

Native Plant Society of New Mexico

newsletter

May/June, 1984

Volume IX, No. 3

Calendar

- May/June Glenn Niners will meet with the Albuquerque Chapter.
- May 2 Albuquerque Chapter will meet at 7:30 at the Albuquerque Museum. Ellie Mitchell will give a program on landscaping with native plants.
- May 6 NPS Board Meeting at the Agriculture Science Center at Los Lunas, 1036 Miller Street at 11:00 a.m.
- May 6 Albuquerque Chapter will have a work session at Castetter Gardens at the base of Sandia Peak Tramway, beginning at 1:30 p.m. Bring gloves and wear old clothes. Call Jackie Farr (294-2178) or Walter Graf (877-6469) for more information.
- May 6 Las Cruces Chapter will have a field trip to City of the Rocks State Park. Meet at Branigan Library at 8:00 a.m. Bring a lunch.
- May 9 Las Cruces Chapter meets at 7:30 p.m. in Room 190, Agriculture Bldg., NMSU Campus. Tom Todson will present a slide show and program on plants of Costa Rica.
- May 16 Santa Fe Chapter hosts Don Lowrie whose program will be "Flowers of Grand Teton National Park".
- May 17 Southeast Chapter will meet at Roswell Adult Center, 807 North Missouri, Roswell at 7:30 p.m. Yvonne Jones of Capitan will give a program on spinning, weaving and dyeing wool using natural native dyes and man-made dyes.
- May 19 Santa Fe Chapter will hold a Plant Sale in front of the Museum of International Folk Art from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. They want donations of all kinds of plants, native or otherwise, particularly ground covers. Anyone who has plants or would allow someone to take cuttings or divisions can leave name and phone number for Ellen Wilde at Folk Art Museum and someone will contact them to set up a convenient time to get the plants for the sale.

- May 26 Otero/Lincoln Chapter will have a Nature Trail-indentification of plants in the new city park at the end of First Street. They will identify and mark plants not to be disturbed when the trail is installed. Meet at the end of First Street (east, that is).
- May 26 Santa Fe Chapter will have the field trip they had to cancel in February. Members will meet at 9:00 a.m. in front of the P.E.R.A. Building. This trip will also take in Galisteo Creek area near Cerrillos with Iris David as leader. Members should bring a sack lunch and drink.
- June 1, 2 & 3 Albuquerque Chapter has a field trip planned to see wild-flowers, native shrubs and trees in the Silver City area.
- June 10 Las Cruces Chapter will have a field trip. Location will be announced later. For more information call Bob Reeves at 523-1806 or Tom Wootten at 522-4434.
- June 13 Las Cruces Chapter plans a program. Location and subject will be announced later. Contact either of the members listed above for information.
- June 17 Southeast Chapter will have a field trip to Valley of Fires State Park, west of Carrizozo. Members will meet at the RAC parking lot at 8:00 a.m. and should bring a picnic lunch.
- June 21 Southeast Chapter will meet at RAC, 807 North Missouri, Roswell, at 7:30 p.m. Gary Wood of BLM will present a program discussing his work in range management, including propagation of desirable plants and eradication of undesirable.
- June 24 Otero/Lincoln Chapter will meet at the Scout Hut, 1012 Oregon (off Tenth Street next to the Garden Center) in Alamogordo at 2:00 p.m. The speaker will be Jim Lewis from the Albuquerque Chapter. His topic will be "Gardening Without Work--Wild Gardens".
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CHAPTER CONTACT PERSONS

- Albuquerque
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George and Myrtle Finley, 1001 Kings Drive, Roswell, NM 88201, (622-8486)

President's Message

Spring is a busy time for gardeners and for the Native Plant Society. Several of our chapters are having plant sales, which are an excellent opportunity to purchase those plants you've been looking for.

The Society is also sponsoring a booth at the National Council of Garden Clubs convention in Albuquerque. We will have a display on native plants and perhaps some plants and other items for sale.

Plans are also in the works for our annual meeting to be held in the Las Vegas area in August. This will provide us with the

chance to renew old acquaintances and make new friends, to learn more about native plants and have a good time overall.

Much of this takes money, which we have to raise by various means. Your dues cover the cost of the newsletter and leave us very little for extras. I'd like to take this time to remind you that all contributions to the Society are tax deductible and gratefully appreciated. We can always use your help in both time and donations. I want to thank all of you who help your chapters and the Society.

Ted Hodoba

Chapter Reports

Albuquerque Chapter: At our March meeting, Roger Peterson, botany professor at St. John's College in Santa Fe, gave an excellent slide presentation and talk on the alpine ecology of Costillo Peaks just south of the Colorado border.

In April, John V. Brown, president of the Central New Mexico Audubon Society, presented a program on photographing wildflowers. After giving us a crash course in photography, including quite a few "tricks of the trade" and some innovative equipment use, Mr. Brown showed many magnificent slides of wildflowers in Panama, where he lived for 15 years, and New Mexico.

Candy Kroft

Las Cruces Chapter: At the March meeting Pat Pennfield presented a program on Fall color and how plants adapt to winter.

For the April meeting Rob Soring presented a program on Alaska and a study he participated in on habitat influence of frequency of polyploidy in plants.

Tom Wootten

Otero/Lincoln Chapter: Jean Dodd sent the Newsletter a page from the April 8 issue of the Alamogordo Daily News titled "Native Plant Society prepares gourmet feast from wild edibles". To quote a portion:

"The cuisine wasn't haute; neither was it minceur. "Country" was a bit closer, though the uninitiated might have called it outre'. Regardless of its name, however, everyone agreed the potluck prepared from native wild plants by members of the Otero-Lincoln chapter of the Native Plant Society was delicious.

Among the dishes sampled at the society's recent meeting were scalloped Jerusalem artichokes prepared from those found growing wild in a Bent orchard, an elderberry dream pie from partially dried and frozen elderberries, watercress sandwiches with cream cheese, elderberry muffins prepared with mesquite flour, a wild blueberry buckle, pinon and chicken soup, deep fat-fried dandelions, salsify soup, a green salad prepared from sliced fresh Jerusalem artichokes, red lettuce, wild onions and mustard; prickly pear pie and ice cream."

Santa Fe Chapter: We have been enjoying monthly botany walks during the winter season. Dr. Don Lowrie has led the group on the majority of the walks and Iris David has assisted in identification of many of the plants (or their dried stalks with seed pods) that have been found still

(continued)

standing in snow banks and in open areas where seed pods are still visible (penstemon, paper flower, stalks from desert four o'clock). Many who had previously gathered seeds during the winter months shared their experiences. We learned the four o'clock is best gathered immediately after going to seed and planted at that time rather than waiting until winter months when seeds are not only scarce but do not germinate well.

The first winter walk in early December combining a pot luck brunch at Dr. and Mrs. Roger Peterson's home, was so enjoyable it was decided to have a botany walk during each of the winter months.

In addition, each month's guest speaker has presented an exceptionally enjoyable and enlightening program. Larry Deaven of Los Alamos, a program on rock gardening with high elevation plants, providing us with many facts concerning soil mixture of rotted sawdust, peat moss and sand to control weeds. His program was beautifully illustrated with slides of his terraced native plant rock garden in Los Alamos.

Mark Cherry's program was on landscaping with native plants stressing that "artists go to nature to paint", so why should not the prospective landscaper go to nature and observe on a nature walk the way plants, rock formations and uneven terrain fall together in forming a natural environment and habitat for survival of plants, along with additionally providing an aesthetic, natural arrangement in a native plant landscape.

John Hubbard, head of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Endangered Species Program, described and presented in detail the various diverse biotic regions within New Mexico. The north, east, south and western areas were illustrated by slides showing differences in soils, i.e., limestone, sandstone, and showing the variety of types of native plants and shrubs within the boundaries of the state, all different due to

climatic and soil conditions.

These plants were discovered in his travels while locating habitat and endangered species for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

Robert Cox of White Rock presented his slide program on "Drought Enduring Plants for Four Corners". This research, a part of his thesis, was an unusual and informative program in comparisons made with native plants in importance of water to their survival--how they would fit into native plant landscaping as a result of this research. Many plants survived extremely well with only the natural rainfall and others flourished with additional water (drip irrigation) added. This research, along with the study of compatibility of plants (i.e., yucca vs. aspen in a landscape) was most interesting.

Dovie Taylor

Southeast Chapter: Our Chapter members had an interesting March calendar centered around the research being conducted by Dr. Roger Peterson on the ecology of the Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge. In 1985 the Bitter Lake Refuge will be 50 years old and the study being done by Dr. Peterson, with the very able assistance of Iris David, will show the changes in the area over this 50-year period. During our meeting at the Roswell Adult Center on March 15th, Dr. Peterson narrated a slide presentation on the plants of the Bitter Lake area and on Saturday, March 17th, some Chapter members joined Dr. Peterson and Iris David for a field trip to the area north of the headquarters buildings, not usually opened to the public for an in-depth viewing of alkaline loving grasses, flowers and shrubs.

On April 19th, Chapter members met at the Roswell Adult Center for a slide presentation by Mary Peckinpaugh on the wildflowers of Australia. Mary had many beautiful slides and pointed out during her narration that Australia really "pushes" native planting.

Jean McElroy

Rattlesnake Springs Acquired

By John Egbert

In early 1984, The Nature Conservancy purchased the private lands associated with Rattlesnake Springs which are adjacent to National Park Service land south of White's City. This area is the only known breeding area in New Mexico for eastern bluebirds and orchard orioles. The bluebirds are cavity nesters and the orioles favor the large cottonwood trees that dominate the overall riparian area. In addition, Bell's vireo, a State Endangered bird, breeds in the western soapberry and probably in the mesquite thickets on the edge of the wetland. In addition, a host of other interesting and colorful birds use the area including painted bunting, indigo bunting, long-billed marsh wrens and green herons. The area also serves as a major migratory stop-over for turkey vultures in the fall. In May, Rattlesnake Springs is an important migratory area for songbirds breeding further north such as warblers and vireos. Steve West of Loving has made a long term study of the birds of the area.

The plant life at Rattlesnake Springs is less well known and the Nature Conservancy would be interested in a volunteer group from southeastern New Mexico getting organized to do a basic inventory of the plants of the area. Since the area will be fenced off, it would be a good idea to start this inventory this spring and summer since we might expect vegetational

changes in the area without the existence of grazing animals.

If any Native Plant Society chapter is interested in taking this on, it would be a fascinating experience and would help us document the natural values of the area. We would hope that one qualified individual or more would be able to work with one or more other interested people in coming up with a plant list of the area including relative abundance.

I will be in the Rattlesnake Springs area and would be happy to meet with interested people this spring. Please contact me at The Nature Conservancy's New Mexico Field Office, P.O. Box 1846, Albuquerque, NM 87103 or call me at 242-2015.

The Nature Conservancy wants to thank all Native Plant Society members who contributed to the acquisition of this area. The Nature Conservancy is now working with the National Park Service to develop a management plan for the entire area and we are certain that the biological values of Rattlesnake Springs will be improved by virtue of more of the area being protected.

Finally, we are hoping to develop some interpretation of the area with the National Park Service so that the general public will learn more about what is important at Rattlesnake Springs and the general ecology of the area.

John Egbert is the State Director of Nature Conservancy-Ed.



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GROWING NATIVES: PENSTEMONS IN THE GARDEN

Genus: *Penstemon*

Family: Scrophulariaceae

To say that penstemons are attractive would be an understatement. Often they outshine all their associates in the wild, displaying masses of blossoms so brilliant they seem illuminated from within. To the gardener their wide range of plant sizes and shapes, foliage textures and floral hues suggest a wide variety of uses in the artificial landscape. Happily, many species will thrive in conditions remarkably different from those attending them in nature, their ranks increasing year by year with only modest intervention by the gardener.

To the true penstemon enthusiast, formal consideration of "use" may seem academic; one may simply scatter as many species as possible over a garden plot, sit back and enjoy the resulting show. However, the perennial gardener, addicted to a bit more visual order, will find the many species falling naturally into manageable categories. Where one desires a definite background, be it in a formal perennial border or in a more relaxed setting, penstemons may be sorted into several size ranges from the very tall (three feet or more) to very flat mats. It should be added that many will exceed their "wild" dimensions. Within each size range, one will find an assortment of flower colors, from a few whites and near-whites to glowing reds, blues and purples. A more subtle consideration, yet one well appreciated when plants are out of bloom, is that of foliage texture and color. Some species have strikingly large, coarsely toothed leaves, while those of a few are so tiny and dense as to merge into a shimmering mass, further varying hue from ash-grey to deep green.

Culture

Most penstemons have strong root systems and vigorous tops, thrive in nearly barren soil and return modest gifts of water and nutrients with spectacular growth and bloom. Further, many show an amazing degree of climatic adaptability; both desert and alpine species often prosper together in lowland gardens near the coast. Countering all this (and promoting their reputations as temperamental and short-lived) is an unfortunate susceptibility to attack by several fungus pathogens kept in check by harsh conditions in the wild.

All penstemons appreciate, and many absolutely require, well-drained soil. Heavy clay soils should be amended with sawdust or other porous organic matter and plenty of coarse sand or gravel. In the worst instances one may build planting mounds, largely of gravel, to drain water away from plant crowns (in areas where either soils or water is saline, such mounds may also help in leaching away salts). In any case the ground should be top-dressed with gravel around plants of matting or reclining species, to speed drying of the foliage after rains. Supplemental feeding should be light; penstemons respond to high nutrition with lush, floppy growth which is unusually susceptible to fungus predators.

A simple rule for exposure is that penstemons should have all the light they can stand (for good blooming and sturdy growth) and should never be crowded. (Excessive shade has the same consequences as heavy feeding.)

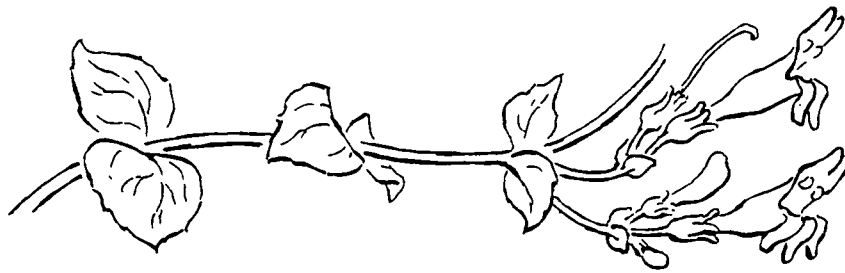
Though chemicals are no substitute for good cultural conditions where penstemons are concerned, one can, if so inclined, reduce the incidence of leaf-spotting and leaf and stem rots through occasional application of a good broad-spectrum fungicide.

Thus far we have neglected mention of animal pests. These tend to be only a minor nuisance unless plants are too lush and crowded for reasons described above. Then they may be attacked and disfigured by snails, slugs and a variety of chewing and sucking insects. Again, the primary remedy is cultural, though the same mechanical and chemical controls may be applied to penstemons as to other plants. I have seen the softer, bushier species browsed by deer and rabbits, but they would certainly be overlooked in favor of other delectables.

Propagation

The penstemons are generally among the easiest of our natives to propagate. One may choose among three different methods, depending upon species and circumstances.

Seeding is the most reliable technique for bringing penstemons out of the wild, and it yields the most rapid rates of their multiplication. The seeds are easily collected by pouring them from opened pods or crushing unopened ones, and they should be stored in a cool, dry spot. Sowing them outside during the winter provides the cold period some.



Keckiella cordifolia

not all, need for germination. Seeds should be thinly and evenly scattered over pots or flats of a well-drained medium like sand or a commercial potting mix, barely covered with the same material, gently watered and set out where they are protected from heavy rains and drying winds. In the case of the high-altitude species, laying the pots away for a few weeks in the home freezer prior to setting them out will help ensure germination. Once the seedlings are up, which may be a few weeks or a few months after sowing, they may be fertilized weakly and grown until large enough to handle easily (perhaps one to two inches tall). Transplanting to deep two and one-half to four inch pots, again in a well-drained mix, should yield plants large enough for the open ground, providing they are carefully watered until established. Plants are ready for this final step when a good number of roots appear around the edges of the pots.

Stem cuttings are a valuable means of propagating

particularly desirable individuals; however, the choice of cutting material is important. Just-matured shoots or portions behind the soft tips of actively growing shoots, large enough to permit removal of the leaves of the bottom one to two nodes and leave two to three pairs above, are ideal. The cuttings are dipped in a mild rooting hormone if available, inserted in pots or flats of perlite, coarse sand or a similar medium, covered over with jars, plastic bags or frames to prevent wilting and placed in a shady, protected spot. Once rooted, they are handled as described for seedlings.

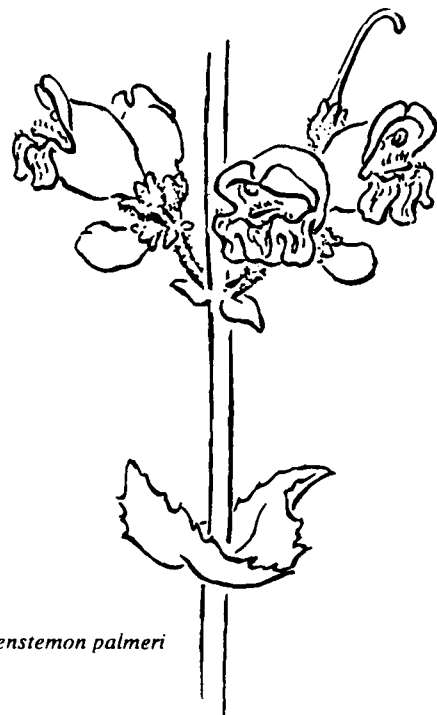
Finally, and also a means of propagating prized individuals, there is division. This is applicable to species which either form mats or trail and take root where the stems touch the ground. The clumps are cut vertically with a sharp spade, undercut and lifted with as many intact roots as possible. Each piece should be replanted no deeper than the parent plant, to avoid rotting stems and foliage.

THE AMERICAN PENSTEMON SOCIETY

The American Penstemon Society was formed in 1946 by gardeners who had been collecting and growing penstemons in different parts of the country. The Society's purpose is to share enthusiasm and information, exchange seeds, encourage the selection and propagation of outstanding forms of various species, and to preserve rare species. Some members are engaged in hybridizing wild species to produce more spectacular garden plants. Others are interested principally in seeing or growing native species.

The Society publishes an annual *Bulletin* that contains a mixture of technical and non-technical material. Members communicate their experiences with penstemons through the *Bulletin* and through direct correspondence. New members receive a *Manual for Beginners*. The *Penstemon Field Identifier*, by Kenneth and Robin Lodewick, is also available. It has drawings illustrating distinguishing characteristics of each species. An annual seed exchange offers seeds of species and hybrids. Each year there is a field trip to different penstemon territory.

One of the founders and the longtime editor of the *Bulletin* was the late Ralph Bennett. The current president is Clifford Lewis of Seattle. Membership is \$5 a year, payable to the American Penstemon Society, 399 Cheltenham Dr., Dayton, OH 45459.



Penstemon palmeri

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California Native Plant Society.

-Ed.

Publications

The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York 10458, has purchased from McGraw-Hill Book Co. all the remaining materials of the Wildflowers of the United States books by Harold William Rickett. These include:

- Vol. 1. The Northeastern States
- Vol. 2. The Southeastern States
- Vol. 4. The Southwestern States
- Vol. 5. The Northwestern States
- Vol. 6. The Central Mountain and Plains States

Index to Vol. 1 through Vol. 6

These materials are now being cloth-bound and will be available to the public during early May 1984 at prices substantially lower than those currently charged by McGraw-Hill.

From No. 4, 1983 Seedhead News, the quarterly of Search

Reviewed by Barney T. Burns
Various authors

Edited by J. K. Rosenfelt
El Palacio, Volume 89, No. 1, 1983

Published by the Museum of N. M.
P.O. Box 2087, Santa Fe, NM 87503
\$3.00 per copy, \$12.00 per year

This volume of El Palacio is devoted to the history of agriculture in New Mexico. Five brief articles:

- Vorsilla Bohrer on food conditions in New Mexico prior to the introduction of corn, beans and squash;

- Gail Tierney on the domestication of these staples and its effect on New Mexico;

- Marc Simmons on factors influencing colonial agriculture (1600-1846);

- Robert Frazer on the military influence on farming (1846-1861);

and photographs compiled by Richard Rudasill are witness to traditional agriculture in the last century.

Judith Phillips

A new Cooperative Extension Service circular, New Mexico Grasses by Kelly Allred, NMSU Extension Plant Specialist, has just been released. This publication talks about how to identify grasses and the important grass tribes in New Mexico.

Copies can be obtained from your County Extension Office. Ask for Circular 509.

Lisa Johnston

Dear Editors,

I have come upon a book recently in the public library that I think should be recommended to the NPS members. It is called A Practical Guide to the Amateur Naturalist, by Gerald Durrell, published by Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1983, \$22.50.

This book is an international guide, full of basic instruction, experiments and technical information, written in a totally absorbing way. Whether you want to learn how to take the vital statistics of a tree or do a wildflower profile or study the layers of a woodland; this book will tell you what tools you need, how to use them, what data to extract and how to record the information. This is a classic textbook with a modern view. It engages you into the complex interrelationships of plants, creatures and environments.

A perfect book for parent, teacher, student and of course the ever elusive amateur naturalist. It has been the book I've waited for to give my own interest a definition and a direction. I think it can be for others as well.

Sincerely,

Deborah T. Swetnam
P.S. My husband and I are NPS members. We work seasonally for the Gila National Forest, Mimbres District, as Fire Lookouts. Our tower is on Hillsboro Peak in the Black Range. It is a five-mile trail from Emory Pass on Highway 90. Any member is welcome to come visit us from April through August. Children welcomed!!

The field trip to Myra McCormick's Bear Mountain Guest Ranch at Silver City on June 1-3 planned by the Albuquerque Chapter still has a few openings. The deadline for registration has been extended to May 15. The cost of the trip will be \$46.50 plus tax, and includes dinner Friday night, three meals on Saturday, breakfast on Sunday and two nights lodging. For more information or to register contact Jackie Farr, 725-18 Tramway Vista Drive NE, Albuquerque, NM 87122, phone 294-2178.



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There will be a Culinary Plant Workshop on Saturday, June 9, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Old Cienega Village Museum at El Rancho de las Golondrinas, Santa Fe. Identification, uses and nutritional aspects of edible plants will be covered. Workshop leaders are Gail D. Tierney and Phyllis Hughes. Call 477-2261 for more information and registration blanks.

Through UNM--Valencia Campus Continuing Education, a Native Plant Workshop will be held at the Willie Chavez State Park, 1617 East River Road, Belen, on Saturday, June 23, 8:30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Participants will view the Bosque plants, learn how native plants can be used for landscaping, learn identification of edibles and non-edibles, learn the "what, when and how" of collecting wild-flower seeds and the methods of growing plants from seeds and cuttings.

Dan Scurlock, Lisa Johnston and Judith Phillips are the well qualified persons conducting the workshop.

Cost is \$25.00 person--discounts to families. For more information phone 864-7741.



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 Friend of the Society \$25.00

To better serve our membership, please check areas of particular interest.

Conservation:
 Endangered species, Habitats
 Restoring abused areas
 Water conservation
 Propagation Seed Collection

Landscaping: Residential
 Civic Commercial Highway

How would you describe your level of expertise? What areas would you be willing to help with?

Are you a member of an organization with related purposes (Garden Club, NM Wildflower Association, etc.)?



Dear Editors,

A Fun Day to share:

It all started with an approximate one fourth acre of naked "back 40" property that contained more rocks than a New England stone wall and had such hard caliche that it defied the sturdiest pickax. If ever there were a piece of property to challenge native plants, this was it!

So we drove down to Tom Wootten's DRY COUNTRY PLANTS establishment, #3904 Highway 70 East (just before getting into Las Cruces proper) and looked over his stock and discussed what might be appropriate for our particular Roswell area. The visit included a viewing of his greenhouse display containing some very beautiful blooming wildflowers. Tom has done a tremendous amount of work and everything is looking good!!!

As a result of our visit to DRY COUNTRY PLANTS, we have the following native shrub species to keep our wildflowers and Buffalograss lawn company:

Squawbush
Bird of paradise
Indigo bush
New Mexico privet
Apache plume
Golden Currant
Santolina
Honey mesquite
Mormon tea
Desert willow
Spanish broom

Rhus trilobata
Caesalpinia gilliesi
Dalea formosa
Foresteria neomexicana
Fallugia paradoxa
Ribes aureum
Santolina chamaecyparissus
Prosopis glandulosa
Ephedra nevadensis
Chilopsis linearis
Spartium junceum

Anyone wishing a "look-see", do call us at 623-1214 and drop by. Just remember that in the interest of keeping our planting cost in line with our retirement income, most of our purchases were one gallon container type, so be sure to bring your eye glasses along! But do stop by again in five years and hopefully ????? by that time you will need a machete!!

Jean and George McElroy
700 Hall Drive
Roswell

Send change of address or any
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