



To plant a garden is
to believe in tomorrow.

— Audrey Hepburn

January—February 2025

Seed Savers Exchange Celebrates 50th Anniversary

Seed Savers Exchange (SSE) is a nonprofit organization that is unique among the various seed companies that we all turn to in spring for new seed. It conserves and shares open-pollinated, untreated, non-hybrid, non-GMO seeds.

Founded in Decorah, Iowa in 1975 by Kent Whealy and Diane Ott Whealy, SSE protects and preserves the many heirloom vegetable and flower varieties in our country that were becoming scarce at that time. Many of these vegetable and flower varieties were dropping out of traditional seed catalogues as the big seed companies shifted their attention to hybrid varieties and later, GMO (genetically modified organism) crops.

As it celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, Seed Savers now manages over 20,000 varieties of seeds in its collection by storing them in a refrigeration system and growing them out regularly at its Heritage Farm. It continues to add more varieties that are offered to SSE by gardeners across the country who have been saving seeds of family favorites.

Varieties which are becoming rare or have special characteristics that make them desirable for preservation are most



'Grandpa Ott's' Morning Glory and 'German Pink Tomato' pose for the 2025 catalogue photo shoot at the Seed Savers headquarters in Iowa.

likely to be accepted into the SSE collection. The stories that accompany them are archived as well.

The Seed Savers Exchange website can be found at: <https://seedsavers.org/>.

We all should become informed about this truly remarkable organization. It is the largest non-governmental seed

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"Organic Gardening - Tips for Success"

On Saturday, March 8, a group of experienced Bear Creek gardeners will be teaching the BCGA garden class titled "Organic Gardening – Tips for Success" at the Bear Creek Nature Center, 245 Bear Creek Road, from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

This class is open to the public and is part of the Nature Center's Sustainability Series. Please register online using this link: www.elpasocountynaturecenters.com

The class fee is \$4.00 per person.

Dan Hopper, the owner of Rick's Garden Center, will discuss Organic Pest Control and Fertilizers. Other topics to be covered include Seed Starting Under Lights, Early Spring Plant Protection, Favorite Tools and Square Foot Gardening.

Plots Are Now Available

Plots are available for new gardeners at the Charmaine Nymann Community each spring. Individuals interested in renting a plot should call now. Registration forms will be emailed to new gardeners around March 1, and plots will be assigned on a first-come, first served basis.

This is an organic vegetable and flower garden. More information about the garden, including its history, rules, handbook and calendar, can be found on the website: www.bearcreekgardens.org.

This year the garden will open for planting on Saturday, April 19 and will close on Saturday, October 11.

Plot sizes and fees are:
20 feet x 20 feet \$75.00
20 feet x 40 feet \$120.00

First year gardeners are generally offered the opportunity to rent a half plot, which is a generous 400 square feet of gardening space. First year gardeners are also asked to provide a \$25.00 cleanup deposit, which is returned when the plot is managed during the growing season and cleared appropriately by the closing day.

The plot fee covers water and spring and fall tilling.

For more information, call Todd Hegert at (719) 329-8873 or email your full name and telephone number to BCGA at: hello@bearcreekgardens.org.

Winter Potluck at Gold Hill Mesa—February 23

Returning gardeners, their families and helpers are encouraged to attend the Winter Potluck at the Gold Hill Mesa Community Room, 142 South Raven Mine Drive, on Sunday, February 23 from 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Join us to see those garden friends you have been missing since the garden closed in October.

This is a potluck, so please bring both a main dish and a salad or a dessert to share. BCGA provides plates, cups, utensils, napkins, coffee and hot cocoa. Everyone is asked to send an email to BCGA

by February 20 to let us know you are coming so that we know how many people to expect.

Please Bring Extra Seed Catalogues

At the potluck we will be collecting seed catalogues to be given out to participants at BCGA's annual garden class. The class will be offered to the public at the Bear Creek Nature Center on March 8. Seed catalogues from previous years are certainly welcome.

They are colorful and informative, and they're very much appreciated by the participants in the class.

Seed Savers Exchange



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preservation operation in the United States, and it regularly sends fresh seeds, including new varieties, to the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Spitsbergen, Norway.

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

Also see the BCGA January-February 2024 newsletter on the BCGA website for more about the seed vault in Norway..

The Catalogue. There are two ways to explore SSE. The first is to access its online catalogue which offers 600 varieties of vegetable and flower seeds from its collection for direct purchase by gardeners.

The catalogue is also available in print. The descriptions are detailed and often contain some history. The price for a packet of seed is usually a little over \$4.00, and free shipping is currently offered for orders over \$25.00.

The Exchange. Beyond its catalogue, SSE offers a second, and truly amazing, way to access heirloom/open pollinated seeds from a legion of gardeners who are passionately devoted to growing favorite varieties and saving and sharing seed. To access this group, choose "The Exchange" on the home page of the SSE website.

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 Page:

Bear Creek Garden Association

The Exchange is a network of seed savers ("Listers") who offer their stories and their seeds on the Exchange for a small fee (often \$3.00) to cover the cost of mailing. This year there are over 14,000 varieties of seeds listed on the Exchange.

The Listers are not making any profit for their work. They do it for the love of preserving and enhancing varieties their grandmother or other family member grew. SSE facilitates the connection through its Exchange database so Listers and purchasers can interact directly. One does not have to be a Lister in order to purchase seeds through the Exchange.

BCGA gardener Karen Stith purchased seeds through the Exchange this year and found that it was easy to sort and select from the huge number of varieties in the database. Some of the little envelopes of seeds arrived in greeting cards with friendly notes of appreciation. It's nice to be a part of this network.

You might consider other ways to support SSE and help it celebrate its 50th anniversary by becoming a donor or member. And if you are traveling near Decorah, Iowa, you can visit the SSE Heritage Farm. Information about its summer activities is on its website.

Margaret Roach, the garden writer for the *New York Times*, devoted her weekly column to SSE on January 15, 2025. The column was titled "Choosing Seeds from 14,000 Varieties? It Just Got Easier". This is a link to her article:

<https://bit.ly/3CYfyAT>.

Margaret explored the Exchange further in a conversation with SSE Exchange and Outreach Coordinator Josie Flatgard on February 7th in her weekly NPR podcast "A Way to Garden". The episode was called "Exploring 'The Exchange' — Seed Savers' Online Heirloom Seed Swap".

Here's the link to Margaret's website where the podcast and a transcription of the podcast are both available:

<https://awaytogarden.com/>.

N.B. — The NYT article is behind a pay-wall but the podcast is available for free. Thank you, National Public Radio.

"Seed Savers' mission is really to steward America's culturally diverse and endangered garden and food crop legacy that we have amassed for generations here, as immigrants came and brought seeds with them and grew them year after year. We are dedicated to preserving those seeds and the stories that go along with them."

Josie Flatgard, SSE



Colorado State University's Extension Service (CSU Extension), in cooperation with Denver Botanic Gardens and Green Industries of Colorado, provides good research-based information about growing vegetables on this website page:

<https://bit.ly/432j1cu>

Recommended topics on this list for early spring are:

"Starting Vegetable Seeds Indoors" and "Planning a Vegetable Garden"



Spring Garden Classes

Phelan Gardens, 4955 Austin Bluffs Parkway, will offer two vegetable gardening classes in March:

March 22 – 11:00 a.m. – Noon
"Tomatoes...Growing for Abundance!"

Price: \$17.85. Sign up online at:

<https://bit.ly/3QL3dcW>

Veteran gardener Bill Young will talk about maximizing your garden's potential to grow tomatoes. He will talk specifics about varieties, soil amendments, providing structure, and maintenance. Depending on your garden resources you could end up growing up to ten times more tomatoes in your garden.

March 22 – 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

"Structuring Your Garden for Abundance"

Price: \$33.85. Sign up online at:

<https://bit.ly/3CQUuML>

Bill Young will talk about real-world examples of great garden planning, discuss helpful products, and talk about ways you can make good use of your plot. You will walk away with a garden planner complete with examples of how to set up your garden and how structure can help in garden rotations, as well as what should stay in one place from year to year. The fee includes a garden workbook for each participant.

Garden Calendar

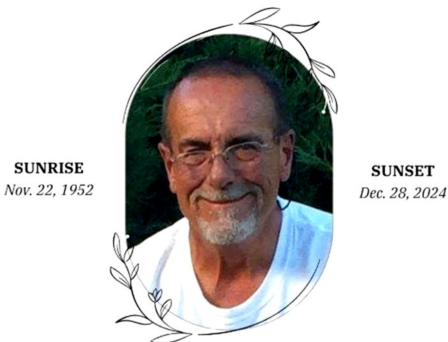
February 23 — Winter Potluck—
12:30—2:30 p.m. at Gold Hill Mesa Community Center, 142 South Raven Mine Drive. Details on p. 1.

March 8 — “Growing Organic—Tips for Success” 9:30—11:30 a.m. BCGA gardeners give this annual class at Bear Creek Nature Center, 245 Bear Creek Road. Details on p. 1.

April 12 — New Gardener Orientation
Bear Creek Nature Center

April 19 — Garden Opens

Douglas Gordon Green



We will miss Doug Green, who passed away in December. He tended his plot at the Charmaine Nymann Community Garden for a dozen years, even through the Covid pandemic.

Doug found great pleasure in the garden and was always a positive presence with a good sense of humor. He experimented with all sorts of vegetables, and was known for saving seeds of squash and pumpkins to see what wonderful and sometimes strange results cross-pollination would produce.

The results were often large and colorful and always very interesting. Our community offers condolences to his family.

The 2024 Garden Badges Are Still Good for Discounts

Returning BCGA gardeners can continue to show their 2024 garden badges at checkout to obtain discounts on purchases at Rick's Garden Center on Uintah Street (10%), ACE Hardware in Uintah Gardens (15%) and ACE Hardware on South 8th Street (10%) until the 2025 badges become available on Opening Day, April 19.

ACE on Uintah also gives BCGA gardeners a generous 50% discount on sharpening tools.

Update on Lani and the Goats



Lani Malmberg has brought her large herd of cashmere goats to Bear Creek Park every year since 1999 to graze in the 20 acres around the community garden.

The goats managed the noxious weeds so that the County Parks workers would not need to spray chemicals near the community garden for weed control.

The nonprofit Bear Creek Garden Association raised funds every year to pay for the grazing.

The cost of bringing the large herd to the park has steadily increased over the years, even though Lani has kindly held the rate lower for BCGA as a favorite, long-time customer.

Lani, her son, Donny Benz and his wife, Kaiti, are now working with their 1200 goats for most of the year in high mountain communities and occasionally in the area north of Denver, where they are handling large contracts with municipalities and the Forest Service for both weed control and fire mitigation.

As of February, 2025, they are settled in the Roaring Fork area and will be breeding the nanny goats this spring as they regularly replenish the herd.

The El Paso County Parks Department is going to take over weed management in the area around the garden this year and may use a smaller number of goats, mowing and other techniques to manage the noxious weeds that must be controlled under Colorado law.

The gardeners, park staff and all the neighbors who love Lani and the goats are grateful to Lani, Donny, Kaiti and their herders for our warm relationship that has lasted for 25 years.

Here are links to their website www.goatseatweeds.com and a *Gazette* story from their winter visit in 2023: <https://bit.ly/3vEUuf8>

We thank them for many years of joyful visits and careful, professional work at Bear Creek Park. We wish them well and we hope to see them again in the future.

Purchase Seeds in Early Spring

In January and February online seed companies and garden centers are fully stocked with seeds, so now is the time to do a little winter daydreaming and planning – and purchasing – of fresh seeds.

Don't wait until the seed racks are picked over and the online companies start marking the most popular varieties “sold out”. Sketching out a garden plan, making decisions and purchasing seeds are the joys of late winter.



Easter Egg Radishes
From Botanical Interests Seed Co.

Experienced gardeners know that you can generally use vegetable seeds left over from last year, as most seeds remain viable for several years if stored properly in a cool, dry place. However, the germination rate may be slightly lower compared to fresh seeds, and some vegetables (onions, corn) may have a much shorter lifespan even if they have been stored properly.

It's important to consider which varieties of vegetables are most likely to perform well in Colorado's high, dry desert climate and short growing season, and for that reason we have put a list of suggested seed companies in the BCGA Handbook.

Several of these companies are located in the southwest and specialize in high desert gardening. The Handbook link is on the home page of our website at www.bearcreekgardens.org and the seed company list is on page 52 of the Handbook.

Sandy's Horse Manure

For many years, BCGA has encouraged gardeners to use the free horse manure provided by Sandy Matthews, who lives near the garden on the south edge of Bear Creek Park.

Sandy piles the manure along her driveway (the first one on the left when going south from the corner of Rio Grande and 21st Streets).

She uses no chemicals in her barn. It is best to apply the manure in the fall, but some gardeners add to plots in spring.