



# The Lab Report

August 2023

## Come Grow With Us!



The first phase of the SOIL Outdoor Learning Lab, a community and education garden, officially opened on June 1st! You read that right, between April 1st and June 1st, we installed all of the below ground garden infrastructure, built and placed 86 garden beds, routed irrigation drip lines to each bed, filled the beds with premium soil, had Riverview students plant seeds before school let out, and rented garden beds to 50 community members! As the plants grow, and community members gather together each day, construction continues with features like a shade pavilion and benches to develop the space into a community hub.



This huge accomplishment wouldn't have been possible without the support of our amazing community, so let's break it down:

- **4 courageous community leaders** from Durango School District 9R, Durango Parks and Recreation and the private sector saw an opportunity for the community and a vision was born.
- **20 generous donors** from our community contributed to raising over \$370,000.
- Over **80 volunteers** collectively contributed hundreds of hours of their time, energy, knowledge, and skill.
- **14 local businesses** signed on as sponsors providing everything from financial support, to building materials, heavy machinery rental, alpaca manure, ice cream, and truckloads of compost!
- **9 local non-profits** with a shared vision for building resilience in our community became partners and collaborators.
- **3 passionate and driven environmental studies interns** from Fort Lewis College committed to spending their summer with us.
- **50 community gardeners**, spanning 3 generations, enthusiastically signed up to garden in this brand new space!

We had the chance to share the full SOIL story on a [recent episode of The Garden Guys](#) with local horticultural legends, Tom Bartels and Darrin Parmenter. You can listen to the episode anywhere you listen to podcasts!

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## More than a garden - SOIL's mission in action



In addition to welcoming our first group of community and student gardeners into the space this Spring, we've collaborated with local organizations (**SEED Studio**, the **Southwest Colorado Education Collaborative**, the **Durango Garden Club**, and **Fort Lewis College** among others) to host K-12 students, college interns, and community members from across the Four Corners. Visitors have created art, played games, built new professional skills, deepened relationships, shared knowledge, connected with nature AND admired the thriving garden beds.

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## Can you help us build the grow dome?

With the education and community gardens flourishing beyond anyone's wildest dreams, we're looking to fund

installation of the next feature of SOIL Outdoor Learning Lab, **the Grow Dome**. This feature will expand programming for student learning and community engagement year-round!

## Grow Dome



A 42' Growing Spaces Grow Dome was purchased in collaboration with SW Colorado Education Collaboration last fall. **Future donations** will support innovative and sustainable techniques, such as a Ground to Air Heat Transfer system, also known as an "Earth Battery", to promote year round growing.

We have a special donation-matching opportunity called the Cultivation Club. Each donation of \$1,000+ will be matched to double your impact as we aim to garner 100 donations of \$1,000! A huge thank you to matching donor Lauren Thompson for her generosity, and to those who have already joined the Club.



[Make a Donation](#)

## Become a garden visitor & volunteer!

Many of you have been patiently waiting to help us in the garden. Well now is the time! On **Tuesdays from 9am-11am**, we will be opening our gates for a weekly **Community Volunteer Party**. This event is open to anyone from the community who would like to help us maintain and continue to develop this beautiful

space!

WE  COMMUNITY  
**VOLUNTEERS**  
AT SOIL OUTDOOR LEARNING LAB

I want to  
volunteer!



@soillearninglab

## Mr. Love is moving into the garden full time!



After 10 years as the science teacher at Riverview Elementary, Charlie Love is shifting to a new position with the Durango 9R School District as Instructional Specialist in Sustainability with an initial focus on developing the SOIL Outdoor Learning Lab facility and programming for all Durango School District students and beyond! He is excited to extend his passion for gardening, sustainability, and outdoor learning experiences to students across the region and the community at large.

## Upcoming Community Events at SOIL!

- **Community Volunteer Party** - Every Tuesday morning 9am - 11am
- **Marye Jackson Memorial Birthday Celebration** - Saturday, August 19th at 11am
- **Manna Soup Kitchen's Tour de Farms** -Saturday, August 26th (time TBD)

Looking for a place to host your community event?  
SOIL has you covered.

Host your event at  
SOIL

# Welcome to our newest SOIL Sponsors!!



Table to Farm Compost, Studs Lumber, Scapegoat Landscaping, Eagle Electric, Builder's First Source, and Waldo Excavation!

Become a SOIL Sponsor

**Smile while you scroll**

Follow @SoilLearningLab

Add some garden beauty to your social media feed, see what's growing, learn about free events, and follow all of the FUN at SOIL by tuning into our [Instagram](#) & [Facebook Pages](#).



Help Us  
Grow

[SOILLab.org](http://SOILLab.org)

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