

Yampa Valley Sustainability Council  
Lifetime Achievement Award  
By Bob Enever  
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The Sustainability Council **kindly** invited me here to receive this Lifetime Achievement Award ..... which I shall **treasure** ..... all the more because my beloved Audrey shares this award with me ... and I **wish** she could be here.

I'm going to use my time to tell you the story of how **tiny** Steamboat Springs, Colorado came to have a Botanic Park .....\_a place for people to commune with Nature .....in serenity.

As a teenager I made flower gardens for my mother, with a vague idea of a plan in my head, a shovel, and a wheelbarrow.

Audrey and I were married for 68 years. All that time, one of our unspoken sharings was that Audrey loved to plant and tend flower gardens, and I would make gardens for her at the houses we lived in. .... So in 1989, after 18 years in Steamboat I built us a new home, with 150 lineal feet of raised flower beds on the south side of the house enclosing a brick patio; this time I used a contractor instead of my hands. For the last 30 years of Audrey's life she loved that garden and spent much of her summers gardening there.

3 years later the City was building the Core Trail along the Yampa River, and needed to go through Fish Creek Mobile Home Park that Audrey and I had owned for 17 years. Without any discussions or negotiations with the City or its attorneys I made an offer that the City immediately accepted. It required that the City buy the land that is now Emerald Park and the Botanic Park, and make the southern 6 acres a City Park that I could do something with. In return The City would have a right of way for the Trail through the Mobile Home Park, and beside the river and would avoid having to cross the railroad tracks **twice**.

Steamboat's parks were, and are all grassed for games and play. Audrey and I wanted to create a **visually-pleasing** park that was fun just to be **IN** ... for the citizens of Steamboat Springs. So I spent the winter of 1994-5 with a landscape architect, making and revising plans every day until I settled on the final design

Once we had a plan, we started to think about how we were going to fund the construction. Just then a personal disaster for Audrey and me occurred when our 31-year-old star athletic son Peter, died of a heart attack in March 1995. Audrey and I immediately decided that we would use the investments we had given Peter ..... as seed money for the Park, to get the construction started. So we buried ourselves in this project to take the sting out of our grief..... I hired trucks and bulldozers, brought in dirt for the berms, and shaped the land. The gravel we excavated to make the ponds was used for the foundation of the circular road. We brought in

massive rocks from the Haymaker Golf Course, which the City was building at the same time. We built fences to keep the animals from eating our flowers.

By this time the Park was such an important part of our lives that from here on we funded the construction work and everything else with our own money. The second year we built an irrigation system and planted 500 trees and shrubs. We also filed on existing water rights to fill the ponds and to have water flowing through the Park. The third year, 1997 we had grass on the Green and opened the Park to the public.

The City partnered with the Park by taking the payroll, purchasing, accounts payable and equipment maintenance functions off our hands, so we could concentrate on the gardens and fund-raising. We have never asked for taxpayer money and the Park's revenues come from memberships, donations and events. The Park pays the City for the payroll and payables.

For the next ten years Audrey and I spent a lot of time at the Park. I built gardens, the concrete stage, Trillium House and the rest of the Park's facilities. Audrey planned the plantings and selected the plants and planted them, with a team led by the Park Supervisor who did everything needed to run a small public gardens. Audrey and the team learned a lot about plants that thrive, and fail, in our cold winters and dry summers.

While this was going on we gained a board of directors; gardeners who wanted to help manage the Park, and who by 2007 were collecting the money from the public, and had gained the experience to run the Park with minimum help from us. We wanted the Park to continue after we were gone so we deliberately left things for the board to deal with themselves, so they would learn, and we could **retire**,..... **again!** This "**working board**" managed the Park very well until 2019, when the board decided the Park and the gardens had succeeded so well that we needed to do things professionally. We hired Jennifer MacNeil as our Executive Director. In 4 short years she and Kathy Connell, our Board Chair, have changed the Park from being in the hands of a good amateur group .... to being a professionally-managed organization ..... and it shows in every aspect of the Park today.

Since this is the Sustainability Council I have to mention that since we started gardening 27 years ago we have **composted** every leaf of our green trash, mainly because our vegetable compost is so beneficial to the soils and plants, but also because it minimizes what we put in the landfill.

So **that's** how tiny Steamboat Springs, Colorado came to have a Botanic Park.

On behalf of my beloved Audrey and myself I want to sincerely thank the members of the Sustainability Council for this Lifetime Achievement Award.