

HANG - High Altitude Gardening

# March into some organic plant advantages

By Janet Sellers

In this month of truly wacky days of snow, ice and then happy sunshine, it can be hard to imagine spring is on its way. Even so, it's time to plan and plant seeds indoors now. Personally, my biggest indoor sprouting success was taking the live composted soil from the outdoor raised garden bed and putting seeds in 3 inches of that medium. I used window boxes for this, and I think seed germination seems to thrive with a group effort. The little seeds were so happy to sprout together and have live soil ready for their needs!

I think the organic live soil microbiology was key. The rich, organic soil we made last year from compost supported a thriving veggie garden all summer from my makeshift sprout set-up, and it's still supporting three left-over tomato plants now in a 3- to 4-foot sprawl tumbling over the plant shelf in my sunroom. They've been bearing fruit since December. I might try to propagate those toma-

atoes from leaf cuttings this month for plants.

Besides the ease of growing with organic methods, a major U.S. study—the largest of its kind to date—showed organic foods have more nutrients than other forms of conventional growing and farm care. Washington State University documented the benefits of organic farming, including more antioxidants, fewer pesticide residues, and even longer shelf life.

Researchers at Washington State University found that when a strawberry plant gets to grow without persistent pesticides, it produces certain phytochemicals to help do its own pest control. These are also the same substances that are responsible for aromas and flavors, and there's a strong suggestion that "organic plants are healthier, and taste better, because they're allowed to thrive without the chemical burden and do what they do as plants."

"Without the synthetic chemical pesticides applied on conventional crops, organic plants tend to produce more

phenols and polyphenols to defend against pest attacks and related injuries. In people, phenols and polyphenols can help prevent diseases triggered or promoted by oxidative damage, like coronary heart disease, stroke and certain cancers...." (Washington State University News, July 2014).

In other news, the Tri-Lakes Garden Community (TLGC) had an ad hoc dessert pot luck and info afternoon Feb. 15, and we hope to have more of these in March, so stay posted by joining the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Tri-Lakes-Garden-Community/1386155058330111>.

If you have some handy tips or gardening news, please share! I'll try to include these soon.

Janet Sellers is an avid novice HANG gardener in the Tri Lakes area. Contact her with your tips and questions for the TLGC at [janetsellers@OCN.me](mailto:janetsellers@OCN.me).

Art Matters

# Art and how to grow a better brain at any age



By Janet Sellers

We always think artists are smart and capable by need as well as interest, and are thinkers and visionaries. But new brain studies show that artists' brains actually have more gray matter than most people. Since the days of Leonardo, artists have held esteemed respect as thinkers and inventors, and even revolutionaries for society. The visual power of art is highly influential to society in many ways.

A small 2014 study reported in the scientific journal, NeuroImage, was based on brain scans and drawing performance of art students vs. non-artists. Findings were that the artists had more gray and white matter, and were strong in spatial skills abilities. The study found that art abilities are not innate, but based on training and upbringing.

"The people who are better at drawing really seem to have more developed structures in regions of the brain that control for fine motor performance and what we call procedural memory," Rebecca Chamberlain, the study's lead author, explained.

Another study reported January, 2015, at NeuroImage showed how visual art learning improves neural structure and function to larger gray and also white matter. That study revealed art training improved not only perceptual abilities, but also perception-to-action.

All this science may sound complicated, but the simple fact is that, if we start art training and learn to enjoy art at any age, the art activities will create a brain and mind with greater capabilities. And that's great news for all of us. We can grab our pencils and start right away or take a class and get our brains in shape!

Here are some local arts events to inspire everyone, and remember there

Upcoming local art activities

1. **Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts (TCLA)—Exhibit, Visions of Light** photography exhibit featuring the use of light in artworks, **March 3-28**. Opening reception **March 6**, 5:30-7:30 p.m. TCLA, 304 Highway 105, Palmer Lake.
2. **Wisdom Tea House—Art show by Daniel Armour, Window into Spring** acrylic exhibit through April 25. Wisdom Tea House, 65 Second St., Monument.
3. **Tri-Lakes Views**—Local arts group sponsors ART-Sites for local outdoor art exhibits, maps at local shops. Their 2015 call for entries due date is April 15. Details at [www.trilakesviews.org](http://www.trilakesviews.org).
4. **Kirkland Professional Photography**—Free sessions for pet photos and free 5-by-7 portrait March and April. Kirkland will make a donation to Tri-

Lakes Cares. Details at 719-487-1779.

5. **Colorado Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest**—Due **March 15**: Call for student artists grades K-12. The due date for Colorado postmarked entries is March 15, and details about the program are available online at the Colorado link here: <http://www.fws.gov/juniorduck>.

Janet Sellers is a local artist and art teacher, and helps produce local arts programs. Her paintings and art sculptures are on view in local art venues and her public art is on view in Colorado and California cities. She can be reached via OCN at [JanetSellers@OCN.me](mailto:JanetSellers@OCN.me).

# Snapshots of Our Community

## UCCS students visit WMMI, Feb. 9



**Above:** On Feb. 9, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs (UCCS) students from the 19th Century American History course pose in front of the 35-ton Corliss steam engine at the Western Museum of Mining & Industry (WMMI). During their museum visit, the students learned about the development of steam power, an energy source that powered the Industrial Revolution from the 18th to 20th centuries and is still used today. The students learned that steam was initially used to create a vacuum in a condenser, used to draw down one side of a beam engine. Eventually steam engines were developed that created mechanical energy from steam pressurizing a piston up and down in a piston chamber, which then rotated an axle and flywheel. A belt on the steam engine flywheel transferred the energy to the flywheel on the machine needing power. Museum staff operated a number of steam engines demonstrating this transfer of power principle. Information on upcoming events at the museum is at [www.wmmi.org](http://www.wmmi.org). Photo by David Futey.