

struction work was done as a learning experience for the senior cadets as their capstone project before graduation and moving on to their initial assignments in the U.S. Air Force.

The project involved a great deal of coordination between volunteers on the PLP&T, including Project Lead Gene Kalesti, Commissioners Kevin Magner and Reid Wiecks and Professor Wambeke.

A cadet team returned to the construction site April 19 to put finishing touches on their work. A

dedication ceremony will be held on May 6 at 10 a.m.

The USAFA will build two additional bridges along the trail system to improve access by bikes as well as hikers as an educational project for senior cadet engineering students over the coming year or two.

Steve Pate can be contacted at stevepate@ocn.me.

Right: Cadet team finishing bridge work, April 19. *Photo by Steve Pate.*



High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

Garden—and lawn—success starts with dandelions!

By Janet Sellers

Before you grab anything that's toxic, let's take a look at some handy hints that are easy and don't harm people or pets.

Chemicals to kill weeds and varmints go down into our groundwater and poison our water.

Every year I share the importance of the dandelions as the first food for both hummingbirds and pollinators. Root to flower, the dandelion supports our gardens in ways we may never have imagined. Dandelions send their roots down anywhere from 2-20 feet to bring up nutrients to the surface. The roots also loosen and aerate the soil and

help control erosion. Dandelions enrich our soil and our gardens. Dandelions will not return when the soil is rich and balanced. They are edible roots to flowers. And they actually fertilize the grass. Dandelions are in the same family as lettuce, artichokes, chamomile, and daisies.

So how did dandelions get such a bad rap? Dandelions are indicators of poor soil. Contrary to popular belief, once the soil is restored dandelions stop growing in those areas. I have been able to find a plethora of information on the benefits of dandelions but curiously, the bulk of texts against growing them is from

chemical companies that want to sell chemicals. Widespread movie and TV shows of "pretend perfect" but fake lawns added to the ideas of lawns and lawn care: perfect lawn, perfect family. But there's no perfect family or lawn. That's fake, too. Dandelions can be mowed after their blooming, which has helped our pollinators and hummingbirds as the first flower of food power in spring. Mowing them is an easy way to control spread if needed.

A kid and pet safe vermin deterrent

The fastest, safest, most effective pocket gopher and vermin deterrent (besides a house cat) I have

found is castor oil. Add to a gallon (a 1-pound bag) of clean clay cat litter 6 ounces of Castor oil and shake in the bag thoroughly to coat all the clay particles. Then cast it over the lawn or garden and watch as the voles disappear over the next few days. They stay away. It gives the ground vegetation and odor and taste that disagree with the vermin. It goes safely into the soil and makes the plants taste bad to the varmints so they won't eat them. Reapply after rain or snow.

Janet Sellers is an avid lazy gardener, letting Mother Nature lead the way in our mountain high desert climate. Contact her at JanetSellers@ocn.me.

Art Matters

Art multiples: slabs to electronic screens; Art Hop rides again



By Janet Sellers

News flash: Our local Art Hop season begins in May, now 5-8 p.m. on fourth Fridays. Wander around downtown Monument for an evening of fun, art, food, and meeting up with old—and new—friends.

Today's creative artwork and hand-painted unique apparel are here as expensive yet greatly expressive, artist-designed clothing, shoes, handbags, luggage and more—even body ink. The novel ideas and values of scarcity are coming back from the mass-produced, highly available pieces that were in demand in yesteryear. And yet:

Mass-made art was an innovation

When they started, most printing process outcomes allowed for a cheaper alternative to hand work. All were available largely to the wealthy, as most new technologies are in any age.

The Museum of Modern Art in New York City explains on its website that lithography was invented around 1796 in Germany by

an otherwise unknown Bavarian playwright, Alois Senefelder, who accidentally discovered that he could duplicate his scripts by writing them in greasy crayon on slabs of easily available local limestone and then printing them with rolled-on ink. This was an easier, cheaper method compared to the earlier pen works, engravings, or etchings. Multiples via printing processes only much later became of value as art but were first related to mass, mechanical reproduction and not valued as highly as the scarcity of original handmade works.

Replication and production throughout the centuries used various flat printing methods including silk-screening, a fabric stenciling process from the Song dynasty in China that emerged around 960 A.D., then used in 1600s Japan for textiles. Japanese stencils used human hairs, with stiff brushes to apply paint. Later, silk was chosen for the stencil fabric, thus the term "silkscreen." The Western use, in England, of this process was first patented in 1907. These processes

and their artifacts hold value now because of their age and the fact that they lasted this long. They are scarce and respected artifacts of our history and our human past.

Mass production of posters in the 1960s utilized screen printing to "get the word out" in posters, signs, political protest signs, and more. The U.S. garment industry took off starting with screen printing of bowling shirts and T-shirts. Colorful printed art was right behind, thanks to Michael Vasilantone, who invented the rotary multicolored screen printing press.

I truly believe that our copy machines and other mechanical means to share our ideas and creative intent are as valuable and powerful in their time—our time—as the historic processes. We're not going to cart around an art material that requires a forklift to use it (lithographic stone slab). We do not need to use such old methods to be aesthetically valid. We do need people to be aware of art methods embodying value regardless of how it is made. Multi-million-dollar global

art fairs prove this culturally and financially every year. Even blank space is part of the art experience.

We are in the newest screen age, the electronic version, and in-hand, touchable works on paper, wood, fiber, and other surfaces are now the rarities compared to the plethora of things available on an electronic screen.

Our current art wave also embraces and craves the human touch in meaningful things. Paintings are in demand, as are sculptures and other artworks as a means for creative expression for artists to make and people to have in their lives. Reproductions are still popular, with value added via the artist that hand-signs each artwork.

Let's meet at the Art Hop and catch up!

Janet Sellers is an artist, writer, and speaker who loves to share the beauty and fun of creative thinking in art, nature, and life. Contact her at janetsellers@ocn.me.

Snapshots of Our Community

Monument Play Park plans, Mar. 10

Right: Thirty people attended a public meeting March 10 to give feedback and get more information on the proposed Heart of Monument Play Park. The park will be next to the Monument Community Presbyterian Church, which is donating the land. It'll be for people of all ages and those with physical and emotional disabilities. NES Inc.



will use the input from the meeting attendants as well as comments gathered by Monument Hill Kiwanis Club and the Heart of Monument Steering Committee to finalize the design of the park. NES says the design could be ready by June. It's hoped the park will be open this summer or fall. From left, Roberta Ross, Monument Mayor Mitch LaKind, and Tri-Lakes Cares Executive Director Haley Chapin look at the project plans. *Photo by Bob Harrigan.*

TLC thanks Kiwanis, Mar. 30



Above: Tri-Lakes Cares (TLC) has thanked Monument Hill Kiwanis Club for its contributions to TLC. Kiwanis President Scott Ross was given a certificate of appreciation on March 30. Kiwanis raises money for TLC with Empty Bowls, D38's Harvest of Love, the Giving Tree, the North Pole Craft Fair, and food distribution during the holidays. From left are TLC Director of Operations Julie Keim, Executive Director Haley Chapin, Development Specialist Christine Bucher, and Ross. *Photo by Warren Gerig.*