

HELLO FRIENDS OF ROCK LEDGE RANCH!

Fall is upon us! Have you visited Rock Ledge Ranch recently? There's beginning to be a chill in the air in the mornings, the squirrels are hiding away the plentiful acorns from the scrub oak trees, and the apples in the orchard are ready to be picked!

Autumn is a busy time at the Ranch—and not just for the squirrels! Read on to find out what we are up to, and what events you should join us at! Remember that the park is open from dawn to dusk year-round, and it's a beautiful place for a fall picnic, a leisurely walk, or the start of a longer hike into Garden of the Gods.

This week, Rock Ledge Ranch staff and School at the RANCH students will harvest apples from our orchard. Most of the apple trees in the orchard at Rock Ledge Ranch are fairly young, planted as part of a project to restore an orchard to Rock Ledge Ranch as a reproduction of the historic one that was here. While the Chambers family owned Rock Ledge Ranch, Elsie Chambers wrote that the orchard they planted included “hundreds of apple trees and hundreds of cherry trees besides other fruit.”

One tree, however, stands out from the rest: Old Rosie. Pictures from the early 1900s attest that this apple tree, now standing alone between the Rock Ledge House and the Blacksmith Shop, existed here before the turn of the century, meaning it was part of the orchard that the Chambers family planted. Last year, results came back from DNA testing performed on Old Rosie, and staff at Rock Ledge Ranch were delighted



to discover that Old Rosie is a Red Astrachan apple tree. Red Astrachan is a Russian breed of apple tree, hardy enough to withstand cold winters, with a shorter growing season. This means that Old Rosie's apples are ready to harvest in early August, rather than in mid-September like the rest of our apples. These characteristics explain the choice of this kind of apple tree: since we live in an area that experiences early freezes, it would have protected farmers like the Chambers from losing their apples to an early frost.

Red Astrachan apples were one of the breeds recommended by Major Henry McAllister, who with his wife Elizabeth cultivated an experimental garden in Colorado Springs in the 1870s. Their goal was to gather and provide detailed information to farmers about which produce would grow well in the Pikes Peak Region. Historians and researchers have not yet discovered an explicit connection between the Chambers and McAllister families, but

Suffragettes at the annual Labor Day Base Ball game



their stories contain much overlap, particularly in the realm of apples. Rock Ledge Ranch still enjoys collaboration with the McAllister House, the oldest historic home in Colorado Springs.

After missing the window on harvesting Old Rosie's apples for years because we did not know that we should be picking them in August, we were delighted to harvest use apples from this 125+ year old tree this summer. Garden staff and volunteers picked a couple of bushels of apples from Old Rosie in the last few weeks of the summer season, and historical interpreters around the Ranch enjoyed using these apples for applesauce, pies, and jam. Getting to interpret activities that we know the Chambers family actually did, like harvesting apples from one of their trees and making them into jam, is always a highlight here at the Ranch, and this was a particularly exciting one.

IN RECENT HISTORY...

The traditional 1880s base ball game on Labor Day was a hit, as always, for nearly one thousand visitors, volunteers and staff. Even the animals got in on the fun—chickens, a sheep, and Martha the cow joined spectators, base ball players, historical characters, and popcorn sellers out on the field, making for a rip-roaring time. Volunteers from Carpenters Colorado Local Union 555 came in force to provide a hands-on woodworking craft for children and educate visitors of all ages about the origins of Labor Day.

Speaking of volunteers, we want to express our sincere gratitude to the groups of volunteers who have joined Ranch staff to pull weeds, plant native plants, and beautify Rock Ledge Ranch on a few occasions in the past few months! We all benefit from the work they have been doing. If you are

interested in getting involved at the Ranch by helping with this kind of work, please contact us at info@rockledgeranch.com.

Fiddles, Vittles, and Vino returned to the Ranch last week, and attendees enjoyed music from four bluegrass bands and food and wine from over thirty local restaurants. This event is sponsored by Club Nine, a non-profit consisting of local civic-minded chefs, who donates the proceeds from FVV to further agricultural programs at Rock Ledge Ranch. It was a gorgeous evening for live music and delicious eatables, making for a wonderful evening for all. Thank you to all the musicians and to the many local businesses that provided incredible foodstuffs for this event supporting Rock Ledge Ranch!

School at the RANCH, our weekly homeschool enrichment program, kicked off at the end of August, and so far the students have spent time getting to know each other, learning the Ranch's geography, and practicing outdoor hiking and exploration skills. Rangers Dave, Val, and Brian from Garden of the Gods Park engaged the students in hands on presentations about park stewardship, and Jerry Cordova from the City of Colorado Springs Stormwater Enterprise provided our program with water test kits and a water table model to boost students' study of hydrology!

AROUND THE BEND...

This Saturday, September 21, is the fourteenth annual Garden of the Gods Powwow at Rock Ledge Ranch. This special event includes song, dance, and traditions celebrating and honoring Native American cultures and history, as well as food and art vendors. The ground blessing occurs right after the gates open at 10am, the Seven Falls



Indians Dancers will perform at 11am, and the Grand Entry is at 12pm. Admission prices are \$8 for adults, \$5 for seniors and military, and \$4 for children ages 3-17.

Rock Ledge Ranch is involved with many community events in the next several weeks! Saturday, September 28 is a big day—look at all we’re doing!

- Ranch staff will be supporting the Cool Science Carnival Day, a celebration of STEAM with activity stations all around the UCCS campus for people of all ages to enjoy. Find out more about this free family event here: <https://www.cool-science.org/cool-science-carnival-day.html>
- You’ll also find Rock Ledge Ranch staff at the McAllister House Museum Harvest Festival, another free family event including live music, food, house tours, and crafts. Visit <https://www.mcallisterhouse.org/events-and-teas/> for more details.
- There will also be a Rock Ledge Ranch presence at West Fest 2024 held at the Westside Community Center from 11am – 2pm. This event will feature live music, picnic lunch, a dessert potluck, and a yoga session. Admission is \$8 per person and \$5 for children 12 and under.

Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services is partnering with Colorado Springs Utilities, the Colorado Springs Fire Department, and the City’s Office of Accessibility to upgrade and enhance the water supply within Garden of the Gods Park and the Columbia Road Neighborhood south of the park. This project will add eight new fire hydrants along the length of the waterline in the Park. Not only will it bring a more reliable water supply to multiple parts of the park and surrounding neighborhoods, it will also improve accessibility at parking lots and trails near the Central Garden area. The staging area for the construction materials will be in the northeast

corner of the Rock Ledge Ranch parking lot, and so visitors to the Ranch may notice the start of the project after staging begins in mid-September. We are glad to be able to work with these other departments and enterprises within the city to improve Garden of the Gods Park for both the near and the distant future! For more details on the project, visit <https://parks.coloradosprings.gov/GOGWaterline-Project>.

Rock Ledge Ranch’s annual Harvest Festival is Saturday, October 5, from 10am-5pm. The Ranch will buzz with the sounds, smells, and activities of fall at this fun-for-all-ages event. Pick your own pumpkin for \$5, go for a wagon ride, watch cider being pressed, enjoy fun games, and tour the historic buildings. Pie will be available for sale, as well as many other food options from food trucks. Regular admissions prices apply, and members are free!

Barnyard Buddies Storytime continues on every Thursday morning at 10:30 through the fall, and the first Thursday of each month the Barnyard Buddies First Thursday program includes a snack, a craft, and an activity as well as read aloud story time with Ranch staff. The First Thursday programs are by registration only, so make sure you sign up at https://www.signupge-nius.com/go/5080E49A5AF23A5F94-46536507-rock#/. This program is free for members and costs \$4 per child for non-members.

Fall Homeschool Day is Wednesday October 30 from 10am-2pm! This event is a chance for homeschool families and homeschool groups to have their own field trips to Rock Ledge Ranch! Multiple historic areas will be open, and many local partners will join Ranch staff in providing hands on learning opportunities for all ages. Members and children ages two and under are free, for everyone else, admission is just \$4 per person!

FALL CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Thursday September 19
Barnyard Buddies Storytime, 10:30am

Saturday September 21
Garden of the Gods Powwow at Rock Ledge Ranch

Thursday September 26
Barnyard Buddies Storytime, 10:30am

Thursday October 3
Barnyard Buddies First Thursday program,
10:30am

Saturday October 5
Harvest Festival, 10am-5pm

Thursday October 10
Barnyard Buddies Storytime, 10:30am

Thursday October 17
Barnyard Buddies Storytime, 10:30am

Thursday October 24
Barnyard Buddies Storytime, 10:30am

Wednesday October 30
Fall Homeschool Day, 10am-2pm

Thursday October 31
Holiday Teas Registration opens for Members
Barnyard Buddies Storytime, 10:30am

Saturday November 2
Everything but the Oink, 10am-5pm

Saturday December 14
Holiday Evening, 4pm-8pm



Sunflowers blooming in our garden

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Rock Ledge Ranch is partnering with many other organizations and city departments to improve and increase our programs and community impact! Some of our community partners in July and August include:

Carpenters Colorado Local Union 555

City of Colorado Springs Stormwater

Enterprise

Friends of the Garden of the Gods

Garden of the Gods Foundation

Nature and Wildlife Discovery Center

Club Nine