

and moisture-protected by its rich, pine needle-thatched floor, but also protected from predatory weeds via the layer of pine needles that knit together into a mulch that decays into nutritional layers for the ponderosas. My own garden bed, described below, has no weeds thanks to the pine needle mulch, and asks for less watering than I ever expected.

The forest has a zillion years' experience with pine needle mulch success, and truth be told, the old story about so-called "acidity" effects on garden beds does not hold true. Whatever is right under the pine needle mulch stays moist and just right for what is intended, be it our beloved pine forest or a garden veggie section.

The forest activates specific fungi and microbial processes for its tree and forest health, and a lasagna garden bed, using kitchen scraps, activates its own specific fungi and microbial cycles to support vegetables and flowers. A caveat on animal manures is that these days, many animals are chock full of antibiotics and medicines, and that will go right into your food from the soil. I don't use manure except organic llama beans or alpaca

poop. Nope, dog and cat poo will not do, and neither will they decompose here—there are no microbes to decompose them into soil, they just become a moldy, rank pile. The forest habitat just does not know what to do with it.

Suggestions for a layered lasagna garden bed are below. Be sure to spray water on each layer as you go. The composting process needs moisture as well as nitrogen and carbon.

1. Begin with single layering of corrugated cardboard, place flat over grass or ground.
2. Add green clippings (use your carefully plucked dandelions!) or veggie kitchen scraps/coffee grounds, organic llama beans (high nitrogen element).
3. Add brown manure—it's high carbon—such as brown leaves, shredded paper, dead vegetation (sticks, dried grasses, etc., also help aerate). I like to use straw (hay has seeds that will sprout) or tall grasses inside mine. Pile on as many layers as you please. Mine was 20 inches high, but flattened out to 3 inches after the first season.

4. Top it off with 3 inches or so of finished composted soil.
5. Spread a 2 inch or so layer of pine needles on top. They will knit together as a mulch that keeps it moist underneath but allows for vital air circulation. You do want to cover the bed with mulch or further rain or snow will make the bed soggy, and the composting process will halt. Unlike other composting methods that take months, it's ready immediately: Part the pine needles, poke a hole in the moist soil, drop in the plantlet or seed, gently replace the soil, then gently replace the pine needle mulch. The slightly warm lasagna bed heats due to microbiological growth turnover in situ per their daily evolutions, which is optimal for short root starts such as lettuces and strawberries. I've also same-day planted the Native American Three Sisters garden via seeds for beans, corn, and squash with success.

Janet Sellers is a High Altitude Nature and Garden enthusiast and welcomes your handy hints about natural gardening. She can be reached at janetsellers@ocn.me.

Art Matters

Making art like Monet for the day



By Janet Sellers

Spring in our locale is a way of saying that at any given moment we should just rush out and enjoy our warm sunny days before they give way to snowstorms. I still like to get out and make art, but it's easier to duck out of the weather with a camera than an art easel setup, so that is what many of us artists do nowadays.

In some recent (indoor) talks and workshops I've been doing, we created paintings using the techniques Claude Monet used outdoors, aka plein air, in Giverny, France. The methods and techniques will translate beautifully to our natural scenes in Colorado. In the workshop, we practiced using the underpainting and color and brush techniques that Monet used.

When a person in the audience at my art talk asked me, "I don't know anything about art, these are wonderful ... but ... what is Giverny? I've heard the word, but I don't know if it is a kind of art, or a place, or a kind plant or kind of art tool." I explained that Giverny was Monet's home

town in the French countryside. It was where he made his home, and most often, when people refer to Giverny, they refer to Monet's home and grounds, where he painted hundreds of paintings of his beloved waterlilies, and hundreds more of his gardens and the nearby landscapes.

Art was not that questioner's field, but he was intrigued by the art that I was showing and asked about it. What made me happy was that he felt comfortable enough to ask me about it. That is how artists are—most of us truly enjoy interacting and talking about art with people at an event. I resolved to include more of the information about the plein air workings and places in my art talks, as well as how things are made, materials, and aesthetic value.

We have some art venues here in our community with friendly artists and some artists' receptions coming up. Let's get out and support our local art and artists this month. Next month, the Art Hop starts up again!

Call for artists

Artists are invited to submit entries for ARTSites 2017, the

yearlong outdoor public art exhibit to be installed in the Tri-Lakes area. The juried exhibit will be installed in June and on display for one year. For questions or to email entries, contact bkonarski@earthlink.net.

Local art exhibits

Bella Art and Frame Gallery, 183 Washington, Monument—ongoing exhibit of over a dozen of their gallery artists.

Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts, 304 Highway 105, Palmer Lake—Delicate Balance, Reven Marie Swanson sculptor exhibit through June 2; Predictions and Perceptions from the Spiritual Realm, also through June 2. Opening reception Friday, April 7, 6 to 8 p.m.

Southwinds Fine Art Gallery, 16575 Roller Coaster Road, corner of Rollercoaster Road and Baptist Road—viewing by appointment, call 719-481-6157, featuring the work of James Wider, John W. Anderson, and others.

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Snapshots of Our Community

Fallen Heroes honored, Mar. 2



Above: The organizations Fallen Heroes Honored and Boots 66, in a memorial tour called "Thank You 4 My Freedom," visited Lewis-Palmer High School (LPHS) on March 2 to honor two fallen former LPHS students, James Hessel and Michael Yashinski. The tour's mission is to preserve the legacies and memories of Fallen Heroes and provide healing to their families through commemorative Fallen Hero Bibles. Members of the LPHS Choir opened the ceremony with the National Anthem. A poetry reading and a moment of silence marked a POW/MIA tribute. Audience members participated in the 22-push-ups challenge, which raises awareness that about 22 veterans commit suicide every day. The presentation included biographical sketches of Hessel and Yashinski and a tribute to military service dogs for the more than 10,000 lives they have saved. LPHS Principal Sandi Brandl received an "Oath Has No Expiration Date" plaque on behalf of the school, and Hessel's parents offered a few remarks to conclude the ceremony. Additional information regarding the tours can be found at <http://fallenheroeshonored.org>. *Photo and caption by Jennifer Kaylor and John Howe.*

Shane Koyczan at TLCA, Mar. 11



Above: On March 11, internationally renowned "spoken word" artist Shane Koyczan provided an emotionally connecting and charged performance at the Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts (TLCA). Koyczan wanted to provide the audience with "a sense of connecting to their emotional space" because the "world today suggests we should shut off our emotions." Growing up in his grandparents' home in Canada's Northwest Territories, he "wrote stories to create his own world based on what was happening in the actual world," which, refined today, gives space to relatable experiences with the audience. By weaving background experiences with poems regarding lost love, reminding ourselves who we are, and the things we want most is something that already happened, each verse seemingly provided a moment of reflection with the next verse delving further into a shared realm of experience. Some members of the audience came from as far away as Kansas and Utah to hear Koyczan. Upcoming events at the TLCA can be found at www.trilakesarts.org. *Photo by David Futey.*