About the Park

Mission: “A place of serenity celebrating the trees, shrubs, plants and birds of the Yampa Valley”

Gardening at 6,800 ft (2,000 m) in the mountains is a challenge. Winter snowfall averages 180 inches (15 ft/4.6 m) and blankets the ground from November to April. Annual precipitation of 24 inches (2 ft/0.70 cm) comes mostly as snow, with little summer rain. Winter temperatures get down to minus 10°F (-23°C) and summers may have only two weeks without a killing frost. The Park is in USDA Hardiness Zone 4. Native plants thrive here as do high altitude and high latitude plants from other parts of the world. The Park has 500 gardens and 460 gardens, many sponsored by individuals and organizations.

The Yampa River, for which the Park is named, runs from the Flattop Mountains at 12,000 ft (3,700 m) to its confluence with the Green River at 5,100 ft (1,600 m) in Dinosaur National Monument.

The Park charges no entrance fee but its operations are entirely funded by the voluntary contributions of its members, garden sponsors and donors. It is a City park but there is no direct City funding. However, the City provides banking, office and vehicle maintenance work, creating a remarkable private/public partnership for the Park.

A parcel of flat land was donated to the City in 1992 by a local couple who constructed the Park (YCP) and its owners since 1995. It was opened to the public in 1997 and since the year 2000 has been managed by the Yampa River Botanic Park Association. This is a group of dedicated local citizens who work many volunteer hours in the gardens and help solicit funds to employ our outstanding and dedicated staff.

Serenity and Design Vision

An urban oasis, free from traffic, commercials and the engineered environment. The Park's design avoids straight lines, the paths twist and turn, the gardens are three-dimensional, the ponds are free-form and clusters of trees filter out the sounds of traffic.

Self-Guided Garden Tour

The neighborhoods below are color-coded to the map (over). The Tour starts from the Main Entrance, goes south and clockwise round the Park then to the center. Throughout the gardens are native pine trees, spruces, firs, junipers, cottonwoods, aspens and non-native fruit trees. Most of the plants here are perennials. Most plants are labeled.

Hummingbird Neighborhood

The Butterfly Garden features plants on which butterflies feed or lay their eggs. The Hummingbird Garden has flowers that attract these tiny birds, mostly broad-tailed. You arrive in the summer to breed and in August the wide landscape of 1,000 miles to return to the mountains of Mexico. The Crevice Garden displays plants growing between vertical rock faces as they do naturally in the nearby mountains.

Each of the Color Gardens has flowers of a different color. Some annuals are used to maintain color throughout the season. The Foliage Garden has two benches with views of Emerald Mountain and the Yampa Valley.

Rainbow Neighborhood

Continue south to the Medicinal Herb, Culinary Herbs and Sensory Garden. Beyond is Windigo Garden and the Wind Sculpture, which has turned continuously since 1998. The Waterwise Garden features dryland plants of the intermountain west. Enjoy September Chama, the grove of aspen trees and the Garden for All Seasons with its sandstone blocks from the mountains near Rocky Mountain National Park. Follow Loop Walk to see the Pioneer Garden, featuring plants that the early settlers brought across the plains.

Reflections Neighborhood

Wander left to see the Hidden Garden and shade by the small cottonwood trees that were here before the Park. Above it are the gardens around the Reflection Pond: the Reflecting Garden, the Grove Garden and the Ponder Garden. The pond source of water is Fish Creek, a half-mile away and the water travels in a ditch through other properties, a right protected by Colorado water law.

The adjacent Painter's Garden features plants that grow in the niches between large rocks on this cool north-facing slope, but the Secret Trail is only for the agile. Next is the High Country Natives Garden which has thickets of native shrubs and plants from the surrounding mountains and is left to grow fairly wild. At the end of this garden, backtrack to Jeff's Walk.

North Neighborhood

Beyond the shed, on the left is Dorothy's Garden filled with native species. Above sits a bench with a ramada overlooking Emerald Mountain. On the right is the Members Rock Garden, the largest garden in the Park. It gets full sun, but large rocks and gravel trap moisture to permit many interesting rock plants to grow.

North of the Members Garden, between the ashes, is the children's Garden. It contains a covered amphitheater, a constructive play table called Stumpyland, a play house and a teepee covered in hops. Beyond are vegetable gardens for the staff and junior Master Gardeners and raised beds which are planted by members of Community Cultivation, a local non-profit. The north-facing slope to your right has a stand of alpine and Douglas fir trees.

Trillium Neighborhood

The high wood filling the edge for maintenance is Jeff's Garden. On the right is John's Pond. The high trillium blooms in May. The High Country Natives Garden is the songbirds and shrubs of the Pond Neighborhood.

Top Mountains, a crevice area, troughs and tufa rock. Beyond the stands of evergreens is Trillium House, the Park's headquarters, named for the three-petalled flowers that push up through the rocks and plants from around the site. Sit on the bench above to enjoy the Yampa River flowing by. Beside the kiosk is the Rose Garden, the largest garden in the Park. It gets sun, but large rocks and gravel trap moisture to permit many interesting rock plants to grow.

Sundial Neighborhood

Returning to the Main Entrance turn right to the flat gardens between Fish Creek and Y. The first garden you will see is the colorful Corner Garden and beyond it the Lily Garden with a mixture of tall Colorado native lies and showy oriental lies. Beside the sundial, the Yin Yang Garden showcases unusual shrubs and grasses. The Sundial Garden is a miniature alpine landscape using tuft rock and the Subalpine Garden showcases shrubs. The Shrub Garden provides locations for the unusual fall crocus that leaf out in spring but display their bright pink blossoms leafless in September. Next, Daris Arbor Garden features a variety of plants providing blooms most of the year and an arbor decorated with roses and clematis.

Pond Neighborhood

Think of The Green as a theater. The pines, spruces and firs are the wall, the grass is the seating. Peter's Pond and surrounding trees and benches are the scenery. The stage is ready for The Green is the venue for Music-on-the-Green (in season Thursday at 7:30 p.m) as well as yoga classes, theater and opera. It is available for beautiful weddings and other events each summer.

Peter's Pond is shaded by native narrowleaf cottonwood trees. To avoid a killing frost, the Annuals Garden is not planted until June, which is when the water lies begin to flourish in the warmer water. The water from Fish Creek has now travelled through three ponds and from here it will travel under the Loop Walk, under the bridge here, then to a wetland into the Yampa River, then the Green and the great Colorado River. It will be tap water for Phoenix, irrigate vegetables in California and a trickle may enter Mexico’s Gulf of California.

Pond Neighborhood

Follow the South Ridge Trail to Loop Walk and turn left to Lynnes Garden, where the Wolf is resting among columbine flowers and aspen trees. Around the corner the Foliage Garden was planted to provide a mosaic of textures. To the left of the gate is the Spring Bulbs Garden, a riot of color in May and June.

Membership

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

Memorials and gifts are tax-deductible. You can have the satisfaction of knowing you have taken action to sustain the Park if you become a member at one of these levels:

- GLACIER LILY $30 - $99
- COLUMBINE $100 - $499
- TRILLIUM $500 - $999
- SUNFLOWER $1,000 - $4,999
- SHOOTING STAR $5,000 - $9,999
- SEGIO LILY $10,000 - $19,999
- FORGET-ME-NOT $20,000+
- BUSINESS SUPPORTER $100+
- GARDEN SPONSOR $900+

Or, mail your donation.

Make checks payable to “Yampa River Botanic Park”

Name ____________________________
Phone __________________________
Billing Address __________________________________________
City ____________________________ State ______ Zip ______
Email ________________________________________________
Amount enclosed ________________________

Mail to: Yampa River Botanic Park
PO Box 776269, Steamboat Springs, CO 80477

Thank you. Your donation helps keep the Park free for all.

Contact Us

Phone: 970.846.5172
Email: info@yrbp.org
Visit our Website: yampariverbotanicpark.org

Join us for “Social Gardening” every Wednesday 9 – noon.

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