

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



New director to build upon Betty Ford Alpine Gardens' legacy

VAIL, Colo. (June 15, 2007) — The highest botanical garden in the United States is looking to build on its stature with a new leader.

The Board of Trustees at Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, in Vail's Ford Park, has appointed Ann Kurronen, a longtime resident of the Vail Valley, as executive director.

"The Gardens is indeed fortunate in having found someone with Ann's enthusiasm for sharing the wonders of the plant world, especially the amazing plant palette our Colorado Rocky Mountain alley, with our residents and visitors," says the board's president, Deane Hall. "It's unusual for a public garden to be able to lure back into horticulture, especially botanic gardens work, someone with her experience in the corporate world."

With a degree in horticulture business from Colorado State University, a master's degree in theology from Seattle University and twenty years of experience in the field of corporate human resources for the Weyerhaeuser Company and Vail Resorts, Kurronen is "uniquely qualified" to take the Gardens to the next level as a leader in mountain plant conservation and research, Hall adds.

Kurronen says her goals include expanding upon the rich beautification, conservation, educational and research programs the Gardens has cultivated since its inception in 1987, with inspiration from former first lady Betty Ford, for whom the Gardens were renamed the following year.

"I've inherited a very rich legacy and expect to build upon it," says Kurronen, whose first job out of college in the mid-1980s was managing the garden center at City Market, in Avon. "I respect the integrity of the organization and want to continue to exemplify the characteristics of our namesake."

With the vision of being recognized as the foremost authority on high-altitude plants in natural and cultivated landscapes in the Rocky Mountains region and similar environments, the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, at 8,250 feet above sea level, is the highest botanical garden in the United States, and perhaps the world.

Providing free access to an estimated 100,000 visitors annually to its Mountain Perennial Garden, Mountain Meditation Garden, Alpine Rock Garden and Children's Garden, the organization has played an important role in encouraging summertime flower displays

throughout the Vail Valley at both private homes and businesses and has been active in displaying and working for the conservation of high altitude plants.

“I want to reach out to the other like-minded organizations in the Vail Valley to further nurture the programs we offer on conservation and other topics important to the Gardens,” says Kurronen, who with her husband Jussi, an elementary school teacher, and three daughters in grade school, is building a home in Eagle Ranch. “The Gardens is a treasure, a living museum that’s ever-changing. One needs to visit regularly to appreciate those changes.”

The Betty Ford Alpine Gardens is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for which operations and programs are funded entirely through the generosity of donors. For more information, call 970-476-0103 or visit www.bettyfordalpinegardens.org.

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Note: Additional photos of Ann Kurronen and the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens are available upon request – SLW.

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Cutline info:

Ann Kurronen, a longtime resident of the Vail Valley, says she hopes to further nurture the conservation, research and other programs important to the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens as the nonprofit organizations new executive director.

Photo credit: Courtesy Betty Ford Alpine Gardens.