

# The Dirt

SPRING 2024



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MONTROSE BOTANICAL SOCIETY



Crocuses brought early spring color to the still-brown demonstration plots of warm season grasses in the Montrose Botanic Gardens. Photo by Jim Cencer

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Liz Mauch

Happy spring, MBS Members! After a mild winter, but also with some much appreciated moisture in the valley, things are greening up around town and at the Botanic Gardens. I hope you have stopped by and enjoyed the crocus, tulips and daffodils that provided us with some long awaited color.

Your Board has been very busy working on planning out the year, including prioritizing projects, adult and children's programming, a retreat in January to discuss strategic planning, and developing the 2024 budget. All of us were glad to get out and work in the gardens again during the first Weed Warrior day on April 3, where we enjoyed re-connecting with our friends and sprucing up the gardens.

We have a very busy year in store. You'll find the list of programs in this issue, posted on our website and in the kiosks. We are excited to once again host the Home Garden Tour on June 8, and the Scarecrow

Festival on October 5-6 (earlier than in the past years). Vice President Sara Ungrodt is looking into the feasibility of another Garden of Lights in December, but with more community involvement/support. More details will come out closer to the events.

Our partnerships are strong. The Montrose Regional Library is once again supporting our children's programs with the Bookmobile, funds for the Pizza Harvest, and maintaining the story boards at Happy Hollow. We are using the Library conference room for two presentations this year. We formed a new partnership in 2023 with the Valley Food Partnership. More on that inside this issue.

Many thanks to all of you who participated in the year end member donation challenge. We started with a \$3500 challenge, which then increased to a \$4500 challenge. We raised \$8970 in December!

*Keep on growing!*

## MBS BOARD

### President

Liz Mauch

### Vice President

Sara Ungrodt

### Treasurer

Peggy Justis

### Secretary

Brenda Bafus-Williams

### At Large

Linda Bentley

Tracy Harrison

Board meetings on  
3rd Wed. of each month  
unless otherwise posted.  
4:30pm - 6:30pm

1st Presbyterian Church  
1840 E Niagara Rd  
Montrose, CO

### Horticulture

Sara Ungrodt

Kathy See

### Operations & Maintenance

Rob Clapper

### Website & Newsletter

Brenda Bafus-Williams

Laura Perfors

[www.montrosegardens.org](http://www.montrosegardens.org)

[facebook.com/  
montrosegardens](https://facebook.com/montrosegardens)

[montrosebotanical@gmail.com](mailto:montrosebotanical@gmail.com)

### Montrose Botanical Society

P.O. Box 323

Montrose, CO 81402

### Visit the Gardens

1800 Pavilion Dr  
Montrose, CO 81401

## SPONSOR AN MBS ENTRANCE GARDEN

MBS is offering an opportunity for individuals or business donors to once again adopt one of our Entrance Gardens for the year in exchange for a donation of \$600. These highly visible, colorful areas make a big impact on visitors as they approach our Gardens, and sponsorship will include your name on a well-positioned plaque.

Sandy Storey has already jumped at the chance to be a 2024 Entrance Garden sponsor. To reserve the other side, please email us at [montrosebotanical@gmail.com](mailto:montrosebotanical@gmail.com) if you're interested, or talk to an MBS board member.



## WEED WARRIORS HONORED AT LUNCHEON

MBS hosted its annual Weed Warrior Luncheon on February 10 to honor the many hours donated by its volunteers in 2023. Our dedicated Weed Warriors show up to work at the Botanic Gardens (doing much more than "weeding") on Wednesday mornings, April to October. They logged nearly 1,800 hours in 2023, with an average of 20 volunteers reporting for duty each week. According to Bryan Cashion, who tracks volunteer hours for his fellow Weed Warriors, the seniority ranks break down like this.

- **First-year WWs:** Jody Buntin, Tim Garvey, Cindy Larson, Carol Schroer, Anne and Greg Wilburn, and Brenda Bafus-Williams
- **Second-year WWs:** Kathy Dahl, Leslie Dubois, Peggy Justis, Debby Ingram, and Linda Scarborough
- **Third-year WW:** Mary Nelson
- **Fourth-year WWs:** Janice Hein, Liz Mauch and Kathy See
- **WWs volunteering 5 to 9 years:** Angeline Armistead, Norm Baker, Nadine Carlotto, Rob Clapper, Lorraine Shide, Terri Simon, Linda Walline, Charlie and Diane Winger, and Susan Woody
- **WWs volunteering 15 to 19 years:** Fran Adams, Linda Bentley, Anne Britton, Connie Kolker and Liane Muller
- **WWs volunteering 20 years or more:** Lynn Lewis, Carol Pyle, Sara Ungrodt and Cindy Youngstrom.



## BEGINNING FARMERS START WORK IN HOMESTEAD GARDEN

by Liz Mauch

In the 2023 Fall issue of *The Dirt*, we announced a partnership with the Valley Food Partnership to support its Cultivating Farmers and Ranchers that Thrive (CFRT) program. CFRT is a collaborative project focused on meeting the unique needs of beginning farmers and ranchers in rural, high desert conditions. The goal is to increase the number of farmers and ranchers that can successfully enter and sustain agribusiness operations to support an improved regional food production system in Western Colorado. The farmer/rancher-driven program includes a progression of core courses, continuing education, technical support, mentorships, and on-site experiences that address production and management topics.

One of VFP's needs is a small incubator plot for those trainees who do not have access to land. The Botanic Garden's Homestead row plot area is well-suited for this use. We signed a one-year Memorandum of Understanding, whereby we supply the land and water, and the VFP cultivates the row crop area and is responsible for maintaining it. In 2024, there will be one or possibly two program students working on the plot. There will likely be herbs, flowers, corn, beans, squash and other vegetables planted. Stop by and watch how this garden area grows.

## MEMBER IN THE SPOTLIGHT: MARRIL LEE BURKE

by Susan Woody



Marril Lee with her appreciation award as a Charter Member of MBS.  
Photo by Stephen Woody

You can take the girl out of the Iowa farm but cannot keep the multi-talented woman, Marril Lee Burke, away from her many forms of creativity. Gardening, sewing, painting, and being a working novelist (three so far) are just a few of her outlets.

Long time CSU trained advanced Master Gardener and the first Treasurer for the newly established (August 13, 1995) Montrose Botanical Society, Marril Lee has substantially impacted not only her years with the Montrose Botanic Garden, but her efforts continue to influence current and hopefully future generations of volunteers, Master Gardeners, and donors for and to the cause that is the Montrose Botanic Garden.

Early on Marril Lee had a 'wish list' that she had thought through on some of the possibilities for the garden. At first she thought a shallow pond with koi and a bridge and water lilies. "That pretty much got nixed after I left the board in 2006, but I still think it is doable," Marril Lee said. "I also thought about a building, which would house a gift shop, rooms for classes, and an office. I think we could have done a Japanese garden, with hardy plants and structures. Those were costly items but I thought they would MAKE our garden. I believe we all had our own wish lists for the gardens, but through the years it has become something entirely different. Just saying."

In MBS's early years, Marril Lee helped start the well-attended annual plant sale that coincided with Mother's Day weekend. MBS also started local garden tours as an early money-maker. "We also made enough money from early memberships to keep us going," she recalled. "Various people (some members, some not) wrote some grants for us. That was enough to get us going slowly. Nothing was fast."

Marril Lee and her husband Walt raised eight kids in various towns. Upon moving to Montrose in 1978, they owned Park Avenue True Value Hardware on Main Street. Their first home was on Spring Creek where she said the dirt was wonderful and full of loam. She "grew everything, vegetables, flowers, grapes, etc." Reading gardening catalogues made her realize, "I've got a place for that."

Marril Lee is a truly remarkable and capable woman. She has a quiet and kind demeanor and being around her is like a tonic. She is a mother of eight, a grandmother of 17, and a great grandmother of 11. She is currently working on her fourth novel.

# MBS ENDS 2023 ON STRONG FINANCIAL FOOTING

By Peggy Justis, MBS Treasurer

Greetings, everyone! We wrapped up 2023 in a strong financial position, not only as a result of our generous donors and members, but also because our Endowment Fund (based on the market) was doing much better than it had in 2022.

Beginning in January, we transitioned to our new online accounting system called Aplos and so far, so good. From now on I will be able to separate out the Endowment and any Restricted funds from the General Operating funds for reporting purposes. This will allow a better look at what is available for General use, versus what is tucked away in the Endowment. Brenda Bafus-Williams, our Secretary, has been hard at work setting up Aplos's membership database as well. In addition, I am looking forward to seeing how well Aplos's ticket module will work for our Garden Tour and other upcoming events.

And then, of course, it has been budget season. Your board has approved what I believe to be a dynamic, purpose-filled, balanced budget for 2024. I look forward to great things happening in the Gardens while being good stewards of our funds. As always, thanks for helping the Gardens flourish!

## 2023 Statement of Activities

### REVENUE

Dues	\$ 7,790.00
Donations and Grant (\$500)	\$25,933.43
Other	\$10,651.61
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$44,375.04</b>

Unrealized Gain/Loss (Endowment Fund) \$13,095.93

**TOTAL REVENUES** **\$57,470.97**

### EXPENSES

Operations	\$17,579.46
Business & Outreach	\$13,833.85
Other	\$ 8,721.54
CO Grant for Homestead Garden	<u>\$ 9,256.58</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$49,391.43</b>

**NET GAIN/LOSS** **\$ 8,079.54**

### Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2023

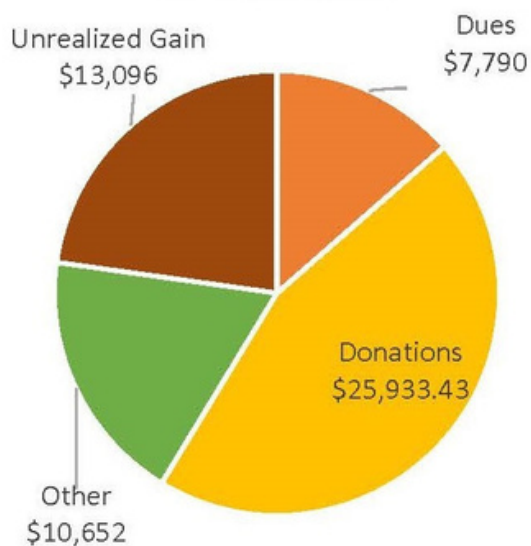
#### ASSETS

Checking/Savings	\$131,780.51
Other (includes Buildings/Endowment)	\$298,788.81
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$430,569.32</b>

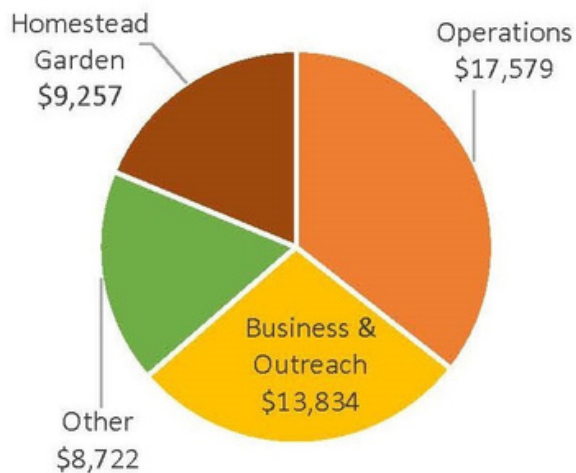
#### LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities	\$ 0.00
Equity	\$430,569.32
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>\$430,569.32</b>

### 2023 Revenues



### 2023 Expenses





# PHOTO PATCH



New bilingual signs on the Gardens' front gate to go along with the new magnetic locks.



Venturing out to the Botanic Gardens for the first time since last Fall? Be prepared for the major detour on Niagara Road as the city works on the new roundabout. From South Townsend, you'll need to loop around on Oak Grove Road then Pavilion Drive. Construction is slated to be done by June.



Beautifully backlit, the fruit of the four-wing saltbush.



Bryan Cashion hands out tokens of appreciation to our hard-working Weed Warriors at the February luncheon.



Justin Musser, Director of Montrose County's Natural Resources, explained their [Turf Replacement Program](#) at MBS's presentation on water-wise yards on March 9.



Tracks in the snow remind us of how important it is to leave dead flowering stalks as a source of food for other creatures in the winter.

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

*Items with an asterisk (\*) will be held at Montrose Botanic Gardens, 1800 Pavilion Dr. Check Facebook.com/MontroseGardens for updates.*

\* **Weed Warriors**, Wednesdays at 9:00 am to Noon beginning April 3

\* **Memorial Open House for Barbara van Schaik, MBS Founding Member**: Friday, April 12 at 2:00-3:00 pm. Short program begins at 2:30 pm.

**MBS Board Meeting**: Wednesday, April 17 at 4:30 to 6:30 pm (and every 3rd Wednesday), 1st Presbyterian Church, 1840 E Niagara Rd

**Elevating Your Garden Photography**: Sat., April 20 at 10:30 – 11:30 am  
Montrose Regional Library's Community Room, 320 S. Second Street  
Jim Cencer will share his valuable tips for both smartphone and DSLR cameras.

\* **Rose Pruning Techniques**:  
Wednesday, May 1 at 10:00 am to Noon. Presented by Master Gardener Betty Hall and MBS Horticulturist Sara Ungrodt. Demonstration of rose pruning techniques followed by plenty of hands-on practice in the Gardens. Bring thick work gloves, hand pruner and long-handled loppers; we have a limited number to share. Snacks provided by MBS.

**Tour of Ripple Effect Iris Farm**:  
Saturday, May 25. Ripple Effect is at 17656 6353 Rd, Montrose. Owner Heather Stark invites us to visit her two acres of irises (of every color!) between 9:30 am and 2:00 pm. She'll be on-hand to answer your questions.

\* **Kids' Planting Day in Happy Hollow**: Saturday, June 1 from 10:00 am to Noon. Help plant the "Pizza Garden" that we'll harvest on September 14. Plus story-time from the Bookmobile.

\* **MBS Home Garden Tour**: See ad at left for details.

\* **Ute Ethnobotany**:  
Wednesday, June 19 at 10:00 to 11:00 am. Presented by Mary Menz, CSU Native Plant Master. Highlighting native plants that were and are culturally important to the Ute people.

\* **Fresh Lavender Wreath-Making**: Saturday, July 20 from 9:00 to 11:00 am. Presented by Tracy Harrison. All materials provided (including picked-that-morning lavender) to make a heart-shaped wreath. Maximum of 15 participants. \$25 per person; pre-registration required, available several weeks before event at [montrosegardens.org](http://montrosegardens.org).

# Home Garden Tour

Saturday, June 8  
9 am - 2 pm

Five beautiful home landscapes on this self-guided tour beginning at the Montrose Botanic Gardens.

- Live music
- Plein air artists
- Refreshments

## Tickets

\$20 for MBS members  
\$25 non-members  
\$5 kids 3-15 yrs

Available after May 15 at [www.MontroseGardens.org](http://www.MontroseGardens.org) or with cash/check at the Montrose Botanic Gardens the morning of the event.

