New Mexico's Voice for Native Plants

Newsletter

of the

Native Plant Society of New Mexico

October, November, December 2025 Vol. L No. iv

Sotol (*Dasylirion wheeleri*) in Soledad/Bar Canyon. Image: Gordon Berman

The Newsletter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico

October–December 2025, Vol. 50 No. 4. This newsletter is published quarterly by the Native Plant Society of New Mexico (PO Box 35388, Albuquerque, NM 87176) and is free to members. The NPSNM, a nonprofit organization, is composed of native plant enthusiasts and advocates, from home gardeners to resource managers and botanists, who have an interest in the flora of New Mexico. Original articles from the newsletter may be reprinted if attributed to the author and to this newsletter. Views expressed are the opinions of the individual authors and not necessarily those of NPSNM. Articles and high-resolution artwork supporting NPSNM's mission are welcomed and can be sent to the editor, Margaret Ménache, ***newsletter [at] npsnm.org***.

The next submission deadline is November 25, 2025.

Mission The Native Plant Society of New Mexico (NPSNM) is a non-profit organization that strives to educate the public about native plants by promoting knowledge of plant identification, ecology, and uses; fostering plant conservation and the preservation of natural habitats; supporting botanical research; and encouraging the appropriate use of native plants to conserve water, land, and wildlife.

Membership in the NPSNM is open to anyone supporting our goals of promoting a greater appreciation of native plants and their environment and the preservation of endangered species. We encourage the use of suitable native plants in landscaping to preserve our state's unique character, to conserve water, and as a part of the regional ecosystem in support of native pollinators and other fauna. Members benefit from chapter presentations, field trips, plant and seed exchanges/sales, discounts on publications, a statewide conference, and a network of knowledgeable plant enthusiasts.

SCAN ME

Joining is easy! Scan this QR code to be directed to our website or go there the old-fashioned way from your browser: www.npsnm.org. You may also snail mail your contact information, local chapter preference (if any), and dues to our main address (NPSNM, PO Box 35388, Albuquerque NM 87176). Yearly dues [$30 regular individual, $45 household, $60 friend of the Society, and $20 for youth (through 26 years) or PK-12 teacher] and donations are tax deductible. Higher supporting levels can be found on our website. ❖

Don't Miss a Newsletter Issue or an Important Society Email!

Has your email address changed?
Has your physical address changed?
Would you prefer to receive *only* an online copy of the newsletter?

Keep us informed so we can keep you informed!

Send us your most current information at: npsnmmembership [at] gmail.com

From the President

Margie Gibson

We have not yet filled the vacancy for a documentarian, an important member of our statewide board who acquires and safeguards copies of documents of legal and historical significance for the Society. Please get in touch with me if you'd like to learn more.

One of My Other Hats

Like most of us, my first volunteer work started with my chapter, where I am still actively volunteering. One of my jobs is serving on the Steering Committee for the Silva Creek Botanical Garden. Our role is to suggest policies for the garden and to carry out plans. It has been a busy few months as we work to finish the last year of a Trails + Grant and begin a new project, the Front Yard Garden.

Climate mural designed and installed at the Silva Creek Botanical Garden by the Youth Mural Project. Image: Margie Gibson

Our botanical garden features some areas with special purposes. The Front Yard Garden will showcase native plants suitable for home landscapes, inspiring visitors with ideas for their yards. We were thrilled when Judith Phillips, a well-known landscape designer and longtime member of the Albuquerque chapter, agreed to design it. She has completed the design, and we plan to have it planted in time for next year's statewide conference here in Silver City.

Sometimes I feel like my brain has too many tabs open as we work simultaneously to finish the Trails+ Grant! The grant funds specific improvements within a two-year timeframe. Revisions to the Children's Pollinator Garden and planting of the Habitat Thicket are complete. A wall built around our iconic water tank now features three beautiful murals designed and installed by the Youth Mural Project. We're still working on a new main entrance and interpretive signs. We need to finish by December.

Las Cruces Conference

Speaking of busy, our members organizing the statewide conference have been working diligently. They've assembled an excellent lineup of speakers, field trips, workshops, and more. I appreciate their efforts and am excited to attend. I hope to see you there. ❖

Conservation Corner

Sylvan Kaufman,

NPSNM Conservation Committee Chair

Consider becoming the new Conservation Chair in 2026!

It is helpful to have some background in botany or ecology and to be able to read and interpret management plans. It could also be a job done by co-chairs with one person responding to management plans and another writing letters of support or tracking New Mexico legislation more carefully. Please contact me, conservation[at] npsnm.org, or your chapter's conservation committee representative, if you would like to volunteer or get more information about the position. The Society needs to speak out for plants at local, state, and federal levels!

SW Invasive Plant Short Course

Invasive plants pose a severe threat to native plant habitats throughout the southwest and it is important to keep up to date on the latest problems and progress. Drs. Leslie Beck and Elise Gorman from New Mexico and Arizona Extension, respectively, organized a two day Southwest Invasive Plant Short Course held in Santa Fe in August. The short course is primarily intended for professionals involved in invasive plant management, and each year its location tends to alternate between Arizona and New Mexico. Invasive plants are non-native plants with rapid growth and spread that cause harm to people, other animals, or the environment.

New Mexico is due to update its Noxious Weeds list in the next few years. Plants designated as noxious weeds represent a small number of all of the invasive plants in the state. The noxious weeds list is used to alert landowners to potential problem plants and is used by the state to prioritize control of noxious weeds growing on state lands. Currently, you can help New Mexico track listed noxious weeds through citizen science participation in EDDMapS. You can view reported infestations here. Uploading observations of invasive plants in iNaturalist can also be helpful to land managers and researchers.

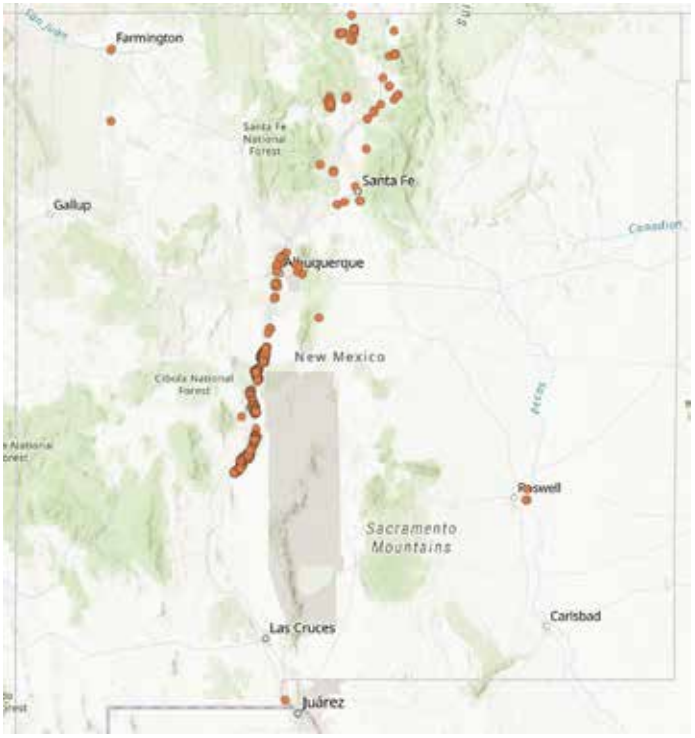
Perennial pepperweed, *Lepidium latifolium*, is a class B Noxious Weed in New Mexico. A photo of the plant along a roadside.

Image: Sylvan Kaufman

Some important updates to know on herbicide use are that the EPA updated its Herbicide Use Strategy for protecting endangered species in August, 2024. You may already be seeing new information on herbicide labels related to endangered species protections. Always read the label!

Dr. Kristen Bowers from New Mexico State University gave an update on biological control. New biological control agents are being tested for control of houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*), Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), and hoary cress (*Lepidium draba*). Look for existing biological control agents such as gall mites on bindweed, leafy spurge beetles, Russian knapweed stem gallers, stem weevils on Dalmatian toadflax, and root and flower weevils on goatheads.

Dr. Flavie Audoin from University of Arizona Cooperative Extension talked about targeted grazing using sheep, goats, and



Observations on the NMDA Noxious Weeds dashboard of perennial pepperweed, *Lepidium latifolium*

cows for control of different species in different situations. She stressed that targeted grazing requires patience with a minimum of three years for control of perennial invasive plants. All of the control presentations emphasized that often a combination of approaches (IPM) yields the greatest benefits. An excellent compendium of articles on invasive species management is available for free (with registration) here.

Sonia Norman from the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson gave a very informative presentation on the Museum's success in using volunteers to control buffelgrass infestations. She found regular volunteers were extremely effective in pulling buffelgrass in patchy areas, saving large, less experienced volunteer groups for densely infested areas. They also used a herd of churro sheep with virtual fencing in a densely infested area.

You can find information on seed balls and their use in seeding native plants after invasive plant removal here. I threw out my sample seed balls just before a summer monsoon rain!

Roadless Act

The public will have a chance to comment on US Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins' proposal to rescind the 2001 Roadless Rule. That rule established prohibitions on road construction, road reconstruction and timber harvests on nearly 59 million acres of national forests and grasslands. Most of the National Forests in New Mexico have some designated roadless areas (see map). The action requires a notice of proposed rulemaking and final rule which should provide several opportunities for public input. The action also requires tribal consultation and coordination with affected states. There will be several opportunities for the public to provide input during the rulemaking process.

iNaturalist

Since I mentioned iNaturalist in the context of reporting invasive plants, I also want to comment on how useful it is for tracking plants. You can, for instance, create a plant list for a particular location and download it to reference in the field. Go to the Explore tab and select a location. You can draw a boundary around the particular area you are interested in. Using Filters, select the species you want to view (and select if you only want to view observations that have been verified or that were made within a certain date range). Update your search, then on the Filters window, click download on the bottom right side. You can further refine the output file on the query page that opens. It is a great tool for both field research and for plant walks! ❖

Links

Noxious Weeds List:
https://nmdeptag.nmsu.edu/apr/noxious-weeds.html#gsc.tab=0

EDDMapS: https://www.eddmaps.org/index.cfm

Reported infestations:
https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/21704ccd576e402a840ddb5bced75b91

Herbicide Use Strategy:
https://www.epa.gov/endangered-species/strategy-protect-endangered-species-herbicides

Articles on invasive species management:
https://naturalareas.org/invasive_species_compendium.php

Seed balls:
https://extension.arizona.edu/publication/seed-ball-strategies-gardening-and-restoration-arid-landscapes

Designated roadless areas:
https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/roadless-map-inv-areas-new-mexico-stelprdb5068530.pdf

Trees of the Rocky Mountains: A Book Review

Margaret Ménache

Rob Weiss has a passion for trees. I put him through his paces about his newly released FalconGuide *Trees of the Rocky Mountains* for an hour on a Zoom interview. At the end, I asked, "Anything else?" He remembered that in one of our email exchanges setting up the interview, I had mentioned I was having some difficulty distinguishing between two juniper species. What was my question? And we were off for another twenty minutes as he gave me tips and advice on how to be sure I get the species properly identified. Sometimes I think I know a pretty lot about trees. Now I definitely know that I do not.

Is all of his wide-ranging knowledge presented in his book? No, of course not. But that wealth of expertise underpins all the text. As for the book itself? It was originally planned as a single book but has been published as two volumes — approximately 200 pages each. *Trees of the Rocky Mountains* came out this year; *Trees of the Northern Pacific Coast* came out in 2024. And Weiss has plans for a proposed *Trees and Grasses of the Northern and Central Great Plains.*

Trees of the Rocky Mountains covers fifty-nine trees, including range maps for each tree and six tables of summary information. A thirty-page introduction covers the basics of tree identification with photographs illustrating the botanical definitions used in keys. There are also sections on forest types, biotic and abiotic causes of tree failure, wildlife uses of trees, and a brief discussion of the non-native trees that have taken up residence (to the chagrin of many) in our native ecosystems.

Although the book title suggests it is a tree identification guide, it is much more than that. There is definitely detailed identification information beginning with the easily recognized characteristics of each tree. That is followed by more detailed information about bark, needles/leaves, cones/fruit, height, and range. For each tree there are several images showing a "portrait" of the tree as well as close-up images showing bark, cones/fruit, and needles/leaves. According to the press release information, the book has 317 photographs.

Pacific silver fir (Abies amabilis) cones. Although it is more common in the Pacific northwest, this beautiful fir is one of the author's favorites.
Image: Robert Weiss

But, what sets the book apart is the rest of the information about each tree. There is information on trees that you might expect to find nearby as well as some tips about similar trees so you can verify your identification by checking it against the other, similar trees. A "tree risk hazard assessment" rounds out the description for each tree. Providing a thumbnail sketch of the common biotic and abiotic stressors that a tree confronts, this is the material that Weiss says sets his books apart and makes them an important contribution to the literature. I agree.

Although completing this work has been a dream and a passion, it is only in the past several years that Weiss found the heart of the books that introduced something truly new and valuable for the general public: the inclusion of the biotic and abiotic information. Once that piece clicked into place, he was able to produce the books quickly, bringing together his thirty plus years of experience as a botanist and an arborist working in seven states in all manner of ecosystems. As he told me, "I don't think it would have happened if I hadn't worked in all those different places."

This is a huge undertaking that Weiss modestly called "a good beginner's book. It's more advanced for tree identification, but it's a good beginner's book for biotic and abiotic factors for, I'd say, all mature trees. I don't cover everything but a lot of the issues work for city trees, landscaping trees that are not mentioned in my book." He also hopes that others might carry on his work to write the more specific books that delve into tree health more deeply.

How important is an understanding of tree hazard assessment? Of the biotic and abiotic factors associated with tree failure and death? As members of the NPSNM, and of community groups generally, monitor tree health and engage in ecosystem restoration projects, an ability to evaluate trees for health and likelihood of success or failure will have a significant impact on the success of a project. A book like this will be an invaluable resource for quickly assessing the health of the trees in our forests. ❖

Native Plant Society of New Mexico

2025 Annual Conference
Responsible Beauty

Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument Image: Gordon Berman

Thursday, October 2 to Sunday, October 5, 2025
Las Cruces, NM

Please bring this section to use during the conference or download it to your phone or tablet from the conference webpage.
Link: https://www.npsnm.org/las-cruces-2025-conference-home-page/

Welcome to the 2025 NPSNM Conference

Hosting the Native Plant Society of New Mexico's 2025 Conference, the Las Cruces Chapter welcomes you to southern New Mexico. We are pleased to showcase the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, which graces our hearts and skyline. Make new friends and reconnect with old ones as you relax, learn, participate, and explore a mixed schedule of events.

- Social events will be held throughout the meeting: Thursday's 5:00-7:00 pm Meet-and-Greet at Hacienda de Mesilla; Friday's 5:00-7:00 pm Reception at NMSU's Art Museum; and Saturday's 6:00–9:00 pm outdoor banquet at D.H. Lescombes Winery and Bistro.
- On Friday, we offer you a choice of garden tours, workshops, and guided hikes to learn more about our beautiful landmarks and scenery,
- For Saturday, we have lined up regionally and nationally recognized speakers who will address environmentally and culturally sensitive topics at NMSU's Domenici Hall. Also, on-site you can bid at the Silent Auction and shop for books. We have offered grants for students to attend and present posters in the lobby. We encourage you to discuss their projects with them and visit our other vendor, educational, and informational displays.

Our activities convene at multiple locations — in town, on campus, in the field — so please be sure to wear your name tag, distributed at registration check-in, at all times to ensure your inclusion at each of your registered events.

NPSNM Las Cruces Chapter
Board of Directors

Conference Location: Domenici Hall, NMSU Campus, Las Cruces and other Las Cruces locations (see map in pocket folder you will pick up at registration check-in for building and parking locations).

Lodging: Please go to the Accommodations tab on the conference webpage.

Pets: NMSU does not permit pets in its facilities, so if you bring your pet, you will need to make arrangements to board or kennel it during conference activities. Here are some recommendations: Your Pet Space (575) 652-4404, Camp Calista (575) 800-8988, Pet Planet (575) 528-8180.

Silent Auction: Plan on perusing our fast-paced **One-Day-Only Silent Auction, Saturday, October 4, from 7:30 am - 3:15 pm in room 102, Domenici Hall**. With holidays approaching, attendees can choose from a variety of high-quality gifts, plants, and curated experiences, using their free $5 coupon that accompanies conference registration. And since this auction lasts only a single day, **we are offering a BUY-IT-NOW feature so you can snag coveted items earlier in the day**. Proceeds support the Las Cruces Chapter's NMSU student grants, the Dripping Springs Visitor Center garden, and chapter conservation efforts. Come ready with cash, checks, or credit cards to shop for a good cause!

Registration Check-in

- **Thursday:** courtyard at Hacienda de Mesilla, 1891 Avenida de Mesilla, Las Cruces, NM 5:00–5:30 pm
- **Friday**: northeast corner of Pan American Center parking lot on Triviz and Arrowhead 7:45-9:00 am or from 5:00-5:30 pm at the reception location, University Art Museum
- **Saturday:** lobby of Domenici Hall, NMSU, 1305 Frenger St., Las Cruces starting at 7:30 am or if you are just attending the banquet, you can pick up your name tag at Lescombes

Thursday, October 2

3:00–5:00 pm NPSNM Board meeting Hacienda de Mesilla (1891 Avenida de Mesilla, Las Cruces NM)

5:00–7:00 pm Welcome Meet-and-Greet for all conference registrants on the Hacienda de Mesilla Cantina rooftop; accessible access on patio. Complimentary appetizers, tea, and soft drinks. Cash bar.

Dinner on your own — restaurant suggestions on the conference webpage.

Friday, October 3

Bring your reusable water bottle from home to use throughout the conference; there will be a water-bottle filling station in Domenici Hall on Saturday. No single-use disposable water bottles will be provided.
Disposable products used at the conference will be compostable.

Breakfast on your own. Eat at one of the hotels or check out the restaurants on the conference webpage**.**

Guided Activity Meeting Place. Northeast corner of the Pan American Center parking lot (Lot 30) on Triviz and Arrowhead (see map in pocket folder). Participants in the Otero Mesa and Pine Tree Loop field trips will meet at 7:45 am and depart at 8:00 am. For all other activities, you will meet your leader or co-leader at 8:45 am and depart at 9:00 am. All trips leaving the Pan American Center Lot 30 will involve carpooling. Please consider taking others if you have a larger vehicle or contributing money to your driver. Before 4:30 pm, parking on the NMSU campus requires a permit on weekdays, except that you may park without a permit in Lot 30, the activity meeting place.

Boxed lunches will be available for pick-up at the meeting point. The activity leader or co-leader will have a cooler where you can stow your lunch until you need it. Please bring your own water.

Field Trips	Distance	Elevation Gain	Difficulty
1. **Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park**	2 miles	250'	easy–moderate.
2. **Dripping Springs Trail**	3.25 miles	450'	easy.
3. **Fillmore Canyon**	2.1 miles	450'	moderately difficult.
4. **Knapp Land Nature Preserve**	1.5 miles	n/a	easy–moderate.
5. **Otero Mesa**	no set route	n/a	easy.
6. **Pine Tree Loop**	4.5 miles	1,040'	moderately difficult.
7. **Soledad/Bar Canyon**	3.2 miles	650'	moderately difficult.

Garden Tour. Three unique Southern New Mexico gardens.

Workshops

A. **Embrace Place: Design a Wild West Garden**. Domenici Hall, Room 121
B. **Sunflower Workshop**. Domenici Hall, Room 125
C. **NMSU Herbarium Tour and Plant Identification Workshop**. Biology Annex
D. **Introduction to Nature Journaling**. Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park garden

Detailed guided activity descriptions may be found in the July-August newsletter or on the conference webpage. The guided activities last from three to six hours. If you are looking for things to do after your activity ends, check the Self-guided Area Activities tab on the conference webpage**.**

Friday Evening, October 3

After your guided activity and local exploration, join us for a reception at the University Art Museum in Devasthali Hall (see map in pocket folder for parking location).

Image: NMSU Art Museum

5:00–7:00 pm Reception at University Art Museum, 1308 E. University Ave. Las Cruces

- complimentary appetizers and mocktails
- optional 30-minute docent-led tours of the museum, which includes the country's largest collection of Mexican retablos
- music by Third Line Jazz Trio

Free parking on campus after 4:30 pm. Recommended parking is in Lot 10 just west of the University Art Museum (see map in pocket folder).
Dinner on your own — restaurant suggestions on the conference webpage.

Image: Ken Steigman

Saturday, October 4

7:30 am —4::30 pm
Yates Theater, Domenici Hall, NMSU
1305 Frenger St, Las Cruces

Recommended Parking is Lot 45, Corbett Center Student Union (see map in pocket folder).

7:30–8:30 am Registration/Check-in
Complimentary light breakfast and beverages
Silent auction begins; book sales, vendor, educational, and informational displays; and poster sessions

8:30–8:45 am Welcome and Announcements

8:45–9:30 am **Bill Neiman,** Keynote Speaker and Co-Owner of Native American Seed, Junction, Texas.

Am I the Problem? Lessons in understanding societal and psychological barriers to restoring the earth. The time is now; the place is here.

Fruits of slimlobe globeberry, *Ibervillea tenuisecta*. Image: Gordon Berman

9:30–10:15 am **Dr. Brandon Bestelmeyer,** Director of the Jornada Experimental Range Long-Term Agroecosystem Research program at New Mexico State University.

What do we want from (Jornada) science? The most important, and underappreciated, step in the scientific process is the question we ask. Questions in long-term science programs, such as the USDA Jornada Experimental Range, evolve with changes in society and environment. Dr. Bestelmeyer will review the history and major impacts of Jornada research from the perspective of stakeholder interests, environmental and agricultural problems, and science frontiers. Members of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico are also Jornada stakeholders, so Brandon hopes to hear what we have to say about key problems that concern us and that we should address.

The Jornada Experimental Range, established in 1912, is a 300-square-mile research laboratory focused on rangeland and dryland questions. Image: Brandon Bestelmeyer

10:15–10:30 am **Break**

Silent Auction, book sales, vendor, educational and informational displays and poster sessions.

Erika Rowe (State Botanist) and Katie Kline (Botanist /Ecologist), with the Rare and Endangered Plants Program within Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), will provide information in the atrium about a *potential* new and exciting volunteer rare plant monitoring program called NM Rare Plant Watch: Citizen Science for Conservation.

10:30–11:15 am **Joe Saenz is Honored Guest Speaker**, Chiricahua Apache Nation council member and owner of WolfHorse Outfitters, Arenas Valley, NM.

Nde Benah, land of peace and harmony. Discussion of Chiricahua Apache history, culture and lifeways.

11:15 am–noon **Jack Dash**, co-author with Luke Takata of *The Southwest Native Plant Primer*.

The Southwest Native Plant Primer. Jack will present information from the book he and Luke Takata co-authored. Introducing 235 wildflowers, grasses, vines, cacti, and trees, the authors recommend their book for gardeners of any skill level, who are interested in choosing native plants for a garden that makes a positive environmental impact. The plants cover a broad area, including New Mexico, Arizona, and the southern portions of Utah and Colorado. Despite vast differences between locations within this region, there are also surprising commonalities. As the Southwest grows in population and water becomes perilously scarce, we must focus on the role that native plants and water-wise planting can have in fostering sustainability in the region. Jack's presentation fills an important gap in literature about gardening in the region, serving as a resource to new and old gardeners alike, providing up-to-date information about current best practices for gardening in the Southwest.

In the field with the *Southwest Native Plant Primer*. Image: Luke Takata

noon–1:10 pm **Lunch served in atrium**
Silent auction; book sales, vendor, educational, and informational displays; and poster sessions

1:10–1:20 pm **Gila Chapter**
Introduction to 2026 State Conference

1:20–1:30 pm A selected reading of short poems by NPSNM member **Dr. Linda Malm** which consider our place in nature. Read by Las Cruces Chapter members.

1:30–2:15 pm **Marcy Scott**, habitat garden consultant, author, and co-owner of Robledo Vista Nursery.

Important Hummingbird Flowers of New Mexico. A pictorial calendar of key hummingbird-pollinated plants from across the state, featuring many species that depend substantially upon hummingbirds to reproduce, along with some generalists which, because of their wide distribution, offer vital nectar resources.

2:15–3:00 pm **Dr. Donovan Bailey**, biology professor, NMSU.

Heinrich, I have a feeling we're not studying plant pathology anymore.

3:00–3:15 pm **Break**
Silent auction; book sales, vendor, educational, and informational displays; and poster sessions

3:15 pm **Silent Auction closes**

3:15–4:00 pm **Rachel Burke**, Agave Restoration Coordinator, Bat Conservation International.

Restoration and Conservation of an Agave Corridor for Nectar-feeding bats in the American Southwest. Rachel's presentation will focus on BCI's work surveying for nectar-feeding bats using cutting-edge environmental DNA (eDNA) from bat saliva left on hummingbird feeders and agave flowers. She'll discuss how new detections of the endangered Mexican long-nosed bat are shedding light on the migratory corridor for this cryptic species and how it is informing BCI's conservation and habitat restoration efforts.

Mexican long-nosed bat, *Leptonycteris nivalis*, with tongue in agave flower. Image: Horizonline Photos/Bat Conservation International

4:00–4:15 pm **Presentation of the Carter Conservation Champion Award**

The Carter Conservation Champion Award honors those who have contributed above and beyond the usual in the conservation of native plants and/or education about them. The chapter sponsoring the annual conference is responsible for selecting an awardee.

4:15–4:30 pm **Closing Remarks and Announcements**
Pick up silent auction winning bids
Book sales; vendor, educational and informational displays; and poster sessions end

6:00–9:00 pm

Banquet

D.H. Lescombes Winery & Bistro
1720 Avenida de Mesilla, Las Cruces
Buffet with multiple entrees, sides, salad, bread, dessert, iced tea, cash bar
Live Music by 575 Band
Outdoor dining at D.H. Lescombes Winery & Bistro

Your name tag, with pre-purchased banquet option, is your ticket for dinner. If you indicated dietary restrictions on your registration, special meals will be available for you. There will be plenty of free parking and spectacular views of the Organ Mountains.

Sunday October 5

Enjoy a leisurely trip home, stopping at one of the recommended en route Optional Self-Guided Activities listed on the conference webpage. A must-see stop before you leave Las Cruces is Dripping Springs Natural Area for beautiful views of the Organ Mountains. We have had a good monsoon season this year, so there are bountiful and beautiful plants there. Some of the Self-guided Local Activities on the conference webpage may be good choices for a morning before hitting the road home.

Thank you for visiting Las Cruces. Hopefully you saw a little of why this year CNN named Las Cruces one of the best ten towns to visit in the US.

Ephemeral emerald pond. Image: Gordon Berman

World Seed Bank

Laurel Berry

Located on a dirt road outside of the small town of Longyearbyen, the Global Seed Vault is not on the typical tourist route for people visiting Svalbard. It was, however, of great interest to me, and I was able to arrange transportation through my tour guide to visit the vault. Two armed security guards accompanied me, not to safeguard the seeds, but to keep me from getting eaten by a polar bear. No one is allowed outside of town without armed protection.

Laurel Berry at the Global Seed Vault, Longyearbyen, Svalbard. Image: Michelle Curry

It didn't bother me that I wasn't allowed inside the vault, which is located in an old coal mine. From the photos I've seen, there isn't much happening inside the vault, which contains row upon row of shelves holding what look like the scientific equivalent of black Rubbermaid storage boxes. The vault is kept at -0.4 degrees Fahrenheit (-18 C), which, according to information at the vault, is "the optimal temperature recommended by the scientific community for long-term seed storage." Signage goes on to say that "situating the Seed Vault far above predicted sea level rise and artificially cooling the underground facility will keep seed deposits safe, even in the scenarios of changing climate conditions."

Standing outside the door to the vault, I found it fitting that, despite the desolate Arctic environment, wildflowers and grasses grew in tufts amongst the scree slopes nearby. Up one side is a low mountain devoid of trees. Down the other side, the rocky terrain reaches all the way to the small Longyearbyen airport, and just beyond that, the waters of Aventfjorden, one of the many fjords that carve into the land.

Svalbard, also known as Spitsbergen (although technically, Spitsbergen is just the largest island within the archipelago of Svalbard), is not part of any country. Rather, it is administered by a Norwegian-appointed governor and is considered to be an unincorporated area. As such, anyone is welcome to come for a visit and even to live and work there without a visa. Not many do, though. The entire population of Svalbard numbers approximately 2,700 people, 2,000 of whom live in Longyearbyen, which is the largest settlement. Historically, Svalbard was a place where hunters could make a living harvesting the furs of Arctic fox, reindeer, and polar bear, which they sold to the fashion industry in Europe. They also hunted seals to eat and used their skins to make mittens, hats, boots, and parkas. Nowadays, it is a popular tourist destination for those wanting to visit the Arctic. I, myself, came specifically for the flora and fauna, and it did not disappoint.

The Global Seed Vault is not an actively staffed site. Rather, employees open the vault to receive shipments of seeds from all over the world and then close it back up again until next time. The vault was designed to safeguard crop diversity from future calamity such as climate change, war, pests, and disease. According to operator NordGen's detailed Seed Portal database, the Vault contains 642 million seeds and can house up to 2.5 billion. The majority of seeds are food crops, with 69% being grains (rice represents the biggest category at 85 million) and 9% legumes. The roughly 6000 other species in the vault include a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, herbs, hallucinogenic plants (think cannabis and opium), and other plants. No GMOs are included. Deposits have been made from 76 institutions and from 223 different countries and territories, with the largest number of seeds coming from India at 95 million. There are regional seed banks

Contribute to the Jack & Martha Carter Conservation Fund

The generous financial support from so many NPSNM members and friends of the flora of New Mexico makes it possible for the Board to approve funding for workshops throughout the state, basic research on a variety of critical plant taxa, continued support for the state's major herbaria, and for the development and support of more early education programs from K–12 in New Mexico schools.

Contributing is easy! Scan this QR code to be directed to our website or go there the old-fashioned way from your browser: www.npsnm.org. You may also snail mail your contact information with a check payable to NPSNM—Carter Conservation Fund to our main address (NPSNM, PO Box 35388, Albuquerque NM 87176).

Every contributed dollar is being used to protect the flora of New Mexico well into the future.
~Jack & Martha Carter

Arctic Cottongrass, *Eriophorum callitrix* (Cyperaceae).
Image: Laurel Berry

all over the world that serve as a first line of defense, but in the event of failure, such as from power outages or war, those seeds could quickly become lost; therefore, the seeds in Svalbard are the second line of defense against genetic extinction. The Seed Vault was established and funded by Norway as a service to the global community.

First opened in February of 2008, there is still plenty of room for more seeds. And even though the focus has been on food crops, scientists have also gathered seeds from crops' wild relatives. From New Mexico in particular, seeds from the maize and squash traditionally used in cooking have been stored there. Also, wildflowers that are becoming scarce are sometimes represented in the vault. For example, seeds from a meadow in the U. K. have been deposited as part of a larger effort to conserve wildflowers that are disappearing.

In 2010, a seven-person bipartisan delegation from the US, including New Mexico Senator Tom Udall, delivered seeds to the vault. Among the deposits were seeds from the San Juan "Tsile," a New Mexico chile that is still grown by elder Native American farmers. Udall was quoted at the time in an article by Crop Trust as saying "In New Mexico, our distinctive red and green chile peppers not only define our cuisine, they also symbolize our state's unique cultural heritage and the livelihoods of generations who have called it home. I'm very pleased that we are saving New Mexico's most deliciously famous crop in the Svalbard Global Seed Vault." In total, thirteen different New Mexico chile species were represented in the deposit, along with red-seeded amaranth, black-seeded sunflowers, drought-tolerant beans, Sonoran panic grass, sunflowers containing genes resistant to sunflower rust, lemon basil, chia, and red-seeded watermelon — all from New Mexico.

Understandably, maintaining crop diversity is the most important mission for the seed vault, but with so much room remaining, it's time conservationists took a look at some of the more critically endangered native plants, as well as those having potential in pharmaceuticals. And it doesn't take a political delegation to make that happen, either. It starts with the seeds being safely stored in a regional seed bank. Documentation must exist that the seeds destined for the Global Seed Vault are duplicates of seeds that are already being stored locally. Institutions that can conserve the material as part of a long-term collection and that have the capacity for multiplying the seeds must also agree to make resources available for research, breeding, and education. At that point, the institution can contact NorGen. If an agreement is reached, the depositor can prepare the samples according to stringent scientific guidelines.

New Mexico does not have a seed vault, although various organizations around the state make efforts to safeguard seeds. I reached out to three different groups for this story but received no response. I should note that the Albuquerque BioPark has a budding seed bank but it remains to be seen if they have visions of making a deposit in Svalbard. If they do, I would be happy to deliver the seeds myself. I know the area.

Speaking of which, I would be remiss if I focused solely on plants and seeds. During my circumnavigation of Svalbard I saw much wildlife, including polar bears, reindeer, Arctic fox, walruses, four different species of seals, a variety of sea birds, a variety of land birds, including red-throated loons, and many whales (including blue whales and one fin whale).

Although the Global Seed Vault was not my primary reason for visiting Svalbard, I am quite pleased that I got to have a look around and it stoked my curiosity on the potential to safeguard native plants from all over, not just New Mexico. As keepers of the Earth it falls to the conservationists and, in the case of seeds, botanists to protect the biodiversity of our planet, despite and because of its constant changes. ❖

Tufted Saxifrage, *Saxifraga caespitosa* (Saxifragaceae).
Image: Laurel Berry

Chapter Activities & Events

For further information on upcoming events, email or call the contact person listed, or visit the chapter's webpage at www.npsnm.org. Click on "Chapters" to select the chapter. Hikers should always bring plenty of water, hat, sun protection, lunch and/or snacks, field guides. Wear sturdy shoes, suitable for rough, uneven ground. Check with your chapter for any fees or restrictions they or the event venues might require. Please check with the hosting chapter to be sure you know the current status of any event listed here. ❖

Albuquerque

Monthly meetings are normally the first Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm at the UNM Continuing Education Building, 1634 University Blvd NE. For more information contact Yasmeen Najmi at 505-220-1381 or yasmeennajmi40 [at] gmail.com. For questions, future field trip ideas, or to volunteer as a leader or co-leader, contact our Field Trip Coordinator: Lee Regan at lnbregan2@gmail.com. You must register at least 24 hours before the start with the field trip leader. Please let us know if you need to cancel.

Oct 1 Meeting. "Rewilding the City one Alley at a Time." Learn how one Native Plant Society member is planting native and xeric plants in neglected landscapes all over NE Albuquerque to benefit wildlife and pollinators. We will also explore the role that each of us can play to transform abandoned places to benefit not only wildlife, but also the human spirit. Candace Stoughton's career includes diverse public sector and NGO environmental work. Please join Candace for this wide-ranging conversation!

Nov 5 Meeting. "Medicinal Plants, People and Environmental Change in the Middle Rio Grande Valley." Traditional botanical healing practices are directly connected to the land and influenced by human relationships with the environment. As environmental change intensifies, community-held knowledge about local medicinal plants that could heal land and people has become more relevant. Community herbalist, author, and NPS member, Dara Saville, will share what she's learning through a PhD research project with local herbalist/plant medicine practitioners about our relationships with plants and the land and human health insights revealed.

Dec Annual Chapter meeting (details forthcoming), no speaker.

Field Trips Dates will be determined based on weather and growing conditions.

A surprise request from a researcher at Montana Technical University, Dr. Angela Walcyck, prompted a few members to respond to her request for seeds and leaf material of *Oenothera suffrutescens*, as she does genetic analysis of the species over its wide range. You may know this plant as Scarlet Gaura, beloved of native bees. Additionally, we have recently begun collaborating with Clay Meredith of the Institute for Applied Ecology (IAE) in monitoring the nearby occurrence of the "homely larkspur," *Delphinium sapellonis*. The Sandia Mountains are apparently its stronghold, as this endemic plant is rare everywhere else. Our conservation chief, Mike Fernandez, and accomplices found a very healthy population in the Sandias.

Our active field trip season was crowned (in this writer's humble opinion), by an outing in the Magdalena Mountains near Socorro, on the Timber Ridge trail. The considerable effort in reaching the remote trailhead was rewarded with breathtaking views and the presence of the very rare *Penstemon pseudoparvus* with its blue flowers. Many other species defied this rather dry year with abundant blossoms. By the time this newsletter goes to press, we will have enjoyed a long-planned members' picnic in the Manzano Mountains. Wildflower walks before and after the main event, a potluck bolstered with chapter-furnished sandwiches, and relief from summer's heat should draw great participation and sharing.

Hiking the Timber Ridge Trail in the Magdalena Mountains.
Image: Tom Stewart

El Paso

The El Paso Chapter holds combined meetings with the El Paso Cactus and Rock Club. The meetings are the first Saturday of the month at 10:00 am and take place at the Garden Center at Memorial Park (3105 Grant Ave, El Paso, TX 79930). All events are free unless a fee is specified. Nonmembers welcome. Info: Kevin Floyd, 915-747-6665; kwfloyd [at] utep.edu; https://www.facebook.com/Native-Plant-Society-of-New-Mexico-El-Paso-Chapter-191913520833180

Oct Members are encouraged to attend the annual conference in Las Cruces October 2-5.

Oct 6 Judith Phillips, a landscape designer and author, will present "Making Resilient (Mostly) Native Gardens" at the UTEP Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens. The talk will start at 6:00 pm and is free to attend. Resilient landscapes begin with knowing where we live, the conditions that define the places that surround us, and how they inform the way we garden. Southwestern native plants are constantly adapting to shifting conditions and offer the best options for keeping landscapes soft and green, with abundant habitat for wildlife, including humans.

Nov 1 Cactus appreciation month. Steven Brack will present about cacti of Chile. Luis Boscholtz will present about what he has learned growing mostly Texas cacti in culture by observing them in their natural habitat.

Dec 6 Potluck and elections. Bring a dish to share with the group. Consider stepping up to join the leaders of the organization!

Tiquilia greggii, plumed crinklemat, from the Franklin Mts, early August. We have had a good monsoon this year and the plants have responded well!
Image: Kevin Floyd

Gila (Silver City)

Upcoming evening programs will be hybrid whenever possible. To attend in person, come to Room 111 in Harlan Hall on the WNMU campus at 7:00 pm. Gila Chapter members will receive an email with the Zoom link; all others are welcome and can request a link from gilanative@gmail.com. Check the website for the latest field trip information: https://gilanps.org/events/field-trips/

Oct 17 Meeting. Eduardo (Eddy) Saldana will present research on *Penstemon metcalfei* (Metcalfe's Penstemon). In 2023, Natural Curiosity Wilderness Stewardship Director Tricia Kazemi found a population of this rare plant in upper Rattlesnake Canyon, west of the Hermosa field station. Eddie will be presenting the results of the 2024 survey and 2025 monitoring, along with a predictive habitat model that will direct future survey efforts.

Nov 21 Meeting. Carolyn Koury of the Gila National Forest will present on the federal Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) program, particularly as it relates to the 2025 Trout Fire, which burned approximately 50,000 acres in Grant County. The BAER program assesses fire effects on vegetation, soils, and watershed function, and executes immediate actions to manage unacceptable post-fire risks to critical values.

Oct 12 Celebration. Silva Creek Botanical Garden is celebrating the completion of Phase One of our Master Plan from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. We'll have brief talks and give thanks to all who've made our progress possible, followed by garden tours, a discussion of our beautiful murals made by members of the Youth Mural Project, a botanical puppet show, plant book and pollinator sculpture sales, and botanical art and science activities for all ages. Come see what we've done!

Dec 7 Celebration. Annual Holiday Potluck at The Hearth, 1915 N. Swan Street in Silver City, 12:30 to 2:30 pm.

Las Cruces

Our hybrid meetings are held on the NMSU campus in the Biology Annex, Herbarium Building, 3080 Williams Avenue, Room 101 on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm. Zoom link available from LC [at] npsnm.org. Check the NPSNM website, the LC Chapter's Facebook page, and recent email for updates, changes, additional news and other events and activities of interest.

Oct 2-5 Las Cruces will be hosting the annual NPSNM conference. We hope to see you so that you'll have a first-hand opportunity to experience the beauty of our city and surroundings.

NPSNM President Margie Gibson greeted and guided our Chapter's **June Field Trip** to the Silva Creek Botanical Garden in Silver City. A collaborative effort supported by the Gila Chapter and the City, the Garden is a floral wonderland. Past NPSNM Co-President and perpetual educator Don Graves showcased the Garden and the adjacent Silver City Waterworks, which is transitioning to a community based facility for tours, gatherings, and scouting events.

Image: Gordon Berman

Fillmore Canyon's cascading waterfall anointed our **July Field Trip**. Monsoonal rains broke the drought, speckled the landscape green, and lifted sotol/yucca/agave stalks — as well as our spirits.

In its revised Resource Management Plan, the BLM has shifted emphasis from profit-generating extractive and grazing enterprises to more ecologically sound mixed-use activities. Consistent with its new mission, the BLM has embarked on a Cienega restoration project on the Corralitos Range. Eleven Chapter members enthusiastically joined BLM staffers on site to plant hundreds of native plants in the degraded Cienega.

Responding to Chapter complaints that unchecked livestock over-grazing left Picacho Peak desiccated and despoiled, the BLM directed that the cattle be removed. Since then, Picacho Peak has responded to the BLM's environmentally friendly policy shift with newly emergent native plants from among its inventory of about 175 known species. After avoiding Picacho Peak pleasure cruises for years, our Chapter now frequently Field Trips there.

Two-tailed swallowtail on Mexican buckeye, *Ungnadia speciosa*. Image: Gordon Berman

Spearheaded by our Chapter Conservation Chair, we sounded an alarm to the New Mexico State Land Office (owner of the property) and Federal authorities that one of Dona Ana County's few, naturally occurring, perennial springs has been degraded by the presence of cattle for decades. Efforts by our Chapter and other environmental organizations have resulted in (i) removal of the livestock and (ii) the State Land Office posting "No Trespassing" signs near the Spring to prohibit unauthorized access. Our Chapter will be working with Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks and other organizations to sponsor a clean-up of the area on National Public Lands Day. The continued protection and restoration of the spring and surrounding canyon will be a long term project to assist State and Federal authorities with their management of this sensitive area.

Otero

Most events are free, and everyone, including non-members, is welcome to attend. For more event and/or chapter information, and to contact us, please visit our chapter section of the NPSNM website.

For the third quarter of 2025 the Otero Chapter anticipates an **October field trip** to Dog Canyon and the Oliver Lee Memorial State Park where the chapter created a native plant garden for the park in the early 2000s. Also, we look forward to a native plant dye workshop in **November**.

Between drought, fires, and floods, our corner of the southwest has had a difficult couple of years. But nature is resilient, as these images show. Life creeps back almost a year after the South Fork fire near Ruidoso and in the Lincoln National Forest.
Image: Elva K. Österreich

Water flows around Ruidoso on June 11, a day after a devastating flood moved through the town. Image: Elva K. Österreich

The Otero Chapter has undergone a few changes to the board this summer. Our president Russell Davis resigned his position in July and the position is now held by former vice president Elva Osterreich. The new vice president is Ken Henderson. Karen LeComte remains the treasurer. Laurel Berry is the secretary and the chapter representative to the state board.

Elva Osterreich has been an active member of the Otero Chapter since the mid-1990s. She loves the company, field trips, and relaxed pace of adventure to be found in the organization. She has been serving for a few years as vice president and enjoys planning trips and presentations. Elva also is a journalist, photographer and editor in southern New Mexico.

Ken Henderson grew up in Alamogordo and developed an interest in native cultures' usage of plants for medicinal and nutritional purposes. Always wondering what different plants are and what they are good for drew him to join the NPSNM and surround himself with knowledgeable people. A love of the outdoors also made membership in the organization a good fit. He still delights in finding new knowledge anywhere he can and hopes one day to have answers to as many questions as he can ask.

Karen LeComte is originally from wet and green New England. She and her husband Dave are fascinated by the tenacity of life in the Southwest and have enjoyed working and learning how to preserve this native environment with conscientious people who comprise the Otero Chapter and the NPSNM.

Laurel Berry returned to New Mexico four years ago after moving to several locations around the country. She honed her botany skills as a range conservationist in Colorado, where she found the largest population of *Asclepious uncialis*: it quickly became her favorite plant. She enjoys hiking with other members of the NPSNM to increase her plant knowledge.

Santa Fe **In-person meetings are on the second Tuesday of the month from September through May at 6:30 pm at Christ Lutheran Church, 1701 Arroyo Chamiso. Speakers are announced via the Santa Fe listserve. To sign up to receive emails, email santafe [at] npsnm.org. We will post speakers on the NPSNM website when we have advance information. Meetings and talks are free and open to all.**

Oct 14 Meeting. Victor Lucero, Forest Health Program Coordinator at Energy Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD), will present "Damaging Agents and Forest Health Conditions – A Broad Overview."

Nov 11 Meeting. The speaker will be Ana Casillas Brownson, Biologist with Bandelier National Monument.

June 26 through October The Santa Fe Chapter is collaborating with conservation photographer Christina Selby (https://www.christinamselby.com/) on an exhibition on rare plants at the Co-Fe Building gallery space, 314 Guadalupe St, in Santa Fe, titled "Gestures from the Land: A Celebration of Native Plants and Public Lands." Sales from the show will help support NPSNM Santa Fe chapter projects, as well as projects at the Institute for Applied Ecology and the Santa Fe Botanical Garden. **The exhibit can be viewed online, as well as in person.**

Biologist Ben Stout leads a walk at Valles Caldera National Preserve.
Image: Sylvan Kaufman

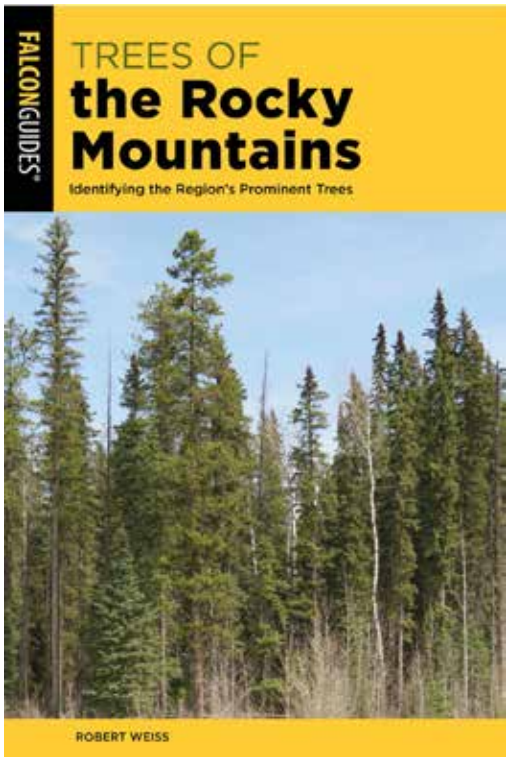
On **August 15**, the Santa Fe Chapter coordinated a hike in the Valles Caldera Hidden Valley. Our hike leader was Ben Stout, a plant ecologist and biological technician at Valles Caldera.

The chapter held a mid-day members' summer potluck and social at Hyde Park on **August 30**.

On **September 24**, chapter members participated in a Tewa United Women's Garden Tour. Located in the ancestral Tewa homelands of Northern New Mexico, Tewa Women United is a multicultural and multiracial organization founded and led by Native women.

Taos **Videos of past meetings are at https://tinyurl.com/TaosNPSvideos. For updates, check the Taos page on the NPSNM website, our Facebook page, the Taos News Calendar, or email TaosNPS [at] gmail.com. Meetings will be held on the FIRST Wednesday of the month in the Kit Carson Electric Cooperative Boardroom, 118 Cruz Alta Road from 6:00 to 7:30 pm. All meetings are free and open to the public.**

Oct 1 Richard Rubin, "A Seven Year Carter Taos Native Conifer Review." Using Jack Carter's "Trees and Shrubs of New Mexico," eight years ago, Rubin planted specimens of all thirteen conifers identified as native to Taos County.



A 2025 Falcon Guide title, this photographic guidebook that identifies fifty-nine of the most prominent tree species of the Rocky Mountains from New Mexico to British Columbia. With extensive images, maps, and tables, the author also includes information on damage and disease. Available from online booksellers and in bookstores.

Native Plant Society of New Mexico

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage PAID
Las Cruces, NM 88005
Permit No. 2093

Printed on Recycled Paper

NEWSLETTER

of the

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO

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