

Magnet Board Set July 2025

Life Beyond Labor: Herbs, Gardens, and Community

Description:

This 10-minute interpretation using the magnet board invites audience-members to explore how ethnic Mexican communities in Northern Colorado built vibrant lives beyond field labor, especially through relationships with plants. From healing herbs and vegetable gardens to family restaurants and house shrines, the set highlights how plants were part of everyday life, spiritual meaning, and personal identity. Each printed image is paired with a youth-friendly caption, while this document provides deeper descriptions and inquiry question suggestions to encourage discovery and conversation among visitors of all ages.

Mission(s):

From the *Poudre Heritage Alliance Strategic Interpretive Plan 2022*

New Interpretive Theme: New Roots

Germans, Russians, Hispanics, African Americans and others settled in the Poudre River basin to farm or work in the sugar beet factories and fields, establishing communities and bringing new cultural and religious traditions.

Theme(s):

Twentieth-century ethnic Mexican migrants are often remembered for their labor in the sugar beet industry, but how did they engage with plants in other ways? This interpretation asks how these communities nurtured unique and shared relationships with plants beyond labor through food, healing, faith, and beauty.

Secondary Themes

- How do plants help us tell stories of everyday life?
- How can gendered lenses be applied to relationships with plants?
- How can combining visual and textual sources better contribute to our understanding of the past?

Audience(s):

- EXPLORERS: Visitors who are curiosity-driven with a generic interest in the content of the museum. They expect to find something that will grab their attention and fuel their learning.
- FACILITATORS: Visitors who are socially motivated. Their visit is focused on primarily enabling the experience and learning of others in their accompanying social group.
- Ages 13+

Although the content is oriented toward thoughtful engagement by older children and teens, the materials are easily adaptable to both younger children and adults. Simple captions, visual sources, and flexible inquiry questions make this magnet board suitable for use in diverse settings from classroom workshops to bilingual neighborhood festivals to senior group visits.

Goal(s):

From the *Cache NHA Strategic Plan 2024 - 2033*

Goal 2: Storytelling

Inclusively tell the story of Cache NHA, including its natural, historical, and cultural significance through interpretation and education efforts to broaden public awareness, thereby enhancing its sense of place and strengthening its value to its community.

- 2.1: Promote and work with partners who interpret resources and sites within the heritage area.
- 2.4: Facilitate educational and interpretive programs as they relate to the significance of the Cache NHA and its themes.

This interpretation contributes to these goals by highlighting underrepresented cultural relationships with plants in the Cache la Poudre region. It interprets the everyday lives of ethnic Mexican residents and their plant traditions—offering a story that is relatable, surprising, and rooted in place.

Objective(s):

Guest will leave with a deeper understanding of how ethnic Mexican migrants in Northern Colorado engaged with plants beyond agricultural labor through healing, home life, memory, and foodways. The interpretation aims to humanize and celebrate these relationships as part of local heritage.

Measurement(s):

From the *Cache NHA Strategic Plan 2024 – 2033*

- # of people participating in educational programs

Other

- # of people who vocalize connections between the materials and their own experiences, who vocalize learning something new, or who express strong emotional reactions, such as surprise, awe, etc.

Resources/Materials Needed:

- Cache NHA Magnetic Map Board
- Magnet Board Stand
- Your Choice from this Set of Media Prints in Magnetic Covers
 - o Map of Old Fort Collins and Ethnic Mexican Neighborhoods (1983)
 - o Model of Greeley Spanish Colonies Shown at Centennial Village (2002)
 - o Map of the North American Borderlands in 1820 (1970)
 - o Photo of Sisters Frances and Mary Garcia (2006)
 - o Quotations from Sister Mary Garcia (2006)
 - o Ingleside Landscape (1988)
 - o Romero Family Photo (1953)
 - o Quotations From Inez Romero (1975)
 - o Diagram of the Milpa System (2021)
 - o Photo of Chamomile (2009)
 - o *El Burrito* Menu (est. 1960s)
 - o *El Burrito* Restaurant (1979)
 - o Photo of House Shrine in Greeley (1998)
 - o Model Spanish Colony House at Centennial Village (2008)

Optional Enhancement Materials

- 15 min Spanish guitar instrumental music mp3 or wav file
- 1 min spliced snippet of Inez Romero's oral history mp3 or wav file
- Smartphone or Laptop (fully charged)
- Bluetooth speaker (fully charged)
- Mint or Chamomile tea bags
- Freshly brewed tea for scent-based interpretation
- Magnifying glass to render magnets more visible

Introduction:

Before there were rows of sugar beets, there were roots. Not just the kind that grow underground, but the kind that people plant when they build a life, like finding a neighborhood, making a home, or bringing familiar seeds from far away. This first portion of the interpretation helps us trace where people lived, where they came from, and how those places shaped the ways those people interacted with plants.

Map of Fort Collins Neighborhoods

- These neighborhoods became known for their strong Hispanic communities. Some people planted flowers and herbs in their yards, while others gathered at the church or nearby fields. Think of these as places where roots grew in both soil and in community.

Model of Spanish Colonies

- This model shows where sugar beet laborers in Greeley initially formed communities. Families lived close together, sharing food, playing games, and sometimes growing gardens. Beet dumps were sometimes repurposed for casual baseball games since the ground would already be leveled.

Borderlands Map

- This map shows a time before the state of Colorado even existed. But the people who lived in northern New Mexico already had deep relationships with the land and its plants. These people brought many of those traditions with them as they moved north. Knowledge, like seeds on the wind, travels over time and space.

As you work through the short commentaries for each media sample, pose 1-3 inquiry questions over the course of your interpretation as time allows to engage with the audience.

Map of Fort Collins Original Townsite showing the relative locations of ethnic Mexican neighborhoods.



Map of Fort Collins Original Townsite. *Architecture and History of Buckingham, Alta Vista, and Andersonville Neighborhoods*. Fort Collins, Colorado Neighborhood History Project, December 1983. Fort Collins Museum of Discovery.

Description:

This map helps us locate the neighborhoods where many ethnic Mexican families made their homes, specifically the Alta Vista, Andersonville, Buckingham, and Holy Family neighborhoods. These were not just places to sleep after long days in the sugar beet fields. They were spaces where families planted roots. You might find gardens with tomatoes, chiles, *manzanilla* (chamomile), and *hierba buena* (mint). You might smell vegetables like beans boiling through open windows. Plants helped turn these working-class houses into homes, connecting people to traditions from the south and to the landscape new to them in Northern Colorado.

While Alta Vista, Andersonville, and Buckingham emerged as residential neighborhoods for sugar beet workers, the Holy Family neighborhood grew from a more broadly established working-class space. Hispanic community members came to populate the area especially due to the presence of the Catholic Holy Family Church that specifically catered to Spanish-speakers.

Inquiry Questions:

- What do you imagine families planted in their backyards?
- What smells or sounds do you think filled these homes?
- Do you know a neighborhood where plants bring people together?
- Why do you think families created gardens, even after long workdays?
- What kinds of plants might have reminded them of home?

Model of Greeley Spanish Colonies



Model of Spanish Colony at Centennial Village. Weld County Images Collection, 2002. Greeley History Museum.

Description:

Jody Lopez, in a blue blouse, and a group of people looking over a model of the Spanish Colony in an outdoor setting. The scene is at Centennial Village; there are a row of story boards depicting baseball players along a sidewalk in the rear and a white building in the far left area. The model was created by well-known Greeley Hispanic residents Gabe, Jody, and Rico Lopez.

Some oral histories from Fort Collins and Greeley, such as Lee Suniga's from 1995, mention the repurposing of beet dump locations and similar, level spaces for casual baseball games.

(Tour of Andersonville, Buckingham and Harmony Area with Lee Suniga. Rheba Massey, Vi Garcia, and Sara Scobey, July 27, 1995. Fort Collins Public Library Oral History Project. Fort Collins Museum of Discovery.)

Inquiry Questions:

- How do you think these families used open space?
- Can you think of a place that was reused or reimagined in your neighborhood?
- What kinds of plants would you grow if you lived here?
- Why might gardens or flowers be important in these small spaces?
- Do you think people traded or shared plants in a neighborhood like this?
- What makes a house feel like a home?

Map of the North American borderlands in 1820 showing the Adams-Onís Treaty



“U.S. Expansion: The Map in 1820.”
National Atlas of the United States of
America, 1970. EmersonKent.com

Description:

This map shows territorial borders long before Fort Collins or Greeley existed, but the various people who would shape this region were already on the move. Many came from New Mexico, bringing knowledge passed down from Indigenous and *mestizo* (mixed-race) ancestors. This included how to grow *nopales* (cacti), when to dry herbs, and what flowers to place at shrines. In these borderlands, ideas crossed just as much as people. The plant traditions that arrived in the Cache la Poudre region didn’t always begin in Colorado. Some practices were already ancient and carried north through memory and migration.

Historians use the term “borderlands” to refer to geographically defined regions situated along the edges of political, cultural, or social boundaries, often characterized by interaction, exchange, and conflict between different entities. These are dynamic spaces where distinct societies meet, negotiate, and sometimes clash. Borderlands are places where new identities and cultural expressions emerge through the mixing and adaptation of different traditions.

Inquiry Question:

- How do you think people carried traditions from one region to another?
- What plant knowledge might someone pass on to their children?
- Can plants help people feel connected even when they move far away?
- What do you think it means to grow “borderland” plants?
- Do you have any traditions from your family’s region or homeland?

Body:

Once families had homes, they brought those homes to life—with flavor, healing, memory, and love. This part of the interpretation looks at how everyday people interacted with plants in small, personal ways. These weren't big fields or official gardens. These were herbs growing beside the kitchen, vines crawling along the fence, or flowers thriving in the wild. In these images and stories, we see how people didn't just work with plants, they also lived with them.

Photo of Sisters Frances and Mary Garcia

- Two sisters in Fort Collins grew up surrounded by faith, family, and a love of nature. They became nuns and moved abroad, but both were shaped by their home.

Quote from Sister Mary Garcia

- In her autobiography, Sister Mary Garcia remembered the wildflowers and *nopales* (cacti) that filled the rocky hills near Ingleside, and how her mother taught her to love plants and beauty.

Photo of Ingleside Landscape

- This is the land Sister Mary Garcia talked about. It stirred up feelings and memories for her, and likely for many other people as well.

Romero Family Photo

- A family portrait from Andersonville, featuring the Romero matriarch Inez on the left. Look at the people, the setting, even the dog, and imagine what plants might have filled their yard and their time.

Milpa System Diagram

- This method of growing corn, beans, and squash together, is an old tradition of Mesoamerica that came to reach many parts of indigenous North America. Mexican families adapted this as they moved northward as well.

Photo of Chamomile

- Called *manzanilla* in Spanish, chamomile grew in yards across Fort Collins. Some Hispanic elders remember using it to heal and to relax.

El Burrito Menu

- This is from a family-run restaurant that began in 1960, built on recipes passed down and the plants that made them special.

Photo of *El Burrito*

- This restaurant is still around today. It's a place where food, plants, music and memory continue to mix.

Photo of House Shrine

- A sacred space inside of a home. Notice the use of flowers, greenery, and decorations. Plants often speak when words cannot.

Photo of Sisters Frances and Mary Garcia



Frances Garcia and Mary Garcia.
Mounted photographic duplicate.
Historical Collection. Fort Collins Museum
of Discovery.

Description:

This photo shows Frances and Mary Garcia, sisters who grew up in poverty in Fort Collins. Raised in a community shaped by work, faith, and family, they eventually became Franciscan Sisters. Towards the end of middle school, they decided they wanted to help people farther out in the world.

For Mary especially, memories of her childhood were filled with flowers, quiet spaces, and her mother's love plants. Their story reminds us that even in working-class neighborhoods, deep spiritual and emotional lives flourished, and that gardens, herbs, and beauty were part of growing up.

Inquiry Questions:

- What do you think Mary and Frances learned from their mother or neighborhood?
- How might their experiences with plants or nature have shaped their decisions?
- What role do you think plants played in their childhood memories?
Can you think of someone whose faith or kindness reminds you of a flower?
- What does it mean to grow up surrounded by both hardship and beauty?

<p>Quote from Sister Mary Garcia</p> <p>My love for nature, beauty and silence had its beginning in Ingleside... I learned of God's great generosity in splashing beauty all over through the different kinds of flowers and wildlife and the interesting and varied rock formations that surrounded us... I remember that Mother would go to the hills in the spring to gather <i>nopales</i>, prickly pears to prepare them as a delicious vegetable. She had a great appreciation for plants and loved flowers.</p> <p>Mary Garcia, 2006. <i>My Weaving: Autobiography of Sister Mary Garcia, O.S.E.</i>, p2.</p>	<p>Description:</p> <p>In her own words, Sister Mary remembered Ingleside, a rocky quarry town several miles northwest of Fort Collins, as a place overflowing with beauty. She spoke of wildflowers, wildlife, and her mother's joy. These weren't just background details. They were sources of spiritual learning and reflections on the divine. Plants weren't just useful; they were sacred and woven into her understanding of the world.</p> <p>Inquiry Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do Sister Mary's memories tell us about how she saw nature? - How do plants help people feel close to something bigger than themselves? - What makes a flower or cactus beautiful to someone? - Why do you think Mary's mother gathered <i>nopales</i> specifically? - Do you have any memories tied to a specific landscape?
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Photo of Ingleside landscape



View of the Piedra lisa in Ingleside –
1988. Mary Garcia, 2006. *My Weaving:*
Autobiography of Sister Mary Garcia,
O.S.E., p3.

Description:

Inquiry Question:

The Romeo family of the Andersonville neighborhood of Fort Collins in 1953.

NO IMAGE
AVAILABLE

"Romero Group." 1953. Romero Family Collection. Fort Collins Museum of Discovery.

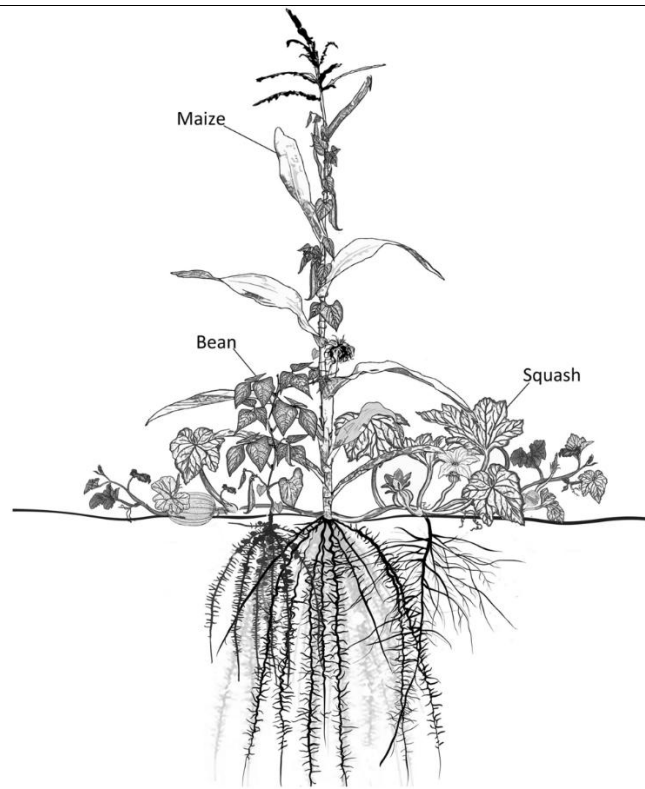
Description:

From left to right, we see Inez, Frances (13), Mary, John, Boy (dog), Toni (?) (9 and 7 months), and Juliet (8 and 8 months), taken in January.

Inquiry Question:

<p>Snippets from a 1975 oral history with Inez Romero where she discussed her mother Mrs. Rivera and her community role as an herbalist healer.</p> <p>T. What kind of remedies would she use for colds and things like that?</p> <p>R. Oh, she used to make tea out of - what do you call that? - pepper-mint tea. She used to plant it herself, and other herbs, and if you had a cut or something, she'd always wash it with that - but I don't remember the names of that.</p> <p>...</p> <p>T. She grew something in her garden, though, that she used for sort of a poultice, didn't she?</p> <p>R. Yes. And she used to plant her own herbs. All the neighbors around here all knew her. If they were sick, colic or anything, they'd call my mother to doctor them. She was real good about that.</p> <p>...</p> <p>R. My neighbor over here she'd say, "Mrs. Rivera, with the touch of her hand, she would get you well." But she was so good for that.</p> <p>"Romero, Mrs. Inez." Charlene Tresner and Lloyd Levy, April 14th, 1975. Fort Collins Public Library Oral History Project. Fort Collins Museum of Discovery.</p>	<p>Description:</p> <p>Inquiry Question:</p>
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Diagram of the milpa agricultural system.	<p>Description:</p> <p>Inquiry Question:</p>
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“The classic milpa with maize-bean-squash.” Lopez-Ridaura, S., Barba-Escoto, L., Reyna-Ramirez, C.A. *et al.* Maize intercropping in the milpa system. Diversity, extent and importance for nutritional security in the Western Highlands of Guatemala. *Sci Rep* **11**, 3696 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-82784-2>

German chamomile



German chamomile, Matricaria Recutita. Kallerna, 2009.
Wikipedia Commons.

Description:
According to Fort Collins Hispanic resident Viola Garcia in the 1998 Fort Collins documentary *Mi Gente*, chamomile or *mansanilla* grew wild and locally in people's yards/gardens. According to her, people would drink it for upset stomachs, to relax and go to sleep, and more.

Mi Gente. City of Fort Collins, 1998.

Inquiry Question:

Photograph of an El Burrito (est. 1960) menu, placed in a time capsule in 1999.



NO IMAGE
AVAILABLE

Menu. La Familia Godinez. Fort Collins Museum of Discovery.

Description:

This menu belongs to El Burrito restaurant located on 404 Linden Street in Fort Collins right beside the Cache la Poudre River. Jesse and Dorothy Godinez opened the restaurant in September of 1960. Jesse's mother Agustina Godinez helped cook family recipes for the restaurant. The Godinez family continues to own and operate El Burrito as of 2025.

Inquiry Question:

- How have you seen plants used in Mexican restaurants?

<p>Google Street View of El Burrito, April 2024</p> 	<p>Description:</p> <p>Inquiry Question:</p>
<p>Google Maps El Burrito, 1979</p>  <p>404 Linden. Tax Assessor Records. Fort Collins Museum of Discovery.</p>	<p>Description:</p> <p>An older photo of El Burrito.</p> <p>The location originally hosted Sam's Place, also owned by the Godinez family. A photo of Sam's Place is available on Fort Collins History Connection.</p> <p>Inquiry Question:</p>

Photograph of House Shrine in Greeley




"Spanish Colony house shrine." Weld County Images Collection, 1998. Greeley History Museum.

Description:

Inquiry Question:

Conclusion:

Two sties

<p>The Romero House, now also known as Museo de las Tres Colonias, in the Andersonville neighborhood of Fort Collins</p>  <p>“425 10th Street, Fort Collins, Colorado – Museo de las Tres Colonias.” Larimer County Tax Assessor, 1949. Tax Assessor Records. Fort Collins Museum of Discovery.</p>	<p>Description:</p> <p>Inquiry Question:</p>
<p>A model Spanish Colony House at Centennial Village Museum in Greeley</p>	<p>Description:</p> <p>Inquiry Question:</p>



NO IMAGE
AVAILABLE

Spanish Colony House. Tedd Runge,
2008. Weld County Images Collection.
Greeley History Museum.

Additional Sources

- QR Code and link to Museo de las Tres Colonias Facebook page
- QR Code and link to Chuck Solano's End of the Row
- QR Code and link to Gabe Lopez's White Gold Laborers
- QR Code and link to Mi Gente video (30:00 mark)... osha with wide usage and including on cowboy boots to repel snakes, matarika, potato w hankerchief and salt and baking soda to lower fever, olive oil, romero/rosemary and windburns, manzanilla,