

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Turn a page at Betty Ford Alpine Gardens

*Charity proud of two priceless albums
by master bookbinder Helmut Fricker*

VAIL, Colo. (March 26, 2008) — With spring in the air and a 20th anniversary to celebrate, America's highest botanical garden is looking to turn more than a few pages this year.

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens wants the Vail Valley community to know about two very special books — both handmade, leather-bound creations by renowned local musician Helmut Fricker, who also happens to be a master bookbinder.

One of the books was given to the Gardens' namesake, former first lady Betty Ford, at a tribute dinner in her honor on Aug. 7, 2005. The one-of-a-kind album, featuring a window on the front cover revealing a photo of a Betty Ford Daylily in full bloom, weighs 5 pounds. Its 40 pages contain personal letters to Mrs. Ford written by her family and friends, including other first ladies, national dignitaries, local community leaders and members of the Gardens' staff.

"It's a very special book," says Fricker, a longtime friend of the Ford family, as well as an honorary member of the Gardens since he performed his Austrian squeezebox act at the Garden's ribbon-cutting ceremony in 1988. "I was so proud to make it for her."

The other book is another one-of-a-kind creation containing every honorarium or memorial to the Gardens since fundraising efforts began in the 1980s. A veritable living document weighing 6 pounds, it lists names of people — living and deceased — added every year by a professional calligrapher, no matter the value of a donation in their name.

"People contribute to the Gardens because they want to make a difference in the quality of life for those in our local community, as well those who visit from afar," says Ann Kurronen, the Gardens' executive director. "While memberships are our largest source of income, memorials and honorariums are another significant portion of our donation base."

The memorial book, on display through Memorial Day at Alpine Treasures gift shop on the Gore Creek Promenade, in Vail Village, will move to the Gardens' other gift shop, the Schoolhouse in Ford Park, for display through the rest of the summer season.

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, at 8,250 feet above sea level in Vail's Ford Park, is the highest botanical garden in the United States, and perhaps the world, providing free access to an estimated 100,000 visitors annually. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for which operations and programs are funded entirely through the generosity of donors, its mission is to inspire passion for plants in high-altitude communities through beautification, conservation, education and research programs.

"We hope to be able to continue to offer our programs free of charge," Kurrnen says. "Memorializing someone is a wonderful way to keep the spirit of someone alive while helping out the Gardens, as well."

Other ways to give tax-deductible donations to the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens are available, Kurrnen says, including: naming opportunities throughout the Gardens; an independent endowment managed by Gardens' Board of Trustees; and the Sustainable Roots Plan, providing financial security for the Gardens for years to come.

Recognized as the foremost authority on high-altitude plants in natural and cultivated landscapes in the Rocky Mountains, Betty Ford Alpine Gardens not only contributes staff and expertise essential to conservation efforts throughout the region, it also provides an environment for rare, exotic and imperiled alpine wildflowers and plants. It also plays an important role in encouraging summertime flower displays throughout the Vail Valley at both private homes and businesses.

For more information on memberships, memorials and honorariums to the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, call 970-476-0103, or visit www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org.

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(Note: Photos of the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens are available for download at www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org, or upon request — SLW.)