

The Dirt

SUMMER 2025



NEWSLETTER OF THE MONTROSE BOTANICAL SOCIETY



*(at left) Lying in between the southern end of the Promenade and the San Juan Mountains in the distance, Happy Hollow is at the visual center of the Botanic Gardens. After years of waiting, plans are underway to redevelop the area.
(at right) Interested patrons discuss possible design elements for the area at a May 31 public input opportunity.*

HAPPY HOLLOW CHILDREN'S GARDEN LONG OVERDUE FOR A MAKEOVER

by Brenda Bafus-Williams, MBS Secretary

The Montrose Botanical Society's board is taking important steps towards giving the area currently known as the "Happy Hollow Children's Garden" a makeover. The board sent a Request For Proposals (RFP) to develop a conceptual design to two regional landscape architecture firms in early July, with an August 8 deadline for responses. The board will kick off fundraising efforts for the project later this summer.

Planning for the project began this spring when the board sought public input on design elements to include in the reimagined space. Members and supporters received an email with a link to an online survey in mid-May, which was followed up by a public "open house" after the Kids' Planting Day on May 31. A planning committee then worked diligently during the month of June to compose the RFP.

Originally excavated in the early 2000's to create a water feature at the center of the Botanic Gardens, the "hollow" remained empty for a number of years after concerns over pond maintenance and liability arose. In 2018, volunteers turned it into a temporary children's garden. Even though the bottom of Happy Hollow is narrow and the path down to it is steeper than desired, it has hosted Planting and Harvest Days for the past seven years in partnership with Montrose Regional Library and its Bookmobile. It is likely that future plans will include at least partially filling in the hollow, which at its deepest is 10 feet below grade.

Even in 2018, the plan was always to develop a more polished discovery garden in the space. It's taken until now to bring all the necessary elements together, but the MBS board and leadership are excited to launch this project now!

MBS BOARD

President

Liz Mauch

Vice President

(open position)

Treasurer

Peggy Justis

Secretary

Brenda Bafus-Williams

At Large

Anne Britton

Tracy Harrison

Laulii Martin Neff

Anne Schuttig

Board meetings on the
third Wed. of each month
unless otherwise posted.

4:00pm - 6:00pm at

230 S Second Street

Montrose, CO

Horticulture

Sara Ungrodt

Operations & Maintenance

Rob Clapper

Website & Newsletter

Brenda Bafus-Williams

Laura Perfors

Private Event Coordinator

Linda Bentley

Montrose Botanical Society

P.O. Box 323

Montrose, CO 81402

Visit the Gardens at

1800 Pavilion Dr

Montrose, CO 81401

Free admission; dawn to dusk

www.montrosegardens.org

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

info@montrosegardens.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Liz Mauch

Hello, Members, Supporters and Business Partners of the Montrose Botanical Society!

The Society's Board has been busy all year: offering programs, overseeing management of the Gardens, being good stewards of the budget and donations we've received, and planning for our 30th anniversary celebration and a renovation of the Happy Hollow Children's Garden. I'm pleased to welcome our newest Board member, Laulii Martin Neff (see page 6).

I am amazed and humbled by our dedicated volunteer Weed Warriors who faithfully show up on Wednesday mornings to weed, plant, do more weeding and fixing. We've already racked up over 1,000 volunteer hours in the Gardens, so a big THANK YOU goes out to all you Weed Warriors!

A special thank you goes out to our Horticultural Coordinator Sara Ungrodt, General Maintenance Coordinator Rob Clapper, and Bryan Cashion, who helps in so many ways, but especially with electrical and irrigation systems.

Here are a few highlights so far this year:

• LET THERE BE LIGHT (and outlets)!

I'm happy to announce that we now have power to the BOB (a nickname for our metal garage building). There are overhead lights and outlets both inside and outside of the building. This project took time and coordination with the City of Montrose as they installed a new transformer along our west fence, which will serve the Gardens as well as the Veterans Memorial. Thank you, DMEA and CAM Electric, for your help with this project!

- **Educational Programs:** We've held a variety of adult and children's programs both onsite and at the Montrose Regional Library. Thank you to all who have presented programs for us. Be sure to mark your calendars for the upcoming presentation on the Kew Gardens at the Pavilion Senior Center, across the Pavilion lawn from the Botanic Gardens. (See details on page 7.)

- **Montrose County Fair:** Thanks to Linda Corwine and Tracy Harrison, we were able to sponsor the Junior Division Floriculture prizes for a second year.
- **Happy Hollow Children's Garden renovation:** This is a big deal for the Gardens. See page 1 for details.
- **Altrusa grant:** Our thanks to: Molly Shaver, a member of Altrusa and MBS, for encouraging us to apply for and receive a \$350 grant from the local Altrusa chapter in support of our children's programs. Thanks also to Liane Muller for her dedicated work on these programs and for maintaining Happy Hollow in between times. Liane and MBS member Terri Simon worked on the grant application. (See photo below.)
- **Member picnic:** Mark your calendar for Wednesday, August 13 at 5:00 pm for our annual member picnic on the Promenade. We'll provide chicken and water/tea, you bring a side dish to share. (See page 7.)

See you in the Gardens! – Liz



(Pictured above) Carole McKelvey (center), a member of Altrusa's Service Committee, presented MBS members Liz Mauch (at left) and Liane Muller a \$350 grant for MBS's children's activities and Happy Hollow Children's Garden.

MEMBER IN THE SPOTLIGHT: GARDEN FOUNDER, JOHN ELOE

by Brenda Bafus-Williams, MBS Secretary

The Rotary Arch Bench is an iconic feature of the Montrose Botanic Gardens. Built in 2005, it commemorates Montrose Rotary's 85th anniversary. However, Garden-insiders know that you might also call it John Eloë's Bench, in recognition of its designer.

A decade before the bench, when Jim Chaplin addressed the Montrose Rotary Club asking if anyone was interested in creating a botanic garden, John Eloë stood up. He would soon join the founding board of the Montrose Botanical Society along with Chaplin, Barbara van Schaik, Dennis Thomas, Mary Melcher, Bette Cromwell, Marril Lee Burke and Linda Corwine. In 1998, John stepped up to serve as the organization's second president, and then remained on the board in various capacities until 2006.

John and wife Nancy had only been in Colorado for two years when he signed onto the garden-building effort. They moved from southern California in 1993 where John was part of a large architectural firm designing high-rise office buildings, civic centers, libraries, hospitals, hotels, shopping malls and city halls. In Montrose, he joined Patrik Davis Associates where he designed the new library, an expansion of the hospital, The Homestead and other projects. In his free time, he envisioned the Gardens.

"Getting it going so we could plant that first tree was the hardest part," John recalled. "Selecting the site and negotiating the lease with the City took time, but the leadership stayed solid to the goal."

Once the alfalfa field just south of the Pavilion was chosen as the location for the Gardens, a final test remained. The City required that some portion of the Pavilion's view of the San Juan Mountains be preserved, even as future trees in the Gardens would grow to maturity. To demonstrate likely compliance, John and others stood on the property with helium balloons tied to

long strings to simulate mature trees. The city council gathered on the steps of the Pavilion to make sure the mountains still topped the balloons.

"From the beginning, we knew it all depended on volunteers and money. We had enough people, talent and a Master Plan. Our schedule was always aggressive," John said. He admits that back then he underestimated how long it would take to build out the Gardens. He predicted 20 to 25 years, a mile-marker MBS passed at least five years ago.

John hasn't limited his interest in plants to the Botanic Gardens. He and Nancy lived on 35 acres of piñon-juniper for 20 years. Inspired by the artistry of Andy Goldsworthy (*Google him!*), John built elements into their landscape to encourage a sense of discovery.

Currently, two of John's favorite plants are the Hot Wings® Maple and Ninebark. His enthusiasm for the two is contagious, so don't be surprised to see them planted in his neighbors' yards as well!



John Eloë sitting in the shade of the Rotary Arch Bench which he designed for the Gardens two decades ago.

HARTIGANS' GENEROSITY EVIDENT IN GARDENS

by Liz Mauch, MBS President

Sadly, long-time member Darrell Hartigan passed away in May. A Vietnam Army Veteran, he and his wife Catherine had been generous supporters of the Botanic Gardens stretching back into its early days. Catherine especially loved the Gardens and, after her passing in 2023, Darrell continued to support the Gardens in her honor.

The Hartigans' generosity is evident throughout the Gardens, with contributions to the Fence Fund, sponsorship of an Entry Garden, and the purchase of the lovely table and chairs in the nook by the front gate. Darrell often came and sat with his cup of coffee at the table. As a final gift, Darrell left a generous bequest to MBS. We are extremely grateful for his and Catherine's long-time support of the Botanic Gardens.



Darrell & Catherine Hartigan

FREE ADMISSION TO GARDENS FUELS CROSS-COUNTRY ADVENTURE

by Jim Cencer, Retired freelance journalist and MBS member

“Don’t leave home without it” is a tagline that now describes the Montrose Botanical Society’s membership card. Since the Montrose Botanic Gardens was accepted into the American Horticultural Society’s (AHS) Garden Network in April, the MBS membership card is all you need to visit many botanic gardens across the country for FREE!



During a May road-trip to Michigan, the AHS benefit saved me the admission fee to several remarkable gardens. What’s intriguing about the 380 AHS member gardens is not just the variety of botanical features but the clever methods of interpreting that variety for us visitors.

For example, both major Michigan universities are AHS members and have vast forested gardens centered by tropical conservatories. The highlight at MSU is the Reach for the Sky canopy walk at a 65-foot elevation. The hanging bridges provide up-close observation of the tree canopy with the 360-degree surround sound of insects and forest birds.

The re-imagining of the MBG Children’s Garden (see *article on page 1*) immediately came to mind while I visited several gardens. This May, the U of M’s Matthaei Gardens had kid-approved features including a sensory garden, water play area, a towering evergreen labyrinth, and adventure backpacks with activity supplies like a scavenger hunt or Conservation Bingo.

The Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha, Nebraska, is education-savvy as well. The Omaha landscape is very unlike Montrose. As part of the 100-acre site, Lauritzen boasts a four-acre arboretum featuring regional plant communities including savannah, oak, hickory, maple and linden forest.

A Japanese specialty garden houses the Sunpu Castle Gate and Mt. Fuji replica. For 2025, the Tremendous Topiaries are a seasonal highlight. Topiaries in the shape of a flock of flamingos, a big bison and an elephant anchor various garden areas with their remarkably lifelike botanical features.

Lauritzen was celebrating the grand opening of Sofia’s Play Garden during my visit. It’s a wonderland — from hidden pathways and



A topiary bison at the Lauritzen Gardens in Omaha, Nebraska.

playful structures to sensory-rich experiences like nature puzzles, and hands-on water features. The one-acre site includes 10 thematic areas, including a forest thicket, urban green and the ‘treetop’ Hawks Songbird Village. This elevated feature includes four birdhouse-shaped interactive play-houses. (Think a ‘tiny house’ two stories tall and painted orange with a large Baltimore Oriole icon.) *P.S. You don’t have to be a kid to appreciate the plant petting zoo!*

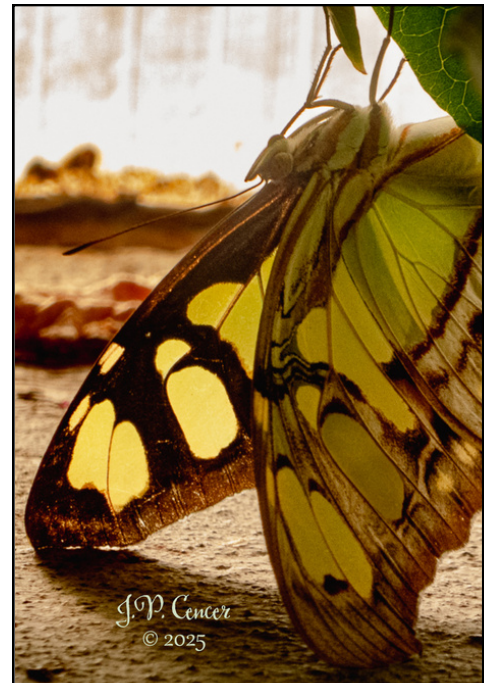
Colorado itself has multiple AHS member gardens which are now free for members of MBS – including the Denver Botanic Gardens! The Betty Ford Alpine Gardens in Vail suggests a \$20 donation but has open gates at an altitude of 8,250 feet. It’s the smallest of the gardens I visited, where terraces of alpine and subalpine vegetation are linked by a stream and waterfalls.

For MBG members familiar with our high desert vegetation at 5,885 feet, the Ford is a treasury of new and remarkable botanical examples with delicate flowers and curious evergreen adaptations.

If a Staycation is your 2025 destination choice, the Western Colorado Botanical Gardens in Grand Junction is a great Four Seasons botanical excursion. The Grand Junction destination is home to adjoining domes housing a tropical rain forest and butterfly pavilion. The local Orchid society often shares spectacular blossoms. For a photographer, however, butterflies are the prime attraction. My

favorites are the Atala, Malachite and White Peacock varieties that boast fascinating patterns, colors (the Malachite is green!) and iridescence. Kids will be equally fascinated by several tortoises, koi and a resident cat.

The 15 acre-parklike site features a Western Heritage Garden and Children’s Secret Garden. A small cattail pond is flanked by a Japanese-themed garden with a small teahouse replica and benches. An extensive succulent garden welcomes American Robins each spring.



A Malachite butterfly at the Western Colorado Botanical Gardens in Grand Junction.



(above) In July, Curiouser Books on Main Street sponsored a city-wide search for "Where's Waldo". This intrepid youngster found Waldo hiding in the Waterwise Garden!

(below) Dave Paprocki helps install new Tribute Pavers in the Shavano Plazas in June.



PHOTO PATCH



(above) Scrubby, a Woodhouse's Scrub Jay, has a raucous call and stern look for anyone he catches in the Waterwise Garden.

(at left) Cheri Isgreen puts the finishing touches on her soil-based painting during the July program, **Getting Creative with Soil**, led by MBS President Liz Mauch.



(above) Weed Warriors have been giving the Entry Garden a fresh look. Pictured from left: Mary Nelson, Cindy Larson, Liane Muller, Leslie DuBois and Linda Bentley.



(at left) Rob Clapper seems to be asking, "Can I count on you to help move these rocks to the western edge of the Gardens?"

MASTER GARDENER JOINS MBS BOARD

The MBS Board welcomed its newest At-large member, Laulii (Lauretta) Martin Neff, at its June meeting. She moved from her agricultural property in Palisade to Montrose in 2024, where she downsized significantly to have more leisure time outside of her garden. Unable to go cold turkey, though, she joined the MBS Weed Warriors to fill her need to garden on a larger scale.

Laulii was born and raised in Grand Junction and started life on a small farm, which fed the family. She grew up in the garden, usually weeding and pulling bugs off the vegetable plants along with her four siblings and parents. A few flowers were lovingly tended (especially her mom's roses), but food was the priority. Pulling weeds and tending plants became therapeutic.

At her own mountain ranch outside of Durango, Laulii planted a large (25' x 80') cottage garden alongside the barn, which brought hours of joy and beauty. At nearly 8,000 feet in elevation, food

gardening was a challenge, but she also created vineyards using American cold-hardy hybrid varieties. In 2002, Laulii completed the CSU Master Gardener program.

Laulii's other love is the San Juan Mountains, where she gets away to hike and camp as often as possible. In her professional life, Laulii practices law, now only part time. She graduated from law school in 1996 and went to work immediately in civil litigation. Her current field of expertise is criminal appeals and constitutional law as it applies in the criminal justice system. On occasion, Laulii has had the opportunity to support and testify in support of new legislation.



Laulii Martin Neff

Nominations open for three board positions

It may seem like a far off date, but it's not too soon to be thinking about nominations for MBS officers. At our Annual Meeting on November 12, among other things we will hold elections for three of the officer positions on our Executive Board, with terms beginning January 1, 2026.

In addition to the normal two-year election cycle for President and Secretary, we currently have a vacancy for Vice President. Election to this office would be for a one-year term from January 1 to December 31, 2026.

To nominate someone (including yourself), send an email to info@montrosegardens.org, no later than 5:00 pm on Oct. 1, 2025,

**Build Your Own
Crevice Garden**

Saturday, September 6
Two sessions:
10:00 am - Noon
or 1:00 - 3:00 pm

Montrose Botanic Gardens
1800 Pavilion Drive (just south of the Pavilion)

Build a small crevice garden in a container as Kenton Seth offers step-by-step guidance that will apply to a larger-scale project in your garden. Plants, soil and rocks provided; BYOP (Bring Your Own Pot -- More details will be sent upon registration.)

30th
MONTROSE BOTANICAL SOCIETY
ANNIVERSARY
1995-2025
info@montrosegardens.org

\$40 for MBS members; \$50 for non-members
Space is limited; preregister starting on August 1 at montrosegardens.org

Presented by Kenton Seth, owner of Paintbrush Gardens in Grand Junction and co-author of *The Crevice Garden*.

LAVENDER INSIGHT FROM A LOCAL GROWER

By Tracy Harrison, MBS Board Member

If you are a lavender lover like I am, or interested in waterwise plants, Lavender for All Seasons is a great resource.

Paola LeGarre, who owns Sage Creation Organic Farm on East Orchard Mesa in Palisade, Colorado, has put her knowledge and love of lavender into this newly released book. It covers all aspects of growing lavender, from the soil and correct plant selection to the products that can be created for culinary, body care and crafting.

Lavender for All Seasons is a beautiful book, full of pictures from Paola's farm, where she shares all aspects of this most useful herb.



Present your
MBS membership card
to receive these
discounts:

Abel's Ace Hardware

10% on gardening items

Camelot Gardens

10% on nursery trees & shrubs

Chelsea Nursery

10% on plants, shrubs & trees

Cooper Soils

10% on soils & mulch

San Juan Gardens

10% on plants

**Please support
these generous
businesses!**

A Glimpse Inside London's Kew Gardens

**Friday, August 8
at 10:30 am - 11:30 am**

Montrose Senior Center

1800 Pavilion Drive (east end of the Pavilion)

Hear about some of the
work being done at
Kew's Royal Botanic
Gardens in London,
a UNESCO World
Heritage Site.

Presented by
Georgia Timpson,
a Horticulture student at
Kew with a keen interest
in our alpine plants.



info@montrosegardens.org



*\$5 suggested donation; free to
Montrose Botanical Society members*

Pictured is Kew's Davies Alpine House.

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST

Friday, the 8th – **A Glimpse Inside
London's Kew Gardens** at 10:30 am at the
Montrose Senior Center – across the
Pavilion lawn from the Botanic Gardens.
(See ad at left)

Wednesday, the 13th – **Annual Member
Picnic** at 5:00 pm at the Botanic Gardens.
Bring a salad, side dish or dessert to share.
MBS will provide beverages, chicken, an
anniversary cake and tableware. BYOB.

SEPTEMBER

Saturday, the 6th – **Build Your Own Crevice
Garden** at 10:00 am or 1:00 pm at the
Botanic Gardens. (See ad on page 6.)

Saturday, the 13th – **Harvest Day at Happy
Hollow** at 10:00 am at the Botanic Gardens.
FOLLOWED BY our **30th Anniversary
Celebration** from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm.
(See ad on page 8 for more information.)

MBS ENDOWMENT FUND MOVES TO WESTERN COLORADO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

In an effort to uphold their duty as stewards of MBS's financial resources, the MBS Board members have been exploring options for the management of our Endowment Fund. After looking at various opportunities to maximize growth and minimize fees, the Board has decided to move the funds from Montrose Community Foundation to Western Colorado Community Foundation in Grand Junction.

If you would like to contribute to the Montrose Botanical Society's Endowment Fund, either with a monetary gift now, or as a part of your estate planning, visit their website at www.wc-cf.org/contact/.

For more information, you may also contact MBS Treasurer Peggy Justis at treasurer@montrosegardens.org.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

since the Spring 2025
issue of *The Dirt*

Barbara Bynum
Cynthia Carlson
Debbie Daniel
Bev Dwire
Johanna Greiner
Kerry Guillano
Dodie & Dean Guinn
Cynthia Harwood
Cara Loriz
Frederick McCaleb
Trinda Nelson
Kandice Ray
Ann Marie Sanders
Sally Sprang
Federico Timm



**30th Anniversary
Garden Celebration!**

**Saturday, Sept. 13
at 11:00 am - 3:00 pm**

Montrose Botanic Gardens
1800 Pavilion Drive (just south of the Pavilion)

30th ANNIVERSARY
1995-2025
info@montrosegardens.org

We appreciate you! Join us free of charge!

- Music from Jedi George
- Family-friendly games and prizes
- Hot dogs and other refreshments (while supplies last)
- Plus, learn more about our plans for the future!

Generously sponsored by:

DMEA **Alpine Bank**



Sunflower
Montrose Botanic Gardens'
"first seed" planted!

30th ANNIVERSARY
1995-2025

Join **Montrose Botanical Society** and its Gardens in celebrating their 30th anniversary by planting these sunflowers! Choose a sunny spot, loosen the soil, plant about 1 inch deep and 6-12 inches apart after last frost (mid-May). Water thoroughly, then keep evenly moist.
www.MontroseGardens.org

MBS has given away nearly 1,000 packets of sunflower seeds (pictured above) as part of its 30th Anniversary celebration. See ad at left for more info about our Garden Celebration on Saturday, September 13!