

**HISTORY OF THE ARVADA GARDENERS  
AND THE ARVADA COMMUNITY GARDEN**

**1967 through 2023**

## History of the Arvada Gardeners and the Arvada Community Garden

The Arvada Gardeners celebrated their 55th anniversary in 2022. They began as an all men's club with a children's garden and have grown to become a family club with three community gardens and a community partner with other organizations in the city.

The Arvada Men's Garden Club was organized on February 24, 1967. The first officers included Don Glittenberg as President, Fred Vetting as Vice President, Chuck Barton as Secretary and Don Henke as Treasurer. They held their first meetings at Moore Realty Community Room at 8833 Ralston Road.

After several months of planning, the club began an ambitious project--to create a Children's Garden--in the spring of 1969. The project was designed to teach gardening skills to young people and at the same time to transform a vacant lot into a beautiful garden spot for the entire community to enjoy. The club members were available Monday and Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings to provide guidance to the young gardeners and their parents.

The first Children's Garden was about an acre in size, fences all around and bordered by petunias. It was located in an empty lot just south of the Pizza Hut on the corner of Field Street and Ralston Road. The land and water were donated by member Frank Veltrie and other donations were solicited from various merchants by Charlie Neale and Forrest Bruere.

The first year there were 88 garden plots sold to boys and girls between eight and fourteen years old and a few more in shaded areas were planted with corn. Each of the available 117 plots measured twelve feet by twenty feet and was marked with special white corner stakes. The plots cost one dollar each to cover expenses and ensure the child's continued interest through harvest time. The culminating events that year included a parade float and entries in the vegetable contest at the Arvada Harvest Festival in September.

Mayor Richard Bartlett and the Arvada City Council gave special recognition to the members of the Arvada's Men's Garden Club and to Frank Veltrie for contributions toward the success of the Children's Community Garden Project. The mayor called it one of the outstanding projects which have been created for young citizens.

In 1972 the Arvada Men's Garden Club was chartered with the national organization, the Men's Garden Clubs of America (MGCA) and went by the name of the Men's Garden Club of Arvada. The club continued its many activities including, the operation of the Children's Garden, sponsoring poster contests, having a Big Pumpkin Contest, sponsoring the Children's garden and Flower Show at the Arvada Harvest Festival and trying to make the grandiflora pink petunia the official city flower (it failed).

In the spring of 1975 the community garden was relocated to the old Garrison Street Water Filter Plant Settling Pond which had been drained and vacant for several years. The garden was dedicated the following year in the memory of Forrest Bruere, founding member and past president. This land on the north side of West 57<sup>th</sup> Ave at Garrison Street is provided by the City of Arvada and is fenced in for safety and security. Water from an adjacent ditch is piped underground to a cistern located near the entrance. An electric pump sends water through an underground piping system to the twenty-eight spigots found throughout the garden. Each spigot is outfitted with a length of garden hose. By 1975 the plot fees had risen to four dollars each but included some seeds and plants provided by the club. Gardener Dick Tuers was selected Arvada Man of the Year for 1975.

Not much is known about the club in the 1980's, but club presidents included Charles Millard and Dean Iden. The Children's Community Garden was operated continuously during the period but it evolved into a community garden for everyone not just children. The club held their monthly meetings on the third Monday of the month at the North Jeffco Senior Center.

In 1990 the club became more active under the leadership of Earl Truitt. He had the shed moved from the hilltop to its current location, had the concrete ditch filled so flowers could be planted and worked with the city to plant many fruit trees around the sides of the garden. During the early 1990's the national organization began allowing women to be admitted as members and changed the name to the Gardeners of America (GOA). The Arvada club then became the Arvada Gardeners of America.

In 1993 Bill Orchard became president and the first newsletter was published and roles were defined for club officers. In 1994 the first Open House was held in August and the first Christmas Party in December. In 1995 the club won the region Traveling Trophy as the most active club and the National Creativity Award for the idea of an Open House. In 1996 the hours were increased to include Monday, Wednesday and Saturday mornings and Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings. Meetings were changed to the second Monday evening of the month.

In 1997 with Liz Kreis as president, the Arvada Gardeners of America were facing some financial concerns. Due to economic reasons that year, the local membership decided to disavow affiliation with the national group and to become independent. They named themselves the Arvada Gardeners. The bylaws were created and adopted on November 10, 1997. The club continued its many activities and members were asked to donate more time to the operation of the garden. The club also began taking the lead on helping put up and take down the holiday decorations in Olde Town Arvada.

In 1999 CC Plummer became president, followed by Bob Black in 2001 and Bill Bowman in 2002. The club added a porta-potty and the annex in the northeast corner was developed to add nine more plots to help replace the fifteen that were lost by the addition of fire and access lanes. A gazebo was built by students at Warren Tech with materials provided by the club. The gazebo was coordinated by the newsletter editor Ray Atkinson and honored Vic Wulf, charter member and long time treasurer. A second pump was installed along with a second run of underground piping to service the east and annex plots more effectively. In 2000 a TroyBilt rototiller was purchased for use by club members at the garden. A fleet of wheelbarrows, shared tools, and new stakes were added the following year.

Elmer Nygaard became president for three years beginning in 2003. The following year the club worked with the Arvada Historical Society to plant an Arvada Centennial Vegetable Garden at the Flour Mill site in Olde Town and sponsored a booth at the Centennial Celebration on August 24<sup>th</sup>. The club was also asked to become involved with the renovations of the McIlvoy House in that they will help create and maintain a 19<sup>th</sup> century garden on the grounds.

In 2005 in addition to operating the community garden, the club began creating partnerships with other organizations in the city. In June members helped raise funds for Historic Olde Town Arvada by staffing the Pepsi booth at the Annual Gold Strike Festival. In July, they manned booths in Olde Town for Fresh Flavors, an evening farmer's market and street fair; they also started viewing the annual fireworks display from the west bank. In August, they held their 10<sup>th</sup> annual Open House and had record attendance of people from the community. In September, the club also succeeded in bringing back the four-year-absent vegetable contest, now called the Garden Harvest Fair, to the annual Arvada Harvest Festival. In October, they partnered with the Arvada Festivals Commission and Historic Olde Town Arvada to participate in the Festival of the Scarecrows and hold the first Annual Giant Pumpkin Contest. In December, the club participated in the dedication of a new Children's Christmas Tree on the lawn of McIlvoy House at the Lagniappe activities.

In 2006 Midori Krieger was elected president. During her term the club began a mentoring program for new members, started tracking volunteer hours to the club and the community, had open hours on Sunday mornings, began a partnership with the Arvada Food Bank, put in a new larger east pump and had the first inklings of being in a new urban renewal area and the thoughts of having to relocate.

In 2007 the club elected Ralph Futch as its new president. The club faces the news that the community garden may have to relocate due to Urban Renewal. The club gets a roll off at the end of the season for cleanup, builds a new, safer tool rack, updates their website, allows

beehives to be put into the garden, has a float in the Harvest Festival parade and celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a huge celebration at the annual open house.

In 2008 Ralph continues as president and the club takes on the responsibility of care for the Lutheran Hospice gardens, gets a nice article about them in the Denver Post, begins to apply for grants, limits garden plots to Arvada residents, and has the sign at the garden rebuilt.

In 2009 Janice Mulvany is elected president and served two years. The club wrote a Community Garden Master Plan to be used by other entities to startup community gardens, participated for the last time in decorating Olde Town and helping out at the last Gold Strike Festival, helped the Sunday Olde Town Farmers Market get started up, had Arvada Channel 8 do a story on the community garden, brought in a refrigerator to be used for Arvada Food Bank donations, brought in more beehives to the garden, had its first big lightning strike on a cottonwood tree, continued to publicly voice their concern about Urban Renewal and the future of the garden, received a twenty-five hundred dollar grant from the Home and Garden Show and had an early fall freeze that damaged pumps and piping.

In 2010 the club helped out the Lost and Found group with their garden, tested paper for the Sunshine Paper Company, partnered with the Delva Family to setup and operate the Delva Community Garden, started helping the city courts by providing safe opportunities for community service clients, looked at community garden opportunities at Beeman Park, Food Bank, Juchem Ditch and Arvada Central Park, created an informal library of reference books in the shed, updated the website, made plans, installed and dedicated four raised bed gardens near the front gate, and received a ninety-three hundred and eighty dollar grant from the Home and Garden show for next year.

In 2011 the Arvada Gardeners elected Keith Sorci as president. It was a very trying year as the Arvada Urban Renewal Authority began its Outline Development Plan for the Triangle which includes the community garden. The gardeners went to the Planning Commission meeting and the City Council meeting to try to have the garden removed from the plan. They failed but did bring attention to their plight and succeeded in getting special consideration for the garden. With their Home and Garden Show grant they built four more raised bed garden, a new less-steep garden entry pathway and a hand rail along the old path into the garden. The Delva Garden received a city grant and had a new fence installed and erected a small storage building. They continued to support the Arvada Harvest Festival and had a farm wagon for their parade float this year; their Giant Pumpkin Contest at the Festival of Scarecrows continues to gain popularity. An eagle scout project at the garden provided a gathering place, tool rack and benches near the raised beds and the garden was a popular stop on the Arvada Historical Society

Annual Garden Tour. They applied for and received a city grant and had a garage built at the site for storage of equipment in the winter and displays, trainings, workshop and shelter during the growing season. Many members assisted in the design and startup of the new Rose Roots Community Garden at 83<sup>rd</sup> and Alkire in northwest Arvada.

In 2012 Keith Sorci continued as President. He brought on another community garden in partnership with the Andres family. The nine-plot garden was filled and had a successful first year. There were changes to the garden rules to improve access for community gardeners and friends. Work on the new barn continued as electrical power and lighting were installed, pegboard was mounted on the walls and a second storage loft was added. The barbed wire on the fence enclosing the garden was removed on the street side. The Delva Community Garden made some upgrades with grant moneys: permanent pathways with bricks and crusher fines, plot borders and a spigot at each plot. The club was asked to look at a nearby location as a possible relocation place should the garden need to be moved. A new refrigerator was donated to hold food bank donations which amounted to 1899 pounds of produce. The garden was awarded a grant from the city and built a 9' x 12' greenhouse for growing their own seedlings for the community gardeners. The garden began compliance with new regulations regarding community gardening and beekeeping in the city. The garden is also looking at ways to become a 501(c)3 organization to be in a better position to apply for grants and other funding opportunities.

In 2013 Keith Sorci continued as president. In addition to trying to become their own 501(c)3, the club also looked at re-joining the Gardeners of America to become 501(c)3. They started collecting recipes for a future cookbook, used mail in registration for plots, saw the approval to build a new Walmart near the garden, began composting in earnest complete with pallet bins, had the Delva Garden get a grant to build a shade structure, took part in the first Sustain Arvada Festival and gave away tomato plants, used their new greenhouse to grow transplants for the garden, faced water restrictions and issues with the ditch water and then endured mid September flooding, held the 18<sup>th</sup> annual open house, watched as a Bee Village was built at the community garden and donated 1968 pounds of produce to the Arvada Food Bank. They were awarded a grant from the city and built a shade structure at the north end, a small fenced storage for the garden equipment and materials behind the barn, and a large fenced storage for the community gardener equipment in the northwest corner. They also partnered with A Brighter Community for volunteer assistance at the garden. The club is also looking at ways to increase membership and participation in the community garden.

In 2014 Keith Sorci was re-elected president. The big change this year was a trial to open up the garden for access all year dawn to dusk for renters, results to be evaluated in 2015.

The club put in a remote monitoring system so the following items could be read from a smart phone or computer: greenhouse, soil and ambient temperatures, rain fall and ditch water indications. A \$5000 grant from the Home and Garden Show was awarded to the garden to put in additional ADA gardening stations. At the garden a second 3hp pump was installed on the cistern, a gourd growing arbor was erected, donated fruit trees were planted around the perimeter, the community garden reference library grew to over 100 volumes, monthly workdays were added to the activities list, an aeroponic demonstration garden was set up at the entrance, and the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Open House was hosted in August. The sister Delva garden was selected to be on the annual Arvada Historical Society garden tour. A social committee was formed which scheduled activities during the year: square dance barbecue, fireworks viewing and refreshments, and the annual Christmas party. The city built a Safe Route to School trail along the west border of the garden which really beautified that area. The club continued to seek 501(c)3 designation, took 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the Harvest Festival Parade, had a 1292-pound pumpkin at the Festival of Scarecrows, donated 2068 pounds of produce to the food bank, volunteered to manage a new community garden as part of the Clear Creek Valley Park, and grieved the loss of long time gardener Jack Appelhans. A bench and gathering area were installed near the garden entrance in his honor.

In 2015 Keith Sorci continued as president of the Arvada Gardeners. He appointed an equipment manager to watch over all tools and equipment, created committees for marketing and revising membership, secured over 300 plant donations from local garden centers, got a new shredder for the composting efforts, and had a timer installed on the pumps for better control. The trial of last year on garden hours was abandoned and the schedule reverted to the previous operation. This will be revisited in 2017. Many new things: had monthly garden classes in the barn which were free and open to the public, Gardeners-in-Charge wore vests on duty, completed the gourd arbor, garden calendar was put on Google, gained a presence at the South Pole, plans continue for the Grippa Garden and the garden was acknowledged as a Certified Wildlife Refuge by the National Wildlife Federation. The garden received a \$1000 grant from Corona Tools for the purchase of ADA tools, a \$300 grant from Kitchen Garden for a presentation supplies and an enclosed bulletin board and work on the ADA planters from the Home and Garden grant last year continued. Photos from the community garden were shown in the new book *Therapeutic Gardens*, the Andres garden was featured on the PBS show Urban Conversion, the main and Delva Gardens were part of the Arvada Sustainability Tour. The garden participated in the Pinwheel Garden to help the Ralston House charity, donated 2855 pounds of produce to the food bank, had a successful Open House in spite of being snubbed by the ACGA Convention held the

same weekend, enjoyed a new wider sidewalk along the south side of the garden, and had their float win first place in the annual Harvest Festival Parade. Planning has begun for the 50-year celebration in 2017.

In 2016 Keith Sorci continued as president of the Arvada Gardeners. He had over 500 donated bulbs planted along the 57<sup>th</sup> Ave sidewalk, created a marketing committee for the garden that in turn created a new logo, promoted the Monarch Larva Monitoring Project, got beehives to return to the garden, considered adding an orchard to the garden, shortened the meeting agenda, supported the city's HEAL campaign, worked to make the gardeners all members for next year, received confirmation from the city that there were no plans to move the garden, and has agreed to work with the Terrace Park neighborhood to get them plots at the community garden. The Arvada Gardeners became a 501(c)(3) organization, donated 1640 pounds of fresh produce to the Arvada Community Food Bank, opened the garden seven days per week, updated the website, put their calendar on Google, had the first new member lunch and learn, began having social time before each monthly meeting, changed their designation from club to organization, joined the Arvada Chamber of Commerce, added new strainers and gages to the pump system, continued having free evening gardening classes, had a pinwheel garden, ordered member name badges with the new logo, endured three hail storms, began maintenance of the World War I memorial at the Arvada Visitor Center, received a plaque from the food bank for many years of donating vegetables, partnered with other organizations in the city for Trails Day, Harvest Festival parade and Festival of Scarecrows, hosted a Square Dance and Potluck and had fireworks viewing at the garden, awarded the golden shovel award to plot #47 Sally Berriman, allowed the Andres Garden to return to private status, and received a Neighborhood Grant from the city to add a dedicated composting area, install a bike rack, install a vegetable washing station, setup a demonstration and vertical garden, buy some new tools and do some fence beautification to the south and west fences. The organization continues with plans for the Jubilee Celebration next year.

2017 was the 50<sup>th</sup> year for the Arvada Gardeners. This anniversary was celebrated with a Golden Jubilee and Open House in August. Arvada Channel 8 made a video to promote it, the city council made a proclamation to honor it, commemorative t-shirts were made to remember it, and special brochure was made to describe it. At the jubilee were many city and state dignitaries, the 100 year old neighbor Herb Reble, a cider press, the vertical garden, garden tours, a history story board, red garden bags, put-n-take table, gate prizes, kids' grab bags, potluck lunch, 300+ visitors, history booklets, and the best open house cake ever.

Also in 2017 Keith Sorci continued as president of the Arvada Gardeners. The system of member and renter was dissolved and everyone was made a member with all the same rights and requirements: \$40 for a plot or \$25 for a raised bed, 15 volunteers hours, one hour garden orientation. New gate and shed locks and keys were furnished, pump key was separate. Also this year: planted a dedicated giant pumpkin patch, used Signup Genius for Gardener-in-Charge shifts, remodeled the greenhouse, applied for a grant for Six Plot Orchard which was rejected but the orchard was still planted using some heirloom fruit trees, dedicated herb garden for use by all, proposed and adopted new bylaws, continued having monthly free evening gardening classes, created an orientation booklet for members, installed a new sensor in the ditch to read the actual level of water, provided a new resting place for the porta-potty, used community service crews from Jeffco Justice for maintenance, had a break-in at the barn, and had a drone photo taken of the garden. The garden participated in the first Arvada Days Festival in Hyland Hills and had a booth to sell dried herbs, homemade soap, garlic, seedlings, and gourds and show a display of old canning equipment and pass out garden information to the attendees. A monarch butterfly float was built for the Arvada Harvest Festival Parade and it won First Place; Kevin Curl won the grand prize at the vegetable contest. Gardener Bill Orchard was selected Arvada Man of the Year for 2016. At the Festival of Scarecrows eleven giant pumpkins were entered and the community garden sponsored a carved pumpkin contest with John Bardeen. In December the garden was recognized with a Bronze Bicycle Friendly Business Award by the League of American Bicyclists for its promotion of biking to the garden and installation of secure bicycle parking. It is the first community garden in the country to be recognized and also the first business in Arvada to be so designated. Many new people have joined the community garden and there is a sunny outlook for continued growth and improvement.

In 2018 Keith Sorci remained as president of the Arvada Gardeners. The “everyone is a member” system remained with success: \$40 for a plot or \$25 for a raised bed, 15 volunteers hours, one hour garden orientation for new members. Activities that continued and improved included the following: monthly garden classes from March to October averaging 19 attendees, using our own beekeepers and distributing honey to members, maintenance of the WWI memorial at the Visitor Center, 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Potluck and Square Dance at the Community Table, 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Open House at the garden, Harvest Festival Parade where the Yellow Submarine float won 2<sup>nd</sup> place in its division and the Viewers Choice Award, Dan Appelhans won the Grand Prize in the Harvest Festival vegetable contest, had a booth at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Arvada Days in Clear Creek Valley Park, and had a booth and presided over the Giant Pumpkin Contest at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Festival of Scarecrows. New this year was participation in the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Winter

Fest in McIlvay Park with a booth where seeds were given away and gourds and plants sold and free gifts for the kids, had a program at the library during a July farmers market to promote the community garden, listened to a meeting program on worm composting with free worms given out, had our first ever chili roasting and apple pressing event at the garden, created a committee to handle garden tour requests, reconfigured the barn layout, ordered t-shirts, hats, aprons and bags with the new logo, was given a seat on the Visitor Center Advisory Board, created a membership committee to handle the 100+ yearly member renewals, enlarged the 6 Plot Orchard to a 10 Plot Orchard, was featured in an article in the Denver Post, was awarded two Trex benches for a soft plastic collection effort, received a tool donation from the Jeffco Justice Services, had an unsuccessful attempt at tracking hours by computer, was awarded a Neighborhood Improvement Grant from the city to add a stairway on the west embankment, add 5 new spigots around the perimeter, purchase a chili roaster and build a split rail safety fence along the garden entrance, made a presentation to the Arvada Kiwanis on the history of the garden and was awarded a grant from the Colorado Garden Foundation for improvements to the community garden next year. Records indicate that 3236 volunteer hours were worked at the garden and in the Arvada community.

In 2019 Keith Sorci continued as the president of the Arvada Gardeners. Plot fees remained unchanged at \$40 per plot, \$25 per raised bed and \$15 for a wheelchair plot. Activities that continued and improved included the following: participation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Winterfest in February, collection of soft plastic in exchange for garden benches, maintenance at the WW1 memorial at the Visitor Center, Community Table and Veggie Van donations, conducting new member orientation and pump training, using our own beekeepers and distributing honey to members, Harvest Festival Parade float was a replica of the Flour Mill, Dan Appelhans again won the Grand Prize in the Harvest Festival vegetable contest, 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Open House in August, late summer chili roasting, had a booth at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Arvada Days in Clear Creek Valley Park, 11 public garden classes with over 200 attendees, 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Potluck and Square Dance at the Community Table, five Colorado Master Gardeners in membership, Giant Pumpkin Contest at the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Festival of Scarecrows, July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks viewing at the garden, organized tours of the garden, Ten Plot Orchard expansion, Herb Garden expansion and community outreach at Naturally Arvada and K8 School Fiesta Event. Two grants were given this year: a \$1000 grant from the Arvada Vitality Alliance to build a 6 compartment composting structure and \$6000 grant from the Colorado Garden Foundation to replace the blue shed, buy all new hose bibs, buy two leaf blowers, two trimmers and two mowers, install corner stake hose rollers and construction of the north end shade structure. New this year was a trial of

only having one vice president, consideration of having a chicken coop, participation in the Parks 100 Festival in McIlvoy Park, installation of split rail fence at the garden in perimeter areas, Gardener-in-Charge shifts down to four (Wednesday and Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday mornings), reviewing garden rules at each meeting, presentation of plaque to S&N Lawnmower for their long time support of the garden, joining the Arvada Historical Society and partnering with them on activities, adopting the RTD bus stop in front of the garden, closing of the Delva Garden, presentation of the garden history at the AHS Oral History event, accepting a vehicle donation of 1956 2-1/2 ton Dodge Farm Truck, applying for a Fruit Tree Grant, making Torso Rags the official garden clothier, being awarded a Colorado Garden Foundation grant for garden improvements for next year, Urban Renewal looking at putting affordable housing just north of the garden and the disbanding the weed police. Records show there were 3889 volunteer hours worked at the garden and in the Arvada Community.

The year 2020 was a difficult years in many ways. Keith Sorci continued as president for the first few months, then Bill Orchard became president pro tem for the rest of the year. The coronavirus struck and gardening changed. Because the garden is on 3 acre site and outside, the garden was able to stay open the entire year but restrictions were imposed for occupancy, masks, sanitizer usage and social distancing to comply with state and county regulations. The community garden was sold out and the pandemic gave the gardeners had more time to spend gardening and the garden plots were representative of this.

And in spite of the pandemic the community garden was able to accomplish: completing the Colorado Garden Foundation Grant to install all new hoses, acquire new folding chairs for classes and meetings, lay landscape fabric and crusher fines on the west and south dikes, get a new speaker system for classes, meetings and events and have an observation hive for beekeeping activities; securing a grant from The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation and 10 fruit trees and 10 fruit shrubs were planted at the garden on June 22<sup>nd</sup>; having a booth at he Arvada Winterfest event and giving away seeds, plants, kids gifts and free advise; having seven of eleven scheduled garden classes outdoors averaging 19 people per class; holding new member orientations in small groups and a new member welcome event; doing spring and fall garden plot rototilling; having a July 4<sup>th</sup> Fireworks alternate event at the garden including scavenger hunts, garden tours, festive gifts and snacks; having public hours on Monday and Wednesday evenings and Saturday and Sunday mornings; being awarded two CARES Act grants for personal protective equipment for use at the garden and events; being nominated for Neighborhood of the Year (finished tied for 5<sup>th</sup>); getting new parking striping on W 57<sup>th</sup> Ave (twice); holding the Annual Open House with 194 attendees and having cafeteria service instead of potluck,

scavenger hunt, free herb plants and seeds, gate prizes, garden tours all with covid restrictions; having gardener Renee Nelson be selected as Arvada's Woman of the Year; holding monthly meetings outside, via Zoom or at the Jaycee Hall; having a simplified method for tracking hours; getting a new key box for the Unblue Shed; establishing a new composting system and procedures; rebuilding the gourd arbor; fixing a big leak in the irrigation system; being the biggest part of the Festival of Scarecrow with the Giant Pumpkin and Giant Squash Contests, and booths for kids gifts, seeds and plants, pumpkin, gourd, Indian corn sales; having the best ever fall sales in the pumpkin patch; and having a very successful first ever outdoor Christmas Party at the garden with slide show, warming tent, gas fire pits, Christmas music, snacks, hot chocolate, hot cider, games, honey distribution, kids bags and decorations (which were left up until the New Year); donating to the Community Table (1100 lbs) and Veggie Van (977 lbs), getting a wonderful donation of pots, planters, cages and seeds from Home Depot; and sadly not qualifying for an Arvada Neighborhood Improvement Grant or a Colorado Garden Foundation Grant this year. Records show there were 2800 volunteer hours worked at the garden and in the community.

Other items related to the garden included having the Veggie Van stationed at the garden; knowing that the City Stores (Old Garrison Street Filter Plant) will be demolished and affordable housing units will be installed just north of the garden; the property west of the garden was sold and three story apartments will be going in there next year; and entering into a partnership with Arvada Urban Renewal Authority to develop the Save Routes to School Trail on the Garrison Street right-of-way on the western garden boundary into a Paseo to include a new fence all around the garden, a garden and front range ADA overlook, demonstration gardens maintained by the Arvada Gardeners, interactive sculptures, stone terraces and seating, new garden entrance, wayfinding signage, raised bed gardens, art opportunities, shade structures, etc. Planning and design in 2021 and construction in 2022. The garden looks forward to this partnership.

The year 2021 saw the continuance of the covid-19 pandemic rather than the end of it. Heather Fiedler was elected president by a unanimous vote and lead the garden through the tumultuous year. The garden complied with the local government covid restrictions throughout the year and this allowed most activities to go on as planned. Again this year the garden saw more plot activity, there seemed to be always someone there, as people were looking for safe places to go to get out of the house.

The garden accomplished many things in spite of the pandemic: created a seed library for flowers, vegetables and herbs; held 12 Garden classes March through September for 300 attendees; had a Garden Celebration in March at the garden for awards, slide show, cartoon,

snacks; Helped Animal Assisted Animal Therapy with a alpaca poop fundraiser; held the 1st Annual Tool Sale; held a Welcome to the Garden barbecue and potluck in June; had the 17th Annual Fireworks viewing at the garden; organized hands on Beekeeping classes open to the public; gave garden tours to the Herb Society of America, EPA Region 8 and a school group; held the 26th Annual Open House on August 14th with over 300 attendees; hosted the 1st Annual Community Garden Bike Ride; had a booth at the 4th Annual Arvada Days Festival; had the 4th Annual Chili Roasting at the garden; held the 1st Annual Chili Cookoff featuring red, green and white chilis; created a berry patch along the north fence; participated in the Festival of Scarecrows and proctored the Giant Squash and Pumpkin Contests; held the 27th Annual Christmas Party and Awards Dinner at the Arvada Covenant Church; had 3200 volunteer hours in the community and the garden; scheduled monthly workdays to maintain the garden; completed the brick wall in southeast corner; gardeners watched the July 17th Colorado Rockies game from nose bleed seats; collected over 750 pounds of soft plastic garnering a free bench from Trex; donated 1271 pounds of produce to the Veggie Van and 2019 pounds to the Community Table; ran a U-Pick pumpkin patch along with squash arbor and Indian corn and sold out; participated in the Arvada Neighborhood Leader Meetings, sent in a feedback form and the president enrolled in the Arvada Neighbors Connected Leadership Program; put up holiday decorations at the garden again this year; donated herbs and tomatoes and peppers to the Visitor Center for the general public; ran power to the Unblue shed for lighting and receptacles; published articles in the Arvada Report for garden plot signup, garden classes, open house, chili roasting and bike ride; applied to be the Neighborhood of the Year; corralled a swarm of runaway bees that were in the garden; received a \$2300 Neighborhood Improvement Grant from the city for the seed library, Little Library for garden books, bulletin board and community artwork; color coded tools in garden tool stations; accepted coffee grounds for compost from Hunter Bay; saw the Arvada Harvest Festival and Parade canceled again; had the county crews volunteer to help out at the garden and festivals; installed new raised bed plot number markers and grieved the loss of long time gardener Emer Nygaard.

Other items of interest included donations: received donations from Home Depot: seeds, pots, tomato cages, raised bed kits; from Brown's Greenhouse: flower bulbs, mums and kale, tomato and pepper plants, poinsettias; from Arvada West High School: hanging flower baskets; from Happy Transplants Garden Club: miscellaneous flower and vegetable plants; and from Kaizen Food Rescue: black plastic folding crates. Some other items included: started using Zelle for some garden transactions; had a new newsletter editor; "planted" a pinwheel garden to support Ralston House; added a safe to the Unblue Shed; had the garden completely filled;

partnered with the Early College of Arvada; bought four new wheelbarrows and a new used cooler for storing vegetable donations; had Mayor Williams take the beekeeping class at the garden; held garden meetings at the APEX Community Recreation Center, the garden and the Jaycee Hall; applied for but did not receive a grant from the Colorado Garden Foundation; began gathering an extensive physical inventory of garden equipment; had an inquiry about an Hogelkultur art plot; sustained damage to the greenhouse from high winds; had homeless encampments near the garden; and saw the house just west of the garden razed to make way for a three story apartment complex. In a garden survey the membership wanted to raise dues to \$50/plot and increase the plot cleaning fee to \$20 while retaining the 15 hour volunteer requirement, the \$50 fee for not doing hours and the November 16th date for plot cleaning; these were confirmed by a vote at the meeting. And we entered into a partnership with Urban Renewal for the Paseo Project just west of the garden which will include public access to the west embankment for spectacular views of the community garden and the mountains and several improvements to the garden.

The community garden started returned to normal in 2022, as Covid slowly retreated. Heather Fiedler continued as garden president and gradually brought all garden activities back to pre-Covid levels and made several new and innovative changes: had a garden physical inventory taken, restarted the mentoring program, opened up all committee chairs, got new combo locks so no more keys, had garden classes at other community gardens, began using a Republic recycle cart, did a thorough purge on the barn and opened the seed library to the public.

The garden was sold out again this year with new gardeners in 33 of the 125 plots. At the garden: dues were raised to \$50 (\$25 for half plot or raised bed, \$15 for ADA plot), the brochure was updated to reflect recent changes, enough plastic bags were saved to get two new benches, Japanese beetles hit the plots with a vengeance, meetings were held at the APEX Rec Center, the garden and the Arvada Library, a raspberry patch retaining wall was built, again this year the garden lost out on a grant from the Colorado Garden Foundation, but was awarded a Mini-Grant from the City of Arvada but was unable to make it happen. The Applewood Seed Company invited the gardeners to tour their planting areas, the garden was recertified until 2026 as a Bike Friendly Business (the only one in Arvada and the only community garden in the US), the Meetup group for the garden classes grew to over 500 members, the Arvada Report published articles for plot signup, garden classes, open house, chili roasting and apple pressing and the bike ride, bought a laminator, saw the homeless continue to camp west of the garden, and watched the three story apartment building west of the garden being built and the water filter plant north of the garden torn down.

Events at the garden included: monthly workdays, 2nd Annual Community Garden Bike Ride in August, 27th Annual Garden Open House in August with 254 attending, pinwheel garden to support Ralston House, gardener orientations for 41 new gardeners, 15 garden classes were held March through September with 415 attendees, 2nd Annual Chili Cook-Off in September with 15 entries, 3rd Annual Welcome to the Garden potluck in June, 18th Annual July 4th Fireworks Viewing, 5th Annual Chili Roasting and Apple Pressing event in September which was the best attended so far, U-Pick pumpkin patch and sold out, 3rd Annual Decorating the Garden for the Holidays in November and 28th Annual Holiday Party and Awards Dinner at the Arvada Covenant Church in December.

The Arvada Gardeners were also involved in community activities: had a very busy booth at the 4th Annual Winterfest Festival in McIlvoy Park, had a booth at the Naturally Arvada event at the Arvada Library as part of the Farmers Market, 2nd Annual Gardeners to the Rockies Game on August 20th, staffed a booth at 5th Annual Arvada Days Festival at Clear Creek Valley Park, entered a vegetable themed float in the 97th Annual Arvada Harvest Festival Parade which went along W 58th Ave west of Kipling and won First Place, gardeners entered items in the Arvada Harvest Festival Food Fair and Garden Contest held at the APEX Field House, operated a booth at the 26th Annual Festival of Scarecrows, ran the Giant Pumpkin and Zucchini contests, donated 1021 lbs of produce to the Veggie Van and 1581 lbs to the Community Table, contributed over 3000 volunteer hours to the garden and the community.

The garden received donations from several groups: Ben Zank family gave a wheelbarrow, stakes and cages, Blooma's Greenhouse (formerly Brown's) donated 15 flats of peppers and squash as well as the 15 poinsettias, Collier Farms provided four flats of tomatoes and peppers and Home Depot contributed pots and planters.

Two gardeners were recognized in the community. Emily King received the Young Professionals Leadership Award and Heather Fiedler was selected one of 31 Badass Women in Arvada, both by the Arvada Chamber.

The garden continues to support the Urban Renewal Paseo Project which is just west of the garden. Gardeners submitted 31 ideas for names and the one submitted by gardener Bill Edwards was selected by the Arvada City Council. Henceforth it will be a city park and be called the Garrison Garden Paseo. We finally see the removal of the CDPHE building and we are involved in the paseo design with construction expected to start in late 2023.

The community garden returned to near normal in 2023, as Covid slowly retreated. Heather Fiedler continued as garden president and had a very successful year. She changed the gate combo, banned vermin poisons, provided a source for farm fresh eggs, did soil testing on

several plots, added hoodies and sweatshirts to the clothing choices, updated the inventory, commissioned a special t-shirt for the open house, partnered with the CO Dahlia Society, promoted no-plot memberships, arranged for an ADA porta potty and had Palisade peach sales as a fundraiser.

The garden was sold out again this year with new gardeners in 27 of the 125 plots and there were 3 new plot-less members. At the garden: the brochure was updated to reflect recent changes, enough plastic bags were saved to get two new benches, Japanese beetles returned with friends, suited-up beekeeping classes were held, meetings were held at the garden and Arvada Police Stations, the garden applied for a educational infrastructure and garden improvements \$15k grant from the Colorado Garden Foundation but did not receive it, with Urban Renewal the garden applied for a \$45,000 grant from Republic Services to put in permanent pathways, the garden will be a Bike Friendly Business (the only one in Arvada and the only community garden in the US) through 2026, the Meetup group for the garden classes grew from 500 to 837 members, the Arvada Report published articles for our activities, and the gardeners watched the Arvada Point Flats apartment building complete and begin taking tenants.

Events at the garden included: monthly workdays, 28th Annual Garden Open House in August with 221 attending, pinwheel garden to support Ralston House, gardener orientations for 40 new gardeners, 15 garden classes were held March through September with 365 attendees, 3rd Annual Chili Cook-Off in September with 15 entries again this year, 4th Annual Welcome to the Garden potluck on June 17th with 81 attending, welcomed 15 pre-school students and parents for a garden tour, the 19th Annual July 4th Fireworks Viewing, 6th Annual Chili Roasting and Apple Pressing event in September, 4th Annual Decorating the Garden for the Holidays and 29th Annual Holiday Party and Awards Dinner at the King of Glory in December.

The Arvada Gardeners were also involved in community activities: Partnered with the Historical Society for a cleanup at the Flour Mill, 3rd Annual Community Garden Bike Ride in August, 5th Annual Winterfest Festival in McIlvroy Park, Naturally Arvada event at the Arvada Library as part of the Farmers Market, partnered with Apex PNR for their Where Community Grows July Bingo activity, had a booth at the snowy Earth Day at Majestic View NC, gardeners helped staff the Arvada Bike to Work Stations, took care of the WWI Memorial at the Visitor Center, 3rd Annual Gardeners to the Rockies Game on July 29th, entered a vegetable themed float in the 98th Annual Arvada Harvest Festival Parade and won First Place, helped design the Vance Street Flats Community Garden, donated 200+ tomato and pepper plants to the Visitor Center, gardeners entered items in the Arvada Harvest Festival Garden Contest held at Clear Creek Valley Park, with Festival of Scarecrows canceled the 1st Annual Pumpkin Festival was

held at the garden and was a huge success, donated 2500 lbs of produce to the Veggie Van and the Community Table, contributed over 3000 volunteer hours to the garden and the community.

The garden received donations from two groups: Blooma's Greenhouse donated 36 potted mums for the Pumpkin Festival and the 15 poinsettia plants for the holiday party and Young's provided 160+ tomato seedlings.

The garden has been working with the city on a lease agreement for the use of the city property. For the past 48 years the garden has had a great working relationship with the city with no lease. But the city needed to bring all it's lease properties under standardized leases. The lease agreement was approved in November. The lease outlines the City's responsibilities and the Garden's responsibilities going forward. But most importantly, the lease agreement will solidify our continued use of the property for years to come.

The garden continues to support the Urban Renewal Garrison Garden Paseo Project which is just west of the garden and Ralston Gardens affordable housing building north of the garden. The garden also allowed a temporary easement on the north end of the garden to allow the building of a retaining wall for Ralston Gardens.

#### Bibliography

Arvada Historical Society. *Arvada Comes of Age, A History of Arvada, Colorado During the Period 1942-1976*. Westminster, Colorado: The Publishing House, 2002.

Archives and records of the Arvada Gardeners including various untitled newspaper clippings, club newsletters, meeting minutes and emails.

Personal diary and records of the club members.