

LEVEL UP: Cultivating Future Leaders

Day One | October 29, 2026
Golden Hotel, 800 11th Street
Clear Creek Ballroom

9:30 - 10 a.m. - Arrival, Coffee & Networking

10:00 - 10:30 a.m. - Welcome & Framing the Day, Leadership Activity

10:30 - 11:30 a.m. - Level Up Panel: What it Really Takes to Move Up in Horticulture

An honest look at building a career in horticulture: What paths are actually available - Where the industry is heading - Money, growth, and real opportunities - What it *really* takes to move up

Panelists: Erin Nash, Legacy Trees | Paul Koenning, Epoch Estate Wines | Katelynn Martinez, OneCanopy | Mike Schleining, SiteOne

11:30 - 12:30 p.m. - Lunch and Leadership Activity

12:30 - 1:30 p.m. - Level Up Discussion Groups: Industry Insights in Action (*pick 2*)

- Modern Garden Center Retail: Marketing, E-Commerce & Social Media | Led by Emma Daugherty and Elcee Evershed, Bath Inc.
- The Future of Food Production: How Greenhouses, Vertical Farming, and Technology Will Feed Growing Cities | Led by Joshua Craver, CSU Extension
- New trends in Annuals and Perennials | Led by Giovanna Romero, Ball Horticulture
- AI in Horticulture: Leveraging AI to Scale Your Expertise | Ashley Wright, Plantista

1:30 - 1:45 p.m. - Leadership Activity, Working Break

1:45 - 2:45 p.m. - Level Up Discussion Groups: Building Your Professional Brand:

Finances, Networking and Career Growth (*pick 2*)

- Business Financial Fundamentals | Led by Courtenay Koontz, Trees of Corrales
- How to Hire, Manage, and Retain a Strong Team | Led by Jesse Eastman, Ft. Collins Nursery / Eastman Farms
- Personal Finance and Money Management | Led by Daniel Schutte, Schutte Financial
- The Power of Mentorship at Every Career Stage | Led by Mike Schleining, SiteOne
- Startups and Financing | Led by Katelynn Martinez, OneCanopy

2:45 - 3:15 p.m. - Leadership Activity, Working Break

3:15 - 4:30 p.m. - Level Up Industry Leader Panel: Stories, Challenges & Advice

True AMA - Moderated Q&A with audience participation - Ask the Questions you really want answered.

Panelists: Mike Bone, Denver Botanic Gardens | Dr. Mengmeng Gu, CSU Extension | Dave Dickey, DWD Plant Sales | Jeremy Friedman, Blooma Farms | Sierra Voss, Root by Design

4:30 - 5:15 p.m. - Wrap Up and Awards Ceremony

5:15 p.m. - Happy Hour and Appetizers in the Mountain Side Patio

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Day Two | October 30, 2026
Breakfast at the Golden Hotel, 800 11th Street
Mesa Meeting Room

Tour at the AARS Public Rose Garden, 200 Jefferson County Parkway

8:30 - 9:30 a.m. - Breakfast and Check Out of Rooms

10:00 - 11:30 a.m. - Presentation and Tour of the AARS Public Rose Garden

Tour the rose gardens at the Jefferson County Sheriff's Complex. This is the only All-America Rose Selection (AARS) garden to be planted at a jail and maintained by inmate workers. Since the inception in 1993, the inmates have helped design, plant and maintain the garden. The collection contains over 2,500 rose plants and 2,500 perennials and shrubs. Led by Rick Lehl, Detention Programs Supervisor.

11:30 - Head Home and Enjoy Your Weekend!