

# ***Native Plant Society of New Mexico***

## ***march-april 1980 newsletter***

VOLUME ~~4~~<sup>5</sup> NO. 2

### CALENDAR

- March 19: Craig Jones of Los Alamos will give a lecture/slide demonstration on lichens.
- March 22: Tentatively set for a field trip to study lichens at the lava beds in White Rock Canyon, led by Craig Jones. The date and meeting place will be confirmed at our March 19th meeting. If you cannot attend the meeting, call Beverley Spears at 982-4926 or 988-5497 (days) for field trip information.
- March 24: Albuquerque Chapter Meeting, Albuquerque National Bank, Central and Washington, 7:30 p.m. Reggie Fletcher of the U. S. Forest Service will speak on threatened and endangered species.
- April 16: Lennie Kellahin will share her slides of mountain wildflowers (tentative).
- May 3: Albuquerque Chapter Plant Sale (See Chapter Activities for more information)
- May 10: Santa Fe Chapter Plant Sale (See Chapter Activities for more information)
- May 21: Michael Moore will speak on herbal and medicinal uses of some native plants of New Mexico. He will also lead us on a field trip, as yet unscheduled, to describe identifying, collecting and preserving these plants.
- June 18: Bill Isaacs of the State Heritage Program will discuss rare plants of the Santa Fe area and has also promised us a field trip.
- June 23-30: 1980 Regional Conference of the National Audubon Society (Southwest Region) at Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, New Mexico. See announcement on page for more information.
- July 16: Helen Cannon will speak on Geobotany.
- August 20: Unscheduled
- September 17: Native Plant Landscaping Workshop conducted by Agua Fria Nursery and Plants of the Southwest.

## NEWS & NOTES

Alice Howard of the California Native Plant Society has started a newsletter called Network, an intermittent publication addressed to a network of friends of the native flora concerning current legislative actions affecting the status of plants. If you would like to be included on the mailing list, write to the National Alliance for Plants, c/o Alice Howard, 6415 Regent Street, Oakland, CA 94618 (415) 655-8136.

The State of New Mexico Department of Natural Resource Conservation has been awarded a federal grant of \$75,000 matching funds with state-appropriated money to develop a Heritage Information System. Significant funds will also be coming from contracts with the State Bureau of Surface Mining, providing them a computerized data base to determine the non-suitability of lands for coal mining, as required by federal law. Once the system is in operation, anyone doing research can have access into the system, for a small fee, to obtain site-specific data on the species occurring, and the range and habitat of those species. (Module I) Other modules will contain information as to the geothermal, geology, hydrology, archeology and endangered species. General information regarding the soil types, land ownership and surface features (rivers, power corridors, etc.) and an extensive bibliographical section will also be available.

On September 6-7th the Santa Fe Garden Council will host a weekend garden show at De Vargas Shopping Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Participants include six local garden clubs, the Rose Society, Orchid Society, Iris Society, African Violet and other indoor plant groups. The Native Plant Society of New Mexico will have a public relations booth where it will sell educational materials and display an exhibit of plant materials and/or photographs. Judges will be on hand to award various trophies and ribbons. Needed will be volunteers to develop an exhibit and/or man the station in two-hour shifts.

The Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental law group, is trying to get plants included under the Lacey Act of 1900 in an effort to reduce the illicit trade in exploited plants. As now written the Lacey Act applies only to wildlife. The Senate version of the bill (S. 1822) has been reviewed by the subcommittee on Resource Protection, Committee on Environment and Public Works, Senator John Culver, Chairman. Senator Domenici is also on the committee and is, reportedly, very interested in the measure. The Native Plant Society of New Mexico wrote to him to express support for the proposal. The House bill (H.R. 5604) is scheduled to be reviewed later this month and we are urging everyone to write to a committee member in support of the amendment. Committee members who may be sympathetic and with whom contact is especially desirable include Les AuCoin of Oregon, Michael Loawry of Washington, Edwin B. Forsythe of New Jersey, and Glenn Anderson, Anthony Beilenson & Paul McCloskey of California.

Melissa Savage represented the Native Plant Society of New Mexico at a recent meeting in Reno, Nevada, of native plant societies in the western region. A regional coalition of these groups has been formed and quarterly workshops are being planned. (See Melissa's report)

Carol Dimeff has accepted the chairmanship for the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Water Conservation for the City of Santa Fe. The committee is now looking for strategic places in Santa Fe for demonstrating native vegetation, drip irrigation and mulching techniques. Proposed sites include the Fenn Galleries, the new County Building, the Unitarian Church at Don Gaspar & Barcelona, El Gancho Tennis Club and possibly other health spas. Your ideas or suggestions can be voiced by calling Carol Dimeff at 471-8158.

## VEGETATION CHANGES IN NEW MEXICO

Our February speaker, Fred Gross, who works as a computer programmer for the State Department of Natural Resources, made some interesting observations regarding recent changes in the state's flora. Fred prepared a map that describes the vegetation types of New Mexico prior to widespread intensive influences from man. His data was taken primarily from the original field notes to the Territorial Survey taken in the late 1800's.

His reasons for doing this?

(1) If we know what the vegetative patterns were, we can better determine what areas are prime candidates for preserving as natural areas.

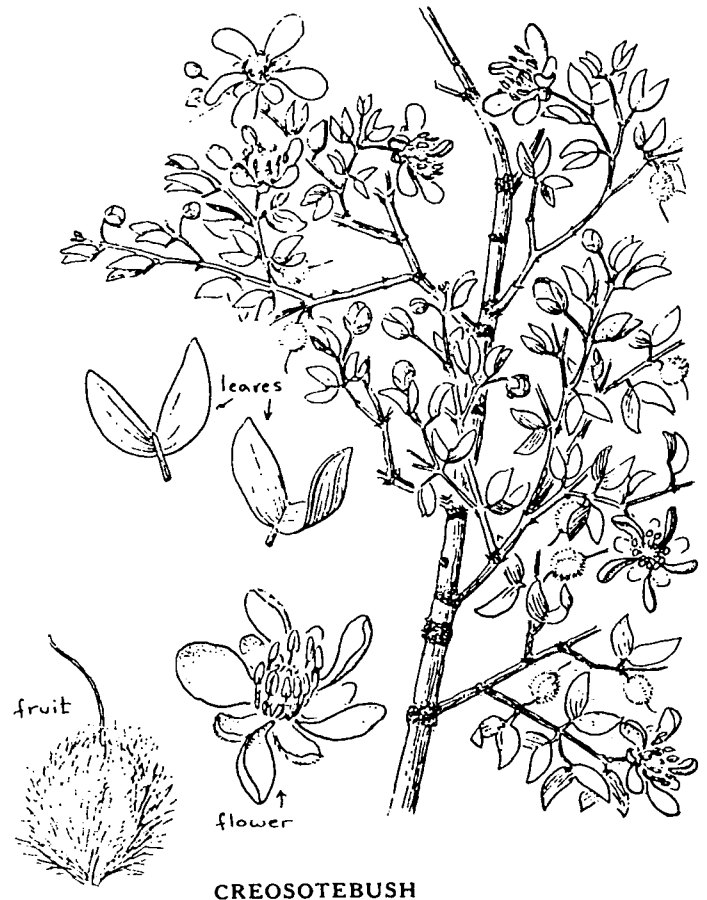
(2) We can also determine the economic feasibility of replanting strip mined and/or areas of brush encroachment if we know whether it was grassland before.

Most sagebrush in the north occurred in rocky outbreaks in combination with pinon and juniper. The pinon/juniper belt was considerably higher than it is today. Sagebrush has taken over areas that at one time were almost entirely grassland. References made to grasses in excess of six feet tall must have been blue-stem. Sagebrush eradication programs in the Taos area have been largely unsuccessful 20 years later. Tractors were used to turn the soil and tear out the plants, but actually this just breaks up the roots so that each piece can become another plant.

Creosotebush once occurred in a narrow belt about two miles wide but now dominates the entire southern half of New Mexico. As our native grasses receded and the top soil eroded, creosote moved from rocky soils near the foothills down to lower elevations. Fortunately, creosote is limited in its northward expansion by temperature; it doesn't grow above 6,000 feet.

This conversion of grassland to shrub types has consumed tremendous acreages in the southwest. Many of these early surveyors recorded thousands of cattle or sheep in a township (36 sq. miles). Peak sizes in livestock herds probably occurred in the

1860's. Where 10-12 head per square mile section is average now, the land supported four times or more that then. The north had more large herds of sheep than in the south. Drought in southern New Mexico further reduced the native grasses after this period of severe overgrazing.



Changes have also been observed in forest composition along our river sources. Cattle are known to eat cottonwood saplings and seedlings. Composition is pushing toward old-age trees, with no replenishment in some areas (e.g. along the Mimbres River). Since cottonwoods are short-lived, we're going to lose them eventually. The Forest Service approach in fencing off a majority of the bank except occasional spots where the cattle can get water has been successful, but this type of management is also very expensive. No mention of Tamarisk or Russian Olives in the Township Surveys; these were not introduced until the 20th century.

## CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

The Las Cruces Chapter has changed its meeting schedule to the second Thursday of each month, 7:30 p.m., still in Room 156 of the Agriculture Bldg. on the NMSU campus. A series of short "botany" lessons has been in progress, covering leaf arrangements (December), leaf shapes (January), flower types (February) and fruit types (March). Chapter members have volunteered to give these lessons and they have been open to the public. The Las Cruces Chapter also has an active field trip record during the spring and summer months. Check with chapter president, Bob Reeves, for more information (646-3021).

The Santa Fe Chapter still meets on the third Wednesday of every month in Room 118 of the Laboratory Bldg. at St. John's College, 7:30 p.m. Anyone interested in learning more about native plants is welcome. The annual plant sale of the Santa Fe Chapter has been set for Saturday, May 10, 1980, at the Institute of American Indian Arts, Cerrillos Road, Santa Fe. A Plant Sale Committee has been organized and has met once to plan publicity. If you have any plant materials you would like to either sell or donate, contact James Meem (Chairman) at 983-1797. Vendors will be expected to contribute at least 15 percent of their sales to the NPS.

The Albuquerque Chapter has met twice and is to meet again on Monday, March 24th, in the Hospitality Room of the Albuquerque National Bank at Central & Washington. Reggie Fletcher of the U. S. Forest Service will speak on threatened and endangered species. An attempt is being made to establish a regular time and place for future meetings. They are also trying to get started a project demonstrating native plants in a land-

Are your dues due? Send your 1980 dues to Dorothy DeWitt, 1414 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501. \$6 individuals, \$8 families and \$5 for students and senior citizens.

scaping situation, either at the Albuquerque Zoo or possibly the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. May 3rd has been set for a plant sale at the Albuquerque Garden Center to raise money for these projects. For more information contact chapter president, Sherry McNatt, 418 Bryn Mawr, SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106, 268-6373, or during the day at 881-3600.

## ARTEMISIAS\*

by Irene Mitchell

The genus *Artemisia* has had a long history of uses by herbalists. Often called wormwood or wormseed, many of the 225 species of *Artemisia* have been used medicinally to expel worms from the intestinal tract. In ancient times, both Dioscorides and the great Roman, Pliny, considered *Artemisia* effective for this use and also recommended them as a stomach tonic. The chemical santonin, obtained from the dried flower heads of several Asiatic species of *Artemisia*, is still used for treatment of intestinal worms.

Linnaeus and other early botanical writers recounted the usefulness of wormwood in the treatment of hypochondriasis, gout, scurvy, kidney stones and disorders of the liver and spleen. "Portland Powder", a medicine once used extensively for the treatment of gout, contained wormwood as its principle ingredient. A mixture of wormwood and vinegar was found to relieve the pain of sprains and bruises, and wormwood also has been used as a diuretic. In the late 19th century, the drug was given to epileptics to treat the spasms of a seizure.

An extract of *Artemisia absinthium* was the source of the alcoholic spirit absinthe, popular in the early 19th century. First used by French soldiers in Algiers, absinthe quickly gained popularity in the Latin Quarter of Paris, where it was known as "The Green Muse." Its alcohol content (68 percent) alone might have been enough to cause severe problems, but side effects due to the chemical absinthol were also found to cause deliria, hallucinations and permanent mental deterioration. Absinthe-induced psychosis was not uncommon. Since the 1930's only imitation absinthe, made from anise seed, has been available. By law, imitation absinthe contains no absinthol. Vermouth is still flavored with wormwood today, but only the harmless flowers are used, not the toxic foliage.

Early settlers to the western U.S. had a very practical interest in sagebrush (Artemisia tridentata), having learned it grew only where the soil was deep and salt-free. Such sites



were good for farms and pasture, provided one could muster the effort to clear the land of sagebrush? Today this shrub is often the despair of ecologists, for it has gradually replaced much of the native grasses of the West. Sagebrush roots exude chemicals toxic to other plants. It is also thought to repel slugs, and many gardeners are finding it useful planted near squash plants and other susceptible crops.

In northern New Mexico the local people still use the herb they call "altamisa" to cure a variety of ailments ranging from baby colic to indigestion, rheumatism, dysentery and asthma. Their altamisa may be A. tridentata or any number of other perennial species that grow so abundantly in the dry Southwest.

Artemisias are largely propagated by division or cuttings. The shrubby types like A. tridentata are best propagated by cuttings taken in later summer and early fall. The cuttings will root by spring in a moist, sandy medium. Seed of this plant is also available from wildflower seed specialists. All members of the genus are relatively easy to grow, even in the poorest soil with a minimum of water. Like most native or arid plants, they do need good soil drainage and plenty of sunlight.

Most species are perennial. One exception is A. annua, also called sweet wormwood, which has dissected green foliage and a sweet enough scent for perfume sachets. Since it can reach a height of 6 feet, it is best planted toward the back of a flower border.

Another outstanding ornamental artemisia is A. schmidtiana, often listed in nursery catalogs as "Silver Mound." This low-growing shrub achieves a height of about 6 inches, but spreads to form a mound a foot or more across. Its elegant silver foliage is a nice addition to a blue and yellow flower garden, and it also looks good in rock gardens.

\*This article was originally published in Horticulture, which was published by the Massachusetts Horticulture Society in April 1978.

#### LASL's Impact Report Issued

How does LASL affect the environment? You can get a pretty comprehensive answer through the Environmental Impact Statement recently published by the DOE.

The 600-page document addresses the environmental implications of DOE's activities in Los Alamos and Santa Fe counties and assesses actual and possible effects on the surrounding environment. It is designed to evaluate the effect of continuing operations at LASL and possible development of new research programs.

Primary resources used for the operation and maintenance of the Laboratory, according to the statement, include land, water and energy. Other resources include materials for structures and experimental facilities and supplies for continuing research programs. The statement evaluates the cumulative environmental effects of all types of waste disposal and the effects of postulated accidents at LASL.

Copies of the statement will be distributed to federal, state and local agencies, to those commenting on the draft statement, and to local environmental groups. Copies are also being distributed and will be available for review at the National Atomic

Museum at Kirtland Base in Albuquerque, and at LASL's main library. Individual copies the document may be obtained by writing to Gordan Facer, Deputy Director, Division of Safety, Environment and Emergency Actions, Office of Military Applications, Department of Energy, MS A 362, Germantown Building, Washington, D. C. 20585.

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#### 1980 REGIONAL CONFERENCE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY, SOUTHWEST REGION

The annual Audubon Southwest Regional Conference will be held at Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, New Mexico, June 23-30. This year's conference will be a full six days of programs, workshops and field trips.

During the week there will be major workshops on solar energy, including hands-on experience in building simple passive solar devices for the home or business. Workshop topics include adult and youth education, photography, field trip leading, chapter and issue publicity, how to produce and present a slide program, back yard sanctuaries and more. Several interesting field trips are also planned.

On the weekend of June 28-29 the conference will be topped off with a full schedule of programs and workshops led by prominent figures of the National Audubon Society, federal and state agencies, Audubon chapters and other organizations. No field trips will compete with these programs, though there will be morning and evening bird walks. The weekend's programs will cover such timely topics as solar energy, nuclear waste, the Washington legislative update, sagebrush rebellions, water projects, whooping cranes, other endangered species and predator policy. National Audubon Society's president, Russ Peterson, and Audubon magazine editor Les Line will be among the participants.

To preregister contact your local chapter of the National Audubon Society.

A first meeting of representatives of western Native Plant Societies and other groups of similar aims and interests met in Reno, Nevada, in late February. Mitchel Beauchamp of the California NPS organized the meeting as a first step in the creation of a coalition so that those who care about plants might speak with one voice on pertinent issues, much as the National Wildlife Federation or the Alaska Coalition. Other purposes for associating were suggested:

- Gather field data for better understanding of plant ranges and habitat requirements.
- Perpetuate native plant species and their habitats.
- Promote the public's knowledge and awareness of native plants.
- Encourage the cultivation of native plants for the preservation of gene pools, reduction in water demands and reduction in maintenance costs.

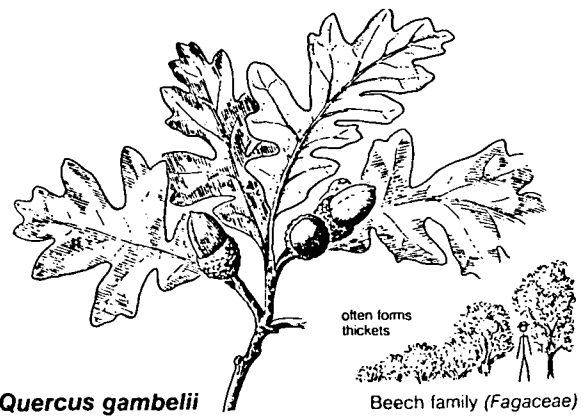
I found it quite interesting to see that, aside from the California NPS which was formed in the mid-60's and now has a membership of 5,000, most of the societies were formed in 1976 or thereabouts and have memberships ranging from about 100 to 300, like our own society.

The first issue the group felt it might address is the proposed MX Missile Project. This is a highly controversial proposal by the Federal government to build 200 new-generation Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles on individual "racetracks" which would allow them to be moved randomly and thus elude destruction by Soviet firststrike. The project is to be spread over 24,000 square miles of southeastern Nevada and western Utah, impacting an enormous area of native western flora. The group that met in Reno is concerned about the impact on all species in the area and particularly plants of rare status, and would like to monitor the impact statement on the area which has been called "the very cream of public land wilderness areas in Nevada." The group plans to meet next in Salt Lake City, Utah, some time in late spring. If there is anyone interested in going, please contact me at 983-1113.

## NATIVE PLANT/BOTANICAL SOCIETIES LIST

In response to a questionnaire of the National Council of State Garden Clubs concerning the need for communication among native plant and wildflower societies, the following list of societies and their addresses was developed:

1. Arizona Native Plant Society, P. O. Box 18519, Tucson, Arizona 85731
2. California Native Plant Society, 2380 Ellsworth St., Suite D, Berkeley, California 94714
3. Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, P. O. Box 1334, Alpine, Texas 79830
4. Colorado Native Plant Society, c/o Dr. Dieter H. Wilken, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado 80523
5. Georgia Botanical Society, Steve M. Bowling, President, 5890 Long Island Dr., NW, Atlanta, Georgia 30328
6. Kansas Wildflower Society, Mulvane Art Center, 17th & Jewell St., Topeka, Kansas 66621
7. Michigan Botanical Society, c/o Dr. Richard Pippen, Western Michigan State University, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49003
8. Missouri Native Plant Society, John L. Hawker, President, Biology Dept., St. Louis Community College at Meramec, 11333 Big Bend Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63122
9. Native Plant Society of New Mexico, c/o Carol Dimeff, Rt. 4, Puesta del Sol, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501
10. Nevada Botanical Society, Margaret Williams, President, P. O. Box 1530, Sparks, Nevada 89431
11. New England Wild Flower Society, Inc., Hemenway Road, Framingham, Maine 01701
12. North Carolina Wild Flower Preservation Society, Inc., Totten Garden Center, 457-A, University of North Carolina, N. C. Botanical Garden, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514



*Quercus gambelii*

13. Northern Nevada Native Plant Society, P. O. Box 8965, Reno, Nevada 89507
14. Tennessee Native Plant Society, Robert E. Farmer, Jr., President, Dept. of Biology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee 37916
15. Utah Native Plant Society, c/o Walter J. Miller, 1448 N. 500 East, Centerville, Utah 84014 or c/o Biology Dept., University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah 84112

In addition, the following groups exist in the western region:

California Botanical Society  
Department of Botany  
University of California  
Berkeley, California 94720

Southern California Botanists  
Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden  
1500 N. College Avenue  
Claremont, California 91711

Hawaiian Botanical Society  
Dr. Dan D. Palmer, Chairman, Native Plant Committee  
1481 S. King Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

Native Plant Society of Oregon  
c/o Dr. Frank A. Lang  
Department of Biology  
Southern Oregon State College  
Ashland, Oregon 97530

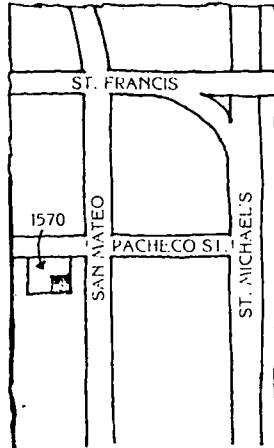
Washington Native Plant Society  
c/o Dr. Arthur Kruckeberg  
Department of Botany  
University of Washington  
Seattle, Washington 98105

Classified Ads

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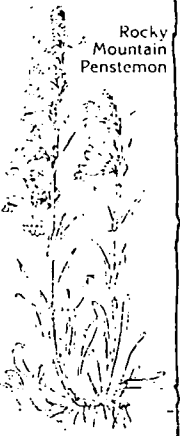


## Plants of the Southwest is moving...

As of May 1, 1980 we shall be in  
building E15, Plaza de Comercio  
1570 Pacheco St., Santa Fe, NM 87501

**505-983-1548**

Native wildflowers, trees, shrubs & grasses and  
this year ancient and adapted crops and vegetables



Rocky  
Mountain  
Penstemon

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY of NEW MEXICO  
c/o Carol Dimeff  
Rt. 4, Puesta del Sol  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

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