



Late October rabbitbrush flowers fading in the Four Corners region

*Photo by Colleen Lyon*

## November 2022 Newsletter

*Edited by Colleen Lyon*

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today!

# The State of Native Plant Legislation in Colorado

By Deb Lebow Aal and Danna Liebert

In this year's Member Survey you, our members, asked how we determine whether we are making progress with changing landscapes, "one yard at a time" (that's the Wild Ones' tagline). We think it's a good question. Rather than relying on anecdotes from native plant landscapers (whose phones are ringing off the hook), Wild Ones Front Range Chapter (WOFR) board members are working to identify metrics to measure success in our region. And we've just created a WOFR Advocacy Committee for those who'd like to help with this and other policy issues (more on that in next month's newsletter). As we begin this exploration of our impact, we want to share some preliminary metrics that have us thinking we're making headway.

**What is progress?** On one hand, it seems like there are articles weekly, if not daily, in major news publications, on the need to landscape with native plants. And yet, you can walk around your neighborhood and still see one Kentucky bluegrass lawn after another, or talk to people who tell you they want to xeriscape their yard (what we think of as "ZERO-scape"). The thing about change is that it can feel like there has been no progress until you reach a tipping point, and then all of a sudden, it's happening everywhere. To people who haven't been working for years to promote the change, it will seem like the transformation came out of nowhere. This is what we hear from people who study revolutions, and it comes to mind when it feels like we are not making quick enough progress on the native plant front. So here's our short list, a baseline of sorts, of local progress (perhaps a mix of progress and missed opportunities), for reflection and encouragement as we forge ahead.

*Signs that the native plant revolution is underway on the Front Range:*

- Our WOFR chapter has grown steadily and dramatically to nearly 350 members and over 1,800 more newsletter subscribers, indicating more interest in native plant landscaping.
- Native plant sales at nurseries have increased significantly. Resource Central sold out early on the three Colorado native plant options for "Garden in a Box" offered this year. Harlequin's Gardens in Boulder was almost completely out of native plants when a few of us went in July.
- In West Washington Park, we have a neighborhood initiative to redo hell strips (the area between the sidewalk and the street, usually a dead zone of weeds or just turf), transforming them into native plant "heaven strips."\* We planted 10 of these this year, and have a waiting list of 30 for this spring. The interest was beyond our ability to keep up. This showed us the power of one motivated person, our friend Avi, who simply put up some flyers asking if anyone wanted help to transform their hell strips.



Flowers and grasses in the [native plant Garden in a Box](#) offered by Resource Central in 2022.

**What about legislation?** We see progress with the State, and Colorado municipalities,

codifying changes aimed at reducing turf grass and in some cases encouraging xeric planting in anticipation of the water shortages we are bound to face\*\* (note these are NOT native plant incentive programs). This is probably not a comprehensive list of all the legislation in the state, but it's a start.

- Colorado passed a statewide [turf replacement bill](#) in 2022, which is scheduled to have turf replacements in place by July of 2023 and will have wide implications.
- Many Colorado municipalities already have turf replacement programs in place or programs that ban new turf grass. Boulder, Castle Rock, Fort Collins, Highlands Ranch (and Centennial Water and Sanitation District), Lafayette, Louisville, Thornton, and Westminster have turf replacement programs. Noticeably missing is Denver, although the state-wide program will include Denver, of course.
- [Fort Collins' turf replacement program](#) gives additional rebates for turf replaced with 80 percent or more native plants.
- Aurora recently [banned turf grass](#) for new developments and banned new golf courses.
- Castle Rock is banning traditional grass turf in front yards of new homes and offering developers steep fee discounts for water saving "[Coloradoscaping](#)" yards. We do love the term "Coloradoscaping" and hope it catches on.
- Arvada is more than doubling homebuilders' water and sewer connection fees to \$54,000 and sharply raising utility rates. However, the city so far hasn't wanted to implement a turf ban, which is hard to understand given impending water issues, and criticism that these connection fees will just result in more expensive housing.

While this is all great news, nowhere in any of this legislation other than Fort Collins (from what we've read so far) is there encouragement to plant native Colorado plants. This is a problem and clearly more needs to be done to address it. We have to broaden the understanding of the difference between xeric and native plantings, and we need more incentives for people to want to plant native plants, not just xeric plants. In addition, we must have access to more native plant options at more nurseries.



Photo source: Western Resource Advocates, "Financing the Future: How to Pay for Turf Replacement in Colorado"

Although we are seeing both bottom-up and top-down progress, the pace of "one yard at a time" seems too slow when there is still so much more room for advocacy. We need to continue to talk up native plant landscapes, and help our neighbors and communities understand their importance. Again, stay tuned for more information we'll be sharing soon on advocating to your city councils and state representatives in a new upcoming section of our newsletter focused on advocacy.

\* Check out "[Plant An Oasis](#)" to see what we're doing about hell strips in West Washington Park.

*\*\* These municipal programs can be incredibly successful - Las Vegas' "Cash for Grass" program has reduced residential drinking water use (yes, using water that meets drinking water standards to hydrate outdoor landscapes - a whole different topic for discussion) by a remarkable [19-21 percent](#).*

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## Chapter Updates

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### **The Member Survey and 2023 Focus Areas**

A few months ago we sent out a survey to find out what you, our members, wanted from our chapter. Thank you so much for taking the time to fill out the survey. We've listened, and our chapter focus for the coming year will change, based on your input. We hear that you want practical programs that will empower you to confidently landscape with Colorado native plants in your own yards. Many of you also want to learn how to spur change on a larger level, from your HOAs to your city and state legislatures. Topics that you have expressed interest in include:

- Landscaping for pollinators and wildlife
- Colorado native plant design and installation
- Weed management
- Native plants and climate change
- Propagation from seed
- Lawn transformation
- Native landscaping policy advocacy

In response, one of our focus areas in 2023 will be to reorganize our website so that our native landscaping how-to resources are easier to access. Similarly, our programs and newsletter content will reflect practical tips and techniques to support your journey in converting turf to native habitat.

We also heard that you are interested in forming more connections with members local to your part of the Front Range. You crave the support and friendship of fellow members who are considering a project similar to yours, or who have already planted a native landscape with wisdom to share. As a result, another 2023 priority will be for us to create four regional teams that can organize casual Member Meetups - check out the Get Involved section below if you are interested!

### **Members: Your Vote Counts!**

Watch for an email about casting votes for our chapter's 2023 Board Members. Voting will take place from November 16 to November 30.

### **National Recognition of Chapter Members**

*Wild Ones National Journal* - WOFR member Vicki Saragoussi Philips authored an [article](#) in this quarter's *Wild Ones National Journal*, focused on engaging children with the natural world (see page 13 of the Journal). Thanks, Vicki, for putting some of our chapter's immense talent in the national journal.

*Wild Ones Annual Photo Contest* - Congratulations to WOFR member Neil Bringe for winning second place in the Scenery Category of the national [Wild Ones 2022 Annual](#)



Photo by WOFR Member Neil Bringe

## Plant Spotlight

### ***Baby Blue Rabbitbrush***



Baby blue rabbitbrush across the seasons. Photos courtesy of Plant Select.

Rabbitbrush doesn't get its full due. It is gorgeous when most of your garden has finished inspiring, and it's bustling with insects looking for late season nectar at this time of year. Some people don't like how rangy large rabbitbrush can get (see our cover picture), and for them, this dense and compact dwarf version is perfect. It adds interest in every season, especially late summer and autumn, when its bright yellow flowers (that can be used as a natural dye) ignite an otherwise fading landscape - in bloom, this shrub looks especially spectacular when grounded near and complementing (dare one say rivaling) the golden shimmer of cottonwood, ash, and aspen above.

Here is the WOFR [plant data sheet](#) for Baby Blue rabbitbrush or Dwarf Blue rabbitbrush (also known as Chamisa), or its official name, *Ericameria nauseous* var. *nauseous* (formerly *Chrysothamnus nauseous* var. *nauseous*) - an important plant for the Front Range ecosystem. It is on the [Recommended Plant List](#) for the City of Fort Collins' Nature in the

City and Xeriscape Incentive Programs, which notes that Baby Blue rabbitbrush is an important larval and adult food host for many of our native invertebrates.

## Get Involved

### Join Our Team!

WOFR is 100 percent volunteer run, including an unpaid board of directors who manage our operations. We have added nearly 100 new members this year and we need to expand our volunteers to support our growth and deliver quality programs. Please consider taking an active role to help our chapter thrive. It is a great way to be part of a like-minded community working for change that can really make a difference - and having fun along the way. You do NOT have to be an expert on Colorado native plants. You can be learning, like most of us. Here are some specific areas in which we need volunteers:



### Volunteer Positions

- *Regional Team Members* - We need your help to create Regional Teams of members in Denver, Northern Colorado, Southern Colorado, and Boulder County. Each team will work with our programming committee to set up casual meetups among members in your area. These can be anything from a happy hour to a member garden check-in, where you can learn from each other, offer advice, and have fun. If you're interested, please email [fronrangewildones@gmail.com](mailto:fronrangewildones@gmail.com).
- *Programming Committee Members* - Would you enjoy planning virtual programs and working with regions to coordinate in person Member meetups? If so, our Programming Committee is seeking new members! Please email us at [fronrangewildones@gmail.com](mailto:fronrangewildones@gmail.com).
- *Board Secretary* - We are seeking nominations for the Board Secretary position in 2023. The Secretary is the record keeper for the chapter, summarizing key decisions and next steps discussed during our monthly board meetings. If you are organized, detail oriented, and interested in helping us drive our mission, please consider sharing your interest so we may discuss further. The secretary is a member of our Board of Directors, but prior board experience is not required. Please email us if you are interested.
- *Newsletter Columnists* - We are redesigning our newsletter and need more people to help with content development in standard columns that will most likely include a plant spotlight; member, volunteer, or garden spotlight; chapter updates; advocacy in action; and a feature article likely on one of the topics mentioned above or on one of our toolkit fact sheets (currently under development). We are One of the most refreshing and powerful ways to advocate important issues is through story. we can inform and inspire each other with our own native plant passion and experience "one yard at time."e open to other ideas. If you enjoy writing, and would like to manage one of our columns, we'd like to hear from you. Please email us at

## Share Your Garden

We are excited to feature more WOFR member gardens in our upcoming newsletters. If you're growing Colorado native plants, please consider sharing your garden with us (photos, observations, musings, trials and tribulations) via this [submission form](#). There is also opportunity here for WOFR member submissions to be featured in the Wild Ones National Journal. One of the most refreshing and powerful ways to advocate important issues is through story. By sharing yours, we can inform and inspire each other with our collective native plant passion and experience "one yard at time."

COMMUNITY FIRST  
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COLORADO  
GIVES  
DAY   
Corporate Partner

December 6, 2022

### Colorado Gives Day starts today!

Wild Ones is participating in the highly recognized and reliable statewide funding campaign (November 1 - December 6). Your kind donations will help us continue to provide educational programs, hands-on gardening tools and advocate for changing our Front Range landscapes into diverse and sustainable native habitats. Look for emails mid-November or better yet, [start the donation process now!](#)

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## Upcoming Events

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***Important notice: We announce many of our events to members first, as our events are popular and sell out fast. So, if you are not a member, please consider becoming one!***

### Colorado Landscape Summit – Transformative Change for a Resilient Future

November 9, 2022

9:00 am – 4:30 pm

Metro State University of Denver, Tivoli Turnhall  
900 Auraria Parkway, Denver

While this is not a Wild Ones event, we encourage our audience to attend this free summit, sponsored by the Colorado Water Conservation Board, exploring the future of Colorado's landscapes. We need a loud voice advocating for native plants. Let's fill that hall with as many native plant lovers as we can!

Click [here to register](#).

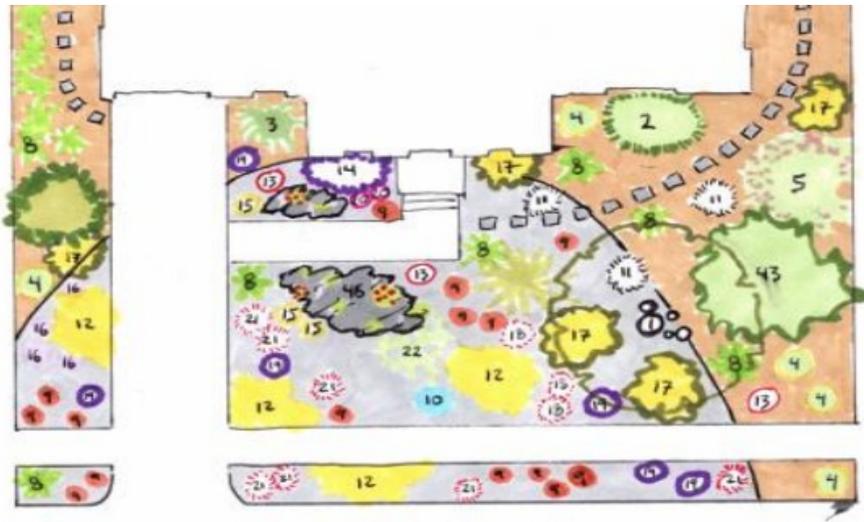
### Colorado Native Landscape Design with Kenton Seth

November 30, 2022

6:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Join Colorado landscape designer Kenton Seth as he discusses native landscape design. Kenton will share his process in creating the "Denver/Front Range Native Landscape Design" for Wild Ones as well as elements of his design style. Kenton will walk participants through his approach to bridging existing site conditions to a desired outcome, including sharing some design inspirations.

Click [here to register](#).



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*We love to hear from you! If you would like to comment on anything in this newsletter or write an article, please send your comments or ideas to [FrontRangeWildOnes@gmail.com](mailto:FrontRangeWildOnes@gmail.com).*

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