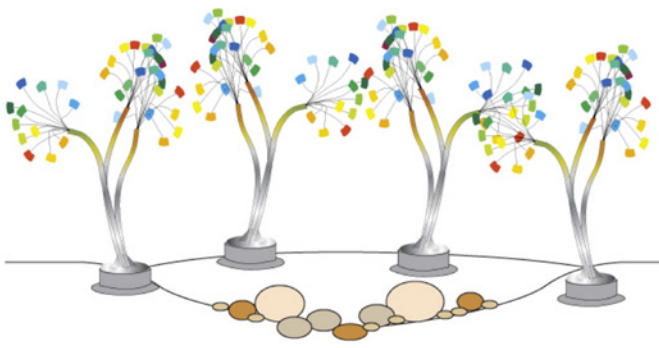


## Roundabout artwork



**Above:** Illustration of the planned sculptures for the Roundabout at Baptist Road and Old Denver Highway by Reven-Marie Swansen. The concept for Aspen Grove is four groupings of three arched “trees” standing 20 feet above the ground, thus visible from a distance. They will be lighted at night. The county’s engineers have positioned each tree in the roundabout to best fit the site. Sponsorship of a tree is \$3,500. For more information, contact fundraising Chair Dr. Betty Konarski at (719) 481-2769 (bkonarski@earthlink.net) or Sky Hall at (719) 491-3638 (skyhall@mac.com). *Drawing provided by Dr. Konarski.*

## High Altitude Natural Gardening What an altitude

By Janet Sellers

Is it time to do some gardening? Oh, yes it is! The Earth may seem asleep in February under the ice and snow here, but for us HANG gardeners, we can use our indoor warmth to start the process.

HANG springtime is generally snow time and soil microbes won’t get the garden growing outdoors until late May or early June, so we get our own proper start indoors.

Many gardeners are dutifully saving and crushing eggshells to add minerals for the garden—and potted plants in sunny windows. My test plants with basalt dust (also called Paramagnetic soil) sprinkled into the pot soil are thriving beyond expectation. With amendments to the organic potting soil, my plants and seeds are all doing great in sunny windows.

Last fall, I had grabbed the growing tomatoes and chard out of my hugelkultur bed with some of its rich soil, potted them, and hoped for the best. They are thriving. Even the marigold seed head I recently put in the chard pot has sprouted fully, and sprouts are 3 inches high already. With many seedlings being a fail for me in decades of high altitude gardening effort, I am curious if putting rich soil with live plants and adding seeds played a part, as the microbes were already working there when I placed the seeds, and soil-free seed starter has no microbes yet.

Anyhow, they seem to like each other.

I’ve had a few gnats show up, but they quickly disappear when I add a tiny bit of mild soap to the watering. I use Basic H, which I like best. I suspect detergents or soaps with any additives are bad for soils. We are, after all, trying to create optimal soil microbiology. I may find a more catchy garden name than “soil microbiology” for the organisms and their thriving chain of events in the soil. Years ago when I was studying in Japan and working with nature farming methods and learning about optimizing natural soil microbiology, the old farmers just called it “spirit of soil.”

For easy access to information, check here for a variety of how-to articles and videos I am posting for our community on the Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/MonumentCommunityGarden>. We have a great Tri-Lakes Gardening Community (TLGC) page link there as well. TLGC is a bunch of friendly local gardeners with endless tips and frequent ad hoc talks and walkabouts to local gardens.

*Janet Sellers is an avid HANG newbie, and welcomes your tips and handy hints to share with others here at our high altitude. She can be reached at JanetSellers@OCN.me.*

## Our Community Notices

By Judy Barnes, Events Editor

*Although we strive for accuracy in these listings, dates or times are often changed after publication. Please double-check the time and place of any event you wish to attend by calling the information number for that event.*

### Wednesday Senior Lunch at Big Red

**Feb. 10:** Raspberry chipotle pork, roasted potatoes, vegetable medley

**Feb. 17:** Chicken Caesar salad with garlic bread

**Feb. 24:** Bratwurst with sauerkraut, coleslaw, chips  
Rolls and butter are served with each meal except sandwiches. Dessert is also provided.

Lunch is at 11:30 a.m. at 146 Jefferson St., Monument (the School District 38 Administration Building). \$3 voluntary donation. Entertainment follows lunch. For more information, call Judy, 487-9067. An activity of Tri-Lakes Health Advocacy Partnership. Meals are provided by Pinecrest Catering, Palmer Lake; Nikki McDonald, executive chef, 481-3307.

### Make sure furnace vent pipes are clear

Snow drifts can block side wall ventilation pipes critical for safe operations of modern gas appliances. Residents with modern high efficiency furnaces in their homes and businesses should make sure the outside vent pipes for those appliances are not blocked by snow and ice.

High efficiency furnaces are not installed using the old style metal vent pipes that extend through the roof. Instead, they use shorter PVC pipes typically vented through a side wall near the ground. While these installations offer great efficiency, the side vent pipes can be covered by snow drifts or clogged by snow and ice, leaves, animal nests or other debris. Obstructed vent pipes can result in the furnace shutting itself down, or in the worst scenario, deadly carbon monoxide could be released into to your home or business. Side wall vent kits that provide added protection against vent obstructions are readily available through local HVAC contractors and online suppliers. But even with a vent kit in place it’s a good idea to check to make sure that snow has not drifted up against the outside wall where the vent pipes come out.

### Monument election judges needed

The Town of Monument Municipal Election will be held April 5 via mail ballot. Election judges are needed for this election. To qualify, an applicant must be 18 years or older, a registered voter in El Paso County, able to attend a training class, and be available and willing to work a long day. Judges will be compensated \$100 total for a full day or \$50 total for a half day. A basic breakfast, lunch, and dinner will also be provided. Applications are available at the town’s website, [www.townofmonument.org](http://www.townofmonument.org), or at Town Hall, 645 Beacon Lite Rd., Monument.

### Volunteers needed for county’s Board of Adjustment, apply by Feb. 12

The El Paso County Board of Commissioners is seek-

ing community-minded citizen volunteers to serve on the Board of Adjustment. Applications are due by **Feb. 12**. The volunteer application is located at [www.elpasoco.com](http://www.elpasoco.com). Click on the “Volunteer Boards” link. For more information, call 520-6436 or visit [www.elpasoco.com](http://www.elpasoco.com).

### Winter mailbox access

Help your mail carriers deliver the mail by clearing snow and ice from mailboxes and walkways. If you receive delivery of mail to a rural-type post mailbox, please clear around the box to allow your carrier to drive up to the box, deposit mail and drive away. If your mail is delivered at your residence or business, please keep the path to your mail box or slot clear of snow and ice. Delivery personnel, meter readers, friends, and family will also benefit from a safe and convenient path to your door.

### Free income tax help

Through its Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, Pikes Peak United Way, in partnership with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), provides free income tax preparation assistance to individuals and families with a household income of \$52,000 a year or less. To find out if you qualify or to schedule an appointment, call 2-1-1 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.; or visit [www.ppunitedway.org/vitaetc.html](http://www.ppunitedway.org/vitaetc.html).

### Register for Tri-Lakes Youth Spring sports

Practices begin March 28 for Outdoor Soccer, Spring Volleyball, and Flag Football; April 9 for Indoor Soccer Clinic and Indoor Soccer. Financial assistance is available. Register at [www.pymca.org](http://www.pymca.org) or at the Y, 17250 Jackson Creek Pkwy., Monument.

### Enroll for preschool and kindergarten

Lewis-Palmer School District preschool and kindergarten registration for the 2016-17 school year has begun. Please contact your neighborhood school or the district registrar at 488-4700 for detailed information. Registration packets are available now at all preschools, elementary schools, and the Administration Building, 146 Jefferson St., Monument. Registration packets are also available online at [www.lewispalmer.org](http://www.lewispalmer.org).

### St. Peter Catholic School enrolling

The school offers full and half-day preschool, Core Knowledge Curriculum with small class sizes, Christ-centered education, athletics, and more. Call or visit: 124 First St., Monument; 481-1855; [www.petertherock.org](http://www.petertherock.org).

### Black Forest Road repair

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has given its approval to county plans for the replacement of failed culverts on Black Forest Road at Kettle Creek. Construction could begin in March. Black Forest Road was closed last October for safety reasons because the culverts under the road had failed and continuing erosion could lead to collapse. Heavy rain in the spring and summer, combined with added runoff due to the area burn scar, accelerated the failure of the culverts. The closure is about

0.6 miles north of the intersection of Black Forest Road and Shoup Road.

### Property tax exemption

El Paso County Assessor Steve Schleiker reminds residents that Colorado Constitution establishes a property tax exemption for senior citizens and disabled veterans. For those who qualify, 50 percent of the first \$200,000 in actual value of the primary residence is exempted from property tax. The State of Colorado pays the property taxes on the exempted value. The application deadline for disabled vets is July 1, and for seniors is July 15. For an application or a brochure that explains the exemptions or for questions regarding the exemptions, please call the assessor’s office at 520-6600, email [ASRWEB@elpasoco.com](mailto:ASRWEB@elpasoco.com), or visit [www.elpasoco.com](http://www.elpasoco.com) and click on “News Releases.”

### Grow Smart Monument group forming

Grow Smart Monument is dedicated to preserving open space and trails, recreational opportunities, natural resources, and community character. Across the U.S., access to parks and open spaces has become a measure of community wealth; a tool for attracting businesses and residents by guaranteeing quality of life and economic health. This group invites collaboration with developers and civic organizations in creating a path to smart growth in our beautiful town. For more information, see the Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/groups/growsmartmonument/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/growsmartmonument/) or email [growsmartmonument@gmail.com](mailto:growsmartmonument@gmail.com).

### Tri-Lakes men’s a cappella singing group

Singers are wanted for a unique men’s singing group that will feature close harmony, a cappella singing, somewhat in the style of the Four Freshmen and Vocal Majority. For more information, call John Hobson at 368-7833, or Phil Zara, 481-3197.

### LEAP—Help for heating bills

The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) is a federally funded program that provides cash assistance to help families and individuals pay a portion of winter

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