

Albuquerque Chapter Newsletter

Native Plant Society of New Mexico

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January-March 2011

From the President:

A Word About the 2011

Albuquerque Chapter Slate of Officers

For some strange reason, our chapter has never had an official vice-president—that is, someone who intended to serve as president in the following year. This is not a good situation. It has led to interesting solutions. Recently, we solved this dilemma by calling our program chair “vice-president,” although we knew that he never intended to serve as president. Why would he? He is a superb program chair, absolutely the best. Another solution was to simply write “vacant” next to the office of vice-president. That wasn’t exactly an improvement, but it was closer to the truth. The result of the situation was that many a president served longer than she or he intended to, and some served under duress. It wasn’t exactly slavery, but it was close.

This is not to say that we haven’t had dynamic officers over the years, but every organization needs a successor to the president. This year’s slate of officers attempts to remedy the situation, hopefully for at least three years. We have not *one*, but *three* vice-presidents, *real ones* who will gain experience as president during the year and be seasoned for the job in future years.

Jeremy McClain has agreed to serve as president in 2012. His work on the board of directors this year will give him experience with the issues we face and how we go about solving them. He will assume responsibility for our tabling events, those events where we reach out to the community for visibility and credibility. Jeremy will be looking to you for help with these events. If you want to keep him, you’ll help him by volunteering when those events take place.

Bob Hass, our hard-working newsletter editor, has decided to turn that job over to a new member, Maya Kapoor, and to take on the role of vice-president in charge of membership (getting it and keeping it) and publicity (publicizing chapter programs and other activities). During the months of April, May, and June, (when we meet), and in July and August (when we do not meet), Bob will handle presidential responsibilities. He is well-versed in the workings of our chapter from his incredible work on the chapter newsletter, and from his active participation as a chapter board member for the past two years.

Tom Stewart will become our vice-president with secretarial responsibilities. Tom has served on the board for at least a decade and knows the chapter schedule inside and out. Tom keeps us on track with the by-laws, maintains a record of attendance, and records our board meetings. Last year, Tom and his committee did a much needed revision of our out-of-date by-laws. Tom will handle presidential responsibilities during the months of September, October, November, and December.

By January 2012, we should have *three* qualified presidential candidates with lots of hands-on experience.

If you are new to our chapter, you might be interested to know that chapter leadership is divided into two parts. Up to 12 voting officers who are elected comprise the board of directors. Up to 9 appointed members serve as the *core group*, the non-voting members of the board. Their ideas and views influence any decision the officers take. Adding the core group to our board allows us to hear more members’ ideas and to accomplish more. Up to 21 people run our chapter.

At press time, we had two core group vacancies. We need a *refreshments chair*, someone to call folks who have signed up to bring refreshments to meetings and remind them to do so. It’s not a difficult job, but it is absolutely essential if we are to have social time at the meetings. We also need a *book marketer*, someone to distribute our books for sale at local businesses. It’s fun and easy to do, but so far we haven’t found the volunteer for that job. If you can help us in these areas, please call me at 828-4775.

Here’s wishing you an exciting and successful 2011 with health and happiness and challenges that enrich your life. See you at our meetings!

Frances Robertson, President
Albuquerque Chapter, NPSNM



Musings of a Habitat Gardener: Such Beauty, But Where are the Heart and the Soul?

By Virginia Burris

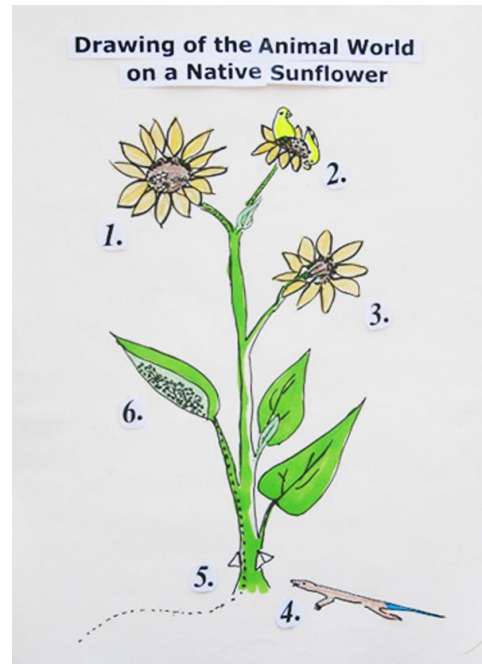
Several years ago I visited a very large, beautiful garden known for its masses of continuously blooming flowers of all colors – reds, blues, yellows, oranges, and colors in-between. The blooms were so thick the green leaves barely showed through. The garden grounds were immaculately maintained. As soon as one species of flower passed its prime-time for blooming, the plants were removed and replaced with flowers that were just beginning their blooming cycle. After several hours of walking the pathways of this garden, I came to the exit. Never had I experienced a garden so lovely in colors. Yet in spite of all this beauty, something wasn't quite right. I left the garden with a vague, uneasy feeling.

Now, several years later, I realize why I have carried this unsettled feeling in me ever since my garden visit. All the acres of blooms should have been a mecca for pollinators, but I saw only one butterfly. Where were the buzz of honeybees and the low drone of fuzzy bumblebees? Bird life was missing as well. Birds should have been part of the scene, flying fast, carrying caterpillars back to their little ones in the nest. It is probable that the lack of butterflies and other wildlife in the garden was due to the use of pesticides.

Why create gardens where only plants are welcome and all else is destroyed, the natural cycles interrupted? The interconnections between the world of plants and animals—the heart and soul of the garden—were missing. Beauty is usually thought of in visual terms; however, beauty can also be found by appreciating the connections between plants and animals.

A habitat garden may not have the profusion of color described in the garden above. Instead, it can give pleasure in a quiet and peaceful way with its profusion of plant and animal life. In the drawing to the right I show some interrelationships between a sunflower plant and animals in my habitat garden. What follows describes the life I saw on a single native sunflower plant in my garden.

Walking down my garden path as I had done many times, I noticed a double row of ants moving quickly up a native sunflower stalk. Knowing that ants farm aphids on plants, protecting the aphids from predators and harvesting the “honeydew” the aphids secrete, I followed the moving trail up to a leaf about five feet above-ground. The ants made a sharp right turn at this point and moved to a leaf stem.



1. Bees of many species, relishing sunflower pollen and nectar.
2. Lesser Goldfinches feeding. Their diet is 96% seeds.
3. A praying mantis moving slowly to deceive its prey.
4. A whiptail lizard eating a moth.
5. A moth hiding, camouflaged by its drab color.
6. Aphids parasitizing the sunflower while omnivorous ants forage.

I carefully turned the leaf over and sure enough, the underside of the leaf was covered with green aphids being attended by the farmer ants. The ants, aphids, and sunflower were connected.

Just that morning, while watching bees land on a sunflower, I noticed a lime-green praying mantis securely holding onto the flower stem just below the flower. Only its spiked forelegs and head protruded above the ring of yellow flower petals. Several bees were too busy collecting nectar to notice the mantis. The next time I looked the praying mantis was casually eating a bee, in no hurry since it had already eaten the head. There were still several bees collecting nectar nearby, apparently unaware of the plight of their fellow bee. The praying mantis and bees formed another link to the sunflower.

Two lizards ran quickly across the path to the base of the sunflower and stopped. One jumped four inches and easily grabbed a camouflaged moth resting on the stem. A second jump and a second moth became breakfast for the lizard. Yet another connection to the sunflower, important to the survival of both lizard and moth. Lesser and American Goldfinches moved acrobatically through the sunflowers, hanging upside-down and plucking

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Landscaping With Natives

Operation Head Start: Plan for Planting Now

By George Oxford Miller

With dreary days and even a spot of snow, landscaping isn't foremost in our minds. But now is the time to plan for planting. Transplanted perennials, shrubs, and trees benefit from late winter and early spring rain and can get established before the rigors of summer. For many shrubs, the growing season peaks in the spring, so they get a head start if they come out of dormancy already set in their new home. Here are three plants that will beautify Albuquerque yards. All require full sunlight. After the first year, water them weekly.



Sotol (*Dasylirion* sp.)

Sotols give your landscape a distinctive Southwestern flavor. The dense, mounding rosette of blue-green leaves adds texture and balance to a xeriscape and provides a foliage complement to cacti. In the summer when the bloom stalk displays its rusty seed head, sotol becomes a dominant focal point. Its low stature makes it an ideal foreground accent where you don't want a visual barrier.

Remember, sharp teeth line the blade-like leaves, so keep sotol away from children's areas. Mexican species are more frost sensitive.

Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*)

Just when many plants are fading, this densely-foliated evergreen shrub comes into its most beautiful season. As the seeds mature, they develop twisted feathery tails, which by September almost obscure the small leaves. The shrub has an erect, narrow profile and is 5-15 feet tall, so it won't outgrow limited space. Its



compact shape and evergreen leaves make this plant ideal as a shrub or hedge to screen a concrete wall. Given time and proper pruning, this moderately fast-growing plant becomes a small, multi-trunked tree with ornate, shaggy, reddish bark.

New Mexico Elderberry, (*Sambucus caerulea*)



Taxonomists have given this attractive plant a half-dozen scientific names and put it in two different families. They may not know where to place it, but you should—in your yard. Whether a bushy shrub or ornate small tree, New Mexico elderberry stands out with lush foliage, bundles of white flowers in the spring, and clusters of purple berries through the summer. This fast-growing plant develops a rounded crown with dense foliage, so use your pruning shears to train it into a handsome tree. It's excellent for windbreaks or screen plantings. It normally grows along intermittent desert waterways, so give it a few good drinks during the summer. Numerous cultivars are available, so be sure to get one adapted to the desert.

George Miller wrote *Landscaping with Native Plants of the Southwest*, available from the Native Plant Society and bookstores.

Musings (*continued from page 2*)

insects and mature seeds, somehow allowing enough seeds to fall to the ground to ensure next year's crop of sunflowers.

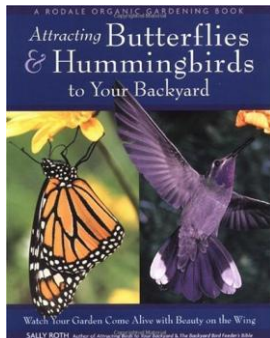
You can make a diagram like mine to illustrate the life and vibrancy you find in your garden. Have fun recording the interactions between the plants and animals. In this way, you will appreciate the rich interconnections that happen when both fauna and flora are welcome.

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Virginia Burris is past president and current conservation chair of the Albuquerque Chapter, NPSNM, and consults on habitat landscape design.

The Book Corner

Attracting Butterflies & Hummingbirds to Your Backyard, by Sally Roth. Rodale Press, 2001, 304 pages, \$21.99.



A beautifully designed garden gives constant joy; a garden filled with colorful insects and birds increases that joy many times over. Roth's manual describes how to entice visitors with nectar-producing flowers, water, shelter, supplemental foods, and host plants for egg-laying and nesting.

Roth provides illustrated sample garden designs, including a butterfly garden in the shape of a butterfly. When you find a suggestion you like, you can take the accompanying list of plants to your nursery. Roth's manual guides you to red, tubular-shaped flowers for attracting hummingbirds and purple or pink, flat, clustered flowers for attracting butterflies. With tables showing the geographical area where each species of plants and pollinators are found, this gardening guide is useful for gardeners from all parts of the United States.

When winged visitors start flocking to your garden, the chapters on butterfly and hummingbird migration, mating, life cycles, and other behaviors will help explain their activities. Roth describes how long-term inhabitants can be observed from the egg to the adult stages. Butterfly eggs deposited on a plant hatch into a series of caterpillars that eventually make chrysalises and finally emerge as adults. Locating a tiny hummingbird nest is more challenging. These nests are well hidden and may best be found by observing females carrying fluffy nest material that you have provided.

The "gallery" in the second half of the book features profiles of 15 hummingbirds and 81 butterflies. Each species has its own page with a color illustration and description. The butterfly profiles include range, description of the caterpillar, and favorite plants; for each kind of hummingbird, range, habitat, aerial display, nesting sites, and favorite plants are listed.

The wealth of information in *Attracting Butterflies & Hummingbirds to Your Backyard*, presented in readable, non-technical form and profusely illustrated with stunning photographs, can guide you at every step of the way to transforming your beautiful, colorful garden to a beautiful, colorful butterfly and hummingbird garden.

Carolyn Dodson
Book Sales Coordinator

A New Year and a New Editor

It's exciting to start out the new year as the newsletter editor for the Albuquerque chapter of NPSNM. Thanks to help from Bob Hass, the changing of the guard has been as smooth as possible.

This year, the newsletter will again be approximately eight pages long per issue. There will be lots of room for your input! Whether you have an article you would like to write, or an idea for a topic someone else might want to pursue, I would love to hear from you. I know lots of chapter members have great leads on interesting people and plants in our area. Please don't be shy with your suggestions! With your participation, our 2011 chapter newsletters will be just as informative and enjoyable as our past newsletters.

I look forward to meeting you in person at NPS events. But even if we never meet face-to-face, you can always reach me by phone or email to discuss newsletter-related issues. Happy botanizing!

Maya Kapoor, Newsletter Editor
Albuquerque Chapter, NPSNM

Albuquerque Chapter Board of Directors

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Conservation Chair: Virginia Burris, 255-6772, vburris1@msn.com

Newsletter Editor: Maya Kapoor, 463-5085, mayalkapoor@gmail.com

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Educational Outreach: Pam McBride, 343-9472, ebotpam@msn.com

Field Trip Coordinator: Dana Price, 872-2646, dana.m.price@usace.army.mil

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Book Marketer: vacant

Computer Expert: Tom Stewart (see above)

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Invasive Weeds Representative: Don Heinze, 565-1441, Donald_heinz@yahoo.com

Member Benefits: Beth Herschman, 892-8751, herschman9@aol.com

Refreshments: vacant

Webpage Coordinator: Nancy McAnally, 873-3197, nancynyna@msn.com