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Rejoice in summer

*Betty Ford Alpine Gardens
hosts annual Summer Solstice
Celebration on Saturday*

VAIL, Colo. (June 12, 2008) — America’s highest botanical garden is gearing up for the summer season with an afternoon filled with flowers, art and fun.

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, in conjunction with Vail’s Art in Public Places program, the Vail Nature Center and the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival, officially observes the longest day of the year during its annual Summer Solstice Celebration on Saturday, June 20, from 1 to 4 p.m.

“We invite the community to help us celebrate summer solstice, the official start of summer,” says Ann Kurronen, the Gardens’ executive director. “In collaborating with several other nonprofit organizations, together we’ll offer lots of activities for children and families that help us appreciate the changing of the seasons.”

Near The Schoolhouse giftshop and museum at Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, in Vail’s Ford Park, artists invited by Art in Public Places will be displaying their work as part of the 10th annual Summer of Sculpture.

This year’s featured work, on loan from the Denver Art Museum, is by world-renowned artist Bernar Venet. The sculpture, entitled “228.5° Arc x 5,” is a 7-foot-high, rolled-steel, curved shape that appears to defy gravity in its ingenious tilted balance.

For a second time, the Gardens and the AIPP also are hosting an *en plein air*, or outdoor, painting competition, during which judges will select three paintings of Venet’s sculpture to be sold at Vail International Gallery.

“The artists all choose different viewpoints,” says AIPP Coordinator Leslie Fordham. “Come look over their shoulders, see their points of view, watch paintings being created from beginning to end. It’s a great way to see the whole artistic process.”

For the kids, activities include a Painted Lady butterfly launch, dancing around a maypole, Bravo’s Instrument Petting Zoo, croquet games and guided tours of the Gardens. The Vail Nature Center, meanwhile, is hosting “The Wild Side of Ford Park,”

including more kids activities, as well as educational nature trail walks along the banks of Gore Creek.

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.

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 about the painting competition during this year's Summer Solstice Celebration, visit www.ArtInVail.com. For a complete events schedule or more information about the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, call 970-476-0103 or visit www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org.

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