vegetables, experiences with wildlife and fresh air and exercise in a beautiful setting. Excerpts are posted on the garden website at this link: <https://bit.ly/3PGv5Zs>

Debbie interviewed John Poyzer, who, with his wife, Marie, has been working the same plot since 1985. Now almost 80, John added a walker to his rake, shovel and other tools when he was recovering from knee replacement surgery a few years ago, saying that gardening “was probably good therapy”.

She also interviewed our garden photographer, Candice Hall, who has managed a full 20x40 foot plot and posts her photos on the Bear Creek Garden Association Facebook page.



Mac Gray working on the Zoo Plot, October 2023
*Photo by Candice Hall
 BCGA Photographer/Gardener*

Another long time BCGA gardener is Kay Gray, whose husband, Mac, is shown in the accompanying photo. Kay, now 78, and Mac, 81, arrived at the garden in 1977, when it was first being established. A docent at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo for many years, Kay runs a donation project for the Zoo. She drives a carload of produce to the Zoo every Thursday starting in early summer and coordinates weekly pickups by the Zoo’s commissary truck once the garden gets into high gear in mid-July.

Helped by volunteers, she and Mac plant a separate full plot for vegetables and herbs for the Zoo.

Debbie Kelley also interviewed local garden guru Larry Stebbins, now 75, who founded many local community gardens and has been a leader at the Old Farm Community Garden. Known as “The Garden Father”, Larry posts detailed vegetable growing advice and tips online at <https://thegardenfather.com/>.

The Independent published this article about him and his work in the spring of 2021: <https://bit.ly/3TSW1Y7>

The Goats are Coming!

This year we are celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the start of goat grazing in Bear Creek Park! Please consider making a donation to the Bear Creek Garden Association to help us pay for the annual grazing.

Goat herder Lani Malmberg will bring a herd of 400-600 cashmere goats to the Park near the community garden on April 2. Our herder this year is Connor Hancock.

Each year since 1999, the BCGA gardeners have raised funds to bring the goats to Bear Creek Park for ten days of grazing on the 20 acres that surround the community garden. The goat grazing is intended to keep noxious weeds in check so that the County Parks workers do not have to spray herbicides near the garden to control those weeds.



We’re hoping to see some fall babies in our herd this spring.

Our goats will have travelled over the mountains on a large stock truck from the Western Slope, where they have been working in the Roaring Fork Valley and also near Rifle on fire mitigation as well as weed suppression.

They worked for weeks last summer to manage a popular trail between Aspen and Carbondale and also to cleaned up two abandoned farm/ranch properties in that area.

Open Plots Are Available

Returning gardeners have claimed their plots and the remaining open plots are now available for new gardeners.

Individuals who would like to join us can get more information by calling Todd Hegert at (719) 329-8873.

Plot sizes and fees are:

- 20 x 20 feet \$75.00
- 20 x 40 feet \$120.00

Water is included in the plot fee. First year gardeners pay a \$25.00 cleanup deposit, which is returned if the plot is properly cleared off at the end of the season.

Detailed information about the garden can be found on our website:

www.bearcreekgardens.org

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Garden Calendar

April 13 — New Gardener Orientation
9:30 a.m. at Bear Creek Nature Center, 245 Bear Creek Road.

April 20 — Garden Opens — Returning Gardeners come 9:00 a.m.—Noon. New Gardeners come in the afternoon in small groups as scheduled.

May 18 — Workday — 8:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m. Bring tools for weeding.

May 25 — Plant and Tool Sale — 9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m. at the garden.

Please Donate to the Plant Sale!

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

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.

Sandy's Free Horse Manure

Sandy Matthews keeps horses at her barn on the south edge of Bear Creek Park.

Since she does not use any chemicals around her animals, BCGA has long permitted gardeners to bring the horse manure she piles along her driveway to the garden as an acceptable (and free) soil amendment.

Sandy's driveway is the first driveway on the left as you drive south on 21st Street from the light at Rio Grande Street. In the spring, use horse manure cautiously around young seedlings.

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

Goats—25th Anniversary

Border collies help manage the herd.

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Lani and her son, Donny Benz, have another 600+ goats that are also making the trip over the mountains to the Front Range to graze near Fort Collins and Castle Rock.

They regularly breed the nannies in the herd to raise a new crop of young goats. About 200 babies were born last fall, so we may see some of them here. They are still small (fall babies do not grow as quickly as those born in the spring) but are now old enough to be weaned from their moms and to be hanging out together and playing.

A wonderful slide show/ film titled "Goats on the Rox" was made by the Roxborough neighborhood in Denver in 2013 to celebrate having brought Lani and her goats to the Roxborough area for weed suppression and fire mitigation. Click this link to watch the 14-minute film, with a younger Lani and delightful goat/dog footage: <https://bit.ly/3TZB3qR>

The Bear Creek Garden Association relies on support from everyone who loves the goats to keep this program going. Please become a Friend of the Goats by making a donation online at the BCGA website: <https://bit.ly/3xhdd0P> Alternatively, use the form on page three to make a donation by mailing a check.

Is the Water on at the Garden?

Depending on the weather, the water system might not be turned on in time for Opening Day on April 20, or it could be on but then turned off briefly if there is a leak to be repaired or the weather turns very cold.

This is city water, the same drinkable water we have at home. Water is costly. Please use it wisely.

Notes for New Gardeners

We welcome all of our new plot owners and their helpers. Please plan to attend the New Gardener Orientation on Saturday, April 13 starting at 9:30 a.m. at the Bear Creek Nature Center, 245 Bear Creek Road.

Here are a few notes to help you get underway smoothly.

As we say every year, the early bird rarely gets the worm at the Charmaine Nymann Community Garden! Be careful with early planting. Watch the veteran gardeners

Planting out cool weather seedlings such as broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage and kale purchased in a garden shop is OK in the last part of April, but they need to be covered with a plastic milk jug or other protection until they start to grow vigorously. Get jugs by asking at coffee shops. Cut off the bottom and a little of the top and stake down in the garden so they don't blow around. Don't use clear plastic or glass containers — they heat up too much on a sunny day.

Sun, wind and cold spring nights will take a heavy toll on greenhouse-raised plants that are not provided with this protection. Don't leave these tender plants struggling in the sun and wind. Shelter them.

Experienced gardeners don't hurry into planting tomato, eggplant and pepper plants in May when freezing temperatures are still likely in our area. These tender plants should be planted at the garden around Memorial Day. It is important to use Walls of Water or similar protection around them.

Likewise, hold off on planting seeds for beans, squash and corn until the soil has a chance to warm up. Chilling can permanently damage these vegetables. They may survive a cold night, but they probably will not produce well.

It is important to add organic matter to the plots each year to maintain productivity. The soil in amended plots is softer, absorbs and retains water better, and has more worms and microbes than soil that is not amended. Ordering straw through BCGA in the spring and using it as mulch is a good first step.

The BCGA Garden Handbook can be found through a link on the home page of the BCGA website: www.bearcreekgardens.org.

It was developed over the years by our gardeners to offer helpful advice for gardening in this location.

Spring Tilling—a Bird’s Eye View



Getting underway in the garden

Have you ever wondered what it looks like when the community garden is being tilled in the spring?

Click this link: <https://bit.ly/43vQLf6> to see a bird’s-eye view of the tiller in action in the first scene of a 30-minute film titled “A Garden Experience” featuring our community garden.

To capture this footage, filmmakers Nancy Bentley and John Atkinson, together with Mona Adelgren of the Youth Documentary Academy in Colorado Springs, flew a drone with a camera above the tractor as it pulled the tiller over the moist spring soil in 2018.

The filmmakers spent two seasons in the garden to capture the story of what the garden means to the gardeners, recording hours of footage that they distilled into a swiftly paced and touching documentary film that has been shown at several film festivals.

They made the film as a gift to the garden. Most of the gardeners who appear in the film still garden their same plots today.

This year the Parks Department had to delay tilling until the soil could dry a bit after the big snowfall in mid-March.

On March 28 the two-acre garden was double tilled by Mark Christensen, in overlapping passes. The tiller goes deeper into plots where gardeners regularly amend their soil and skips shallowly over neglected plots. Please add be a good steward and organic matter (straw, Garden Mix) to your plot.

“The Nature Cure”

The folks in England have a very special way of writing about their relationship with nature. We’re sharing an article published in *The Guardian* last December.

It’s titled “The Nature Cure: How Time Outdoors Transforms Our Memory, Imagination and Logic”. It helps to explain why working in the community garden in Bear Creek Park is so nurturing, especially if you set aside enough time to be watching the clouds, the play of light on the mountains and the antics of the birds and other wildlife. Here it is.

<https://bit.ly/4ae5Dme>



At the Charmaine Nymann Community Garden the badges and keys change each year. Badges and keys will be sold on Opening Day. Please be sure to bring cash or a check to pay for them. Badges and keys are \$3.00 each this year.

Show your badge at these stores (from April to April) to receive the following discounts:

Rick’s Garden Center, 1827 West Uintah Street, 10% discount.

ACE Hardware, Uintah Gardens, 1830 West Uintah Street. 15% discount on purchases, and a 50% discount on tool sharpening.

Cheyenne Mountain ACE Hardware, 1785 South 8th Street, 10% discount on purchases.

Grading and Erosion Mitigation in the Northeast Corner of the Garden

Slow erosion during rainstorms moves soil toward the east end of the garden over time, as evidenced by the lower height of the fence line and water posts along that side of the garden.

At the request of BCGA, the County Parks maintenance staff came in after the garden closed last October to do remediation work.

Using a skid loader, senior park maintenance worker Mark Christensen carefully removed a good foot-and-a-half of excess soil that had built up in the east edges of plots A-4 and B-4. First, he moved the soil up to the west end of plots A-5 and B-5. He then pulled it gradually back toward the east fence line, creating a nicely tapered and more softly sloping surface in plots A & B-4 and -5.

Mark also moved four to five cubic yards of soil from the east fence line up into plots adjoining the aisle that runs south from the truck gate. The aisle and those plots (A-8(e) and B-8 (e)) flooded significantly during the heavy rains we experienced last year in June and July.

It is hoped that raising the grade in those two half plots and the adjoining aisle will resolve the flooding issue. The County Parks staff plans to continue doing some erosion and grading maintenance in the northeast corner of the garden as part of the annual fall tilling. After the heavy dirt moving Mark handled last fall, only a box grader should be required for erosion mitigation in the future.

BCGA thanks Parks Director Todd Marts and the Parks team, including Brian Bobeck, Kyle Melvin, Adam Robertson and Mark Christensen, for their significant, ongoing support for the community garden.

Become a Friend of the Goats - Donate to the Goat Fund

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phones: (home) _____ (cell) _____

E-mail address: _____



Please make checks payable to Bear Creek Garden Association. BCGA is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Mail to Bear Creek Garden Association, Post Office Box 38326, Colorado Springs, CO 80937