



Tizer Botanic Gardens and Arboretum

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Open daily from 10 am - 6 pm

Nursery: April through September

Gardens: May through September

The Tizer Botanic Gardens and Arboretum is a true treasure of Montana with about one-half mile of trails on approximately three acres. Prickly Pear Creek winds through the middle of the gardens, swelling with the spring runoff from 9440' Elkhorn Peak, and calming with the end of summer. The gardens are owned and run by Belva Lotzer and Richard Krott, along with two full time and several part-time employees and volunteers. The nursery offers a unique and wide variety of trees, shrubs, and perennials hardy for zones 2-4, and drought tolerant. The Krott's graciously invite you to leave the world behind, relax, unwind and enjoy their little piece of paradise. Visit the vegetable garden, rose garden, herb garden, children's garden, secret garden, begonia garden, meditation garden, butterfly and hummingbird garden, shade garden, and gazebo garden. Take a wildflower walk, enjoy Prickly Pear Creek, relax at the reading tree, visit the unique gift shop, or explore the original homesteaders' cabin. People are welcome to bring a picnic and spend the day walking through the gardens, reading, writing, painting or just enjoying the company of friends and family. You can enjoy high tea in the garden or even have your wedding there!

"We see many people moving to Montana from milder climates thinking that they will not be able to grow anything here. Before they buy anything in our nursery we encourage them to first tour our gardens" explains Richard. "They get excited seeing what mature perennials, shrubs and trees look like and that indeed there are thousands of things they can grow in their new home." The Krott's grow over 100 varieties of Clematis, more than 60 types of roses, (we tested about 600 roses representing over 100 varieties for Weeks Roses) over 200 kinds of evergreens, 30 kinds of apples, and 35 varieties of Maples, to name some of their bounty. The gardens are about 1,500' higher in elevation than Helena and they see temperatures as high as 105 in the summer and dropping to 40 below zero in the winter. Coupled with the low number of frost-free days, these extreme temperatures can make gardening a real challenge. "In ten years we have never seen 65 consecutive frost-free days in our gardens," notes Richard. But you would never guess the challenge was so great when touring these gorgeous grounds.



Tizer Gardens really began in 1997 when Richard Krott and Belva Lotzer fell in love with and purchased a small piece of property on Tizer Lake Road, in Jefferson City. The couple began gardening in their backyard paradise, in the heart of the Elkhorn Mountains straddling Prickly Pear Creek. Gardening provided stress relief and a sort of therapy for Richard as he recovered from cancer. Enticed by Mother Nature to spend as much time outside as possible, they began developing gardens along the creek and attacking large swaths of noxious weeds and replacing them with Cosmos. Over time they acquired an additional 6 acres of land and have developed about 4 acres of that to date.





By the spring of 2000, people had begun to notice the flowers in the couple's garden and the Krott's were finding visitors in their garden at all hours of the day and night. That year they decided to open the gardens on weekends for visitors. They went from 200 visitors that first year to 2000 visitors the next year, and last year they welcomed over 15,000 visitors to their gardens. By 2003, the temptation of a new opportunity wooed them into starting a nursery in order to share the wonderful plants they had discovered would grow in this unforgiving climate. In 2004, the Jefferson Local Development Corporation named the couple "Entrepreneurs of the Year", for their ingenuity and creativity in developing a new tourism destination in Jefferson County.



Early in 2005 the Krott's came to know and befriend Panayoti Kelaidis, now senior curator and director of outreach for the Denver Botanic Gardens. It was his persuasion that convinced the couple to apply for and receive designation as an official Botanic Garden and Arboretum, the only one in western Montana. As a result of that association, two years later, Tizer Botanic Gardens & Arboretum also became Montana's only demonstration garden for the Denver Botanic Garden and Colorado State University's "Plant Select®" Program. Also in 2007, the Montana Federation of Garden Clubs awarded them "Gardeners of the Year" for the State of Montana. 2008 brought about the renovation of the original garage into a bright, clean gift shop. It was a happy day when they moved all of the gift items from the old tractor barn with a dirt floor into the new site.

Tizer Gardens have also become a great place to take in a festival or two. Annually they host a "Things with Wings" Festival, where hundreds of inquisitive young children

learn about birds, butterflies, and aquatic critters and how they all relate to horticulture. The annual Scarecrow Festival attracted about 500 people who made 225 scarecrows and carved several hundred pumpkins in one day last September. And it is easy to get inspired when seeing the happy faces of about 1,000 people at the very popular annual Fairy & Wizard Festival. The Krott's are also working on developing a more organized children's horticulture program this year. Our hats are off to the persistence, creativity, and love that Belva and Richard have sown in this wonderful place.

Amusing incidents

A part-time staff person was instructed to put several bottles of water in an ice bucket for a bride and her party just prior to a wedding ceremony in our gardens. We later observed that there were no bottles in the ice bucket and the ice was floating in a lot of water! Then there was a young man who showed up on the first day of work wearing flip-flops. He was told he needed to shovel dirt into a wheelbarrow and dump it about

50 feet away and he needed his work boots. He went to his car, we thought to get his boots on, but he drove away and we never saw him again.

Inspiration

As for inspiring things, we would have to say the people we meet from all over the world who come to tour the gardens. We saw about 15,000 visitors last year touring the gardens, not counting our Nursery customers.

Richard and Belva also have Tizer Lake distributors LLC, a separate deer fence business from the gardens and nursery. See their ad below:



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