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# A Winning Combination

*Inmates at the County Jail and members of the Denver Rose Society work together to showcase roses and community involvement.*

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**A** cooperative venture between the Criminal Justice System and the Denver Rose Society has allowed community groups and sentenced inmates to work side by side to achieve common goals. Together they have created a special environment that is welcoming to all and which will provide a beautiful place where the public can come to enjoy and learn more about roses through tours, pruning demonstrations and educational classes.

The project began in 1992 when inmates sentenced to the Jefferson County Jail were assigned to maintain the landscape of the Sheriff's Complex in Golden, Colorado. Throughout that summer, inmates removed more than 30 large dump-truck loads of dead plants. That left 10,000 square feet of space available for replanting. Fortunately, Dennis Potter, one of the jail Lieutenants who loves roses, sought the help of the Colorado State University Extension Service and the Denver Rose Society. In 1993 a collective decision was made to create rose gardens in the space. Roses were selected in the hope that their special distinction would make the project unique and interesting for inmates and citizens alike.

Caring for the rose gardens has and will continue to provide labor intensive work for inmates in the jail, provide free landscape maintenance for the county, reduce jail population through earned good time for working inmates, provide the opportunity for certain inmates to learn a new trade or skill and reduce instances of disruptive behavior from

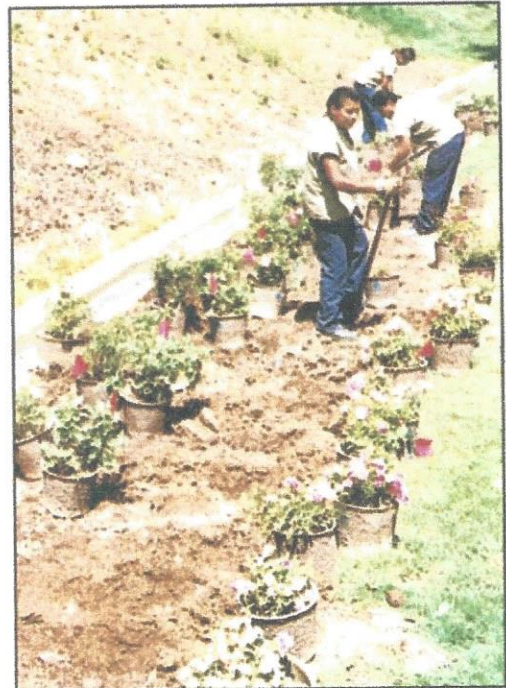
inmates in the jail due to inactivity.

From the beginning, CSU extension personnel helped by offering technical information on landscape management. Gerry Boller and Joan Truby, active ARS and Denver Rose Society members who are also Master Gardeners for CSU Extension, provided the rose expertise. Thanks to their efforts the first phase of the plan became a reality in August of 1993 when 391 rosebushes were planted at no expense to taxpayers!

***This has become a WIN – WIN project benefiting both the inmates and the greater community!***

More than half of the roses were donated by private sources and local nurseries. The entire project, which included soil preparation, nutrients for the soil and purchase of additional roses, cost less than \$1,500. All the money came from the inmates themselves from the sale of snacks, sundry commissary items and telephone usage fees!

The detention facility is located at an altitude of 6,000 feet on six rolling acres in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The views are lovely, the grounds often windswept and sunny. Pines and deciduous trees planted when

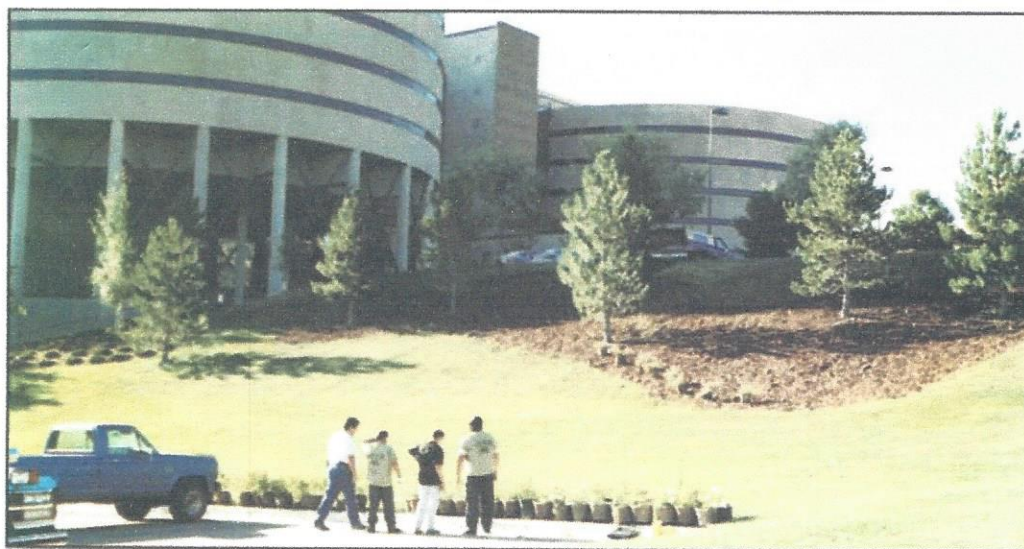


***Workers dig holes in Area 3 where roses have been placed.***

the complex was built seven years ago provide a nice backdrop for the beds. As plans were drawn, roses were selected that were known to succeed in the harsher climates of Colorado — Species, Rugosas, Miniatures and hardy Shrubs.

Prior to planting, numerous meetings with jail personnel were held to arrange for the selection and management of the inmate worker programs and the indoor and outdoor maintenance programs. Of the three inmate workers assigned to the "Rose Garden" one had done landscape work, one had grown roses and the other had never gardened! Coordinators from the Rose Society, Gerry Boller and Joan Truby, came regularly to supervise the program. Teaching was informal and the holding area became a classroom for learning about classifications, varieties, prickles, leaves and blooms. The only mishap occurred when the automatic sprinkler system came on unexpectedly, soaking all present.

A scheme for getting the roses to their proper sites was worked out by color coding the pots with spray paint. On planting day the inmates had the roses at the planting sites by 8:30 a.m. Over a dozen community volunteers and CSU Extension Master Gardeners arrived



All photos courtesy Denver Rose Society.

**The Sheriff's Complex watches over the workers as they plant the roses (top).**



**The group reviews landscape plans for the formal garden. (L to R) Susan Yetter, Landscape Designer; Geraldine Boller and Joan Truby, co-chairs of the rose project.**



**Inmate workers roto-tilling the areas in preparation for planting.**

and were promptly put to work. Seven additional inmate workers moved from area to area digging holes while the volunteers split pots, applied super phosphate, planted and watered. It turned into a regular production line and by 2:45 p.m. the planting was completed.

Inmate workers continue to work in the rose gardens — watering, applying trace elements (Planter II), fertilizing with the organic based Mile-Hi Rose Feed manufactured by Front Range Rose Societies and applying mulch obtained from the county's chipper/shredder operation. Winter protection is applied and the rosebeds are watered as needed during the winter months.

Of the original three inmate

workers, all have been released and two of them have returned as visitors — to assist and make sure the work proceeds properly. Rose Society representatives continue to visit at least weekly and are currently teaching a series of three classes on rose care that is open to all inmates assigned to outdoor work. Sources are also being explored for permanent plant markers, organic materials for the unplanted areas and new sources for more donated roses.

This past spring an additional 1,000 roses were planted. The "putting green" area became a focal point for the gardens with the addition of a formal rose garden which may provide a suitable microclimate for Hybrid Teas,

Floribundas, Grandifloras and David Austin English Roses. Although some All-America Rose Selections and American Rose Society Award of Excellence Winners have been planted, additional beds will be added.

Jail officials report that changes inside the jail have been remarkable. There is a waiting list for assignment to the "R. Garden" and grievances and disturbances have decreased dramatically. Joan Truby reports, "This has become a WIN – WIN project benefiting both the inmates and the greater community! It has been exciting and satisfying and we've all learned a great deal. We have always felt absolutely welcomed and accepted. We have made friends and developed a certain camaraderie with individuals who always have time to talk and to learn."

The only major "problem" reports Gerry Boller is that "the increased amount of good time earned by the 'R. Garden' inmate workers has sped up their release dates which requires training replacements more frequently. We can live with that.

And, next year, when visitors receive roses on Mother's Day and Father's Day, we can live with that as well! It's exciting to know we have helped create a special environment that will be less intimidating for citizens to visit."

You are all cordially invited to come and see this unique new garden when the Denver Rose Society hosts the national ARS convention in June, 1995 or anytime you are in the area.



**About the Author:** Pat Allen is the past president of the Portland Rose Society and is currently secretary of the Denver Rose Society. She is a Life Member.