

The Dirt

SUMMER 2023



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MONTROSE BOTANICAL SOCIETY



Photo Credit: J.P. Cencer

HOMESTEAD GARDEN: Many thanks to our members who have volunteered hundreds of hours in the past months to establish the new Homestead Garden in the southwest corner of the Botanic Gardens.

See related articles on page 2.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Linda Bentley, Interim President

Hello Members,

The last few months have been busy ones for the Garden. I would like to begin by thanking all of our loyal Weed Warriors who have kept the gardens trimmed, weeded and planted. They have persevered through the month of July which has been one of the hottest on record. They have truly made the Botanic Gardens the gem of the community.

There aren't enough words to thank our hardworking board. They have literally put their back into their work this year. The Homestead Garden was awarded a one-year Colorado Garden Foundation grant which ended June 30. Considering that we started from "ground zero" in the Spring of 2022, we accomplished a lot (see articles on page 2). Work still remains to be done in the area in the coming years.

Our educational programs have been a success. We opted to have them mostly in the spring this year, and found we had better attendance than the programs offered in the busy summer. However, we do have another very important one happening in the Gardens, brought to us by Melissa Schreiner, an entomologist with the CSU extension, about "Japanese Beetles: Are they coming to Montrose?" on Tuesday, August 8th at 5:30 to 6:30 pm. Light refreshments will be served. Please bring a lawn chair.

Reminders: We hope to see you at the members' picnic Wednesday, August 16th starting at 5:00 pm, and at the Annual Member Meeting on Wednesday, November 8th at 6:30 pm. More details in Upcoming Events on page 3.

Happy Gardening!

OFFICERS

Interim President

Linda Bentley

Interim Vice President

Steve Manis

Interim Treasurer

Peggy Justis

Secretary

Liz Mauch

At Large

Tracy Harrison

Debby Ingram

Brenda Bafus-Williams

Board Meetings:

3rd Wed. of each month
(Unless otherwise posted)
4:30pm - 6:30pm

First Presbyterian Church
1840 E Niagara Rd
Montrose, CO

Website and Newsletter

LaBree Shide

Email Address:

montrosebotanical@gmail.com

Website:

MontroseGardens.org

Montrose Botanical Society

P.O. Box 323

Montrose, CO 81402

Visit the Gardens

1800 Pavilion Dr

Montrose, CO 81401

We are always looking for additions to the newsletter!

Please email your ideas for articles, photos, and tidbits to the email above.

HOMESTEAD GARDEN TAKES SHAPE by Liz Mauch

Starting with a “blank slate” in the spring of 2022, our volunteers have been hard at work turning an area in the southwest corner of the Botanic Gardens into the new Homestead Garden.

We thank our volunteers who did countless tasks. Our horticulture committee researched historic crops, flowers and shrubs which we planted in 2022 and 2023. They created a row crop area (see article below), and did extensive soil amending and rototilling. The area now has rows of strawberries, raspberries, grains, corn, onions and potatoes. Last year, volunteers planted orchard trees on the south end of the space, and this year added a row of shrubs along the west side to provide protection from the wind and a colorful display next to a future path through the area. And, we thank the City’s Public Works department for digging an irrigation ditch which now connects to a headgate just south of the Gardens.

We also thank Dan Deuter who had been storing the remains of an historic cabin from Cerise Park for us. He and some volunteers hefted the logs and re-assembled it on a prepared pad in May. Sections of old corral fencing help to define the area, and three interpretive panels shed light on early settlement in the valley, the history of irrigation and the Gunnison Tunnel, and strawberries as an early cash crop.

The Colorado Garden Foundation (CGF) supported our work with a grant of \$14,500. As we came in under budget on the work originally proposed, the CGF allowed us to use the remaining funds to purchase lumber for an ADA accessible bridge over the irrigation ditch, and materials for constructing accessible crushed gravel paths.



Planting row crops; assembling the logs of the historic cabin from Cerise Park; and digging postholes for interpretive signs.

WHAT'S GROWING IN THE BACK 40? by Kathy See

The Homestead Garden’s row crops section is planted and thriving. Last year we experimented with planting a green cover crop here that included gigantic turnips and radishes, oats and an agricultural pea. All of those green plants were tilled into the soil last fall and decomposed over the winter. The soil was vastly improved this spring, but it is not yet great soil! This year we planted grains, similar to the species that were grown in homesteading times, as they are not as picky about soil as some other crops might be.

There is great success so far with the wheat, oats, and barley. The millet is up but not as vigorous as the other three, and the corn that germinated is healthy, although we lost about half of it so that planting is looking a bit sparse. The shrub hedge plants suffered from the heat early in their lives at the gardens but all of the different kinds seem to have taken root.

The flood irrigation system that was set up with much labor last year works as it is supposed to, but it takes a lot of attention to keep the water moving effectively across the row crops and then out of the gardens. Our team decided to use sprinklers during the summer heat because it can run on timers. That’s why you’ll see hoses in the row crops.

All of us who worked on this garden came away with a new appreciation for how hard farming is, and with admiration for the early farmers who had to do much of that labor without modern machinery to help. When you are next in the gardens, take a trip out to the Back 40 and look at our success story.

Nomination Deadline for Officers

At our Annual Meeting on November 8, among other things we will be holding elections for all four officer positions on our Executive Board, with all terms beginning January 1, 2024. President and Secretary will be elected to serve two-year terms, and

Vice President and Treasurer will be elected to serve one-year terms.

We request that before you nominate someone, you first ask them if they are willing to serve. To nominate someone (including yourself), please send an email with the person’s name and the office for which they are running no later than 5:00 pm on

October 1, 2023, to montrosebotanical@gmail.com.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Alan Morris by Sara Ungrodt

We sent out an enormous, heart-felt “Thank You!” to Alan Morris as he and his wife Roxanne, moved to Grand Junction in May. Alan has been a volunteer Weed Warrior in the Montrose Botanical Gardens just shy of 10 years, and also served on our board as our facilities person.

Alan is a man of many talents. He came with his engine hoist, jacks, drills, hauling chains, trailers and BOB: the Bobcat skid-steer with all sorts of attachments that dug, moved, lifted, pulled, loaded and just plain never quit. Alan always loves challenges and we gave him many! He evaluated anything that had a motor and, if worthy, fixed it or hauled it to his house for winter projects.

Alan also engineered the Shavano Valley steel shelter at the Gardens (where the picnic tables are) and worked together with Prospect Steel welders Wayne and Ricardo. It was impressive and heartwarming to see all those “steely” guys working together for the good of the Gardens.

Alan credits his mother, who shared her passion for growing things, with his love of gardening. “Volunteering at the Botanic Gardens was a joy for me – not only was I able to be of some help, but I also forged many friendships and learned a lot from others. As Roxanne and I move on to drier pastures, I will miss MBS and my Weed Warrior compatriots,” Alan said.

Alan will be missed so very much and his talents will always be remembered and treasured as we open the garden gates or sit on garden benches and watch the plants (which were supported by his many contributions) grow. We are better Weed Warriors and gardeners as a result of having spent time with and learned from Alan -- and his buddy BOB.



UPCOMING EVENTS

All events at the Montrose Botanical Gardens,
1800 Pavilion Drive, unless otherwise noted.

Pest Alert! Japanese Beetles

Tuesday, August 8, 5:30 pm

Find out more about this invasive insect that has made it to Grand Junction from Melissa Schreiner from CSU Extension. Limited seating available; bring a lawn chair if possible. Light refreshments provided by CSU Extension.

MBS Board Meeting

Friday, August 11, 4:30pm,

First Presbyterian Church, 1840 E. Niagara Rd.

Originally scheduled on August 16; rescheduled to avoid conflict with the Member Picnic.

MBS Annual Member Picnic

Wednesday, August 16, 5:00 pm

Chicken, non-alcoholic beverages, dinnerware and tables/chairs provided. Please bring a potluck side dish, salad or dessert. Join us to celebrate another thriving season in the Gardens!

Pizza Harvest

Saturday, September 9, 10:00 am

Harvest time in the Happy Hollow children's garden. We'll use garden produce to design and bake a special pizza pie.

Scarecrow Festival

Saturday & Sunday, October 14 & 15

See Flyer

MBS Annual Meeting

Wednesday, November 8, 6:30 pm

First Presbyterian Church, 1840 E Niagara Rd.

See notice re: Nominations for Officers, pg 2

Holiday Party

Wednesday, December 13, 5:00-7:30 pm

Ute Museum, 17253 Chipeta Rd, Montrose

More details to come!

SCARECROW FESTIVAL
A FUNDRAISER FOR MONTROSE BOTANIC GARDENS
1800 PAVILION DRIVE
SATURDAY & SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14 & 15, 2023
10:00AM - 4:00PM
FREE ENTRY • DONATIONS WELCOME
KIDS ACTIVITIES & FALL CRAFTS, SAT & SUN, 11AM-2PM
BOOKMOBILE, SAT ONLY, NOON-2PM
KIDS IN COSTUME GET AN EARLY "TREAT"

COME CHECK OUT OUR AWESOME
SILENT AUCTION
FEATURING A CREATIVE ARRAY OF
SCARECROWS AND OTHER FALL DECOR

WANT TO CREATE A SCARECROW?
SCARECROWS NEED TO BE SELF SUPPORTED
AND FAMILY FRIENDLY
SEE COMPLETE DETAILS ON OUR WEBSITE

 **MONTROSEGARDENS.ORG** 



© J.P. Cencer 2023

A wet winter and spring provided for a floral bounty. Above, Moroccan Sea Holly. At right, Prince's Plume.

PHOTO PATCH



Attendees at our Rose Pruning workshop in early May were able to get some hands on experience.



MBS hosted a May field trip to Agoge Garden CSA in Montrose, with more than 40 people attending. Will Justis, who manages this aquaponics operation, led us through the process.



Three dozen kids (with their adults in tow) enjoyed Planting Day in Happy Hollow. Above: Liane Muller (at right) welcomes the kids into the Hollow where they transplanted young tomatoes.

PLANT SELECT: ON THE CUTTING EDGE by Kathy See

In June, Sara Ungrodt and I attended the Plant Select meeting in Denver on behalf of the Montrose Botanic Gardens, which are a trial garden for Plant Select.

Many years ago, Plant Select - which is a combined effort of Colorado State University, Denver Botanic Gardens and other regional plantsmen and women - took on the task of discovering and developing new species of plants that are adapted to many of the various growing conditions in Colorado. Since Plant Select began, it has developed research strategies, trial gardens, marketing, propagation and distribution for their new introductions into the nursery market in Colorado - and as it turns out - other states.

These meetings always have an interesting line-up of speakers, as well as other attendees who are really cool plant geeks. It is also when Plant Select gives out the new plants to the trial garden members, which makes our Gardens an active part of the development process for new varieties that may be released to nurseries and gardeners like you and me.

This summer's meeting featured a speaker from Idaho Firewise, who shared their successes in creating fire resilient landscapes. A speaker from Utah explained how her Water Conservancy district has shifted the homeowner's point of view on creating low-water, sustainable landscaping, thus saving thousands of gallons of water each summer.

At the end, Plant Select gave participants a new-on-the-market plant to take home and try in their own yards. I came back to Montrose with a car full of unknown plants to nurture and analyze! It's kind of fun to be on the cutting edge of plant research in our little corner of the world.



© J.P. Cencer 2023

Hot Wings Tartarian Maple is a Plant Select species at MBG

NEW MEMBERS
SINCE THE SPRING 2023
EDITION

WELCOME!

Claire Beutler

James Cencer

Phil & Charlotte Foster

Colleen Hollenbeck

Martha Nance

Donna Ancell Stadler

Carol Stevens

Anne Wilburn

Montrose Botanical Society is a non-profit organization, 501(c)(3), since 1996, that provides horticultural education and leadership for residents of the Uncompaghre Valley through the development of botanic gardens for demonstrations, education, and leisure.