



December Plant Spotlight: *Fallugia paradoxa* (Apache Plume). Photo credit: Conservation Garden Park

December 2022 Newsletter

Edited by Colleen Lyon

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Colorado Gives Day is TODAY!

Climate Change is real. One powerful way to heal our soil and landscape is to take action.

Join us in transforming our private and public gardens into diverse sustainable native landscapes. As demonstrated by these monthly newsletters, Wild Ones does this:

- We provide expert educational programs
- We host seed and plant swaps
- We have do-it yourself gardening resources
- We have a collective group of committed volunteers who run everything!

We need your help! Please support our vital work with a contribution to Wild Ones.



YOUR SUPPORT WILL GO FURTHER!

Every gift made TODAY before midnight earns Wild Ones Front Range a dollar boost from the \$1.4 Million Incentive Fund.

[DONATE NOW!](#)

Gratitude can transform any situation - so thank you to those who have already contributed.

From Seeds to Seedlings

By Jen Smith

Seed Swap update. Thanks to everyone who came out to the Seed Swap events in Denver, Colorado Springs, and Fort Collins! Swap attendance was double last year's, and we had more seeds at the end than when we started due to so many of your generous donations.



Northern Colorado Seed Swap



Denver Seed Swap

Germination. Now that you have all of these native seeds, you may be wondering how to transform these into plants? You can start by becoming familiar with the Wild Ones Front Range Chapter's [Germination Guide for Native Seeds](#), authored by member Jan Midgely. In this guide, Jan outlines recommended germination techniques and difficulty level for an extensive list of native species.

Propagation. From there, you can refer to the [Native Plant Propagation page](#) on our website. Here you will find various ways to sow seeds, including scattering them during a snowstorm, creating mini-greenhouses out of Ziplock bags (be sure to view the fabulous how-to video by member Jen Frazer!), and sowing them outdoors in trays. Just pick a method that feels do-able for you, and treat it as a fun science experiment.



Speaking of experiments, last winter member Brian Rasmussen decided to sow three seed species that are native to his area in two different soil mixes and compare results (*Eriogonum umbellatum*, *Heliomeris multiflora* and *Penstemon virens*). For each seed, he sowed the left side of the flat in Black Gold Seedling Mix and the right side in a homemade native soil mix. The pictures below show that his homemade native soil mix was the clear winner! Learn more details about Brian's method on the [Native Plant Propagation page](#) and see if it inspires you to try germinating in your own native soil mix.



Want to learn even more about native plant propagation? Wild Ones Front Range chapter members are welcome to join our propagation committee. This group meets monthly to discuss propagation techniques and develops best practices to share with our membership (it's a lot of hands-on fun as shown in the photo below). To join, [email us](#) with your interest.



Plant Spotlight

Apache Plume



Photo credits (left to right): W.D. and Dolphia Bransford, Campbell and Lynn Loughmiller, and Thomas Muller, all courtesy of Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center

One of the showiest native shrubs on Colorado's front range is Apache Plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*). It has a wild look about it, and can get rather rangy if untended, but that, we think, contributes to its beauty. It is extremely drought tolerant, with white flowers in the spring, but what it is best known for is its pink seed clusters which appear once the flowers are finished. These gorgeous seed pods last for quite a long time, typically from May through September. This shrub likes full sun, so plant on your south or west side, where your soil drains well, but somewhere where you can see it, as it attracts a wide variety of bees and butterflies. Some say this plant is firewise also, although you must still be careful not to plant this beautiful native shrub too close to buildings.

Laurel Starr



Laurel Starr (right) with Garima Fox (left) of Rocky Mountain Botanical Gardens

Laurel brings her energy and passion to the Wild Ones Front Range Chapter as a volunteer on our Programming Committee. She prefers contributing in a variety of ways, including moderating virtual webinars, organizing garden tours, and leading field trips. When asked about her experience volunteering with the Programming Committee, Laurel said, "I was initially worried that I lacked the skill set. (But) I enjoy working with others to help bring educational opportunities via Zoom talks and garden tours to Wild Ones Front Range members. I (have) met wonderful people, made new friends and encourage others to take the plunge and volunteer."

Laurel has also advocated for the creation of Golden, Colorado's first pesticide-free park and leading volunteers in organic weed maintenance in the park's native grass turf. We asked Laurel how her pilot organic park project came into existence so that her work could serve as a model for WOFR members who want to influence their city to landscape with more CO native plants. Here is Laurel's story:

I had been looking for a way to "move the needle" with regard to reducing pesticide use and increasing biodiversity for years. An opportunity arose in 2019 when our city council invited public comment on their drafted Strategic Action Plan. I sent in my thoughts on reducing pesticide use and planting more native plants to enrich biodiversity. To my surprise, I received an immediate response from my city councilperson for whom reducing pesticide use was a personal issue because of a childhood experience of Acute Pesticide Exposure that had landed her in the hospital. She encouraged me to build public support, and asked me to find examples of communities which had had success managing parks without pesticides.

I built a case with resources from Beyond Pesticides (BP), a national nonprofit, and the citizen group Non Toxic Communities, and pointed to Boulder, which has had pesticide-free parks since the 1990's. BP has resources to train city park personnel in organic management, and they partner with Natural Grocers, who have raised over 250K to help communities transition to organic parks. This councilperson and I had a meeting with the

head of Golden's Parks department. He was receptive to the idea but didn't have the staff for the manual weeding that would be necessary to manage turf organically. Parks agreed to a plan for DeLong Park which would make the turf area amenable to a transition to organic management in the future, if so desired.

I also presented arguments for organic park management at Parks Advisory Board meetings. At the critical moment when city council was going to vote on contract bids for DeLong Park, an influential person in my community wrote to City Council and the mayor demanding that the vote be postponed until the option of making the park pesticide free had been fully explored. Her letter brought the subject to the attention of the entire council, and they all thought it was a good idea! Next thing we knew the head of our Parks department was also onboard with creating a pesticide free park! DeLong opened in June 2022. It is just under one acre in size. It has a turf area, a playground and a natural area which was seeded with CO native grasses. Once the weeds are better under control, we hope to introduce more native forbs.

Understanding Park's staffing issues, I volunteered to create a group who would manually weed to take the place of using pesticide to manage weeds. This is how Weed Busters began. To get the word out about our existence, I created a Facebook page and NextDoor group but didn't reach many interested people. The city helped by advertising Weed Busters on their social media platforms. We also got a list of Golden members of the People and Pollinators Action Network (PPAN). PPAN also broadcasted my invitation to join and put a link on their website to "volunteer in Golden!" One of our members also advertised Weed Busters in the League of Women Voters newsletter. We met weekly throughout the growing season last summer and are currently working on park signage that will state that the park is pesticide free and invite people to get involved with the Weed Busters. If any WOFR members are interested in joining, please [send us an email](#) to get on our mailing list and be notified of social events and park weeding dates starting next Spring. If we can build a substantial group of volunteers, we hope that Golden's Parks Department will transition additional neighborhood parks to organic management.



[News article and video featuring Laurel's advocacy work!](#)

Advocacy News and Action

Colorado Landscaping Summit Recap

By Danna Liebert

Thanks to Jenifer S. Heath and Barney White for contributing to this piece.

On November 9, The Colorado Water Conservation Board hosted an all-day "Colorado Landscaping Summit" to discuss the implementation of Colorado's Turf Replacement Bill, HB22-1151, and outdoor water conservation strategies being used in different cities. While native plants were mentioned, there was little talk about the importance of promoting them

in the rollout of HB22-1151. One notable exception was Scott Winter, a panelist from Colorado Springs Water Authority who said, “it’s as important what we are putting in as what we are taking out.” He advocated for using native grasses as an alternative to turfgrass, and as living mulch; better integrating stormwater management into public landscaping; rethinking what trees we plant; landscaping to reflect our front range ecology; and (as if this list wasn’t enough music to the ears of any WOFR member), he also said that artificial turf and replacing turf with rock on top of landscape fabric were pet peeves of his!

Here are some takeaways from the day. For more info, you can watch a recording of the [summit](#).

- Through Colorado’s Turf Replacement Bill, HB22-1151, a total of **\$1.5 million will be distributed over two cycles**, with annual allocations of \$550K to help fund existing turf replacement programs + \$200k to support the development of new turf replacement programs ([learn more here](#)).
- **Incentives and restrictions** - Lindsay Rogers from Western Resources (WR) said WR was aware of 22 cities/water providers that offer turf replacement incentives (giving \$1-2 per square foot), and 10 water providers with turf limits for new development, as of last summer. Implementing landscape codes that limit the installation of turf in new development and medians is the most cost-effective way for cities to reduce water use.
- It was acknowledged that although funding turf replacement is — from a municipal cost-benefit perspective — one of the most expensive water conservation investments for cities, **we need to find ways to quantify the financial value of the many additional environmental benefits of turf replacement** (supporting biodiversity, reducing pesticide use, stormwater management, sequestering carbon, eliminating the labor and carbon footprint of mowing, etc.)
- **Irrigation efficiency is another very cost-effective water conservation measure** (fixing irrigation leaks, installing more efficient irrigation systems, and simply educating people about irrigation scheduling since many people overwater). “Replacing the grass doesn’t stop the sprinkler head from leaking.”
- There is a **need for training landscapers designers, architects, and irrigation professionals** to design, build and maintain water efficient landscapes of the future. Western Resources is working on a report about landscape and irrigation certification programs for landscape professionals. CO has no required certification, 10 other states do.
- **Equity issues were discussed** in light of the fact that turf replacement incentives are mainly used by people in higher socioeconomic groups. Speakers suggested funding public projects in underserved areas where people spend time, supporting low-income water customers who have abandoned landscapes, and investing in indoor retrofits that would allow people to invest in their landscapes. Some cities offer higher rebates for Garden in a Boxes for income qualified residents (\$100/box vs \$25/box).
- **Denver will be rolling out a new turf policy**. Denver Parks and Recreation will be replacing non-functional turf in parks and tracking a number of metrics including biodiversity. Denver has 75 million sf of turf that needs to be replaced over time! DPR wants to “show the public what this looks like and that you can balance functional use with supporting biodiversity.”
- Colorado Springs’ water authority is working on a **manual that will identify CO native grass best practices**.
- **Garden in a Box** - Kate Larson from Resource Central (RC), said RC is trying to move towards a fully native plant selection for their Garden in a Box, and they are now at 80% (although I don’t know if RC is defining “native” as CO, regional, or North America). The #1 reason people say they buy the Garden in a Box is to save water, and the #2 reason is supporting pollinators. RC's DIY homeowners spend, on

average, \$2/square foot on turf replacement.

- The “**CO Best Practices Guidebook**” for municipal water providers is being updated and will include more of a focus on reducing outdoor landscape water use and “Coloradoscaping” (although a definition for this new term wasn’t clearly defined as using plants native to Colorado).

If you would like to write or contribute to this column, please [email Danna Liebert](#).

Get Involved

Call for Photos!

We are excited to feature more WOFR member gardens in our upcoming newsletters (design; insect habitation and pollination in action; early, mid, late season bloomers, etc.). If you're growing Colorado native plants, please consider sharing your garden photos with us 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."



Member Volunteer Positions

Check out the [volunteer section of our website](#) to learn more about the following positions and opportunities below!

- Advocacy Committee
 - Newsletter Committee
 - Programming Committee
 - Propagation Committee
 - Toolkit Committee
 - Volunteer Coordinator
-

Upcoming Events

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!

Member Meeting & Propagation Panel

Wednesday January 18, 2023

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Join us for a free members-only meeting in January to discuss chapter accomplishments and priorities for 2023. Then some of our members will host a propagation panel to share their tips

and techniques for propagating native plants. Come with your questions and let's have fun propagating over the winter!

Members will be notified via email when registration opens by mid December. Not yet a member? [Join today!](#)

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.

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