



BETTY FORD ALPINE GARDENS

2021

The policies in this handbook support Betty Ford Alpine Gardens' staff and volunteers in creating an organizational culture of sustainability and stewardship while fulfilling the criteria of the Actively Green business certification program.



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“In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we have been taught.”

— Baba Dioum, Senegalese Conservationist

Introduction:

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is one of the world’s premier specialized botanical gardens. Located in the small resort town of Vail, Colorado which attracts a global audience for its skiing and outdoor recreation, Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is the highest elevation botanical garden in the world situated at 8,200’ (2,700 m) in the central Rocky Mountains. The Gardens attracts more than 100,000 visitors annually to see its unique collection of alpine and mountain plants collected from around the world.

Mission Statement, Vision Statement and Guiding Principles:

See section 2.3 of Betty Ford Alpine Gardens Employee Handbook

Strategic Plan –Three-Year Objectives

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens’ staff and Board of Directors work together to create and adhere to the objectives set forth by a Strategic Plan. Each year the Executive Director and board of directors develop an organizational financial budget that is in alignment with the organization’s Strategic Plan. Sustainability planning and continuous improvement are considered during this process. The three objectives for the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan are:

- Conserve and educate –dramatically expand our conservation and educational impacts through innovative research, exhibits, educational and interpretive programs.
- Grow –present inspiring displays of alpine plants and develop additional public sites to expand our living collections and conservation efforts.
- Sustain –we will build our organizational excellence to have all the financial, board, staff and volunteer resources needed to meet our mission and vision.

Each of these objectives include additional strategies and priorities. For more information, please refer to the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens 2020-2023 Strategic Plan.



Sustainability Code of Conduct Pledge:

At Betty Ford Alpine Gardens we are committed to sustainability and the “triple bottom line” approach including: environmental sustainability, financial sustainability, and social equity. We integrate sustainability into our management and facility operations and our programming for youth and adult participants. We are a socially and environmentally responsible organization and therefore we address what we can control through our operations, and we influence what we cannot control by considering the extended supply chain when we purchase from and contract with vendors. For additional information, please refer to Betty Ford Alpine Gardens’ Sustainability Action Plan available from the operations manager.

Sustainability Policy Statement:

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is committed to the sustainability of the Eagle Valley and surrounding mountain environment. We value the ecological, economic, and cultural health of our community and our valley. Therefore, we strive to engage our participants, visitors, and employees in environmental stewardship and learning about the surrounding mountain environment. We also encourage our participants, visitors, and employees to participate in local cultural and educational opportunities that enrich our community’s sense of well-being. Betty Ford Alpine Gardens uses a Sustainability Action Plan to set goals and guide our progress. We will conduct a sustainability review at minimum annually and plan for the following year’s goals in order to foster continuous improvement.

Green Team

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens has a designated Green Team with a chair staff member and other staff represented from each of the organization’s departments. The Green Team meets monthly and is responsible for coordinating the organization’s sustainability management and initiatives and Sustainability Action Plan. The Green Team is responsible for maintaining Actively Green eco- certification using the Actively Green sustainability management system.

Green Team members:



Ellen Lorenz, Nick Courtens, Nanette Kuich, Nicola Ripley

Specific Responsibilities:

- Record and monitor water usage and find ways to conserve
- Record and monitor waste production, compost and recycling and find ways to improve
- Record and monitor energy usage and make recommendations
- Record and monitor purchasing of paper, chemicals, and other products and ensure their sustainability (recycled, eco-friendly, fair trade, organic, etc.)
- Record and monitor greenhouse gas emissions and promote fossil fuel free transportation
- Stay up to date on ecofriendly innovations and processes so as to implement them into the organization
- Track staff volunteer hours

Waste Reduction Policy

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is committed to limiting our environmental impact by decreasing waste through reducing, recycling, composting, and bulk purchases. Staff members are regularly updated on local recycling and composting policies and procedures and are capable of instructing guests and visitors about how to use these systems. Waste storage and disposal adheres to local regulation and best practice guidelines. Being located in an area with abundant wildlife, Betty Ford Alpine Gardens takes the necessary measures to keep the local population and wildlife safe. All waste is stored in enclosed and locked facilities.

Waste Reduction Monitoring Plan: Recycling bins are accessible and well labeled in all spaces and emptied into the larger, 800-gallon recycling dumpster located in the trash building in the Ford Park Parking Lot. The recycling bins in Ford Park are single stream bins. The Green Team will monitor the amount and type of waste in our sorted containers to track and maximize the amount of waste diverted from landfills.

Paper, Cardboard, Plastic, Glass, and Aluminum:



Comingled recycling can include all recyclable paper, cardboard, plastic, glass, and aluminum containers marked with a recycling symbol 1-7. Staff members rinse out containers to prevent both a dirty recycling stream and odor in indoor recycling bins. Cardboard is broken down and tape and staples are removed.

Plastic Bags/Film and Corks:

Employees are provided with reusable bags and the use of single use plastic is discouraged. The gift shop purchases only biodegradable bags. Plastic film (Amazon packaging, wrapping, fruit bags, etc.) is collected and brought to the City Market for the plastic film recycling program.

Corks are collected in a bin in the staff office and taken to a ReCork location.

Compost:

Garden compost is taken to the West Maintenance Building of the Gardens. Once full, it is collected by the Town of Vail into a larger compost facility. To complete the circle, the Gardens purchases the soil product of this compost. Kitchen/event compost is collected in the compost bucket located in the office kitchen and taken to the Honeywagon drop site. Paper towels from the restrooms are collected in a bin the workshop and taken to the drop site, as well.

Household Hazardous Waste:

There is a container in the staff office to collect HHW. Items to be put in this container include electronic waste (batteries, CFL bulbs, chargers, cables, etc.), chemical waste (paint, cleaners, pesticides), and ink cartridges. These are taken to the Vail Hard-to-Recycle events.

Procedure:

1. Waste and recyclables are disposed of properly in seven-gallon containers located throughout the Center and collected in the 30-gallon trash bin and 14 gallon recycling bins in the Alpine House workshop, respectively.
2. When these receptacles are full, the amount of material in gallons is recorded onto laminated sheets and then emptied into the larger 800-gallon dumpsters in the Ford Park Parking Lot trash building. This data is entered monthly into the SMS and a normalized data spreadsheet.
3. Trash can liners are reused as often as possible.
4. Compost is the bucket or bin and taken to the organics drop site.



5. HHW is disposed of during the WMSC hazardous waste drive and/or Town of Vail's Difficult to Recycle drive, yearly.
6. Lunches are predominately zero-waste by bringing containers from home to reuse and by using the reusable plates and silverware provided in the staff kitchen. Food is discarded into compost bucket.
7. All material purchases are deemed necessary in order to reduce solid waste production.

Water Use Policy

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is dedicated to the efficient use of water both indoors and for irrigation and continues to seek more ways to conserve. Wastewater, including grey water, is only reused or released safely or treated by Eagle River Water and Sanitation with no adverse effects to environmental flows.

Water Use Monitoring Plan: The Green Team tracks and records water use on a monthly basis via water meter measurements. With a baseline established, Betty Ford Alpine Gardens determines and enacts the best procedures to reduce water consumption and catches any abnormal usage.

Procedure:

1. Green Team takes measurements from the water meter on a monthly basis and normalizes quarterly based on patron count.
2. The organization strives to maintain or reduce the baseline based on seasonal trends.
3. Staff is thoughtful and strategic about water usage while still maintaining the health of the gardens (ex. Sweeping instead of mopping, irrigation system with water detection). Drought signage will be placed in bathrooms and the kitchen when necessary.
4. Continue to use a raw water system for irrigation set forth by Eagle River Water & Sanitation.
5. Much of the Gardens to remain native plants and water thirsty annuals are used sparingly.
6. Monitor any high-usage trends or occurrences and identify conservation opportunities.



Energy Reduction Policy

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is dedicated to the efficient use of energy resources and maintaining sustainable practices in order to continually aim to reduce usage and thereby reduce total non-renewable energy consumption. A goal of 5% energy use reduction is strived for annually.

Energy Use Monitoring Plan: The Green Team tracks and records energy use on a monthly basis from Holy Cross Energy. With a baseline established, Betty Ford Alpine Gardens determines and enacts the best procedures to reduce energy consumption.

Procedure:

1. Green Team monitors monthly utility bills to ensure monthly recording accuracy and normalizes monthly based on patron count.
2. Green Team ensures proper functioning of green building design features and explores opportunities for adjustments.
3. All staff is encouraged to make behavioral changes to reduce energy use including; lowering thermostat set points, leaving lighting off when there is plentiful natural light, turning lights off in unoccupied rooms, unplugging charging devices, and turning off electronics. Continue to use self-turn-off lights.
4. Monitor any high-energy trends or unusual occurrences and identify conservation opportunities.
5. Avoid the use of natural gas.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Policy

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is dedicated to the reduction of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions related to operations. Employees share new ways to reduce their carbon footprint.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Monitoring Plan: Betty Ford Alpine Gardens totals the employee commuter and business-related miles by car or plane



for operations. Action plans are created to reduce total emissions. It is our goal to switch to renewal energy with Holy Cross' PuRe program.

Procedure:

1. Employee commuting mileage and frequency is totaled to establish a baseline. Employees are encouraged to carpool, bike, and use public transportation to reduce commuting mileage.
2. Commuting mileage is recorded on a monthly basis and normalized quarterly based on full time staff count in order to track reductions or promote conservation.

Pollution Prevention—Vehicles Policy

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens pledges to reduce air pollution and vehicle traffic by encouraging participants, visitors, and employees to use public transportation whenever possible. All visitors to the Gardens are encouraged to use the Vail Public Transportation System and Eagle County transit as a way of traveling to the Gardens whenever possible.

Pollution Prevention –Vehicles Monitoring Plan: The Green Team tracks full-time employee vehicle commuting. This information is recorded monthly and fossil free transportation is subtracted from the total.

Procedure:

1. Participants, visitors, volunteers, and employees are encouraged to use public transportation and carpool whenever possible. Vail Transit and ECO information is provided for all transportation inquiries and on our website.
2. Employee commuting mileage is recorded monthly and fossil free transportation is subtracted from the total. This information is normalized quarterly based on full time staff count.
3. To avoid using air-polluting vehicles, employees walk, bike, or use the electric golf cart for maintenance and transportation around Ford Park and Vail Village.



Sustainable Transportation Pledge:

Visitors have the option and are advised to bus, bike, or walk as a means for arrival and departure. Employees are rewarded with schedule accommodation for using alternative transportation to get to work (carpooling, walking, biking, public transport). Telecommuting is offered, as well. Bikes are available to employees and volunteers to use for maintenance, transport, and errands. It is Betty Ford Alpine Gardens' policy to provide and promote activities, tours, and experiences that incorporate human-powered travel.

Chemical Use and Purchasing Policy

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens strives to minimize the amount of harmful chemicals it introduces into the environment by using non-toxic and biodegradable cleaning products. The only other chemicals used are organic fossil fuel free fertilizer and OMRI Certified pesticides. Betty Ford Alpine Gardens uses IPM (Integrated Pest Management) strategies to reduce the amount of chemicals introduced through care of plants. Purchase of harmful substances is avoided and substituted when available with preference given to biodegradable products. The Education Center also provides information for community members looking to reduce their chemical use in home gardening.

Chemical Management Plan: The Green Team keeps track and records the purchase of cleaning products and chemicals in a material safety data sheet.

Procedure:

1. Purchase organic, eco-friendly, non-toxic, and biodegradable products in order to provide a healthier environment for employees and the community. Cleaning products used are as natural and harmless as possible.
2. The organization trains all applicable employees in the safe and proper handling of chemicals. Proper protective equipment is used when needed.
3. All toxic chemical cleaning supplies purchased are inventoried with safety information in a material safety data sheet and stored in a designated location.
4. Provide information on organic gardening and ways to keep chemicals out of Gore Creek and improve Eagle County's overall environmental health.



Responsible Purchasing Policy

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens strives for sustainable economic development through the support of local businesses and the purchasing of recycled, fair trade, local and organic products when possible. Products that are harmful to the environment, humans, or animals are avoided.

Responsible Purchasing Monitoring Plan: Betty Ford Alpine Gardens will record purchases of recycled, fair trade, local and organic products for each quarter.

Procedure:

1. Staff are encouraged to purchase products locally when available, (within a 100-mile radius of the organization), over importing from outside the region. Give preference to organizations with sustainability certifications and policies.
2. When purchasing, research if there is a more ethical option.
3. Record responsible purchases.
4. Continually update the list of preferred and local vendors.

Paper Reduction Policy

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens pledges to reduce paper usage and commits to continue to use at a minimum 30% recycled copy paper.

Paper Reduction Monitoring Plan:

Track paper purchasing with a pledge to reduce paper usage 10% a year.

Procedure:

1. Track and document overall volume of copy paper purchased on a quarterly basis.
2. Non-business paper that is printed on only one side must be reused in tray 2.
3. Materials such as tour maps and scavenger hunt maps are laminated or placed in reusable devices to avoid the necessity of mass printing and paper waste.
4. Visitors are encouraged to place their maps/brochures in the "Recycled Maps" receptacles at the end of their use.



Community Impacts –Good Neighbor Policy

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens recognizes that the overall well-being of the Eagle Valley community depends upon people living in neighborhoods throughout the Valley and surrounding communities. Betty Ford Alpine Gardens' operations do not jeopardize the well-being or access to basic provisions or services of any person or neighboring community.

Giving Back Policy

As an environmental education nonprofit, Betty Ford Alpine Gardens engages daily in giving back through providing education and promoting conservation of alpine plants and fragile mountain environments. We pledge to do the following:

1. Continue to offer access to the Gardens and Education Center admission free as a way to engage the community and equal access.
2. Provide free materials to visitors related to education, conservation, protected areas, proper use of outdoor spaces and environmental health and encourage them to participate.
3. Provide members and volunteers with free workshops focusing on how to properly maintain a garden for their benefit and the benefit of Gore Creek. Focus on sustainable, organic gardening.
4. Offer free educational opportunities for schools and groups throughout the year, focusing on environmental stewardship.
5. Provide and share volunteer opportunities. Record staff volunteer hours.
6. Preference is given to companies that support socio-economic and conservation initiatives when selecting service providers.
7. Enhance social community development through interactive educational programs on the surrounding environment and other outreach opportunities.
8. Preserve the alpine ecosystem for future generations by continuing involvement in the Seed of Success program, Colorado Rare Plant Conservation Strategy, North American



Strategy for Alpine Plant Conservation, Global Genome Initiative, climate change monitoring, and habitat protection projects.

9. Continue involvement citizen science projects including Project Riverwatch, Project Feederwatch and Project Budburst.
10. Continue involvement on the Steering Committee for the Sustainable Destination Project.

Customer Feedback Policy

A survey soliciting feedback concerning program successes, failures, and sustainability practices is sent to visitors and program participants. Field observations are conducted by program coordinators and directors to evaluate consistency, quality, and alignment with our mission. Feedback is collected into a database and reviewed by staff to assess what is working and what we can improve. Services such as Yelp, TripAdvisor, Google, etc. are also monitored to help gain insight into the visitor's experience.

Corrective Feedback Policy: At monthly all-staff meetings, we acknowledge the successes, address the feedback that needs attention, and determine how to make improvements in order to ensure the guest experience. A debriefing after all programming and events is also conducted.

Participant & Visitor Education

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is committed to promoting the principles of sustainability and encouraging visitor's participation in these efforts. The Gardens will include conservation and sustainability in all programming and will ensure this message is communicated to visitors.

Responsible Travel

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens values and protects our surrounding mountain landscapes and watersheds. Our organization benefits from local ecosystem services such as clean air and water and natural open spaces for our participants, visitors, and employees to recreate and



rejuvenate. We are surrounded by the 2.3 million acre White River National Forest including federally designated Wilderness Areas. We pledge to help sustain these natural resources by promoting sustainable behavior in our participants, visitors, and employees –reducing vehicle traffic and air pollution by encouraging use of alternative forms of transportation, disposing of waste properly, respecting and not feeding wildlife, and preventing erosion by trekking on designated trails.

We include cultural heritage in our tour content in terms of what the present land was before us, who/what was before us and how to correctly travel in the alpine and mountain environments. Our researchers take proper precautions in preparing themselves and their equipment for alpine excursions in lieu of the rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus.

Participant and Visitor Education—Local Community & Economic Development

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens supports long-term economic vitality in the Eagle Valley by encouraging participants, visitors, and employees to purchase products and services from local vendors and to enjoy a full day in town upon experiencing the Gardens.

Infrastructure -Construction

When the Education Center was built in 2015, awareness of and compliance with regulations and non-statutory guidance related to land use for the particular zone of operation was heavily incorporated. Risk factors related to climate change, natural phenomena, and customer safety were addressed. The Gardens obtained applicable permits as required by law. The site selection and design took into account visual amenity, landscape, heritage, biologically sensitive areas, and assimilative capacity of ecosystems. During normal operations and when construction occurred, the integrity of archaeological, cultural, connectivity of natural sites, and protected areas are/were preserved. Threatened or protected species were and are not displaced, impact on wildlife is minimized/mitigated, watercourses were not altered, and runoff was unchanged. Local and recycled materials, sustainable practices and design features, regionally appropriate decorations, and xeroscaping with native plants were considered and implemented to the extent



possible. The insulation applied is above basic standards. Construction waste was sorted and disposed of in an environmentally sound manner. The construction followed closely to LEED standards.

It is our intention to maintain these standards should any renovation or demolition be considered.

If you would like more information or have suggestions for the sustainability program at Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, please contact our operations manager, Ellen Lorenz at info@bettyfordalpinegardens.org (970)476-0103 x3