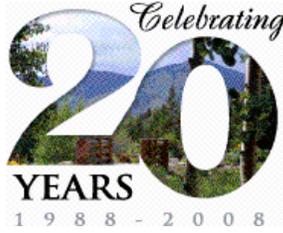


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Kids meet Mother Nature at Betty Ford Alpine Gardens

*New Back to Nature Trail promotes
discovery, creativity in the great outdoors*

VAIL, Colo. (Aug. 2, 2008) — There's plenty of nature for kids to touch, feel and experience at America's highest botanical garden.

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, announces the creation of the Back to Nature Trail, a network of primitive footpaths, features and activities in the natural riparian environment along the banks of Gore Creek, in Vail's Ford Park. The area provides a safe and quiet place for children to play freely and flex their youthful imaginations.

"We now have a place at the Gardens where kids can actually touch nature, unleash their creativity and build things out of their imagination," says Nicola Ripley, director of horticulture at the Gardens. "The Back to Nature Trail is the type of place kids can go to when they are told by their parents to go outside and play. It's a safe and wondrous place to explore in a natural mountain setting."

The concept is inspired by "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder," by Richard Louv, who's started a movement of sorts advocating the benefits Mother Nature can have on children. In the book, Louv directly links a profound lack of nature in the lives of today's "wired generation" to some of the most disturbing childhood trends, such as the rises in obesity, attention disorders, and depression.

"We know from our own life experience that children do need to spend time in nature and the outdoors for healthy physical, mental and emotional development," says Ann Kurronen, executive director of the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens.

Listed here are seven specific reasons:

- Nature reduces stress and lowers the risk of depression.
- Children work through issues by playing outdoors. Nature has a restorative, spiritual quality that enables them to think more clearly.
- Outdoor experiences foster creativity. Natural spaces stimulate a child's limitless imagination.

- Two-thirds of American children can't pass a basic physical. Growing evidence suggests contact with nature is as important to children as good nutrition and adequate sleep.
- Spending time outdoors helps build a child's confidence through heightened awareness of their surroundings, which in turn, encourages them to better trust their instincts.
- Nature-smart children have alert sensory skills. Outdoor environments challenge, excite, and stimulate their senses.
- Nature-connected children tend to pay more attention to the world around them and are more compelled to protect nature as action-oriented adult citizens and voters.

Open dawn to dusk along the banks of Gore Creek, the Back to Nature Trail is located between The Schoolhouse Gift Shop and Museum and the covered bridge at Manor Vail. In addition to a picnic area with tables, there are several stations at which Gardens staff members provide natural objects and props that promote sensory enrichment and appreciation of the great outdoors.

Other children's programs at the Gardens include:

- The Children's Garden, designed to simulate habitats ranging from the valley floor at 8,200 feet above sea level to the highest peaks of the Gore Range, at more than 13,000 feet.
- The annual Butterfly Launch, in which local third-graders learn about natural metamorphosis.
- Junior Naturalist Program, a joint venture with the Gore Range Natural Science School, Vail Recreation District's Nature Center, the Colorado Ski Museum and the White River National Forest Service.
- Learn N' Grow, educational classes for children ages 5 to 10 offered on Wednesdays.
- Back Pack Program, in which children check out a backpack filled with interactive discovery ideas.
- Gardener's Tool Shed, offering kid-friendly tools for use to play in the soil.

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 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, call 970-476-0103 or visit www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org.

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