

The Dirt

Fall 2023



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MONTROSE BOTANICAL SOCIETY



Photo Credit: J.P. Cencer

PICTURE PERFECT: If you thought that there's no reason to visit the Botanic Gardens this time of year, photographer Jim Cencer urges you to think again! Or rather, look again, as he did at these oak leaves and Variegated Statice (*Bukiniczia cabulica*). We've been fortunate to be able to share Jim's stunning photos from our Gardens on facebook.com/MontroseGardens throughout 2023. If you don't already, "Follow" us there!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Linda Bentley, *Interim President*

Greetings, Members! It's hard to believe another gardening season has come to a close. We are especially grateful to all the dedicated Weed Warriors who showed up to work at the Garden on Wednesdays. We logged a minimum total of 1,767 volunteer hours from April through October, averaging 20 volunteers each Wednesday. This figure does not include the many hours that your hard-working Board puts in every week.

I'd like to extend a special thank you to our outgoing board members: Steve Manis who most recently served as Interim Vice President, but has also served as Treasurer and an At-Large member over the past few years; and Debby Ingram, who has served two years as an At-Large member and has taken care of our membership renewals. She has agreed to continue in that capacity next year. Thank you, Steve and Debby!

The annual membership meeting had an excellent voter turn-out,

with 73 ballots submitted including the 26 members who attended at the meeting on November 8. The votes are in, and your new Board beginning on January 1 will be President Liz Mauch, Vice President Sara Ungrodt, Secretary Brenda Bafus-Williams, and Treasurer Peggy Justis. Together with our current At-Large members Tracy Harrison and yours truly, we are in good hands going into 2024.

In addition, the members approved amendments to the Bylaws which were recommended by the Board, and also an increase in dues. Per the Bylaws, the Amended Bylaws go into effect immediately and member dues will increase with your annual renewal.

If you are interested in seeing our year-end financial statement, Bylaws and Code of Ethics, you can find them on our website at montrosegardens.org/boardofdirectors.

Thank you for your continued support of the Gardens. The Botanic Gardens are truly a gem in our community.

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

Horticulture

Sara Ungrodt & Kathy See

Operations & Maintenance

Rob Clapper

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

montrosebotanical
@gmail.com

MontroseGardens.org

www.facebook.com/
montrosegardens

Montrose Botanical Society
P.O. Box 323
Montrose, CO 81402

Visit the Gardens
1800 Pavilion Dr
Montrose, CO 81401

MBS ENTERS WIN-WIN PARTNERSHIP by Liz Mauch

Over the past few months, the MBS Board has been working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for 2024 with the Valley Food Partnership (VFP). The agreement provides garden space to support one of VFP's program areas while also providing one of our Garden areas with eager caretakers.

The VFP's USDA-funded program -- Cultivating Farmers and Ranchers that Thrive (CFRT) -- provides training and support to aspiring new or current farmers/ranchers that have been in the industry 10 years or less. When needed, the program also aims to pair its participants with available plots of land, which is where our new Homestead Garden comes into play.

As you may be aware, the Homestead's row crop area is shovel-ready and a perfect size for learning the trade. Over the past two years, we have improved the soil with Nutrimulch and also with green compost. (See articles about that successful experiment in the Fall 2022 and Summer 2023 editions of The Dirt.) We also brought irrigation water to the area via buried pipe.

Founded in 2007, the VFP is a local non-profit that envisions a resilient regional food system that sustains the land, producers and healthy communities.

Since the Gardens are located on land that MBS leases from the City of Montrose, the City was also involved in reviewing and approving the MOU.



Using Secretary Liz Mauch's back for a table, Interim President Linda Bentley signs an agreement with the Valley Food Partnership. Looking on is Janette Oslund, VFP's project specialist for their Cultivating Farmers and Ranchers that Thrive program.



Interim President Linda Bentley oversees the placement of the Valley Food Partnership's toolshed just south of BOB (aka "the Cleary Building").

LET'S MATCH OUR WAY INTO 2024 by Peggy Justis

It's the most wonderful time of the year to... Donate to the Botanic Gardens!

We have a special year-end giving opportunity happening now! We have two anonymous donors who are offering us a total of \$3,500 in matching gift challenges. Let's match this challenge and take full advantage of this opportunity. All donations received by Dec 31, 2023, will count towards this match.

Well, how do I help with this, you ask? Hop on your computer and go to coloradogives.org/organization/MontroseBotanicGardens. Hit the green donate button and you are on your way to helping us raise \$7000. Colorado Gives Day is December 5th. If you give on this particular day, it could qualify us for even more matching opportunities. But don't worry, any day through the end of the year is a perfect day to donate.

Or if you prefer, you can also go to montrosegardens.org, select donate at the top right, and then choose the orange General Operating Fund donate button.

If those options are not to your liking, just send a check to Montrose Botanical Society, PO Box 323, Montrose, CO 81402. This money will also count towards our matching gift if received by December 31st. So let's match, match, match our way into a strong finish to our financial year!

And as always, thank you for your support. We really appreciate our donors!



SCARECROWS (AND FAMILIES!) INVADE THE GARDENS

by Brenda Bafus-Williams

The Scarecrow Festival on October 14-15 was a huge success with the best attendance yet for the event, while also raising \$2,300. The Botanic Gardens pulsed with a real sense of community as hundreds of people enjoyed the perfect Autumn days, strolling along the pathways. Kids were busy checking off items for a scavenger hunt while adults bid on the 20 scarecrows and two dozen other items donated to our silent auction. Gina and Bob Grundemann created a scarecrow-themed “stick your head in the hole” photo opportunity to add to the fun. Kids’ activities also included face-painting and rock art.

By popular vote, “Holly Homestead’s Hobbies” was the winner of the Scared Crow Award. The scarecrow was a group entry from The Homestead at Montrose.

Thanks to the Scarecrow Festival Committee for all its hard work in pulling off the event: Tracy Harrison (committee chair), Anne Britton, Pat Brown, Peggy Justis, Liane Muller, Joyce Rime, Alicia Tuck and Brenda Bafus-Williams. And thanks to our many volunteers who helped to staff the event!



Two staff members from The Homestead at Montrose delivered “Holly Homestead’s Hobbies”. Residents at The Homestead crafted Holly, which ended up winning the popular vote for the Scared Crow Award.



The line was often long for face-painting!



Gina and Bob Grundemann created a great photo opportunity for families with this “put your head in the hole” board.



Rupert the Scarecrow was our Festival’s official ambassador, spending a week at each of four different locations around town prior to the event. Here he listens intently to a story from Tina Meiners in the lobby of the Montrose Regional Library.

AIR-SPADING REVEALS MORE TROUBLED CRABAPPLES

by Sara Ungrodt & Brenda Bafus-Williams



Jonathan from Climb Tree Services uses an air-spade to blow away the top layer of soil from around the base of a crabapple on the Promenade. He was then able to identify and remove roots that were growing in circles around the tree’s base.

Three years ago we suspected trouble on the Promenade.

A decline in some of the “Spring Snow” crabapples planted in our West Promenade area sent us looking for a diagnosis from State Forester Vince Urbina. We found evidence that the wire baskets around the rootballs of some of the trees had not been properly removed when planted some 20 years ago. After much research and discussion, we had an arborist perform root crown inspections on several of these trees with the help of an air-spade (a long steel tube that administers focused, pressurized air). With the surface layer of soil blown away, we found dense, trapped roots encircling the base of the trees. These girdling roots were judiciously removed to encourage more fibrous root growth which is better able to absorb nutrients from the surrounding soil.

We waited three years after this treatment to see if air-spading would pay off with increased tree vigor – which it has! And so, on November 2 Jonathan with Climb Tree Services came to air-spade and inspect some of the other crabapples along the East Promenade and Entrance Gardens. Again we found several trees with strangling roots. We also found evidence of poor practices in the past -- bits of orange bailing twine (used to keep the wire baskets together during hauling) and even remnants of the wire basket.

Some of the offending roots were cut with chisels and/or a small chainsaw. A few of the roots were squeezing the trunk so tightly that they popped when they were cut – as if to say, “Thank you!” After waiting two weeks to give the new cuts time to callous, we tucked the roots in for the winter with a layer of Nutrimulch.



ENTRANCE GATE GETS MAGNETIC LATCH by Liz Mauch

If you have visited the Botanic Gardens recently, no doubt you noticed a change to our entrance gate.

The latch on the gate has long presented a challenge to some visitors, particularly to the many older citizens who come to visit from the nearby senior housing. In addition, that latch lacked a lock (Say that fast ten times!) so the Gardens' security cameras have been alerting us to unwanted nighttime visitors. To address both issues, the Board decided it was time to look into a lockable gate mechanism to discourage unwanted visitors, but also be easier to open during daytime hours.

We received two quotes and went with England Fence for a programmable magnetic lock, which they installed on October 9. The timer is set to lock the gate at dusk and release at dawn. There is an exit button mounted on the display kiosk in case someone is locked inside and needs the magnet to release.

The City of Montrose gave us American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to cover half of the cost of the installation. Thank you, City of Montrose, for your support!



The crew from England Fence installed a new latch on the main entrance gate to the Gardens in October. The new device has a programmable, magnetic locking mechanism.



MORE NATIVE PLANTS FOR POLLINATORS

by Brenda Bafus-Williams

A big thanks to Ryan Sedgeley with the Endangered Species Coalition (ESC) for inviting MBS to apply for a \$500 mini-grant in September. The funds were targeted for the purchase of native plants that support pollinators.

We purchased several curl-leaf mountain mahogany to fill in the space along the west fence where some of our pine trees had died. We filled a similar spot in the Native Garden with some dwarf rabbitbrush. We also planted hyssop, penstemons, milkweed and purple prairie clover in several locations. Thank you, ESC!

The ESC is "working to address the leading cause of global pollinator species decline – which is habitat loss – by actively increasing habitat for imperiled native pollinators, including the Monarch butterfly." Read more about ESC's work at endangered.org/pollinator-protectors/.



Nadine Carlotto helped plant Purple Prairie Clovers in the Native Garden, just some of the many plants provided by a mini-grant from the Endangered Species Coalition.

*Long-time MBS member and generous supporter
Ellery McClintock
passed away in November in Georgia.
We're holding his wife Sally in our hearts.*

SAVE THE DATE!
**MONTROSE HOME
GARDEN TOUR**
JUNE 8, 2024



THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS

Ace Hardware
Alpine Bank
Camelot Gardens
Chelsea Nursery
City of Montrose
Montrose Pavilion
Cooper Soils
DMEA
Montrose Regional Library
San Juan Gardens
TEI Rock Drills



Charlie Winger and Greg Wilburn work on creating a footpath on the north edge of the Homestead Garden. Photo courtesy of J.P. Cencer.

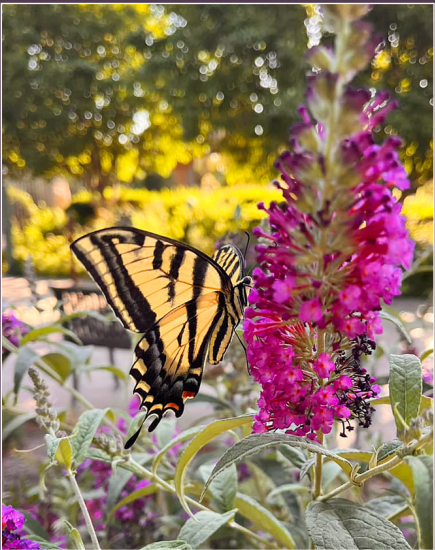
PHOTO PATCH



Over 50 members enjoyed the annual member picnic in August where the Board announced the winner of the contest to rename the Cleary building. Sara Ungrodt suggested the winning name - BOB (Building Out Back) - as it also honors Alan Morris and his BOBcat Skid-Steer Loader.



Kids enjoyed looking in the Happy Hollow garden for herbs and vegetables they planted in June to include on their pizzas in September. The event helps illustrate the "garden to table" concept for children.



Swallowtail butterfly visiting a Butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*), courtesy of Nancy Hall Nelson.



Debby Ingram, Peggy Justis and Liz Mauch appreciate the new bridge across the Homestead Garden's irrigation ditch, which was built by MBS member Tim Garvey.



Elected at our annual meeting in November, MBS's officers starting on January 1 will be Liz Mauch, President; Brenda Bafus-Williams, Secretary; Peggy Justis, Treasurer; and Sara Ungrodt, Vice President.



Photo courtesy of J.P. Cencer



Bryan Cashion caught this rainbow spanning the Botanic Gardens on October 28, the day before Montrose received its first snow of the season.

HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF JAPANESE BEETLES

by Brenda Bafus-Williams

Buy local, plant local.

Melissa Schreiner with CSU Extension and Teresa Nees, the Mesa County Japanese Beetle coordinator, hammered that message home repeatedly during an August 8 presentation at the Botanic Gardens. They emphasized how using local sources is an important way to keep the Japanese beetle infestation that's in Mesa County right now from spreading here.

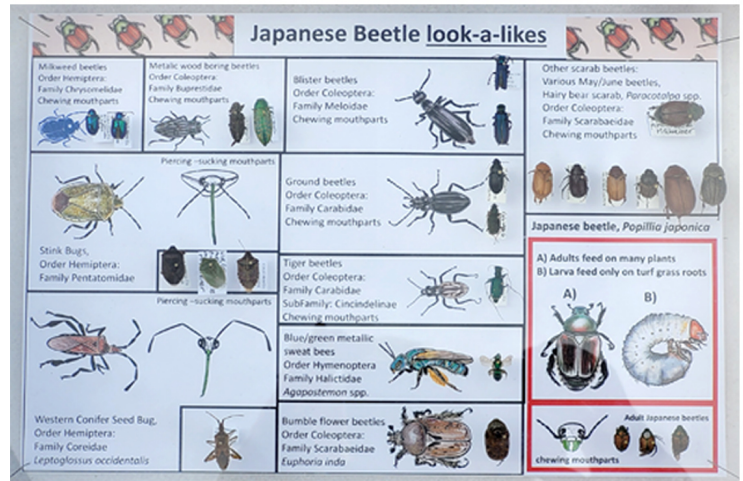
The invasive insect travels largely in the grub stage of its life in untreated plant material -- a favorite being sod or turf. In the adult beetle phase, it is a voracious creature that can "skeletonize" many types of plants including roses, raspberries, grapes and crabapples.

Registered nurseries are required to put out beetle traps and treat their plant stock -- not so when Aunt Sally in Grand Junction offers you some of her extra daisies. Mesa County is still hopeful it can eliminate the beetle (as Palisade did successfully a number of years ago), but the Front Range and Salt Lake City now have widespread, permanent populations.

If you think you've discovered a Japanese beetle in any life stage, please confirm its identification by taking it in a ziploc baggie to the CSU Extension office inside of Friendship Hall at the Montrose County Fairgrounds. Their larvae are a creamy white grub with a dark head and well-developed legs. Usually, the body curves into a "C-shape."



In early August, Melissa Schreiner (entomologist with CSU Extension) emphasized the urgency for keeping Japanese Beetles out of Montrose County during her presentation.



JOIN US FOR A

Holiday Party

Wednesday, December 13
5:00 – 7:30 pm at the Ute Museum

PLEASE BRING a potluck dish, an item for the Silent Auction and cash/check so you can take your auction purchases home!
MBS will provide paper products and tea/coffee.

NEW MEMBERS
SINCE THE SUMMER 2023
EDITION
WELCOME!

Leslie DuBois
Gavin and Will Justis
James Kintner
Cynthia Larson
Linda Scarborough
Carol Schroer
Jodie Yates-Simon