

Ecologist rises to top

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens' Nicola Ripley is named president of national group

Daily staff report

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VAIL — One of Vail's leading ecologists is now the head of North America's top professional gardening associations.



NICOLA
RIPLEY

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens' director of horticulture and research, Nicola Ripley, has been named president of the American Public Gardens Association.

"My passion has always been plant conservation and research," said Ripley, an Eagle resident who for three years has served on Gardens Association's board of directors, two years as vice president. "This will be quite a challenge and commitment of time, but the returns for Betty Ford Alpine Gardens will be far greater. We're now an important part of an enormous support network of public gardens."

With a master's degree in ecology from University College of North Wales in Bangor, England, Ripley has emerged as one of the United States' leading specialists in alpine environments. In addition to overseeing the plant collection and research

projects at Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, she travels frequently, sharing talks and slide shows with botanic clubs and societies across the U.S.

Ripley also has worked for some of the giants in the field, including the Nature Conservancy Council and the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology in England. And for five years, she was co-owner and director of Montane Environmental Solutions Ltd., an environmental consulting company based in Eagle County that conducted rare plant studies, environmental-impact analyses and wetland surveys for private and governmental clients.

"With her knowledge and experience, Nicola got a lot of respect when she first joined our board. We immediately saw her as a potential leader," said Dan Stark, executive director of the Gardens Association. "And with her coming from a relatively small organization like Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, she can make sure the interests of small public gardens are represented within our leadership."

The American Public Gardens Association, based in Kennett Square, Pa., strives to serve and strengthen public gardens by supporting their work, value and achievements in horticultural display, education, research and plant conservation. With more than 500 institutional members and more than a thousand individual members, the APGA is the leading advocate for public gardens in North America.

For more information about the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, call 970-476-0103, ext. 3, or visit www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org.