

Spring Banners
by Michelle Tschetter & Bob Kennemer

- **Chicory** – is abundant in and around La Veta. Its roots are best known as a substitute for or an additive to coffee. A native of Europe chicory is also known as blue sailors or wild succory. The vibrant blue flowers are seen from June to October. Painted by La Veta artists, found in local rancher's hay, consumed by area foragers as a pot herb/medicine/or beverage, this lovely plant is enjoyed by all.
- **Claret Cup Cactus** – are among the most beautiful of the hedgehog cacti. They can be found in flower boxes in downtown Walsenburg or along the Hogback Trail in nearby Lathrop State Park. The blossoms vary with soil types or genetic difference, ranging from orange to a deep blood red. Considering the blood, sweat, and tears shed by area coal miners; this plant is a befitting reflection of Huerfano's County seat.
- **Prickly Poppy** – This plant, before it flowers, is rather scruffy and weed like, resembling a thistle. It will, however, surprise you once its giant white blossoms open. Found along dusty roads and disturbed soils around Gardner, this plant reflects much about Gardner. Upon first glance, the Gardner area does not seem to have a lot going on. But it boasts a rich history of early Spanish settlers and ranchers, Hippie communes, and beautiful wilderness lands. A diamond in the rough.
- **Iris** “ –The goddess of the rainbow,” according to Greek wildflower folklore, this was because of the many colors the blossoms could have. But the wild iris' of Cuchara are all an eye catching blue. Iris was the bearer of good tidings to mortals. The name means “eye of heaven.” When one visits Cuchara and Cordova Passes in late May into June, a heavenly sky of blue will be at your feet, as thousands of iris' bloom in mountain meadows.