

**Thank you** Janet Mura for serving as Publicity Chair. Thanks also goes to Judith Phillips for serving as State Board Representative for our chapter, and Lee Regan for his volunteerism!

**Welcome** Dana Loy as our new Chapter Representative!

#### **Editor's Note**

As I finish the newsletter watching birds enjoy my feeders and the snow melting this January 5, my schedule is filling with warm season activities. The Taos Chapter is hosting our annual state conference in July during peak flower season. Our partner in preserving native plants and the habitat they provide, the Friends of the Valle de Oro's ABQ Backyard Refuge Program has a number of dates in the spring calendar starting in January so sign up for their mailing list.

Soon our chapter will be getting requests for volunteers for our information table at various events. Carol Conoboy, our Outreach Event Coordinator would love to hear from you at home 505-548-3177, carolconoboy [at] gmail [dot] com

If you want our Albuquerque Chapter board to list dates, times, and meeting places for field trips and meetings and other activities for



Vivid red against green captured in sunlight, *Castilleja miniata*, Scarlet Paintbrush, a jewel found in Red Canyon, Manzano Mountains September 30th. See story page 4.

Photo © Lee Regan

2024 in the newsletter like we did before the pandemic, it's up to you to let our board members know how you feel. I like having tentative dates in my calendar. There will be changes throughout the year, but I find it easy to save the date on a paper calendar. On the other hand, maybe you think the newsletter is obsolete and you want to get all your updates by e-mail. Let us know!

A big THANK YOU to Margaret Menache for her beautiful January-March 2024 state newsletter! Welcome to 2024. Let's enjoy preserving native plants as habitat for our non-human neighbors.

#### -Diane

Diane Stevenson Albuquerque Chapter Newsletter Editor

#### **Cover Photo**

Chihuahuan desert-edged dunes in White Sands National Park looks a *little* like hoped for winter 2024 snow, though midday temperatures were above 90° F in late September.

© D K Stevenson

#### President's Message January 2024 Tom Stewart

The past year, with its no-show monsoon and sweltering summer was hard on our environment and on our usual outdoor enjoyments. Even the high reaches of the Sandia Mountains were disturbingly dry and wildflowers were not at their best. At long last we are said to be in for a winter when El Niño might reverse that.

The climatic phenomenon El Niño is stressful in some regions and beneficial in others. Typically, in New Mexico it brings wetter winters and recharges mountain aquifers with the blessings of snow. Autumn and early winter precipitation has already



Agastache pallidiflora, Giant Hyssop, Red Canyon, Manzano Mountains, 9/30/23

Photo © Lee Regan

given us cause for celebration. Let's hope that this winter and spring keep delivering to invigorate the next growing season, minimize wildfires and invite us to partake of nature's beauty.

It has been a great year for our chapter of the Native Plant Society in many ways. We have had more community engagement, more volunteer service, and more energy coming from members than any time since the onset of the pandemic. Many fascinating presentations, a consistently great newsletter, super field trips and so much learning. Thank you everyone who made this happen.

The year culminated with a fun visit from our state co-presidents, Wendy and Don Graves from Silver City. Their cheerful, inspiring company was the highlight of our annual potluck lunch meeting in December. They made good use of *all* their Albuquerque days, visiting Santa Ana Nursery, the UNM Herbarium, Albuquerque city greenhouse operations, El Oso Grande Pollinator Habitat and several nice restaurants.

My best memory of that week was our walk through the BioPark on a cool morning of intermittent drizzle, visiting with our recent guest speaker Clay Meredith and the curator of plants Maria Thomas to learn about their seed banking program and conservation of rare plants.

The momentum continues in 2024, with some great speakers already scheduled and a variety of outdoor excursions will include some closer to town and for "beginners" to the plant world. Alliances with other groups is an exciting development. We are always open to comments and suggestions about what we are or are not doing. The invitation to contribute in any way you feel comfortable is always open.

Take good care,

**Tom** 



Here we are at a spectacular outcrop of Proterozoic quartzite with steeply dipping bedding. This unit was deposited in a back arc basin about 1.67 billion years ago.

Geology by Kent Condie Photo © Lee Regan On the September 30, 2023 field trip to Red Canyon in the Manzano Mountains, happy hikers enjoyed good weather while finding native flowers. Lee Regan and Kent Condie posted photos and described the flowers for those who participate in facebook/meta on our facebook group page. Here are a few of their observations.

Kent Condie noted 31 species in bloom, though some of them were in the late stages and blossoms were drying out.





Above: Great excitement as we find several species still in bloom while botanizing in a small meadow. *Verbascum thapsus*, Mullein, in the foreground.

Above right: *Heuchera pulchella*, Sandia Alumroot, endemic only in the Manzano and Sandia Mountains Photos © Kent Condie

# NMSU Los Lunas Agricultural Science Center Field Trip Carol Conoboy

On October 24 a few NPSNM members took a last-minute trip to NMSU's agriculture science center. Marisa Thompson met us in the field where we found seasoned volunteers clean-picking tomatoes. They were weighing, sorting and analyzing a variety of tomatoes from plants growing on 6-foot fencing. Plants were separated by species and all received uniform treatment (for instance, regulated water and shade cloth during the hot growing season).



Marisa Thompson is New Mexico's urban horticultural specialist. She explained that the tomato plants were experiments to see which kinds grow best based on the product. For instance, some plants were grown with a light shade cloth, some without a shade cloth. Some plants without shade cloth died due to insects and solar exposure. Plants being harvested were grown under dark shade cloth during the heat of summer. Analyzing the results will show the most successful plants, whether cherry, mid-size, large or pear-shaped. Some tomatoes were not ripe, so volunteers took them home with an assignment to photograph color changes each month, then to save seeds for 2024 growth. Because volunteers were experienced with the collection/analysis procedure, it was an in-

Marissa took us on a tour of the 3-acre farm where many varieties of chiles, grapes, shrubs, trees, and different vegetables were growing. There were many varieties of fruit trees, 2 trees of each variety on the farm. One of the two fruit trees was the control. The other had been pruned or cut back. Over time the amount, size and quality of the fruit will be analyzed.

formed, systematic, scientific approach.

When the analysis of the fruit was completed, we were allowed to harvest crops that had gone fallow. We enjoyed

picking fruit, particularly Arkansas black apples, grapes, and jujubes!





Marisa showed us one area being considered for a secret garden. We saw the facilities and beginnings of a learning garden. With hundreds of acres on the property, there are so many possibilities!

As a biologist and orchardist, I found the farm to be well planned and maintained. Crops are grown without herbicides and pesticides. There are arthropods and birds that contribute to pollination of plants, especially insects such as bees and flies.

Thank you, Marisa! We enjoyed our day. I hope to return in the spring to see everything in bloom.

Clockwise from Top Right: an Oriental Persimmon tree, Carol Conoboy and Marisa Thompson, Arkansas Black apple
Photos © Sharon Miles



# Staying Cool in Texas Diane Stevenson

I was lucky to be on the Aquatic & Riparian Habitat field trip with Jim McGrath at the state NPSNM conference 2023. Jim is a great botanist and friend who now lives and works in the Silver City area.

Photos clockwise from top left: Jim McGrath describing a plant as he does so well,



an unidentified creek moss in our trip leader Casey Williams' hand,



Martin Purdy botanizing by the creek,



Casey Williams identifying a water plant

#### A Lively Restart of the NM Rare Plants Technical Council Lee Regan and Tom Stewart

The first meeting of the New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council since 2021 was hosted by the Albuquerque BioPark on November 13, 2023. The meeting was facilitated by New Mexico State Botanist Erika Rowe and her assistants, Martin Purdy and Ashley Taylor. More than 50 people attended, including members of the Albuquerque chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico, mostly in person but also by zoom. Presenters included former State Botanist Bob Sivinski; Este Muldavin, the director of New Mexico Natural Heritage (NMNH); Harpo Faust of the UNM Herbarium and Navajo botanist Arnold Clifford.

Attendees included representatives and contractors from around the state, including US Bureau of Land Manage-

Agastache pallidiflora, Giant Hyssop, Red Canyon, Manzano Mountains Photo © Lee Regan

ment, Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, the National Park Service, Institute for Applied Ecology and from four botanical gardens (Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Tucson and California) the UNM Herbarium, and several retired active botanists.

The topic of what constitutes a "rare" plant centered around finding a balance between an older restrictive definition and now the inclusion of governmental lists of "sensitive" plants, or "species of conservation concern." The use of "rare" is certainly appropriate for plants that are endemic (found *only* in New Mexico) and to those with "disjunct" or widely scattered small populations. Several other species, termed "peripherals," occur in small areas of New Mexico at the edge of a larger (but limited) range in bordering states. When other factors such as climate change and management of land use are considered, the terminology for "rare" becomes more vague, but equally important in discerning which plants are endangered or "threatened", therefore in need of State and/or Federal protections.

There were three presentations on current genetic research investigating connections among geographic varieties of several rare plants. Genetic research is revealing relatively rapid (millennia-long) diverging lines of phenotypic variation, leading to suggestions that some varieties may constitute distinct species. The familiar Fendler's hedgehog cactus, *Echinocereus fendleri*, for instance, has distinctive regional varieties that appear to result from active evolutionary processes other than hybridization.

Everyone (whether working in agencies or not) is encouraged to become more familiar with the New Mexico Rare Plants website <a href="https://nmrareplants.unm.edu/">https://nmrareplants.unm.edu/</a> and to incorporate more data and information into its expanding database. The need to compile written botanical reports on many of the rare species was noted.

All the matters discussed are important for guidance in devising strategies for conservation actions going forward. Building on her predecessor Daniela Roth's work, Erika Rowe outlined ambitious goals: increasing protection of rare plants; expanding data on their status and distribution; providing guidelines for management of plant populations; promoting coordination and collaboration among agencies and institutions; and encouraging education for stewardship.

There is a consensus on the need for habitat suitability assessments, seed collection and storage, botanical research infrastructure (equipment and trained personnel), and more "boots on the ground" to monitor plants in more locations statewide. Besides aiding these kinds of efforts, we might look forward to other ways that NPSNM can collaborate on educational projects and public promotion of critical plant knowledge.

### **Spring 2024 Field Trip Preview Sharon Miles**

Happy Winter! Thank you everyone who contributed ideas by e-mail or in person for the 11/17/2023 planning meeting.

Here is a glimpse of upcoming field trips for this spring. We want to offer more field trips near Albuquerque and try different approaches for selecting a variety of field trips. We will be offering teaching field trips for beginning botanists and service projects with tours and burritos. We might even tour a few member's private gardens.

For questions, future field trip ideas, or to volunteer as a leader or co-leader, contact our 2024 Field Trip Coordinator Sharon Miles: sharon [at] seniorcareoptions [dot] net or 505-604-6307. Please contact the field trip leader for details about each field trip. Dates can change due to weather and other unforeseen events. We'll post field trip dates in the upcoming



A ground-hugging *Phacelia heterophylla*, Varileaf Phacelia, Red Canyon, Manzano Mountains Photo © Lee Regan

Spring 2024 newsletter and member e-mails. Generally, field trips begin in April. We know your spring calendar fills quickly. Here are some possible field trips:

#### Early April Field Trip: Pine Flats, Manzanita Mountains

Leader: Doris Eng

Traditionally our first field trip of the season, Pine Flats is located along the transition ecotone from piñon-juniper to ponderosa pine. The early blooming pasque flower, *Pulsatilla patens* is a highlight. We may find spring parsley, *Vesper constancei*, dwarf lousewort, *Pedicularis centranther*, and other early blooms.

#### Mid April Field Trip, NMSU Agricultural Science Center (Los Lunas)

Leader: Carol Conoboy

Since 1957, New Mexico State University's Agricultural Science Center in Los Lunas has been researching crop varieties and native plant species for agriculture, home gardens and habitat restoration in the Middle Rio Grande. Marisa Thompson, will lead us on a walking tour of the facilities, learning garden and fruit orchard. Rating: Easy walking on flat terrain

### Mid April to Mid May Field trip possibilities Quebradas Backcountry By-way, area east of Socorro

Leader: Lee Regan

Chihuahuan desert mountain ranges, scenic, colorful geological landscapes and several arroyos offer plenty of opportunities to view blooming native plants, depending on precipitation. Moderate hike of 2-3 miles round trip, mostly in arroyos.

#### Las Huertas Canyon east of Placitas

Leader: Lenore Goodell

Las Huertas Canyon is at the north end of the Sandia Mountains. Las Huertas Creek is the only perennial stream in the Sandias. At 7100 ft. elevation, red osier dogwood, hawthorn, chokecherry, butterfly milkweed, inflated penstemon, Bigelow's leather flower may be flowering among the many trees, shrubs and herbs at the water's edge and in the adjacent grassy meadow.

#### Mesa Prieta or Rinconada Canyon, Petroglyph National Monument

Leader: Lee Regan

We'll start at the edge of Albuquerque's west side residential development, follow a hilly gravel track to the base of the basalt lava escarpment, then return through a sandy arroyo. Beautiful views and plenty of blooming plants flourish in this desert environment.

#### The Yerba Mansa Project Celebrates its 10th Anniversary Dara Saville December 12, 2023

The Yerba Mansa Project will be celebrating its 10th anniversary as a community-driven nonprofit land stewardship organization this year. Our primary goal is to nurture native medicinal plants, the ecological and cultural systems they support, and to bring people into connectivity with these places, plants, and stories. We have been replanting and re-seeding Bosque plants, caring for critical plant habitat, offering free educational events for school classrooms and the general public, building our iNaturalist Plants of the Middle Rio Grande Bosque Field Guide, and collecting data for conservation for nearly a decade!

Come on out and join us for community events this year including our next Bosque Restoration Field Day coming up in May (see photo). Stay tuned as our 2024 events calendar develops.

Visit <a href="www.YerbaMansaProject.org">www.YerbaMansaProject.org</a> to find out more about us, get involved as a donor or volunteer, and to join us for fun in the field.



Yerba Mansa Project Bosque Restoration Field Day planting Photo © Dara Saville

# ABQ Backyard Refuge Program Update Laurel Ladwig, ABQ Backyard Refuge Program Director

Here are the first dates for informal training / public events at the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge:

Saturday, January 6th - 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

#### **Backyard Habitat Chat - Winter Habitat Ideas**

Talk with ABQ Backyard Refuge Program staff and volunteers and learn about supporting wildlife in the winter!

Saturday, February 17th - 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

#### **Backyard Habitat Chat - Thinking about Spring**

Talk with ABQ Backyard Refuge Program staff and volunteers about the transition from winter to spring habitat.

• SAVE THE DATE: We'll be holding another Build Your Backyard Refuge Day on March 23rd, 2024

Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge and Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge 7851 2nd St SW, Albuquerque, NM 87105

ABQ Backyard Refuge Program

https://friendsofvalledeoro.org/abq-backyard-refuge/

Download the January - March Valle de Oro calendar with many great events. https://friendsofvalledeoro.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Winter-calendar-2024-Jan-Mar-1.pdf

#### Weed or Wildflower? Tom Stewart October 4, 2023

You have seen it bravely flowering on a sidewalk curb, along a trail in the foothills, or emerging from an otherwise boring ground cover as a cheery yellow bouquet. Nobody planted it or wished for it and they certainly don't know the name of it. Is it a weed? Some landscape nitpickers will eliminate any Cutleaf Goldenweed they



spot. I ask what will take its place, California-grown marigolds for one summer? More rocks?

Cutleaf Goldenweed, *Xanthisma spinulosum*, (see my photo on this page) pops up all over the western US. It appears to be especially fond of the Albuquerque area. Lucky us! A perennial composite in the aster family (Asteraceae), it forms a tidy mound up to a foot high and a little wider. It doesn't sprawl or take over vegetatively. Bright flower heads up to an inch in diameter come and go all summer and fall in response to even a little water. No allergenic pollen goes flying and it hosts a unique set of winged creatures. Seedlings are easily controlled.

Characteristics like this would generate catalog sales, so why call it a weed? A weed is only a plant in the wrong place. Well, it has found the right place in my yard and on the grounds of shopping centers, schools, churches and medians where it often gains acceptance.

The related *Xanthisma gracile* sometimes bursts abundantly onto the scene and looks more frail, wiry and sprawling. It is a short-lived annual and is clearly less substantial than cutleaf.

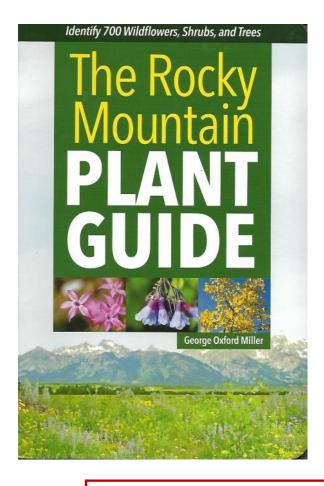
Some folks call our perennial Spiny Goldenweed, owing to the Latin name *spinulosum*, which means full of little spines. So little that you can hardly discern them as tiny hairs at the tips of tiny teeth on tiny leaves. Use a strong hand lens and notice that you can not even feel them against your oh-so-tender cheek. Like many wildflowers, this one is regionally known by different outlandish names, such as ironplant, yellow tansyaster and lacy sleep daisy. (The Native Plant Society does not recommend it as an herbal sleep aid.)

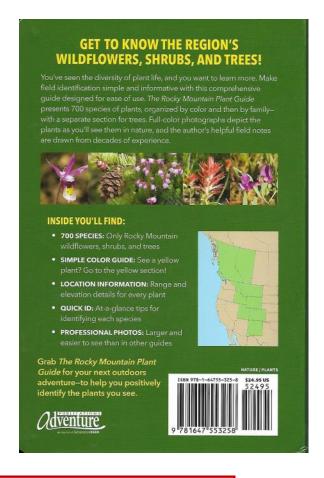
You may not have room for this volunteer ornamental or have any property at all. You can appreciate this long-time New Mexico resident that doesn't ask anything of us but offers floral color in hot summers when little else does.

#### Book Review by Lee Regan, 11/1/23

#### Rocky Mountain Plant Guide By George O. Miller Adventure Publications, Cambridge, MN. 2023. 412p.

This new identification tool has pictures and concise descriptions of 700 shrubs, trees and wildflowers, divided by color and indexed for easy access. Each page contains two photos that are larger than found in most field guides, plus a more detailed close-up inset of each flower or plant. Descriptive details for each plant include the overall appearance, stem, flowers, leaves, habitat, elevation, and range, indicated for three regions: Northern and Canadian Rockies; Middle Rockies; and Southern Rockies. Since the latter region includes northern New Mexico, this guide will be a useful addition for many NPS members. Besides the great photographs and amount of information compiled in the book, it is compact and easy to carry. Highly recommended for any northern mountain adventures.



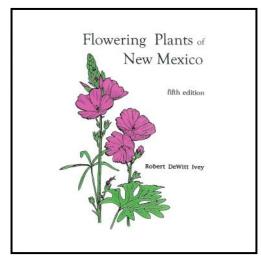


Lee Regan hosts the book sales table before and during our monthly meetings and usually has copies for this book for sale.

#### If it was a snake, it would have bit me. . .

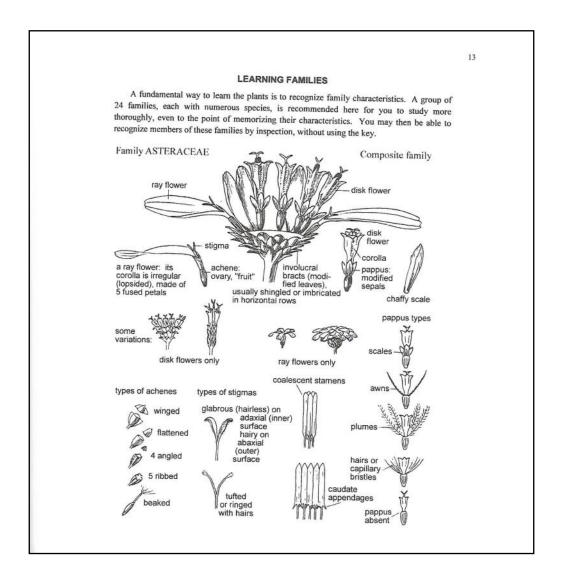
paperback/product-1qn85y9v.html?page=1&pageSize=4

I have been looking for an easy way to learn plant families that I could share with you. It's been right under my nose all the time. Pick up a copy of the late Robert DeWitt Ivey's Flowering Plants of New Mexico, 5th edition. It is right there in the front of the book. Just read it. He was a high school biology instructor who explored New Mexico and created this great desk reference. One of our members even put a digital copy on their phone to have in the field. Buy a copy and spend a few winter hours studying plants in a book learning families botanical names. It is available at lulu.com for \$36 plus shipping: https://www.lulu.com/shop/robert-dewitt-ivey/flowering-plants-of-new-mexico/



Some days are like that. Delight in learning a little from a very good book. The Asteraceae or Composite family has the plant Tom Stewart wrote about on page 10 in this newsletter. See below for a sample from Ivey's 5th edition book.

#### -Diane



#### Native Plant Society-Albuquerque Chapter January - March 2024 Meetings

Scheduled monthly meetings are normally held the first Wednesday of each month (except August and December) at 7:00 PM at the **UNM Continuing Education Building, 1634 University Blvd NE**. Meetings and presentations are free and open to the public.

Meetings start about 7:00 pm. You are welcome to come early for socializing and browsing our native plant books for sale.

For more information on programs, contact Sara Keeney at abq [at] npsnm [dot] org or 505-379-3392.

January 3 Meeting: Common Mushrooms of Central New Mexico: Dr. Cleveland Sharp reminds native plant aficionados that when we're out hiking in Summer in the mountains of New Mexico, we often find mushrooms. They bloom in a profusion of colors, shapes, and sizes. Once we start noticing them, they can be everywhere on the forest floor. But what kind are they and how can we figure them out? Those were the kind of questions that led Cleve Sharp and his wife, Jan Bandrofchak, to join the New Mexico Mycological Society 10 years ago. Now with the help of experienced foragers Terri and David Wallis, they've developed a slide show of the common species found the in the central mountains.

**Dr. Cleveland Sharp (Cleve):** One of my wife's goals in retirement is to "Spend more time outdoors". It's a goal I heartily endorse. One pleasant way to do that is to look for mushrooms. It's like an Easter egg hunt for adults. As a retired physician, I took readily to learning the Latin names and families of fungi. It's a stimulating and absorbing hobby. We find that we see the woods much more completely when we are hunting. I served as foray field trip manager this year and look forward to doing more with NMMS. Favorite mushrooms: *Boletus rubriceps* and *Flocularia straminea* 

**February 7 Meeting: The Alpine Flora of New Mexico:** Explore plants from the elevational limits of New Mexico! In this program, **Joseph Kleinkopf** will discuss observations and patterns gleaned from two summers of collecting plants in alpine habitats of New Mexico. Learn the names of a few favorite alpine plants, as well as when and where to find them.

**Joseph Kleinkopf** is a PhD student advised by Dr. Hannah Marx at the University of New Mexico and the Museum of Southwestern Biology. He is interested in using museum collections to answer questions about when, where, and how alpine plant communities come together to become the assemblages we see today.

March 6 Meeting: Insect Galls of the Southwest: Galls are growths on plants that are caused by another organism and can be all sorts of shapes and forms. If you've seen them, you may have wondered: what is the function of these weird growths and how can I identify them? Quin Baine, Museum Research fellow at the Museum of Southwestern Biology will give a summary of the main groups of insect gall formers, their specialized relationships to plants, and how to recognize common galls of native plants of the southwest. Gain an insight into an unusual plant interaction, and hopefully be inspired to start identifying species of a cool and understudied group of plant-dependent animals.

**Quin Baine** is a Museum Research fellow at the Museum of Southwestern Biology and a PhD candidate in Biology at the University of New Mexico. She is an entomologist by training and has been working to establish a gall specimen collection at the museum. Her current research is on the highly diverse gall-associated communities of rubber rabbitbrush, *Ericameria nauseosa* in the southwest.

#### **Etcetera**

- ⇒ Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority, ABCWUA, has online classes through their Water Authority Conservation Program. 505-842-WATR <a href="https://www.abcwua.org">www.505outside.com</a>
- ⇒ Xeric Garden Club of Albuquerque, located at the Albuquerque Garden Center, 10120 Lomas Blvd NE. Free Admission to all events below <a href="http://www.xericgardenclub.org/calendar.html">http://www.xericgardenclub.org/calendar.html</a>

**Saturday, January 13, 2024**, 9am: Members' Meeting; 10am Presentation Udith Philips will give a presentation on the topic Researching and Writing The Gardens of Los Poblanos. Researching and writing about the gardens of Los Poblanos provided an opportunity to answer the many questions that arose while she was working on the plant selection for the transition of the gardens from their historic roots to present day resilience. After her presentation she will have autographed copies of her new book The Gardens of Los Poblanos available for purchase.

**Saturday, February 10, 2024**, 9am: Members' Meeting; 10am Presentation Wes Brittenham, Director of Horticulture at Los Poblanos will speak on Garden and Landscape Design Using Nature as Inspiration. He will talk about observing patterns of sun and shade, how water moves through the garden, ways to attract pollinators, and create a wildlife habitat.

**Saturday, March 9, 2024**, 9am: Members' Meeting; 10am Presentation Steven Brack, who has been growing and experimenting with cacti and succulents for over 53 years, will give a presentation on Cacti and Succulents for Your Garden

Feedback, articles, photos, book reviews, and news submissions for the Albuquerque chapter NPSNM Spring 2024 Newsletter should be submitted via e-mail to Diane Stevenson distevenson331 [at] hotmail [dot] com by midnight, Spring Solstice, March 21, 2024. *I would love to hear from you!* 

#### **Become an NPSNM Member:**

Join at http://www.npsnm.org/membership/

NPSNM is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the conservation of native New Mexico flora. The Society, and its local chapters, work to educate its members and promote the conservation of our native flora so future generations may enjoy our valuable resource.

#### **Membership Benefits**

Members benefit from regional chapter meetings, field trips, an annual meeting, and four issues of the state newsletter each year. Some chapters also hold plant sales and annual seed exchanges and offer discounts on a variety of books providing information on native plant identification and gardening with New Mexico native plants.

#### **Albuquerque Chapter Benefits**

Members who show a valid NPSNM membership card

Qualify for Plant World membership

Receive a 10% discount at Plants of the Southwest

## NPSNM Albuquerque Chapter 2024 Board of Directors

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Conservation: Pam McBride
Outreach Events: Carol Conoboy

#### **Core Group (essential volunteers)**

Books: Lee Regan
Communications: Carmen Alexander
Field Trip Coordinator: Sharon Miles
Publicity: Vacant