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## THIRD SEASON OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH WITH HIGH LINE CANAL CONSERVANCY



Denver Botanic Gardens' scientists are gearing up for their third season of research with the High Line Canal Conservancy to survey plant communities along the 71-mile trail. The Gardens' data collection will occur mid-June through early July, focusing on newly planted trees along the High Line Canal.

Trees on Colorado's plains only thrive near bodies of water or with the help of irrigation. In their natural habitat, native cottonwoods and willows line the floodplains of major rivers, housing abundant wildlife. In more urban areas, these trees would not exisit without places like the Canal corridor, which is home to more than 23,000 mature trees, about 40% of which are cottonwoods. There is an opportunity to plan and plant for the future as many of the cottonwoods are near the end of their natural lifespan and as the hydrology of the Canal changes. Denver Water is reducing its reliance on the Canal for irrigation delivery and local jurisdictions embrace its potential as green stormwater infrastructure.

The Conservancy, in collaboration with its jurisdictional partners, initiated a tree planting campaign in 2021. This was the largest planting effort on the Canal since 1990. The initial planting of 225 trees includes both native riparian trees (plains cottonwood, narrowleaf cottonwood and boxelder) and xeric trees commonly seen in urban areas such as honeylocust, Kentucky coffeetree, catalpa, common hackberry and several oak species. In future years, a total of 3,500 trees – or about 50 trees per mile across the Canal corridor – will be planted.

The Gardens' scientists and students from University of Colorado Denver will examine how well the recently planted riparian versus xeric trees establish in relationship to their planting locations based on water availability, soil characteristics and light. They will also look for signs of stress and/or pest attack that might inform choices for future tree plantings. While many of the trees tolerate a wide range of conditions, the tree planting campaign represents a unique opportunity to gather information on hundreds of trees over time and space.

The data collected in 2022 will help inform landscape enhancements and maintenance as part of implementing the <u>Plan for the High Line Canal</u>— a multi-year plan that is underway to ensure the Canal reaches its greatest potential

as an environmental and recreational asset. Future landscape enhancements will honor the historical and native vegetation along the Canal – dating back to the 1880s – and help to restore and enrich the Canal's landscape for generations to come.

This research is part of a partnership between Denver Botanic Gardens and the University of Colorado Denver with funding from the CU Denver Presidential Initiative on Urban and Placed-Based Research. The fieldwork will be used to develop a Course-based Undergraduate Research Experience project for undergraduate science students at CU Denver.

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About Denver Botanic Gardens: Green inside and out, Denver Botanic Gardens was founded in 1951 and is considered one of the top botanical gardens in the United States and a pioneer in water conservation. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the Gardens' living collections encompass specimens from the tropics to the tundra, showcasing a plant palette chosen to thrive in Colorado's semi-arid climate. The Gardens is a dynamic, 24-acre urban oasis in the heart of the city, offering unforgettable opportunities to flourish with unique garden experiences for the whole family – as well as world-class education and plant conservation research programs. Additional sites extend this experience throughout the Front Range: Denver Botanic Gardens at Chatfield is a 700-acre native plant refuge with an active farm in Jefferson County; Mount Goliath is a high-altitude garden and interpretive site on the Mount Evans Scenic Byway. The Gardens also manages programming at Plains Conservation Center in Aurora. For more information, visit us online at <u>www.botanicgardens.org</u>.

## About the High Line Canal Conservancy:

The High Line Canal Conservancy is a tax-exempt nonprofit formed in 2014 by a passionate citizens' coalition to provide leadership and harness the region's commitment to enhancing and permanently protecting the High Line Canal. With support from each jurisdiction and in partnership with Denver Water, the Conservancy is leading a collaborative and region-wide effort to ensure that the Canal is protected and enhanced for future generations.

The High Line Canal has long been a beloved asset across our region, but it is outliving its historical use as an irrigation channel. The High Line Canal Conservancy is working to preserve, protect, and enhance this ecological and recreational resource by reimagining it as a 71-mile park. For more information, please visit www.highlinecanal.org or send an email to hello@highlinecanal.org