



## MNLA Member Profile

# Rocky Mountain Gardening Magazine

When Andra and Dan Spurr moved to Montana more than 15 years ago, they, like a lot of gardeners, were initially dismayed at the challenges of trying to grow vegetables and perennials at high elevations, a short growing season, poor soil, drought, and a litany of pests. But with careers in magazine publishing, they decided to do something about it: start their own magazine.

Thus was born *Zone 4* in 2009. Instrumental in helping them get started were Dr. Bob Gough, a professor of horticulture at Montana State University, and his wife, Cheryl Moore-Gough. They also sought contributions from other universities, extension specialists, and long-time gardeners in the region. *Zone 4* was quickly recognized and appreciated around the region as a reliable source of expert gardening advice, filling a need unattended by most national publications.

In 2015 the name was changed to *Rocky Mountain Gardening* to avoid confusion over precisely which USDA climate zones the magazine actually covered; despite the name *Zone 4*, articles always addressed activities in zones 3-7, from northern Montana to southern Colorado.

In addition to horticulture, the Spurrs believed that supporting the local food movement was a natural extension of vegetable gardening. *Zone 4 Live!* events at Chico Hot Springs Resort & Day Spa, and articles on community-supported agriculture (CSA), farmers' markets, restaurants sourcing local ingredients, and the broader food distribution system soon established the magazine as a leader in changing the way people view and consume food.

In the Spring 2016 issue, the Spurrs announced their intention to sell *Rocky Mountain Gardening*. In his editorial, Dan wrote:

"We have learned much about the people, places, and plants of the Rocky Mountain region. Most importantly, we have learned what a great group of folks gardeners are. Smart. Experienced. Generous with their knowledge. Down to earth—literally and figuratively! On our road trips around the western states we've been welcomed and cared for by everyone we met. Friendships we made will be lifelong.

"So it is with greatly mixed emotions—you know what's coming next!—that we have decided it's time for others to take hoe in hand and nurture *Rocky Mountain Gardening* to the next level. There are a number of fertile areas in which to make this happen. At our ages, we have to think of ourselves as "Old School." For one, given the ever-growing impact of the Digital Age there are wonderful opportunities for younger minds with new skills and fresh ideas.

"We've undertaken a search at national and local levels for new owners, both publishing groups and private individuals. Enthusiastic partners is another option. Interested parties should contact Andra.

"Thank you—readers, advertisers, and contributors—for your continuing support! We'll keep you posted.

"Gardeners are the best!"

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