

“cattail on the cob.” The moist days of March are a perfect time to gather food from the forest as well as to put out some nutrients for your garden soil and emerging plants from seed or perennials. I put out Epsom salts on the soil near plants, and that will go into the soil for use by the

plants gradually. A sprinkling of Epsom salts: supports improved seed germination and nutrient absorption, counters transplant shock, greens up leaves, deters pests, and boosts chlorophyll, powering plants for sweeter fruit.

Remember, too, that a flower patch in the garden not only helps pollinators

but also supports food plants. Native flowering plants optimally support the local ecosystem, attracting helpful bugs and birds to our gardens, and for years I have planted tall sunflowers (organic raw seeds from the bulk food packs) as a hedge against possible pollutants from the neighborhood.

Janet Sellers is an avid lazy gardener (aka leave it beautifully natural) and active ethnoecologist promoting the dynamic relationships between people, biota, and environments from the cultures of the past and immediate present. She can be reached at janetsellers@ocn.me.

Art Matters

Felted fiber art from Black Forest



By Janet Sellers

Peter Ziek and wife Barbara have been devoted alpaca professionals for decades. They started out with a few of the animals, and some 20 years later have a herd of over 100 at Wild Hair Alpacas in Black Forest. Barbara is a devoted fiber artist and had quite a number of lovely items of wearable art and objet d'art for sale in local Gallery 132, where she cheerfully explained the arts' stages from animal to shearing to washing, coloring, and felting the items into the finished piece. While most of the items at this show were wearable, felted alpaca fleece can be made into wall hangings and other works of art.

The Zieks are enthusiastic about their alpaca life, relishing all aspects of care, herding, feeding, and breeding programs and just plain enjoying the various personalities and antics of the herd. The Zieks begin socializing their alpacas with humans as early as pos-



Above: Barbara Ziek, fiber artist, exhibited her alpaca fiber wearable art on Feb. 10 at Gallery 132 in Historic Monument at the Saturday artist event. Ziek uses a felting technique for her art, integrating dyes prior to the felting process as well as using unusual colorants such as rust for rich browns and deep auburn colors. Photo by Janet Sellers.

sible and often have meet- and-greet events planned for this. Peter shared

his love of the alpacas and many stories about their uniqueness outside the shop where their alpacas were on view.

Alpacas have a social life complete with best friends in social groups. Daily, one alpaca female mom from the herd will volunteer to babysit the crias (babies) so the mothers have some time off to eat. The crias play and run, dash off to nurse from their mothers, and return to the babysitter all day long. There is a social order, and the mothers instill strict social manners in the crias. The herd at Wild Hair Alpacas even have their own police squad of young, strong, watchful males that stay alert for dangers such as predators. Ziek said they have never had a problem with predators, and he has seen coyotes walk on by the pasture after the cop squad investigates the intruders. Jokingly, Ziek said it's because the close walking alpaca cop squad appears to the predator as an enormous animal with five heads and 20 legs.

Art events for March

Southwinds Fine Art Gallery—2018 Celebration Art Second Weekends Champagne Tour March 9, 4-9 p.m. guest artist show with talks at 7 p.m. by artists Sue Johnson and Lorrie Beck; March 10, costumed figure drawing 10-noon; tea with featured member artist T. McKinsey Morgan 1-4 p.m. 16575 Rollercoaster Rd.

Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts—*Visions of Light* photography juried show by Tom Heywood, Feb. 28-March 23, 304 Highway 105, Palmer Lake.

Gallery 132, an artist cooperative, will host violinist Michelle Edwards March 17 for toe-tapping Irish tunes. 251 Front St., Ste. 8.

Janet Sellers is an artist and writer. She exhibits her paintings and public art sculptures in Colorado galleries and museums, and teaches art and movie classes locally. She can be reached at janetsellers@ocn.me.

Snapshots of Our Community

Gardening class, Jan. 30



Above: Town of Monument Gardener Cassie Olgren presented the second of her series regarding high-altitude planting in the Tri-Lakes area on Jan. 30. She spoke to a full house at the Chamber of Commerce community room. Many folks in the area are new residents or newer gardeners who desire expert advice to prepare for the late spring planting. Olgren said she already has a waiting list of 55 even after she completes the series. She can be reached at colgren@tomgov.org. Photo by John Howe.

CERT Training, Jan. 31-Feb. 3



Above: Disasters happen. Will you be able to help your friends or coworkers when emergency responders are overloaded and cannot get to you right away? CERT, or Community Emergency Response Teams, are regular people who train ahead of time “just in case” for wildfire, tornado, earthquake, blizzard, or human-caused disasters. You can learn basic first aid, general preparedness, terrorism awareness, fire safety tips, search and rescue, psychological first aid, and more. Participants shown here at the Jan. 31 - Feb. 3 class hosted by Tri-Lakes United Methodist Church Emergency Preparedness Group practiced using leverage to extricate “Teddy,” who was trapped under a heavy object. To attend a free 20-hour CERT class series, to host a class in your neighborhood, or to become a volunteer instructor, contact Robin Adair, Community Emergency Preparedness and CERT program coordinator at robinadair@elpasoco.com or (719) 575-8858. See www.eppcert.org for information. Photo by Lisa Hatfield.

PLAG at TLCA, Feb. 2



Left: The Palmer Lake Art Group (PLAG) member show reception at Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts (TLCA) was held on Feb. 2. The center was filled with art lovers for the annual winter show, sales of which benefit local high school students. The show ended Feb. 23. Photo by Janet Sellers.

Fireworks Fundraiser, Feb. 3

Right: The Chautauqua Mountain Band plays Feb. 3 at the fundraiser Blues and Brews for the Palmer Lake annual Fourth of July fireworks celebration. The event showcased several bands and included beer tastings, samples from restaurants around the area, and other convivial pursuits. Photo by Janet Sellers.

