



Jensen-Olson Arboretum Introduction

Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, April 2024

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Introduction to JOA for new PRAC members

This is an abbreviated summation of how JOA came to be and current management. For more detailed information, the Administrative Agreement and Conservation Easement can be found through the Parks & Recreation department. For current management practices and contemporary questions, feel free to contact Ginger Hudson, JOA Manager.

This year JOA celebrates its 17th year as a CBJ Parks and Recreation facility.

The property that is now JOA was homesteaded in the late 1880s by John and Marie Peterson who immigrated from Germany. They also staked a gold claim along and up Peterson Creek. Their mining was quite successful, affording them a winter home in downtown Juneau. The Peterson's grew their own vegetables, and the garden site is still in production today as part of the arboretum. John and Marie had two daughters who continued the mine operation even after one home burned down and John's death soon after. One daughter, Irma stayed on the property while the other moved away. Irma married Charles Olson and they remained on the property caring for Marie until her death. Once the gold was mined out, Irma built a milk farm and sold vegetables locally. Irma and Charles had one child that died young. Irma outlived Charles. She also cared Marie on the property in their wood-sided house until Marie's death. Irma had no other heirs so her nephew Carl Jensen inherited the property.

Carl married Caroline and they built the existing residence and garage from a kit plan purchased out of Topeka, KS. Carl was a shipwright and Caroline was an accountant. In addition to working for local businesses, she helped Carl with his business. Caroline developed the ornamental horticultural aspect of their property that set the foundation for the arboretum. Carl and Caroline continued to cultivate vegetables in the garden started by the Peterson's. Carl pre-deceased Caroline and they did not have children. Caroline did not want the property that had become her home sold or developed. At the encouragement of friends and conservationists in Southeast Alaska, Caroline worked with the Southeast

Alaska Land Trust, SEALT, to create the first conservation easement through SEALT and the first in SE Alaska. She started with an administrative agreement with CBJ in 1998. The property was transferred to CBJ in 2006 upon Caroline's death and it opened as a public garden in 2007. It was Caroline who gave the name Jensen-Olson Arboretum.

The Conservation Easement defines the use of the JOA property. Guidelines are set to preserve the beauty and educational aspect of the property. Some include: no industrial-commercial tourism such as large cruise ship busses; no fishing or hunting; no fence can be built to decrease access of wildlife; major changes or construction must be approved by SEALT; access should always be available for educational purposes including local schools and UAS; free admission to the general public; maintenance of the manager's residence, and more.

The homestead of the Petersons covered much more land including a field near Peterson Creek cultivated for feed for the horses and even a cow that Irma tended. All but fourteen acres were sold in order to focus the property for conservation. Caroline used funds from land sales and her and Carl's savings to create a \$1.8 million endowment managed by CBJ to be grown in perpetuity and used to help maintain the property. At the end of FY23 the endowment was worth \$2.74 million. Each year a 5-year average is calculated and 4% is drawn off the average to apply to the JOA budget. The remaining fiscal year budget is drawn from CBJ general revenue. JOA's approved FY24 budget was \$239,100.

JOA is managed by CBJ P&R department. Staff includes one full-time salaried manager, one seasonal full-time groundskeeper assistant with benefits, and one seasonal groundskeeper assistant without benefits. Seasonal assistants are employed generally May - September. Other P&R landscape staff provide assistance with big projects as well as with large equipment. The manager lives onsite and tends to the property year-round, including assessing for weather damaged trees and plants, and clearing snow from the parking lot. JOA staff maintain the Pt. Caroline trail. Heavier trail repair is done by Trail Mix. Ginger is only the second resident manager. Each manager has lived onsite with their spouse. It needs to be made clear to the advisory committee and CBJ management, one single individual could not maintain JOA alone. Each manager's spouse contributes countless hours of support work be it snow removal, tree removal, coordinating volunteers, communicating with outside agencies, cleaning rain gutters, mitigating incursions from bears and porcupines, and much more. These partners fully support the success of their manager spouse even though they too have full time jobs. The visitors to JOA benefit greatly from their help.

The city formed the Jensen-Olson Arboretum Advisory Committee to help guide CBJ and JOA on the use of the property and the endowment. The first JOA manager Merrill Jensen set the foundation for interactions with JOAAB and ensured the endowment would not be the sole source of funding for JOA. JOAAB was dissolved in 2023 at the recommendation of P&R Director George Schaff. PRAC now encompasses JOA. The Endowment Committee from JOAAB remains as a subcommittee of PRAC.

Funds from the manager's rent, currently set at \$900 per month, and wedding rentals, currently set at \$300, go toward a part of the general funds called discretionary funds. New in 2024 are commercial use permits. These are CBJ Parks & Rec site use permits that are required during the summer season from other large tour operators. JOA permits target taxis and other small tour companies. The permits are \$250 per year, and there is a per-head fee.

Facilities on the property include a 20-spot parking lot along Glacier Hwy, the residence built by Carl and Caroline, a double garage, and the gardeners shed. The residence houses the arboretum manager, currently Ginger Hudson and her husband Ken Murphy. Ginger is the second manager in the arboretum's history. The garage houses JOA's power equipment, firewood for seasoning, hand tools, and other supplies. It is not heated and has a dirt floor. There is one shallow well onsite for residence water. The residence is heated with fuel oil and the stove is run on propane. The gardeners shed holds hand tools and other supplies. It is the main break room for seasonal gardeners and serves as volunteers for events. The shed is heated with a wood stove, there is electricity but no running water. JOA provides a water dispenser with service from Alaska Pure Mountain Spring Water for summer staff. There are two exterior water faucets for landscape care. Part of the Pt. Caroline trail is on JOA property. The trail is accessed from the same parking lot.

Recent improvements were updating the residence water filtration system and internet service. The internet had not been updated since original installation in 2006. That service was not able to support online meeting platforms. The well water collected from the tap in the residence tested high in lead and iron. Sulfur smell was prevalent and strong. In FY21, Ginger began work with the former JOA Advisory Board and P&R management to request financing from the discretionary funds to cover the update costs. This was the first-time discretionary funds were accessed for property improvements. In the spring of 2023, the residence plumbing was replaced and a new multi-stage water filtration system installed. In the summer of 2023 CBJ IT installed Starlink internet service after Ginger proved it was viable for the area. In the fall of 2024, the original single pane windows will be replaced by a capital improvement deferred maintenance budget.

A special feature that puts JOA on the map internationally is holding the Nationally Accredited Collection™ of the Genus *Primula*. *Primula* are known commonly as primroses. Caroline adored primroses and had many in the garden beds. JOA's first manager Merrill Jensen built upon that collection to acquire accreditation in 2012. At the same time Merrill acquired official arboretum accreditation from ArbNet through the Morton Arboretum. These certifications and other public garden memberships place JOA in the professional botanical garden sphere. Visitation to JOA averages about 10,000 guests per year.

An independent nonprofit, all volunteer group, Friends of Jensen-Olson Arboretum, FJOA, helps support JOA through grant acquisition, site improvements, and educational programming. A major improvement FJOA accomplished was coordinating construction of a permanent bathroom. For the first 15 years of its existence, JOA rented a port-a-pot each summer. The restroom is a concrete forest-service style vault toilet. There is no running water in it, but it is beautifully painted inside and lovingly maintained. FJOA has also raised funds and/or acquired grants to purchase a riding lawn mower, buy plant and interpretive signage, build the Chilkat View Shelter, build a covering over the potting bench area, purchase computers and a contractor to update the plant collections database, buy plants, and much more. FJOA coordinates the family and adult educational events onsite such as Tidepooling with Families, BugDay, photo workshops, and watercolor painting workshops. It is requested that donations go through FJOA as opposed to CBJ due to the time and cost of processing. FJOA holds their own funds and has an established fund through the Juneau Community Foundation. More information can be found at friendsjoarboretum.org.

Currently JOA is open in summer, April-October on Wednesdays - Sundays from 9a -5p. It is open in winter, November - March on Fridays - Sundays, 9a - 4p. Dogs are not allowed in the arboretum per CBJ code. Dogs are allowed on the adjacent Pt. Caroline Trail.

Learn more at: <https://juneau.org/parks-recreation/jensen-olson-arboretum>

<https://www.facebook.com/CBJJOA/>

friendsjoarboretum.org