

Consider the yellow warbler that nests here. It leaves en masse to fly from as far south as Panama to as far north as Alaska. This beautiful bright lemon-yellow bird will arrive at the southern border of the United States in early April. Males fly separately from females and arrive earlier to establish territories. In El Paso County, the male yellow warblers arrive in early May, and by early June pairs are nesting.

### Do birds migrate to the same location?

Many birds return to the same nesting areas while others fly to different regions. For years, we observed a pair of broad-tail hummingbirds nesting in the same scrub oak. We always assumed that it was the same family but we had no way of knowing. Bird banding programs have made it possible to track the movement of specific birds and have indicated that some birds do return to the same location. Banding, along with other methods, indicate that many

species have expanded their range and breeding areas are changing. Wild fires, habitat loss, and changes in climate are all thought to be influences on species expansion. More research is needed to determine the effect range change will have on bird populations.

### What methods are used to track bird migration?

For centuries, ornithology has been a field of study at many major universities around the world. As with any science, methods are tested and retested, and with new information our knowledge expands. Today, as technology evolves, new methods of tracking migration are emerging, and the following are but a few examples.

Free cellphone apps like Ebird, Audubon Birds, and other similar apps are a birder's new best friend. They are used to both record and find the exact location and time that birds have been observed. Both experienced and casual

birders alike use these apps and report findings. Information is gathered and recorded daily. They already have enhanced our knowledge of bird movement.

Radar aeroecology is an emerging science being tested at the University of Oklahoma to track animal migration. It integrates atmospheric science with earth science, geography, and engineering to investigate the location and movement of animals. The same radar systems that scan the atmosphere to monitor weather and track aircraft also contain signals from other sources, including birds that show up as tiny specks on the radar.

It is with great pleasure that I return to *OCN* after a three-year absence to write about a subject that is near and dear to my heart. I enjoy hearing from readers, so please contact me with questions, to report the birds you see, or just say hi.

*Elizabeth Hacker can be reached at elizabethhacker@ocn.me.*

## High Altitude Nature and Gardens (HANG)

# Forest wisdom: a gardening guide for what to plant and when

By Janet Sellers

In Tri-Lakes, we live in forest habitat—that is why we came here. Our local ponderosa forests have more than an abundance of life and critters and their sustenance all living harmoniously within them. Native peoples enjoyed this abundance of gourmet foods, each food having its time and place as the sun moved the seasons along. Below I will list not only what the forest naturally provides for us to eat, but also how the forest and Mother Nature advise us about what and when to plant other common stuff we are used to having for food.

### Microclimates on the Front Range

Here's the reason we pay attention to what is already here and thriving in place. Our microclimates along the Front Range provide the rich sources of support for our indigenous plants and their seasons of emergence, fruition, and the ever-important decay preparation cycles. Each tiny area—and it can be in the same home garden or down the street or down the mountain—has its warm, cold, moist, or dry air flow, often changing hour to hour. The forest has adapted to this clime with vigor, creating its own health and habitat of tree canopy and forest floor with symbiotic relationships.

The decay cycle prepares the soil floor for the upcoming year, and that is done in the winter when most of us think the Earth is sleeping or dead. The truth is, it is a vital part of a healthy habitat cycle. With only growth, there is no decay upon which to feed the growth. With only decay, there is no growth and ongoing habitat. All our lives depend on the cycles.

The forest provides plenty of food for its inhabitants, many of which we all know about and consume. Just think of berries or asparagus; morel, porcini and chanterelle mushrooms; and our protein- and mineral-rich dandelions—even early cattail stems are delicacies! If you are ever lost in the woods or just hankering for some easy pickings, the forest has millions of years' experience of palatable provisions if you just know where to look. Caveat: Check out the Colorado Mycological Society for updates and information. Be safe! There are plant and 'shroom imposters that are deadly.

Most of us have a garden because we like planning, planting, and watching it grow, and eat the food from it. I love the food from my garden beds, but truth be told, I have a dark secret: I do not get much from just throwing a seed in or planting a plant. A prepared raised bed is required to succeed, lined with a one-fourth-inch metal mesh of some sort to deter underground pests but keep the underground life involved.

### Gardening timetable

Our spring weather is goofy and unpredictable for us humans, but we can observe the forest and nature for its clues on having a food garden that is familiar to us. Many locals have tried and failed at having a common kitchen garden, but there is hope for an easy, successful kitchen gourmet garden on the deck, in the windowsill, and even outside in glorious, changeable Colorado weather. Here's a step-by-step guide for planting vegetables using the wisdom of nature:

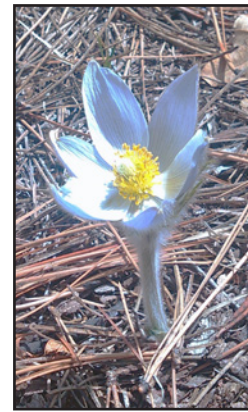
1. Pasque flowers tell us when we can start seeds indoors.

2. Plant peas when the daffodils bloom or when spring peepers (frogs) sing.
3. Plant cool-weather spring veggies when dandelions are in bloom or the lilacs have leafed out.
4. Plant bush beans and summer squash when the lilac flowers have faded
5. Transplant tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant when the bearded iris is in bloom.

*Janet Sellers is an enthusiast for nature and organic gardening, and welcomes your handy hints at janetsellers@ocn.me. Also, visit Facebook.com/MonumentCommunityGarden for videos, articles, and more about high-altitude nature and gardening.*

**Right:** Look but don't touch:

The pasque flower, genus *pulsatilla*, is possibly the earliest flower to bloom in the Tri-Lakes area and is so named because it blooms in spring near the Passover/Easter holiday season. Some people say it looks like a fuzzy purple crocus flower. The plant has a medicinal use history but it is highly toxic, just like tulips and other garden flowers. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*



## Art Matters

# The ancient legacy of art in Tri-Lakes

By Janet Sellers

*"All art that is worthwhile is a record of intense life ..."*—  
Robert Henri

It may surprise you that some of the finest records of intense life in art and imagination exists in the rocks and ponderosa modified trees that we can see close by our homes here in the *Our Community News* readership area. Ancient history as a moniker denotes a mere several thousand years before our time, while the Native Americans in our area are known to have been here for over 12,000 years.

Naturally occurring trees and rocks with artful, almost magical forms in them have been appreciated by humans for millennia as divine, sacred natural forms because of their mystery, beauty, and obvious figurative forms. The confirmed Culturally Modified Trees (CMT) we see living right here in our area are of course made with human intelligence applied to nature, are known as sacred spirit trees, and are highly revered as natural artforms by the admiring public.

The hundreds, more likely thousands, of years of outdoor art in our local area via our figurative rock formations and forests with sacred spirit trees are testaments to life and a memorial to our ancestors who lived here. Our willingness to protect these natural treasures and living forest treasures as well as bring in contemporary art to enjoy in town reflects who we are now. Most of us have seen Elephant Rock, but I've also seen bear rock formations, portrait rocks, turtle rocks and living trees with mysterious animal forms in them here. Once you see the forms in the rocks and trees, they are unmistakable. We have found rock formations with Eocene epoch turtle fossils, too.

Most of our CMT were made by those who lived here long before the likes of Spanish explorers Cortes and Balboa (a tree in Black Forest bears an arborglyph, aka tree picture, of a conquistador complete with helmet), before

George Washington crossed the Delaware, before Thomas Jefferson built Monticello, and before Ben Franklin put a key on a kite string.

The makers of the spirit trees way back when are now the ancestors, as we will become the ancestors to our future generations. What amazing imaginations the Native Americans had of life and love to create living art forms, knowing they will be seen and imagined and remembered—or at least wondered about—by their families down the line. That makes not only for an understanding of the longevity of human imagination and creativity, but also of the shortness of our personal lives. Thankfully, those of us who live here now are included in the creative benefits from that hard work and love put into modifying the trees. Their art is the human touch in nature that bears witness to humanity centuries ago.

No brick and mortar memorial will bring you the image of the conditions in the rich mountain forest life of our first peoples here. You can only know it by seeing authentic nature, trees, rock formations, and more in their original authentic space, with the authentic elements. What happened in the mountains and forests is beyond our imagination, yet we have a beautiful reminder of the early peoples who had such great forethought and foresight to the future. Protecting these live art forms can bring us closer to the people, the history, the legacy, and the love these art forms bring down to us through the ages.

We can go outdoors with family and friends and embrace the fine weather as it shows up, and appreciate these treasures in person. The CMT were created hundreds of years ago (ponderosa live up to 800 years) with a great love in mind for those who would follow as descendants and their future, too. They are a memorial of the ancestors who walked these forests, enjoyed the trees, flowers and vistas,

the sights and smells and sounds of the forests just as we do now. We walk amid our ancient history when we walk through our forests, just as they did, friends and family together.

### Art Hop and other exhibits

In addition to the historic art forms of the trees and rock formations, we have some contemporary art to enjoy, and it's all over town, especially starting in May with our annual Art Hop season.

The Art Hop starts May 18. Each summer for over a decade, local merchants from the towns of Palmer Lake and Monument host for us the local art and artists at their venues with refreshments and live music. Join the fun, support the arts and buy sculpture, paintings, jewelry, pottery and more. The Art Hop runs from 5 to 8 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month, May through October.

In June, the upcoming 2017-18 Tri-Lakes Views outdoor art exhibition will be on view. Many thanks to the efforts of the Tri-Lakes Views group and to the artists who made the sculptures for our enjoyment. A map of the exhibit locations is forthcoming this summer.

Bella Art and Frame Gallery offers a photography show by Kim McFadden-Effinger, through May 26. Artist reception May 18 at the gallery, 183 Washington, Monument.

Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts (TLCA) offers the Predictions and Perceptions exhibit through June 2; Delicate Balance sculpture exhibit by Reven Marie Swansen through June 2, Lucy Owens Gallery. TLCA, 304 Highway 105, Palmer Lake.

*Janet Sellers is a local artist, writer and teacher. Her paintings and sculptures are exhibited in Colorado and California cities, galleries, and museums, as well as in private collections. You can reach her at janetsellers@ocn.me*

