

## Connecting people to nature in the urban matrix | Denver Botanic Gardens

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Botanic gardens exist across the globe to showcase plant collections and connect people with plants through programs, and quiet places. In many cases they serve as green gems within cities, providing nature-based solutions to connect people to healthy ecosystems in the urban matrix. Beyond garden spaces, public gardens are actively connecting urban residents with nature in new and innovative ways. Nearly half of the world's population lives in cities, with the functioning of these urban landscapes and citizenry depending directly on biodiversity. That is why Denver Botanic Gardens (Denver, Colorado, USA) prioritises research projects that not only document biodiversity but are designed to help understand how to best manage urban biodiversity, and to connect people to nature through outreach projects. For example, via a multi-year collaboration with the High Line Canal Conservancy, a similarly mission-focused non-profit, we have undertaken projects that range from foundational scientific documentation of under-described urban flora, to applied work that assesses potential conservation outcomes associated with the implementation of green stormwater infrastructure and tree-planting initiatives along a regional urban greenway. At CommonGround golf course located in the heart of the Denver metro area, we are documenting and expanding native plant representation in areas adjacent to golfing greens. Additionally, our Sustainable Landscape Services program was established in 2017 with a goal of using the knowledge and resources of the Gardens to influence, educate and implement practical landscape design. Focusing on high-visibility public and private projects, the Gardens has provided consultation services and guidance on an array of landscapes throughout Colorado. As climate change and resource scarcity continue to affect urban ecosystems, the Gardens is well-positioned through these initiatives to guide urban land management to adopt sustainable landscape practices, improved horticultural aesthetics and efficient use of natural resources and landowner investments.