



Crail Gardens

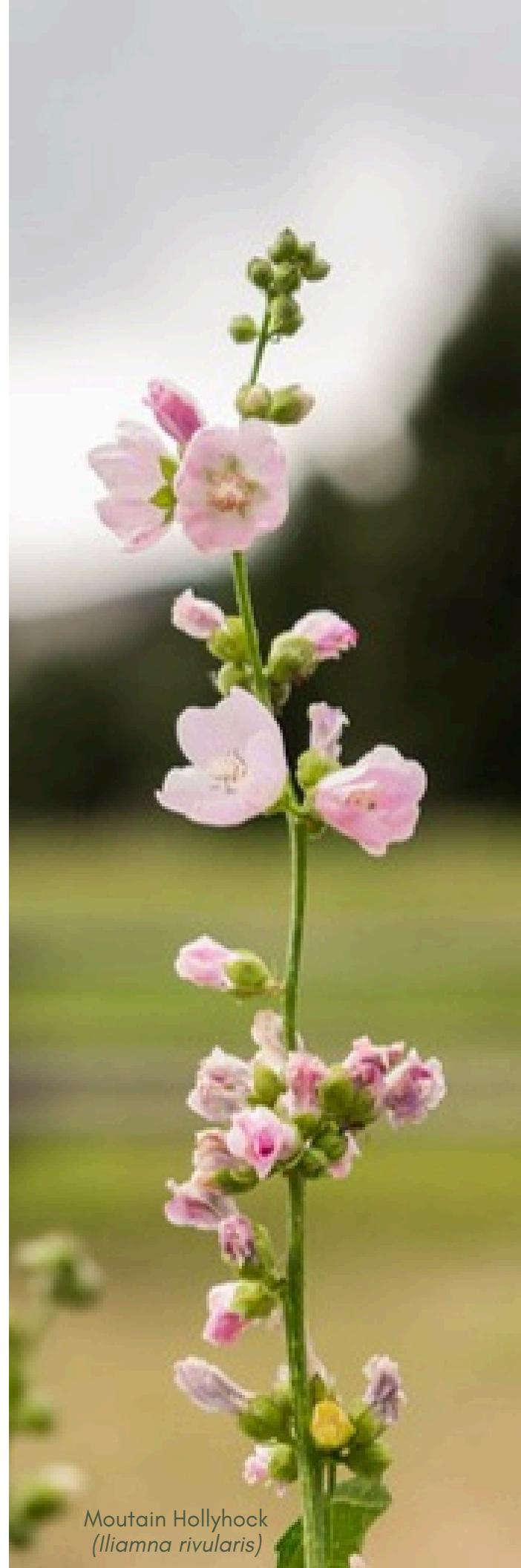
2025

A Living Demonstration of Stewardship & Resilience

Some landscapes speak softly. Crail Gardens, located at the historic Crail Ranch in Big Sky, is one such place—an unassuming yet powerful example of how careful stewardship practiced over time can restore ecological function and deepen a community's relationship with the land.

Established by Grow Wild in 2019, Crail Gardens was designed as a living demonstration of native, water-wise, and wildlife-friendly landscaping that honors the historic character of the site while addressing modern conservation challenges. From the beginning, the goal was not simply to plant a garden but to create a place where people could see, touch, and learn what responsible land stewardship looks like in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Over six years, the gardens have matured into an outdoor classroom and community gathering space. Native plants now anchor the landscape, offering seasonal color, pollinator habitat, and resilience in the face of drought and disturbance. Just as importantly, Crail Gardens has become a place for people—volunteers, neighbors, visitors, and landowners—to connect with the land and with one another.



Mountain Hollyhock
(*Iliamna rivularis*)

Goals and Long-Term Impact

Crail Gardens is guided by three enduring goals: demonstration, education, and connection.

As a demonstration garden, it showcases best practices in native plant selection, efficient water use, and adaptive maintenance. These practices are visible and replicable, offering visitors practical ideas they can take home to their own properties.

As an educational space, the gardens support learning through hands-on participation and observation. Workshops, volunteer days, and informal tours invite curiosity and foster understanding without requiring prior expertise.

As a place of connection, Crail Gardens reminds us that conservation is a shared endeavor—one built through relationships, repetition, and care over time.

Since 2019, this work has resulted in measurable, cumulative impact:

- **1,609 wildflowers planted**
- **52 native species added**
- **67 public and volunteer events**
- **1,262 people engaged**
- **218 volunteers contributing 748 hours**



Each of these numbers represents more than effort alone; they mark a sustained, collective commitment to caring for a shared landscape.

2025: Stewardship and Innovation

In 2025, Crail Gardens entered a phase of maturity. Many early plantings are now well established, shifting the focus from expansion to stewardship. This year emphasized thoughtful refinement—adding 66 wildflowers to strengthen plant diversity and fill targeted gaps, while continuing to care for existing plant communities.



Western Comma
(*Polygonia gracilis*) — likely



These gatherings reinforced the garden's role as a welcoming, accessible space where learning and creativity abounds.



The Firewise Crevice Garden: Beauty Meets Resilience

The most notable addition in 2025 was the installation of a Firewise Crevice Garden, a timely and innovative response to increasing wildfire risk in the region.

As wildfire threats grow across the West, landowners are often encouraged to create noncombustible zones near structures—guidance that can feel at odds with traditional landscaping aesthetics. The Firewise Crevice Garden at Crail Gardens offers an alternative vision.

By combining locally sourced stone, careful spacing, and fire-resistant, drought-tolerant native plants, the crevice garden demonstrates how firewise principles can be integrated into attractive, ecologically rich landscapes. Rock creates natural breaks in fuel continuity, while low-growing native plants reduce ignition risk without eliminating vegetation entirely.

This garden reframes firewise landscaping not as subtraction, but as design—showing that safety, beauty, and biodiversity can coexist. As a demonstration project, it provides homeowners, land managers, and the broader community with a tangible, inspiring example of how to adapt to fire-adapted landscapes without sacrificing ecological values.



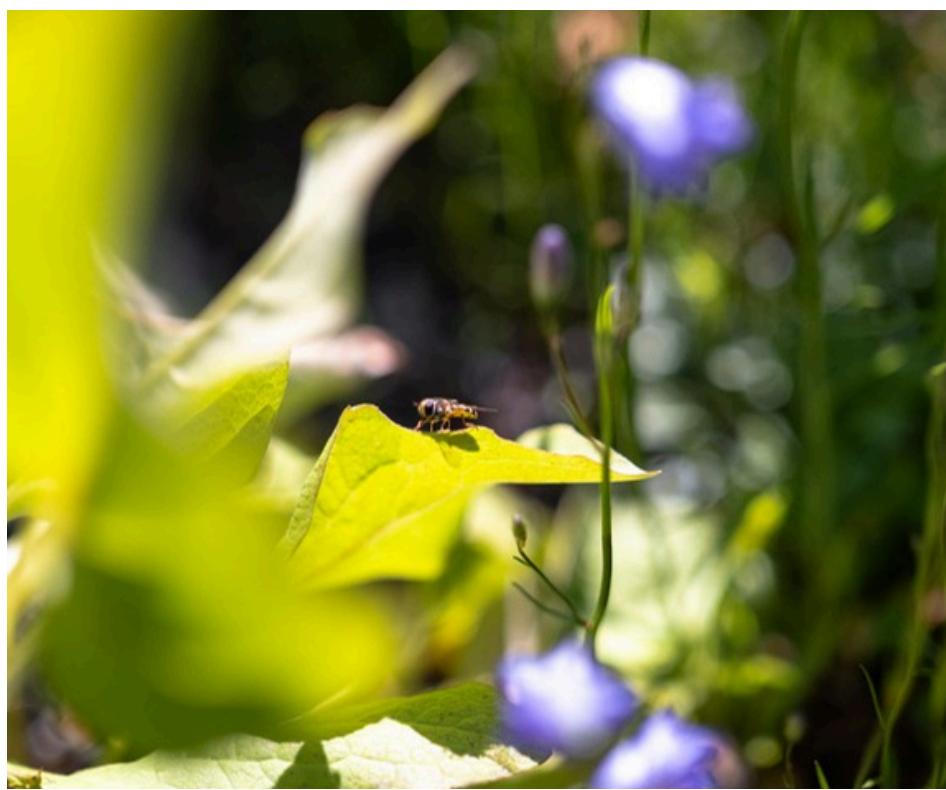
The garden will take root in spring 2026, with a ribbon cutting planned during the 2026 Big Sky Wildflower Festival — an open invitation to celebrate this shared work together!

A Living Legacy

Free and open daily to the public, Crail Gardens continues to invite quiet exploration as well as active participation. Volunteers find satisfaction in tangible work and visitors discover plants, ideas, and perspectives they can take with them.

Looking ahead, the future of Crail Gardens lies in continued care—monitoring plant health, adapting to changing conditions, and expanding interpretation around emerging issues like wildfire resilience. Its strength is not in rapid growth, but in endurance.

Crail Gardens stands as a reminder that conservation is not a single act, but a practice. Built slowly, season by season, it shows how small, deliberate actions—multiplied over time and shared among many—can shape landscapes that are resilient, instructive, and deeply rooted in place.



With Gratitude

Crail Gardens would not exist as it does today without the steady support of our partners and the generosity of our volunteers. From those who helped envision the gardens in their earliest days to those who return season after season with tools in hand and curiosity intact, this work is truly shared.

We extend our sincere thanks to every partner, volunteer, and community member whose time, expertise, and care have shaped this landscape. The garden stands as a living expression of their commitment to place.

Photo: Arrowleaf Balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*) — five years in and approaching its first bloom.

As a slow-growing native perennial, this species may take three to eight years or more to produce its characteristic golden flowers, making each flowering season all the more rewarding to anticipate in our landscape.



Thank you Crail Garden Benefactors!

