

forest of trees and garden foods, we heroically work to protect our local ponderosa forests and focus our efforts in a specific garden area and optimize the decay process to get our garden-specific humus, the ready soil, in a faster time frame. We can dramatically speed up the process and increase production in a wood chip Back to Eden garden, using chipped pine needles, chipping leaves, twigs, branches, and logs for the natural set of components that have the optimal connection to the breakdown for humus.

Once the whole pile has gone through the chipper a couple of times, it gives good diversity and is easy to use. Just put it over the ground at least 3 to 4 inches thick. I still cringe when I see the huge numbers of bagged pine needles and leaves that could create a wonder-

ful garden right in place. Experts from Back to Eden gardening traditions say we can just chop up the leaves, run the lawnmower over it or stick the weed eater into a barrel of leaves and needles to create the mulch, the black gold that makes soil so powerful and magical to grow things.

But the removal of the naturally dropped nutrients is robbery to the forest floor food bank. The trees need their natural food to thrive and withstand life's stressors. Commonly, after removing the real soil food mulch from the land, people buy chemicals to put on the earth to "fix it" or fix what was ruined, but relearning how to leave it alone, organic and safe is a growing trend.

In nature, the materials layer themselves as they fall to the ground,

beginning their process so that we have plenty of oxygen to create the decomposition of materials and thereby our sweet smelling, forest soil. If we mix the ingredients, they become acidic and may become anerobic, which gets slimy, foul and won't become productive soil. With the wood chips, there are small and large pieces. The small pieces decompose faster, while the larger ones are slower to deteriorate but they hold water better for the process, thereby complementing the small pieces as all the materials decay in due time.

The best soil makers break down the materials into the humus, and we rely on fungi for that. Fungi are known as the teeth of the forest. A thick wood chip mulch will bring in fungi and create a fungal-dominated soil, beloved by big food forest trees and woody

species. Some "experts" try to say that wood chips are a fire hazard, but wood chips are actually masters at moving and holding water. Just like trees, the wood chips can hold, store and release the water. While science experts do their work in controlled environments, they relate that information, but out in nature the answers are quite different, and investigating this humus creation relationship for the ultimate eco-protection is a worthy effort.

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### Art Matters

## Local art: for a big kick out of the most beautiful of small artworks



By Janet Sellers

While making the rounds on Small Business Saturday, I spoke with Wendy Ledsham and Dayna Morgan when I visited Monument's new Gallery 132. They were making their artwork and tending the store. The gallery is an artist co-op for paintings, glass work, metal works, jewelry and other objet d'art—even the art of chocolate truffles! Ledsham makes mandalas in paint onto a variety of objects. At the time we spoke she was putting colors onto glass holiday ornaments, in detailed myriad dots that remind me of the movement of stars in the sky. She had a set of tools just for making the size of tiny dots and dipped the nibs into the various paints and onto the glass.

Morgan, a retired IT pro, has been making jewelry and beadwork for quite some time and creates abstract, free-form medallions for necklaces in precious metal clay and beadwork. She has a showcase at the gallery and enjoys sharing her knowledge of her craft to visitors when she is at the gallery. We talked of her love of art, Southwestern spirit trees and stone sites, and her beloved horses, and we plan to go see some sacred art in the form of Ute Spirit

Trees very soon. It's always intriguing to me the way our local sacred art of Spirit Trees inspires so many people. The ancient sacred artform is precious and a natural treasure of our rare yet very local ethnoecology history, and the contemporary awareness to protect these is growing, which is also good to see.

While many think of the jumpstart of holiday fun as beginning in late November, the annual Small Business Saturday "shop small" campaign is still powerful for December, too. According to American Express, founder of Small Business Saturday in 2010: "The benefits of Small Business Saturday reach beyond just one day. According to this year's Small Business Saturday Consumer Insights Survey, 84 percent of consumers who are aware of Small Business Saturday said the day makes them want to Shop Small all year long, not just during the holiday season!"

Southwinds Fine Art Gallery, another local gallery with a group of artists, will hold a holiday art show and sale the weekend of Dec. 8 and 9. This show will focus on small works, just right for gifts and intimate spots for office or home. The small works of art

or groupings can liven up any space. There will be paintings, glasswork, jewelry, greeting cards, as well as aerial works. Some art with a holiday theme will be available for those who like to put up holiday art beyond mere decor, and lots of art for everyday enjoyment.

Southwinds has nine local artists, and the recent shows and sales have been well-attended on the artist reception evenings (for December it is Dec. 8, 4 to 8 p.m.) and on the Saturday sale days. The gallery has been at its site on the corner of Baptist and Rollercoaster Roads for nearly two decades. Just remember to look carefully for this spacious art wonderland—it is beautifully nestled in the Black Forest and surrounded thickly with ponderosa pine. It is very conveniently located close to Fox Run Park, so when you are out and about, drop by and say hello to the artists and enjoy the art on the show dates, or you can visit by appointment.

#### December art events

**Bella Art and Frame Gallery**, showcasing member artists all month, 183 Washington St., Monument.

**Gallery 132**, local artisan cooperative, has events Saturday, Dec. 2, for Small Town Christmas, with vio-

linist Michelle Edwards 11 a.m.-1 p.m. with a butterfly pinning demo by Steve Fisher 1-2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 9, Ice Carving demo at 11:30 a.m. 251 Front St., Suite 8, Monument.

**Southwinds Fine Art Gallery**, spectacular and small works art show and sale Dec. 8 and 9. Public artist reception with goodies Dec. 8, 4-8 p.m., Dec. 9 meet the artists 10-4 p.m. 16575 Rollercoaster Rd., Colorado Springs.

**Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts**, annual member and resident artist show through Dec. 30, 304 Highway 105, Palmer Lake. The next call for Artists: Visions of Light photography show, early deadline is Dec. 18. View website for details: [www.TriLakesArts.org](http://www.TriLakesArts.org).

**Holiday Pop Up Shops**—they really do just "pop up" impromptu so keep a look out! Did you miss any? Just see Facebook: "local holiday pop up shops" for the Tri-Lakes area.

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**Above:** Pop-up shops are notable for their ability to be more personal and unique than big-box commerce, and usually pop-ups are unannounced as a local fun surprise store. Like a trunk show in a storefront, the new venue style is popular nationwide for optimizing spaces and offering new or unique products. This pop-up shop with local coffee purveyor Lynae Thompson, with hostess gifts and holiday gift baskets, was featured during Small Business weekend at Bella Art and Frame Gallery, and will return often this season. Get the scoop on the last-minute pop-ups online with Facebook by searching "local holiday pop up shops." *Photo by Janet Sellers.*



**Above:** Artists Wendy Ledsham, left, and Dayna Morgan enjoy their time making art and visiting with guests at Gallery 132. The artists are part of a group of artists in the cooperative, located in the Historic Monument area. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*