

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



## **Art ‘en plain air’ at the Gardens**

*Betty Ford Alpine Gardens hosts  
artistic workshops this summer*

VAIL, Colo. (May 28, 2008) — America’s highest botanical garden is celebrating artistic expression amid the alpine flora this summer season.

Inspired by an extraordinary passion for high-altitude flowers and plants, Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, in Vail’s Ford Park, presents the 2009 Art in the Gardens series, which invites local and regional artists to spend a day amid the Gardens’ alpine flowers and plants demonstrating and teaching how they create their work *en plein air*, or “in the open air.”

Kicking off the Art in the Gardens series is local nature photographer Jon Sheppard, on hand from 3 to 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 3, then again on Wednesdays, June 17, July 8 and 29, Aug. 19 and 26 and Sept. 2. Class time includes instruction, shooting in the Gardens, critique and the opportunity to have photos selected for display at the Vail Public Library during the upcoming winter season.

“I get a real thrill sharing with others how to make great images, offering new ideas and tricks of the trade,” says Sheppard, now in his fourth summer offering expertise at Betty Ford Alpine Gardens. “And it’s the perfect setting.”

Next week, on Wednesday, June 10, fourth-generation Colorado watercolorist Cheryl St. John will be on hand in the Gardens from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., then again on July 1, Aug. 12 and Sept. 9. Inspired by “the wide open spaces,” her classes focus on improving *en plein air* techniques.

"*En plein air* is always a challenge, never-ever routine. The changing light and weather conditions create a sense of urgency that translates to a spontaneous and loose interpretation of the scene, something that is very difficult to achieve in the studio," says St. John. "Besides, it's a great excuse to be outdoors."

The husband-wife team of Kevin D. Miles and Wendy Schaefer-Miles, known for their luscious neo-impressionistic original oils of the great American landscape, are in the Gardens for two days, June 19 and 20, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., creating an oil-on-canvas painting of the Gardens.

Denver watercolor artist Patricia Barr-Clarke demonstrates *en plein air* techniques all day on Wednesdays, July 15 and 29 and Aug. 12. And Cynthia Padilla, international botanical artist and naturalist illustrator, offers a two-day Field Sketching Workshop 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, Sept. 4 and 5.

The Art in the Gardens program also features artists displaying their art for sale at Alpine Treasures, the Gardens' gift shop on Gore Creek in Vail Village. St. John will be on hand July 25, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Barr-Clarke will be there Saturday, Aug. 1, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Vail watercolorist Elaine Kuntz is scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 5, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"I love doing studies of all the wonderful and unique flowers at the Gardens," says, Kuntz, known for her realistic approach to location and feeling in the atmosphere. "I enjoy the immense variety of colorful things there, and to be able to get up close to them is marvelous."

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 the complete events schedule or more information, call 970-476-0103, ext. 3, or visit [www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org](http://www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org).

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