

days, with temperatures right around normal—in the 30s and 40s. However, a major pattern change was taking shape to our north, as very cold air directly from the Polar region was building and moving south. This cold air mass began to affect the region during the afternoon and evening of the 7th. However, for the first few days, the cold air was fairly shallow, only reaching to about 6,000 feet in elevation.

This developed a relatively unusual situation for us on top of the Palmer Divide, where the cold air could not reach up to us, but instead kept the lower elevations locked in the cold. This is known as a temperature inversion and occurs when cold air is below warm.

This pattern held for several days, with the depth of the cold air increasing slightly each night, then retreating back to the lower elevations during the day. A good example of this was on the 8th, when the cold air briefly moved into the Palmer Divide, quickly dropping temperatures into the single digits, with low clouds and flurries from around 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. Then, as the depth of the cold air lessened, warmer westerly winds kicked in and our temperatures jumped into the 40s in only a few hours.

At the same time, where the cold air hung on, temperatures remained in the single digits and teens with low clouds and flurries. This pattern repeated itself each day from the 8th through the 11th, with most areas below 6,000 feet never warming above the 20s while we reached the mid-30s to mid-40s each afternoon.

Finally, a reinforcing surge of cold air moved in from the north by the early evening of the 11th. This allowed the cold air mass to deepen enough to overcome the mild westerly flow and surge into the region. The initial signs were low clouds and flurries by mid-afternoon, then the cold air continued to deepen temperature tumbles, reaching the low single digits by midnight and low temperature falling below zero the next morning. The low clouds and light snow kept things cold on the 12th as well, with highs only reaching the single digits. Light snow continued off and on

in the cold air mass, and again the temperature tumbled below zero by the morning of the 13th and struggled to recover much that afternoon, barely reaching into the single digits again.

The final and strongest surge of cold air then moved in on the afternoon of the 13th. This was accompanied by more light snow and some winds and even colder temperatures. As the dry, cold air moved in, skies cleared out. This combined with the fresh snow to allow temperature to plummet to record levels. Those looking for heat on Valentine's Day had to produce their own, as Mother Nature decided to keep us in the deep freeze. The high temperature on the 14th didn't even make it above zero, and when the sun set the evening temperature quickly plummeted to the teens and 20s below zero. When we woke up on the 23rd, everything was in the deep freeze, with most locations at minus 20 or lower.

Fortunately, the Arctic air mass slowly began to slide off to the east over the next few days, allowing highs to return to the 20s on the 15th and 30's on the 16th. But quickly behind the departing air mass, another storm was moving through the region. This was another quick but powerful storm, dropping 4-8 inches of new snow from the late afternoon of the 17th through the early morning of the 18th. Skies cleared out behind this storm, but the quiet weather only lasted about a day, as another quick-moving storm brought 1-3 inches of new snow from the evening of the 20th to the morning of the 21st.

Westerly winds returned over the next couple of days, which allowed temperatures to jump back into the mid- and upper 50s on the 22nd and 23rd. The westerly winds were also efficient "snow-melters" (the classic Chinook winds) through much of the recent snowfall. Then, one final storm moved through the region with an initial frontal passage during the evening hours of the 23rd. This held temperature below freezing on the 24th, with snow falling most of the day and continuing into the morning hours of the 25th. Another 4-8 inches accumulated for most of us, bringing our monthly totals to above normal levels.

Quiet but cool weather held tight for the last few days of the month. But even though temperatures remained below normal to end the month, the stronger sunshine helped to melt some of the snow. Of course, we will continue to see daylight grow longer as we head into March, but that also means the weather pattern begins to get more active. In fact, the second week of March through the second week of April is usually our snowiest time of the season. When the snow does fall, it usually melts pretty quickly, providing the much-needed moisture to start the growing season.

A look ahead

March is known for a wide range of weather conditions in the region. We can see 70° temperatures one afternoon and blizzard conditions the next. Many of us remember the blizzard of March 2003 when we received 30-50 inches of snowfall that shut down the region. However, snow that does fall begins to melt quickly this time of the year, providing beneficial moisture for our plants as we head into spring.

February 2021 Weather Statistics

Average High	35.2° (-4.5°)
100-year return frequency value max	51.9° min 32.8°
Average Low	9.9° (-3.1°)
100-year return frequency value max	21.9° min 3.7°
Highest Temperature	59° on the 23rd
Lowest Temperature	-23° on the 15th
Monthly Precipitation	1.15"
	(+0.21" 22% above normal)
100-year return frequency value max	2.10" min 0.02"
Monthly Snowfall	20.5"
	(+2.8", 15% above normal)
Season to Date Snow	57.5"
	(-11.0", 16% below normal)
Season to Date Precip.	2.81"
	(-2.27", 45% below normal)
Heating Degree Days	1232 (+194)
Cooling Degree Days	0

Bill Kappel is a meteorologist and Tri-Lakes resident. He can be reached at billkappel@ocn.me.

Letters to Our Community

Guidelines for letters are on page 31.

Disclaimer: The information and opinions expressed in Letters to Our Community are the responsibility of the letter writers and should not be interpreted as the views of OCN even if the letter writer is an OCN volunteer. The letters this month are arranged in alphabetical order based on the letter-writer's last name.

Cleared town employees deserve public apology

In May 2018 Trustees Clark, Coopman, and Bornstein and private citizen Ann Howe began their public, unrelenting attack on town attorney Alicia Corley, Treasurer and acting Town Manager Pam Smith and Town

Clerk Laura Hogan, accusing them of general incompetence and specifically, financial malfeasance.

On Jan. 19, 2021, Mayor Wilson stated (as recorded in the meeting minutes) he received an email from the U.S. Department of Justice that the investigation pertaining to the finances of the Town of Monument is closed and no evidence was discovered that indicated any federal crime had been committed.

I want to hear a public, relenting apology from at least these four since all their innuendo, unabashed accusations, and not-so-veiled attacks yielded only to besmirch the reputations and lives of these innocent people.

Surely, it is not too much to ask of potential candidates for public office (governor?) to admit a mistake publicly when they were so public about their "opinions" (that's all they were, upheld by not one scintilla of fact). Isn't that what they would expect someone else to do had their reputation been sullied and livelihood threatened? Let's hear it folks. You weren't shy about making false claims, let's see if you have the intestinal fortitude to admit your errors, truly the mark of an enlightened, honest, and fair human.

Laura Kronick

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Between the Covers at Covered Treasures Bookstore

Planning and preparing your garden

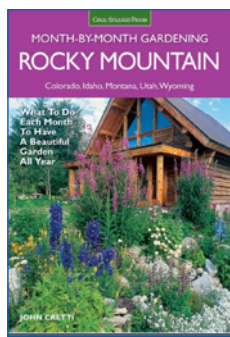
By the staff at Covered Treasures
"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need."—Marcus Tullius Cicero

With spring arriving, it's time to go from dreaming to doing. It is possible to have beautiful and productive flower and vegetable gardens in Colorado, you just need the right guidance. These books are helpful resources.

Rocky Mountain Month-By-Month Gardening: What to Do Each Month to Have a Beautiful Garden All Year

By John Cretti (Cool Springs Press) \$26.99

Take the guesswork out of gardening. Included are detailed instructions on watering and fertilizing to pruning and problem solving. Complete with specific advice on growing annuals, perennials, bulbs, grasses, roses, ground covers, trees, shrubs, and vines, you will reap the benefits of the gardening successes of John Cretti, who has more than 32 years of gardening experience. Discover the when and how of growing, caring for, and maintaining your Rocky Mountain garden.



The Wildlife-Friendly Vegetable Gardener: How to Grow Food in Harmony with Nature

By Tammi Hartung (Storey Publishing) \$16.95

Tammi Hartung and her husband have more than 40

years of experience on their organic farm in Colorado, plus she is a frequent teacher and lecturer. This specific guide helps you create harmony between the vegetable garden and the wildlife who consider it part of their habitat. It explains how to start with a healthy garden, how to create beneficial relationships through thoughtful planting, how to attract beneficial insects and pollinators, and how to purposefully create habitats for wildlife with strategies to help garden and wildlife peacefully coexist.

Homegrown Herbs: A Complete Guide to Growing, Using, and Enjoying More Than 100 Herbs

By Tammi Hartung (Storey Publishing) \$19.95

Enjoy a thriving, fragrant herb garden and use your harvest to bring beauty, flavor, and health to your everyday life. Tammi Hartung provides in-depth profiles of 101 popular herbs, including information on seed selection, planting, maintenance, harvesting, and drying. Hartung also shows you how to use your herbs in a variety of foods, home remedies, body care products, and crafts.

The Backyard Homestead: Produce all the food you need on just a quarter acre

Edited by Carleen Madigan (Storey Publishing) \$18.95

Put your backyard to work. Enjoy fresher, organic, better-tasting food. Grow vegetables and fruits; keep bees, raise chickens, goats, or even a cow. And when the harvest is in, cook, preserve, cure, brew, or pickle the fruits of your labor. This comprehensive guide to homesteading provides a wealth of information with easy-to-follow instructions.

Mountain States Medicinal Plants: Identify, Harvest, and Use 100 Wild Herbs for Health and Wellness

By Briana Wiles (Timber Press) \$27.95

Whether you are just starting out or are looking to deepen your herbal knowledge, this book is your companion for finding, identifying, harvesting, and safely using 120 of the region's most powerful medicinal wild plants. Plant profiles include color photographs, identification tips, medicinal uses, herbal preparations, and harvesting suggestions. Lists of what to forage for each season are useful year-round.

Mini Meadows: Grow a Little Patch of Colorful Flowers Anywhere Around Your Yard

By Mike Lizotte (Storey Publishing) \$16.95

With as little as 50 square feet and for less than \$20, gardeners can plant a colorful meadow that demands little in the way of space, mowing, or maintenance, uses less water, and provides a habitat for pollinators. From choosing the right variety of seeds, preparing the soil, sowing, and watering, gardeners of all levels will be able to reap the rewards of thriving meadows through the seasons, year after year.

Firescaping: Protecting Your Home with a Fire-Resistant Landscape

By Douglas Kent (Wilderness Press) \$21.95

This unique form of landscaping design keeps your property healthy, clean, and clear. Land management expert Douglas Kent, who has been on the front lines of wildfires, shares decades of experience working in