

Valley Gardeners

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Coming Up

<https://ValleyGardeners.org>

Summer 2025

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From the President

Things I'm going to do differently!

It may only be August 1, but it is still the right time to take a serious look at your garden to see what worked, what didn't, and what you want to change for next year. While I loved the knockout beauty of having blooming flowers everywhere, I have realized that the effort required might be better spent following a different plan. So I've been spending time looking at what other gardeners have done.

Jackie Doig has a lot of feathery tall purple Russian sages and they look magnificent, so I planted three in a sunny, dry part of my yard. The sage does double duty as it will also hide an area that just won't do what is beautiful.

In a long newly bricked and slightly shaded area there are now three artistic blue pots that could almost stand alone but do have long lasting begonias in them. While I'm still very happy with my self-seeding cosmos, poppies and calendula,



Annie's colorful garden near Carbondale. Photo by Meg Ribotto.



Left: Blue pots with begonias enliven a bricked area.



Right: A sunflower sculpture and figure on the fence add interest in a corner. Photos by Annie Worley.

my started-from-seed zinnias and dahlias never really even bloomed...so I'll either buy them fully grown for pots or give up on them.

I love my vivacious and easy to control red Maltese crosses and black eyed Susans, but the Shasta daisies can only be controlled by constant dead heading and digging out their roots... I'll give those daisies one more year or else. I'm also not sure about my leggy self-seeding bachelor buttons but, I am impressed with my long blooming deep blue delphiniums and all the late blooming phloxes.

So overall my new plan is to have more long lasting annuals pots with mulch on top to reduce watering needs and to back up those annuals with colorful and large self-seeders like cosmos, poppies, calendula, black eyed Susans and hollyhocks. Pretty pots and some colorful garden art are also and truthfully a wise use of gardening money because it can free up your valuable time and save your back. Plus, gardening with pots still allows you to get your serotonin fix while you get your hands dirty!

Annie Runyan Worley



Pearl of Wisdom

First and foremost, Have Fun!! If your garden becomes a chore, nothing else really matters.--Joyce Woltman.



A June Jumble of Speakers

Lynne Uhl and Debbie Hanson contributed to this article.

June 25 was a beautiful day when 28 Valley Gardeners gathered in Annie Worley's fabulous back yard. Guests sipped mimosas as they admired Annie's gardens that framed the views of the river. An informal exchange of ideas characterized the meeting with two presentations and lots of Q & A. Once again the hospitality team outdid themselves by preparing an amazing and delicious brunch with three egg casseroles, three coffee cakes, and a huge fruit salad.



Annie Worley's beautiful back yard and view of the river. Photos by Laurie Bathke.



Annie stands on her stone garden feature.. Photo by Debbie Hanson.

The Hard Truth

Annie began the presentations with the topic of hardscapes. Hardscapes are "the non-living elements of a landscape design, primarily using solid materials like concrete, stone, brick, wood, and other man-made structures." Hardscape elements are both useful and attractive design elements. Annie explained that she was tired of having to work so hard to keep grass from her gardens, so she put in concrete and brick weed barriers. She made a swirled concrete design accent surrounded by hosta in her front yard and a brick covered concrete barrier around her flower beds. Annie said that she spends 13% less "gardening time" because of the hardscape. She said, "Keeping the weeds down is my mantra."

Those "Pesty" Issues



The second speaker was Dani Wesolowski with the Garfield County branch of the Colorado State University Extension Service. She was very knowledgeable and passionate about her subject. Her main focus was methods to control common garden pests and invasive weeds. Dani spoke about noxious weeds in Colorado and ways to control them. She also talked about both beneficial and detrimental insects. She recommended using the Palisade Insectary for an organic solution. The insectary breeds and sells benign insects that prey on invasive plants.

Laurie Bathke enjoyed the Q&A time when, "People told her what their pest problems were, and we discussed what to do for them. Some use Neem oil, and I found I can buy a box of ladybugs for aphids at Eagle Crest. Afterwards we ate lunch and talked about gardening some more."



Dani answers questions about garden pests. Photo by Meg Ribotto.



From Left: Tada! Jackie Doig announces that brunch is served. Photo by Meg Ribotto.

Valley Gardeners serve themselves egg casseroles. Photo by Meg Ribotto.

Gardeners gather in the shade of tent for brunch. Photo by Lynne Uhl.



Discover the Recovery

by Meg Ribotto



Adam points out the lodge pole pine cones on a dry branch.
Photo by Lynne Uhl.

On July 24, 10 Valley Gardeners set out for the third year to learn how Basalt Mountain is recovering from the Lake Christine fire. Adam McCurdy, the Forest and Climate Director at ACES (Aspen Center for Environmental Studies) was our engaging and very knowledgeable guide. **Lynne Uhl** and I drove our 4-wheel drive vehicles up to 9,600' elevation. There is a gate there now, and from there we proceeded on foot. It was very level terrain and more of a walk than a hike. I missed the hike last year, but I did go two years ago and what a dramatic and positive change. We are now seven years out from the 2018 Lake Christine Fire.

Aspen, wildflowers and fireweed! They are all along the road on the drive up. Adam talked about fireweed, *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, a dominant species on disturbed ground. The common American name "fireweed" derives from the species' abundance as a colonizer on burnt sites after forest fires. Once established, the plants spread extensively by underground roots. An individual plant eventually forms a large patch. It plays an important role in forest reclamation. Adam also

shared some local lore. Fireweed blooms are often seen as a sign of the end of summer. As the flowers progress up the stem, blooming from the bottom to the top, they signal the gradual decline of daylight and the approaching autumn. When the blossoms reach the top of the stalk, it indicates that winter is not far off. Thankfully, I didn't see that! Lots of blooms still.

Adam focused on lodgepole pine as we wandered through the forest. Lodgepole pine, *Pinus contorta*, is a familiar species in Colorado's Rocky Mountains. It thrives in the aftermath of fire. It produces serotinous cones. They can hang on the pine tree for years and only when a fire sweeps through, melting the resin, do the heat-dependent cones open up, releasing their seeds. It allows for rapid regeneration after a fire, and lodgepole pines are one of the first trees to grow back. Serotinous was our "word of the day." Serotiny in botany means "following" or "later."

Lynne Uhl was interested in how to identify different conifers. Lodgepoles have 2" needles while other pines have different numbers and configurations of needles. Fir trees are "friendly with soft flat needles."

Susan Arenella noted, "After a fire in the forest, one of the first creatures to return is the beetle, as the bark has been burned, leaving the trees unprotected. Second is the woodpecker to drill holes in the exposed trees to allow for the 'cave dwellers' to inhabit the newly formed 'tree caves.' As the forest regains growth, wildlife returns, choosing mostly to graze on newly grown foliage."

The group went back to **Jackie Doig's** house on Missouri Heights where we ate our brown bag lunches on her back patio. She served homemade cookies, lemon bars and ice tea.



Above: Fireweed covers the burned over hillside.



Lodge pole pines begin the reforestation of the burn scar.
Photos by Meg Ribotto.



Left: The group gathers with Adam while Lynne points out a young conifer.
Photo from Lynne Uhl.



Right: Katherine Reppa noted that that burned trees eventually fall and rot providing places new life to sprout up. Photo of fallen trees by Katherine Reppa.

Where in the World At Home in Japan

by Laurie Bathke



"The first photo symbolizes Japan: Kindness, quiet, respectful, beautiful."

In May Laurie Bathke celebrated a milestone birthday at her son's home in HoJo, Japan. She sent photos describing the whole area of beautiful street views.

My son's home is a solar home, so they designed hanging equipment on the outside to dry clothes solar, and there's a wet room for their soak baths every night. There's one photo of the beautiful deck which is designed with three big planter boxes, then a big fertile garden planted out in back. They live in HoJo, an old Japanese village that has businesses like an Udon maker, local rice sales, a soy sauce maker, bakery, good local grocery, liquor, optometrist, and dentist.



Left: Laurie's son's solar house.



Right: The lush garden.



Scenes from the neighborhood.
All photos by Laurie Bathke.

The photos I'm sharing are favorites of mine. You've all seen professional gardens... so I'm showing you favorite gardens and shrines in the countryside where I visited. Kai is on Ring Ring Road in HoJo where my son and his family live. They were our guides to all these places, and many more. Ring Ring Road is the local bike path which is many miles long with blossoming trees, gardens, rice fields, breweries, and restaurants all along it, also nice bathrooms. We walked and rode bikes for enjoyable miles.



Coming Up

September 17
Sustainable Settings
Tour and Lunch

October
Garden Hardscape Basics
Preston Earth,
Sustainable Design
Sara Preston
Location TBA

November
Flower Arranging
Marti Barbor
Morgbridge Commons
Basalt

December
Holiday Luncheon
Heather's Restaurant
Basalt



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