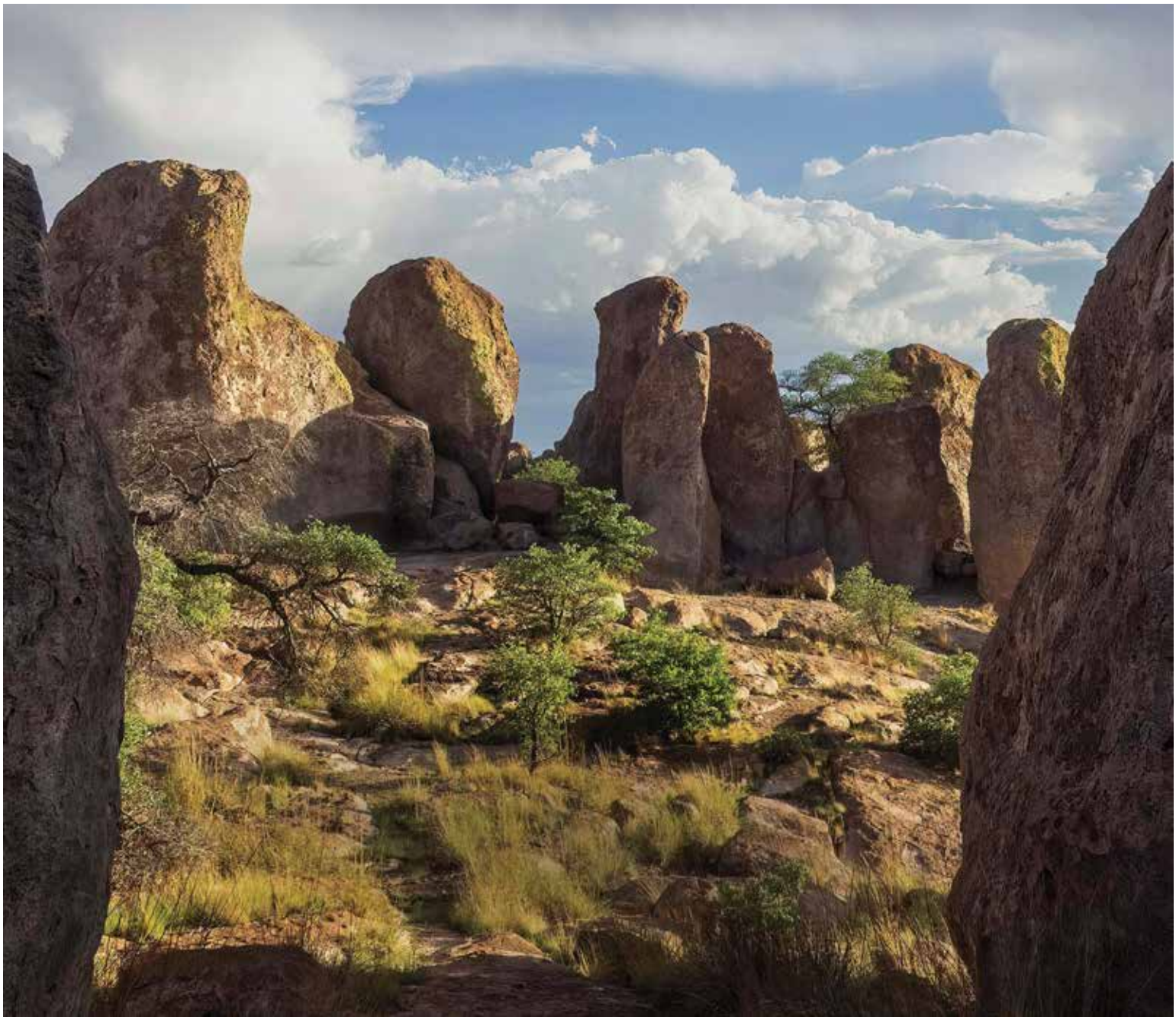
New Mexico's Voice for Native Plants

# Newsletter

## of the

# Native Plant Society of New Mexico

April, May, June 2026 Vol. LI No. II



City of Rocks State Park is a one square mile area of Chihuahuan desert between Silver City and Deming. The result of a volcanic eruption about 35 million years ago, the rocks have subsequently eroded into sculpted columns, such as those pictured above. A hike in this park is but one among the many field trips that will be offered at the 2026 statewide conference, "Roots of Resilience: Native Plants in the Next Fifty Years." Please save the date and come join us in Silver City, September 10-13. Read preliminary conference information beginning on page 8 and watch for updated information on our website and in the July newsletter.

Image: Elroy Limmer

**The Newsletter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico**

April–June 2026, Vol. 51 No. 2. 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 May 25, 2026.**

**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***

One way to be quietly hopeful in a turbulent world is to give our time to something we believe in. Protecting native plants protects habitat, and planting them creates it. Our actions matter.

If you're looking for a deeper way to make a difference, consider serving on our board. It's an opportunity to help guide meaningful work, support conservation efforts, and ensure that the values we care about continue to take root and thrive.

Our board consists of five executive officers who serve two-year terms that expire at the end of this year and a representative from each chapter. After four years as treasurer, preceded by six as president, Tom Stewart is retiring, so we are seeking a new treasurer. A description of the role follows at the end of this column. The other officers are willing to serve another term. However, that does not preclude someone else from throwing their hat in the ring.

The board meets in person twice a year. Our main board meeting is in January at the Sevilleta National Wildlife Field Station. The second meeting is held in conjunction with the statewide conference. Business between these meetings is conducted primarily by email.

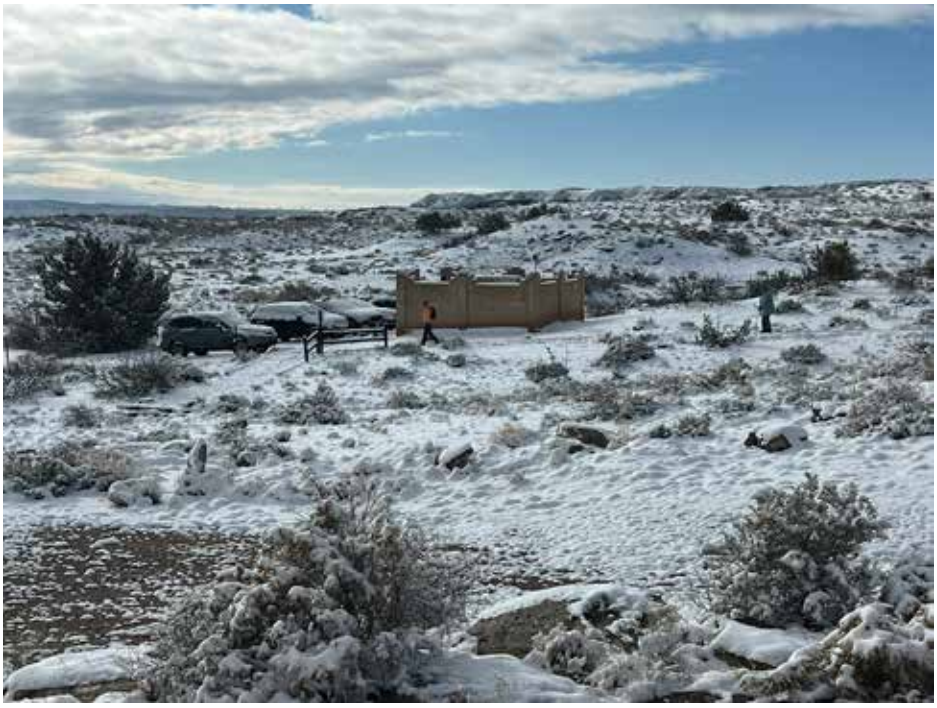
At this year's Sevilleta meeting, in addition to operating decisions such as the budget, we awarded sixteen grants from the Carter Conservation Fund, almost twice as many as last year. We had to make some hard choices. Fortunately, we received many generous donations. You can read about the grants in this newsletter and on our website.

The board also approved support for the Rare Plant Watch from our special projects fund. Our state has more than 230 rare or endangered plant species. This community science program collects information about them. We are funding a part-time coordinator, Mia Brann, at the Institute for Applied Ecology. She will develop program and training materials and engage NPSNM chapters and volunteers. The Rare Plant Watch will launch this spring. Collecting this information is critical to conservation.

Another proposal approved by the board was to reinstate the Sunflower Scholarships. The scholarships were designed to make our statewide conference more accessible to university students and interns working in native-plant-related fields. We decided to make them available to the chapter hosting the statewide conference. Awardees are funded to attend and are given an active role by participating in the conference poster presentations. The scholarships are aimed at a statewide audience. Information on how to apply for this scholarship will be available on the annual conference webpage.

Another element of the meeting was the chapter representatives' sharing highlights of their chapter activities. Those hiking boots on the ground, educational programs, and other local activities are incentives for many of our members to join.

It's a good board with a real sense of camaraderie. We gather at Sevilleta the night before the meeting for a potluck dinner, and there are some very good cooks. Another incentive for joining our board!



A somewhat unusual image from the Sevilleta January board meeting and retreat. A brief snow storm created a winter wonderland for humans and provided much needed moisture for the plants.
Image: Elva Osterreich, Otero Chapter

If you are considering becoming our treasurer, several things make the job easier than you might expect. One is the support from our sterling administrative assistant, Lindsey Kirchhevel, who handles many day-to-day tasks, including checking our post office box, depositing checks, and tracking membership dues and donations. Her records and reports are sent to the treasurer and president. A finance committee helps draft the budget, and we have an accountant who prepares our tax filings.

Would you like to learn more about becoming our treasurer or any other officer? Or have a friend who might be interesting in serving? Email us at president [at] npsnm.org or tomstewart [at]swcp.com. ❖

**Links:**

Carter Conservation Fund:
https://www.npsnm.org/carter-conservation-fund/

# Conservation Corner

*Sylvan Kaufman and Margaret Ménache,*
*NPSNM Conservation Committee Co-Chairs*

I welcome Margaret Ménache as co-chair of the Conservation Committee! You may know Margaret as the newsletter editor, but she shares a deep interest in conservation with me and together we hope to accomplish more than I could do alone. Reach out to us or to your chapter's conservation representative if you have conservation questions, suggestions, or concerns.

One of our new goals is to write "talking points" that you or your chapter can use to advocate for different plant conservation issues. Look for our first talking points on the NPSNM website in time for April's Native Plant Month. We encourage individuals and chapters to write letters to the editor of your local newspaper, write social media posts, or to use other outlets to encourage public appreciation and conservation of native plants during Native Plant Month.

## New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council

The New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council met in February at Valle de Oro and online. This organization is a coalition of conservation partners that meet once a year to share information on rare plant activities in the state and to vote on species to be included on New Mexico's rare plant list. This year, look for an update to the New Mexico Rare Plant Conservation Strategy, updated information on the rare plant pages, and a contest for a new logo!

One big topic of conservation and celebration at the meeting was the launch of the pilot program for Rare Plant Watch, a community science initiative funded in part by NPSNM. Read more about that in Erika Rowe's article on p. 6. Information about that program can also be found on the NM Rare Plants website under NM Rare Plants Watch.

Despite federal cuts to staff and funding, the state, federal agencies, and the Institute for Applied Ecology will continue rare plant monitoring studies, although they may not be able to survey as many species or populations as before. These groups will prioritize long-term studies where data are contributing to our understanding of plant population demographics as well as the impacts of land uses and climate changes. Hopefully, Rare Plant Watch volunteers will help contribute new data on species that have been understudied. In 2025, surveys at Valles Caldera, Brazos Box Canyon, and other study sites in northern NM found more than twenty-eight new state and county records for plant species!

## Center for Plant Conservation and Other Resources

Center for Plant Conservation partners in New Mexico—the Santa Fe Botanical Garden, Albuquerque Biopark, and Institute for Applied Ecology—all collected seeds from around the state for rare plant conservation in 2025 and will continue to do so in 2026. NPSNM volunteers helped with seed collecting and seed cleaning in some cases. These seeds go into the USDA-ARS National Laboratory for Genetic Resource Preservation in Ft. Collins, CO, where they can be used for future research and restoration studies.

Check out the new New Mexico Rare Arthropod Resource. Modeled after the rare plant website, this site provides information on rare arthropods in the state. Quite a few are pollinators or use native plants as host plants. Community scientists interested in arthropods can help with updates.

Consider joining the Bumblebee Atlas project which launches in New Mexico this year. This statewide community science project aims to survey bumble bee species throughout New Mexico using capture/photograph/release methods, and will provide the training and species identification to volunteers and agency staff who participate. The goal is to fill data gaps and learn where our bumble bee species are now, which habitats they are using, and which flowers they are relying on. More information is also available on our NPSNM website.

Internships are often available for the student wishing to gain some botanical experience. Although the deadlines are fast approaching (or possibly the positions are already filled), here are two opportunities. If it's too late this year, bookmark the websites. Internships are often available at different times throughout the year.

Americorps is looking for a BLM Rare Plant Technician, Santa Fe office, March–August.

A Science and Conservation Internship with SFBG and the EMNRD Botany Program,starts late May or early June. ❖

Links

NM Rare Plants: https://nmrareplants.unm.edu/

NM Rare Plants Watch: https://nmrareplants.unm.edu/nmrareplantwatch

NM Rare Arthropod Resource: https://nmrare.org/

Bumblebee Atlas: https://www.bumblebeeatlas.org/

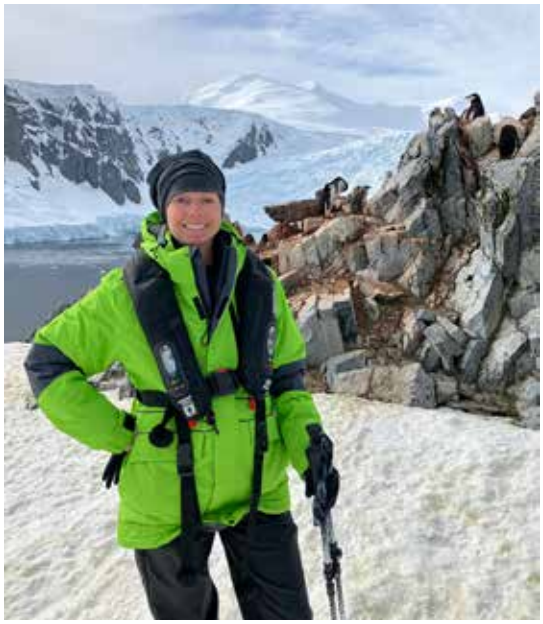
NPSNM native bees: https://www.npsnm.org/native-bees-of-new-mexico/

Americorps: https://secure8.entertimeonline.com/ta/conservationlegacy.careers?ShowJob=705187971

Science and Conservation Internship: https://visitsfbg.org/wp-content/uploads/2025-Jankowski-Internship-Description.pdf

## Meet One of Your Board Members

***Jackye Meinecke***



Enthusiastic Laurel Berry is the NPSNM Otero Chapter representative and serves on the state conservation committee. She's been a member since 2022. "I wanted to get back to my botanist roots, learn about native plants, and meet like-minded people. Even members who are not botanists know more about the [local] native plants than I do."

Laurel was a biology major at the University of New Mexico, when a botany professor needed an assistant for a project to create a booklet of the species of cacti in Bernalillo County. She then went on to focus more on botany. After graduation, she worked on rare plant searches in southern Colorado, locating the largest known population of dwarf milkweed (*Asclepias uncialis*). "That was my plant," she said. "That was my baby." She was delighted when it was featured in the Newsletter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico in the first quarter of 2025.

She moved to New Mexico from Ohio to work for the Target in Las Cruces, only to discover the job she had been offered had evaporated. "I knew I'd find something," she said confidently. She found a position at the Alamogordo Daily News as a stringer covering a variety of assignments, including sports. Currently, she focuses on covering aviation and the New Mexico Museum of Space History.

"Every man in my family was a pilot," Laurel said of her military brat upbringing. Even her ex-husband was retired Air Force. So, she learned to fly sailplanes.

Laurel plans to stay in the Southwest, particularly New Mexico. She has a fantasy of moving to Dixon, but in the meantime, Alamogordo is good for her. "I am content with $2 movies and a library for books. So many wonderful things in this town," Laurel said enthusiastically. "Cool people. Cool things."

Laurel is adventurous and has challenging goals. "I love to travel," she said. "You learn so much."

Last summer she ticked Antarctica off her list. She found a trip through a travel agent and was attached to a group tour that traveled above the Antarctic Circle. Her favorite part of the trip was viewing polar bears. She managed to observe nineteen bears of all ages, including yearlings.

"I have one more ocean to swim," she said of her plans to swim in the Indian Ocean. She has yet to visit Asia and Australia, the last two continents on her bucket list.

Her Alamogordo family consists of two dogs: Ziggy, a black Labrador and German Shepherd cross, and Mazi, an Australian Shepherd. "They just love to hike the Sacramento foothills," Laurel said. She volunteered that her favorite part of participating the native plant society is the annual conference. ❖

# Updates from the State Botanist—Spring 2026

*Erika Rowe. Rare and Endangered Plant Program, Forestry Division*

Spring is shaping up to be an exciting season for rare plant conservation in New Mexico—especially as we strengthen our partnership with the Native Plant Society of New Mexico (NPSNM).

## Launching NM Rare Plant Watch


One of the most exciting developments this year is the launch of NM Rare Plant Watch, a statewide community-science effort designed to connect volunteers with historical (over ten years old) rare plant locations and help update their conservation status.

The program is being developed and led by the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, Forestry Division, Botany Program. Partners across the landscape, including NPSNM, Natural Heritage New Mexico (our rare plant data managers), and the Institute for Applied Ecology, will play critical supporting roles. Many public land managers are also supportive of this program, as updated occurrence data will help inform their future management decisions.

The idea for NM Rare Plant Watch grew out of discussions at last winter's Rare Plant Technical Council meeting, where breakout groups identified a strong need for more coordinated volunteer engagement. Among several ideas that emerged, Sylvan Kaufman (NPSNM) and I identified this program as the most viable. With support from NPSNM leadership and inspiration from successful programs in other states, we built a framework to make it happen. Interest at last fall's NPSNM conference in Las Cruces confirmed that the timing was right. Our newest employee, Katie Kline, has made significant progress in bringing the pilot program to life.

Participants will "adopt" historical rare plant records, visit those locations, and collect standardized data to determine whether populations still persist, how many plants remain, and what threats may be present. Once submitted, these data will be vetted and then shared with Natural Heritage New Mexico to update their records, thereby strengthening our statewide rare plant database and decision making as a result.

This program would not be possible without a generous grant from NPSNM, which is funding a half-time coordinator, housed at the Institute for Applied Ecology, for one year. This support allows us to develop training materials, maintain consistent communication with volunteers, distribute volunteer packets, and ensure the program remains scientifically rigorous and sustainable. Having a dedicated coordinator will set Rare Plant Watch up for success during its first pilot year.

This partnership is forging something larger than a monitoring effort: it is building a community of trained advocates for New Mexico's rare plants. Our first training was held in March. If you are interested in learning more or signing up to volunteer, please visit NM Rare Plant Watch.

Looking ahead, my wish list will be to work on expanding chapter-level training events and to identify a lead "advocate" within each NPSNM chapter who can help train Rare Plant Watch community scientists and organize group field outings to collect data. We will share first-year results at the NPSNM 50th Anniversary Conference, hosted by the Gila Chapter.

## Strengthening the Rare Plant Technical Council

During last year's Council meeting, it became clear that the Council would benefit from more formal structure, defined roles, and clearer processes. Since then we have made substantial progress: draft bylaws are now complete and ready for a vote. A transparent nomination and ranking framework for our list of rare plants is nearly finalized, clarifying how taxa are included, reviewed, listed, or delisted. This framework will soon be posted to the NM Rare Plants website.

Mesa Verde cactus near Farmington, NM on clayey soils. Image: Daniela Roth

Perhaps most impactful has been the creation of quarterly Rare Plant Working Group meetings. These smaller, focused sessions allow us to review nominations and supporting data throughout the year, replacing the former one-day annual review model with a more thoughtful, science-driven, and well-documented process.

We are also updating rare plant fact sheets across the New Mexico Rare Plant website to ensure information remains current and accessible to all audiences.

## 2026 Field Highlights

This summer's survey and monitoring efforts are ambitious, especially now that I have two full-time staff to expand our field capacity:

- Status surveys, led by Marty Purdy, for Sneed's Pincushion Cactus (*Escobaria sneedii* var. *sneedii*; federal and state endangered) in the Franklin Mountains (NM–TX), to update occurrences and clarify distinctions among closely related varieties that have not been thoroughly resurveyed in many years.
- Expanded searches for Zuni Fleabane (*Erigeron rhizomatus*; federally threatened, state endangered), building on a new USGS habitat suitability model that recently led to exciting range extensions in the northern Gila National Forest. We hope to expand the known range even further north and south.
- Threat assessments and population mapping for Gooding's Onion (*Allium gooddingii*; an at-risk species currently under federal review), complementing recent Arizona-led efforts in the Gila National Forest.
- New BLM-supported monitoring led by Katie Kline, including surveys for *Muilla lordsburgana* (a recently described species found near Lordsburg) and habitat model testing for *Sclerocactus mesae-verdae* near Farmington. Both projects will improve our understanding of these taxa, their preferred habitat, and their range extent.
- Continued work to better understand population trends and sustainable management considerations for *Coryphantha robustispina* var. *scheeri* (state endangered; BLM Sensitive) near Carlsbad, which is increasingly impacted by oil and gas development.

These efforts reflect a broader goal: improving data quality so conservation decisions are grounded in current, defensible science.

## Staying Engaged

Did you know that New Mexico has the fourth highest plant biodiversity in the US? Rare plant conservation depends on engaged citizens. Whether through NM Rare Plant Watch, chapter trainings and meetings, policy and advocacy, attending the Rare Plant Council meetings, or simply learning the flora of your region more deeply, whatever level you're at, your involvement matters.

With strong partnership from NPSNM and others across the state, we are building something that strengthens both science and community here in New Mexico, and we are just getting started!

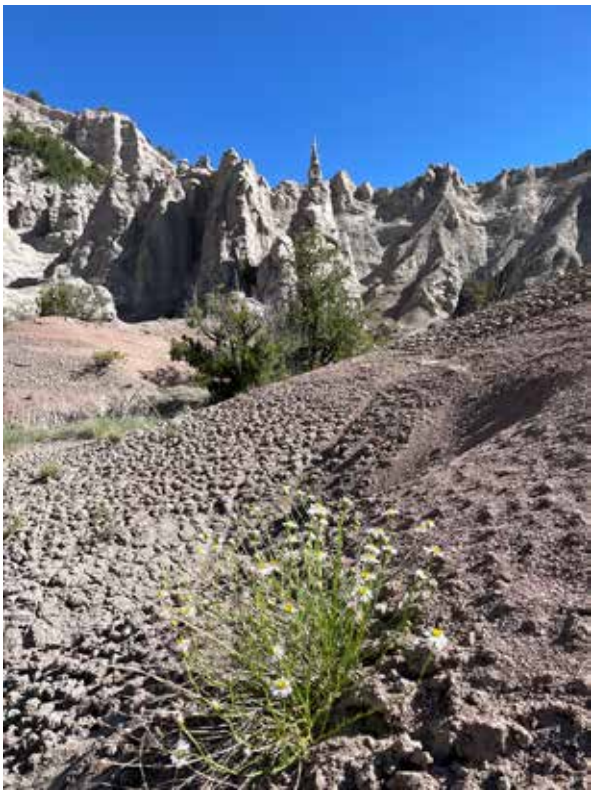
We hope you'll join us. ❖

**Links:**

NM Rare Plant Watch: https://nmrareplants.unm.edu/nmrareplantwatch

NM Rare Plants: https://nmrareplants.unm.edu

The small Lordsburg Noino was discovered in 2015 and officially described in 2020 by Cecelia Alexander. It looks superficially like an onion; however, it is in the Asparagaceae family. The genus of this species (*Muilla*) offers a hint at this comparison; the person who first described this group, which includes three other Muilla species, had a sense of humor. Muilla is "Allium" spelled backwards. Image: Erika Rowe



Zuni fleabane on steep eroded slopes of limestone and mudstone near Quemado, NM. Image: Erika Rowe

## Native Plant Society of New Mexico

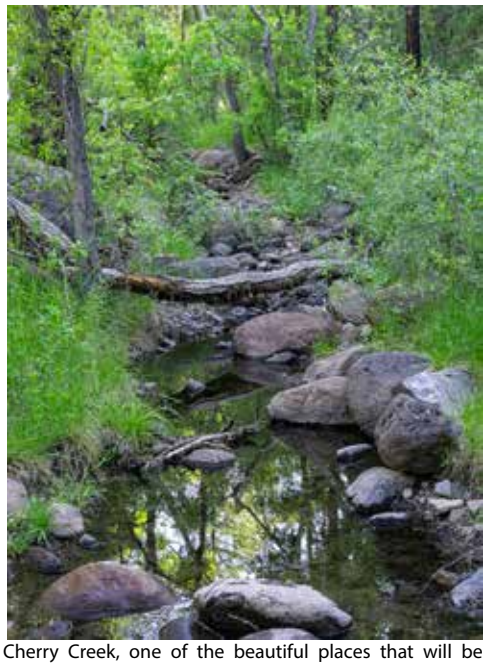
# 2026 Annual Conference

# Roots of Resilience: Native Plants in the Next Fifty Years

Thursday, September 10

to

Sunday, September 13



Cherry Creek, one of the beautiful places that will be offered as a field trip during the conference.

Silver City, NM

As in previous years, this preliminary conference information will be followed by the final agenda in the July newsletter. That newsletter will contain the full program with timing, a full listing of speakers' presentations, and lots of conference details. Additional information can also be found on the conference webpage. Bring the middle section of the July newsletter to use during the conference or download it to your phone or tablet for reference.

**The conference webpage is: https://www.npsnm.org/npsnm-state-conference-2026/**

The Gila Chapter of the NPSNM is planning a very special statewide conference to celebrate NPSNM's golden jubilee. Silver City is surrounded by 3.3 million acres of national forest, including three wilderness areas, making it the perfect base for hiking and botanizing. We are offering a wide range of field trips to do just that.

The Town of Silver City was founded in 1870 following a silver boom. The charming downtown Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and features Victorian, Queen Anne, and Territorial-style brick buildings, along with a vibrant arts scene.

The conference will include field trips on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, and we are offering bonus field trips on Sunday. Not all of them will require hiking boots; trips around town are included as well. In addition, there are a variety of unique workshops, such as cyanotype print making, macrophotography, and the poetry of botany.

Friday and Saturday events will be held at the Grant County Veterans Memorial Conference Center. Phil Connors will serve as Friday's keynote speaker (review of *the mountain knows the mountain* in January newsletter), and Doug Tallamy (review of *How Can I Help?: Saving Nature With Your Yard* next page) will speak at the banquet. We will host a Meet-and-Greet reception on Thursday, September 10, in the ballroom of the historic Murray Hotel, and Friday evening's reception will be held on the grounds of the 1887 Waterworks Building and Silva Creek Botanical Garden.

**Registration:** Opens July 1, 2025.

**Conference Location:** Grant County Veterans Memorial Conference Center.

**Accommodations:** If you want to get a head start on planning your trip to Silver City, here are three hotels offering a special conference rate. Call the hotel directly and mention that you are attending the Native Plant Society of New Mexico conference.

**Holiday Inn Express**
1103 E. Superior – 4 minutes (0.4 mi) from the Conference Center
(575) 538-2525
Located off Highway 180, the hotel offers a free deluxe continental breakfast, a heated spa, an exercise room, an outdoor pool, and on-site parking. Room options include two single beds, two queen beds, a king bed, and suites.
$159/night + tax; reserve before September 1st

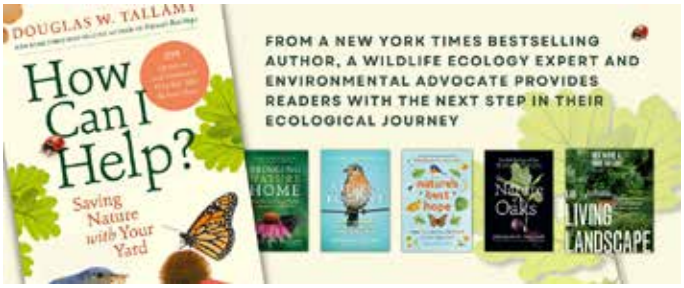
**Murray Hotel**
200 W. Broadway
(575) 956-9400 – 8 minutes (3.1 mi) from the Conference Center
First opened for business in 1938, the Murray Hotel maintained its original Art Deco style during restorations and reopened in 2012. In the heart of historic downtown Silver City, guests enjoy a variety of interesting downtown views. The Murray Hotel offers single or two-bed queen rooms, king rooms, and suites. A complimentary continental breakfast is included.
$104/night + tax; reserve before August 8th

**Sure Stay by Best Western**
1120 E US Hwy 180– 5 minutes (1.7 mi) from the Conference Center
(575) 213-1183
The hotel offers a free full breakfast, on-site parking, high-speed internet, an indoor heated pool, and a fitness center. Room options include one king bed or two queen beds, plus suites.
$137/night + tax

## Doug Tallamy's Most Recent Offering

***David E. Phillips***

*How Can I Help?: Saving Nature With Your Yard*, by Douglas W. Tallamy.
Timber Press, 2025. ISBN-978-1-64326-471-4. (Hardcover). 373 pp. $30.00.




What are biological corridors? What can I do to attract bats? What's the best statement to convince others to plant natives? Why are caterpillars important? What exactly do we need to do in our yards to make them more sustainable? These and 494 other questions on how to save nature are answered in Douglas Tallamy's latest book, *How Can I Help?: Saving Nature with Your Yard.* The questions are some he's been asked over the years at lectures and via email.

Tallamy is Professor of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. He has authored or co-authored nearly one hundred journal articles and is the author of four books: *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants* (2009); *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard* (2020); *The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees* (2021); and his most recent *How Can I Help?: Saving Nature with Your Yard* (2025). Dr. Tallamy is also one of the founders of Homegrown National Park, a nonprofit organization that promotes habitat restoration and biodiversity on public and private lands through the planting of native and the removal of invasive species.

One might question why Tallamy would write yet another book on how to save our planet by introducing native plants that promote healthy ecosystems. Optimism and momentum seem the most likely answers. In his introduction, Tallamy quotes Edwin Way Teale, the American nature writer, who noted that "we cannot make the world uninhabitable for other forms of life and have it habitable for ourselves" (7). Tallamy optimistically observes that "every day, we are moving closer to making our planet more habitable" (7) and that "we are learning how to restore the ecological damage we have wrought in so many places and we are starting to act on that new knowledge"

(7). The book is, then, an effort to keep the momentum of change alive, to spur others to action through an awareness of the value of native plants in creating a healthy ecosystem. Tallamy also hopes to "fill in some of the gaps in knowledge and to correct misconceptions that [he] has created over the years" (338).

Tallamy believes that "Mother Nature is far more resilient than most people realize and that, given half a chance, she will repair much of the damage we have inflicted on her in short order" (14). But who can help Mother Nature with this daunting task? The answer lies with "[r]esidential landowners, the very people asking the majority of the questions I hear, [who] hold enormous conservation potential because there are so many of them, and they control the plantings on landscapes over such large areas of the country" (9). Each of us has a stake in repairing the damage to our natural world because we've finally realized that "each of us depends entirely on the quality of local ecosystems for our continued well-being" (9).

Tallamy outlines how we can begin the healing process by answering 499 questions, each categorized by topic, in ten chapters. Each chapter contains early questions that are "more entry level or generalized with more specific questions following under appropriate subheadings" (11). The book also contains an extensive resource section and a nineteen-page index.

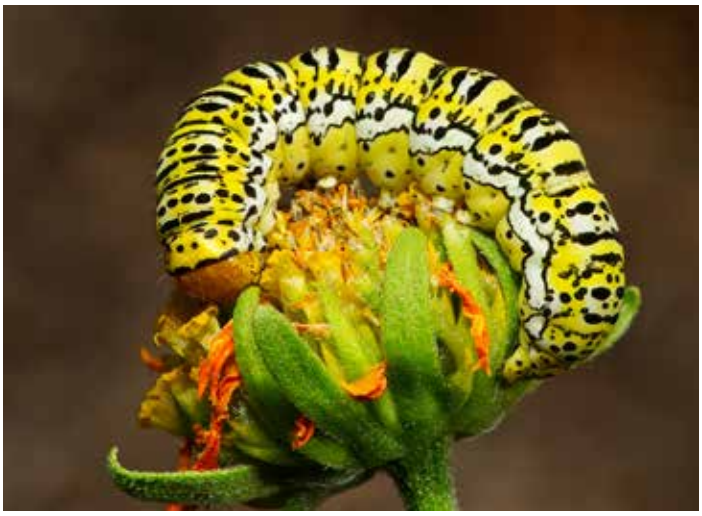
Chapter one, "Ecology and Evolution," addresses those two topics, beginning with a brief overview of what evolution is and how it works, specifically in plants and insects. He then moves to ecology, "the study of how living things interact with one another and their physical environment" (18), followed by a brief discussion of ecological sources, sinks, and traps. He answers questions related to biological corridors and how they've been lost to road building, housing developments, and shopping centers. Food webs and caterpillars come next, and he points out the importance of caterpillars in the food web and how to increase their populations. Caterpillars play a central role in the book, Tallamy calling them the "bread and butter" of the natural world. Without them, we're doomed.

Chapter two focuses on biodiversity and its importance. Insect declines and how to restore insect populations are major topics here. Without native plants, the insects that have evolved to feed on them will perish, as they've not had the time to adapt to feed on non-native ornamentals and invasive plants. One way to restore native insect populations, especially in the West, is to provide water features, which "are a welcome resource for birds and insects alike" (55). The link between insects and native plants is clear: without native plants, native insects decline, the animals that feed on those insects, birds for example, also decline, and so on up the food chain.

Native and non-native plants come in chapter three. As outlined in the previous chapter on biodiversity and its benefits, Tallamy argues that "native plants support the life that runs the ecosystems that support us" (59). He answers questions related to how one can afford to purchase native plants, how various natives support biodiversity, and "good" and "bad" natives, "bad" natives identified as those that can destroy biodiversity, Virginia creeper for example. What follows are answers to questions related to cultivars, ending with information on keystone plants, an essential plant that "performs an ecological function much better than most other plants" (76), especially in how well that plant supports caterpillar and pollinator populations.

As one might expect of a writer who published an entire book on oaks, that tree takes center stage in chapter four. Tallamy calls oaks "one of the most ubiquitous tree groups in the country," writing that we "have ninety-one species of oaks in the United States" with only four states—Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, and Montana—not having a native species (81). He returns again to caterpillars to argue that without oaks for caterpillars to feed on "the vast majority of our birds would not be able to reproduce, and countless lesser-known animals would disappear as well" (84). One oak, the Gambel, hosts 221 caterpillar species alone. Oak masts and their importance to larger mammals is addressed here as is oak management, diseases, and pests.

Tallamy next answers questions related to invasive species in chapter five, defining an invasive as "a non-native organism that displaces native species" (144). In response to a question about why we don't let nature take its course to control invasives, Tallamy points out that humans have created an uneven playing field for natives. We've imported too many invasives at once, not giving natives a chance to compete and we've introduced invasives without "the predators, parasites, and diseases that keep them in check in their homeland" (145). Nature is "no longer able to take its course…[because] we have removed the means by which na-



A Gilded Seedcropper *(Basilodes Chrysopis)* is shown feeding on a sunflower. Throughout his book, Tallamy stresses the importance of providing caterpillars with food sources so that they will thrive and become moth or butterfly pollinators. Without them, he insists, we're doomed.

Image: David Phillips

ture used to restore balance in disturbed ecosystems" (147). Tallamy then discusses how to eliminate invasive plants.

Invasive animals are the focus in chapter six, as Tallamy answers questions related to pest control. He does not absolutely reject the careful use of insecticides and insectivores, but he adamantly rejects the use of bug zappers, mosquito foggers, and poison in controlling rat and mice populations. Of interest to those of us who have a love/hate relationship with deer, Tallamy lists several ways of controlling their population, including reintroducing predators, market hunting, and deer contraception. The chapter ends with practical information on how to deer-proof newly planted natives with wire cages and how to reduce deer ticks.

Conservation and restoration is Tallamy's focus in chapter seven. As in previous chapters, the author makes the point that conservation is essential to a well-functioning ecosystem. Again, one way to achieve that goal is through introduction of native plants, specifically plants that support the "most caterpillars species…[and] the most specialist pollinators, [remove] the most carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and [protect] our watershed the best" (222). The agricultural industry can help in this endeavor through "roadside management, prairie strips, hedgerows, and the elimination of needless pesticides" (228). A section on monarch butterflies emphasizes why that particular Nymphalidae is important and how to enhance their populations by planting native milkweed. In the remaining pages of this chapter, Tallamy promotes the Homegrown National Park program to "get the message out that the future of conservation will be on private property and we, all of us, are responsible for good Earth stewardship to go viral" (243). He also explains how another program—Pollinator Pathways—"encourages people to plant pollinator gardens in enough places to create continuous strips of habitat for pollinators and other flower visitors" (245).

Chapters eight and nine, "Home Landscapes" and "Supporting Wildlife at Home," are perhaps Tallamy's most practical chapters, as here he explains the importance of proper landscape planning—no lawns—to "enable ecosystems to produce the life support we and every species require" (251). He answers questions related to management issues, including the debate between landscaping for aesthetics and landscaping to protect valuable ecosystems (you can do both), how to reduce or eliminate lawns, how to reduce fire risk (especially in the West), and how to influence politicians to plant natives on public lands and encourage nursery owners to carry more native stock. To support wildlife at home, he encourages readers to feed birds the correct food, explains how to attract raptors and prevent bird window strikes, and how to gently persuade your neighbors to keep their cats indoors. Tallamy explains how light pollution and its effects on moths, especially the use of white outdoor light, can be controlled through use of yellow lights and how one can create an environment that is attractive to native bees and other pollinators. Though Tallamy feels that honeybees have their place, especially in agriculture, he discourages hobbyists from placing "hives in parks and preserves—or in any natural area—[because] it negatively impacts the native bees already struggling to make a living in that area" (335).

The final chapter of the book, "Concluding Questions," is a catchall for questions that do not neatly fit into the other chapter categories. These include why developers can without conscience destroy the environment, why the public's knowledge of basic ecology is so poor, and what gives him hope for the future. He ends with a question he often asks himself and one we should all contemplate: "Why did we humans change from cultures that typically lived for millennia within the limits of local resources to cultures that over-exploit and thus destroy the very resources on which they depend?" (344). In his final paragraph, Tallamy suggests that "we all have more reverence, more respect, and more care for the natural systems that determine our quality of life. In [his] view, this is the only viable path forward" (346).

Tallamy's writing style is clear and uncluttered with scientific jargon, making the book an enjoyable read for those who don't have degrees in the life sciences or those who recognize the need for change, change that can and should begin with each of us. Two minor quibbles: one is that in many chapters, Tallamy tends to focus on the Eastern United States and their native plants, though the general advice he gives is relevant to other parts of the country; however, he is based in Delaware and owns property in Pennsylvania. The second is the difficulty of finding specific answers to specific questions. Yes, the book is divided into separate categories, as summarized above, but should one not have the time or inclination to read an entire chapter or wade through a rather extensive index in search of information on a topic, it's difficult to find that information. In that case, one might consider purchasing the book in a searchable electronic format. ❖

Links:

HomegrownNationalPark.org

https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/

# Carter Conservation Fund and Wootten Family Student Conservation Grant Awards for 2026

Standing left to right are the 2026 NPSNM Board members: Jackye Meinecke, Tom Stewart, Margie Gibson, Betty Spence, Sylvan Kaufman, Julia Bailey, Bob Pokorney, Barbara Fix, Laurel Berry, and David Phillips. Sara Keeney was at the meeting but not present for the photograph. Image: Margaret Ménache

As described in the President's column (p. 3), every January the NPSNM board meets to attend to organizational business. New officers are introduced, chapter representatives report on the past year activities and discuss ideas for the coming year. The budget is reviewed. The highlight, though, for many board members is awarding the Carter Conservation Fund grants. To that responsibility has now been added the Wootten Family Student Conservation grants. Providing funding for native plant research and outreach is one of our most tangible tools to be a voice for native plants and fulfill our mission. We made awards totalling close to $35,000 in support of sixteen projects this year.

The NPSNM also provides annual grants of $600 each to seven herbaria: University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University, University of Texas at El Paso, San Juan College, Western New Mexico University, the Roger Peterson Herbarium (now part of the Santa Fe Botanic Garden), and the Carrizo Mountain Herbarium, located in Beclabito, NM.

We encourage you to apply for a grant or to make a donation to the Carter Conservation Fund (see below for QR code to link directly to the NPSNM website). We also encourage you to consider engaging more actively with the NPSNM at your chapter level or as a member of our board. Now more than ever it is the right time to step up for native plants.

## Carter Conservation Fund Awards

The NPSNM board is pleased to announce the grants awarded from the Jack and Martha Carter Conservation Fund. Through this dedicated fund, we can make a difference by reducing threats to our flora and habitat, advancing scientific knowledge, and promoting the appreciation and use of native plants. This year, we received a record number of requests.

### Bandelier Riparian Monitoring and Restoration

Following the 2011 Las Conchas Fire and subsequent flooding, no major restoration has occurred in Bandelier National Monument's watersheds. This project focuses on establishing monitoring sites in the three main canyons of the park to assess riparian recovery. Using woody and herbaceous vegetation data, as well as monitoring geomorphology, this project will monitor current conditions, impacts from beaver activity, and effects of management efforts, to inform future restorations plans.

### 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

## Interested in Applying for a Grant?

Applicants may send in their proposals any time of the year until November 30. Guidelines for applying and an application form may be found on the website: https://www.npsnm.org/nps-sponsored-grants-donations/

The proposals are reviewed by the statewide NPSNM Board and voted on at the winter Board Meeting, usually at the end of January. The awards for grants are sent in February, while gifts in support of the regional herbaria are sent later in spring or early summer. The Carter Fund also finances an award for a Teacher of the Year and to a Conservation Champion, chosen by the chapter hosting the statewide annual conference and presented to the individual at the conference banquet.

The NPSNM Policies identify criteria for awarding grants, management of the fund, and responsibilities for the awardees: https://www.npsnm.org/about/chapters/statewide-organization/ ❖

**Plants and People Gardens at Black Range Museum**

The Hillsboro Historical Society's (HHS) Plants and People Gardens use a native plant palette of 79 trees, shrubs, and perennials plus grasses as a focus for our new community gathering space. Written materials, web pages, and programs will bring more natural history to our history interpretation, highlighting the use of native plants in our landscape, their traditional use by the Apache and settlers to southern New Mexico, and the plants' value for attracting insect pollinators and birds to the garden.

**Plant ID Signs at Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park**

Throughout the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park, Asombro has invested in plant identification signs to help educate visitors of all ages about some of the most common plants in the Chihuahuan Desert. Most of these 2" x 4" or 4" x 6" signs are made of plastic and specifically designed for outdoor use in botanical gardens, zoos, and public parks. They are mounted with high-quality glue on metal sign supports that we insert in the ground to a sign height of approximately 12 inches. Most include the scientific name, English common name, and Spanish common name. The larger signs that correspond with a Plant Scavenger Hunt also include information on the main adaptations for surviving in an arid environment.

**DAVA Native Habitat & Outdoor Learning**

Doña Ana Village Association (DAVA) serves families and youth in the greater Doña Ana/Radium Springs area. We will create a native habitat and outdoor learning area in the DAVA Open Space by planting regionally appropriate native species, installing wildlife structures (bug hotel, bat and bird houses), and adding interpretive signage. Youth and families will participate in hands-on planting and ecology activities that promote native plant knowledge, water-wise practices, and wildlife stewardship. The project restores desert habitat, enhances biodiversity, and establishes a durable outdoor classroom for ongoing community education.

**2025 Rare Plant Monitoring Reporting**

High quality population and demography data is essential to conservation of rare plants in New Mexico. To facilitate broader access to the most up-to-date information, the Institute for Applied Ecology proposes to analyze and distribute monitoring data collected during the 2025 field season for six rare plant species within the state. Results will draw on four months of research and add to seven years of previous research documenting individually tagged plants within permanent monitoring plots.

**Yerba Mansa Project (YMP)**

The YMP nurtures native species in the Middle Rio Grande Bosque. This project will provide broad support for our ongoing work. We constantly evaluate our restoration efforts within our focal site in the Tingley Beach area of Albuquerque as we have done for the past ten years. Each year we conduct biannual restoration Saturdays where we are assisted by dedicated volunteers who remove the invasive Ravenna grass. After the removal, volunteers plant Yerba mansa, hackberry, currant bushes and other native plants.

**Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge Habitat Garden Guide**

The NM Backyard Refuge Program will create a guide to the plants and ecosystem features in the habitat garden at Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge. For each plant in the habitat garden, this guide will expand upon the information from our plant list and offer planting information and details about benefits for wildlife. The guide will be in PDF and iNaturalist guide formats, along with a plant-focused coloring book with art by LWren Walraven.

**Shrub Encroachment and Seed Dispersal**

Shrub encroachment threatens Chihuahuan Desert grasslands. Understanding seed dispersal can inform restoration. Are grassland species arriving but failing to establish, or not arriving at all? By understanding this we can assess if seed addition is required or if other measures like shrub removal must be taken to ensure native species establishment. Using seed traps and soil cores in the Chihuahuan Desert, we will quantify species dispersal in pristine and encroached grasslands to inform management plans.

**Restoring Urban Ecosystems at Barrio**

La Mujer Obrera works collectively to restore and care for an urban ecosystem in Barrio Chamizal, an industrialized/commercialized residential area. Once a thriving riparian ecosystem, this neighborhood now provides limited habitat for the native plants, animals, and insects that previously lived here. We are working to transform our community garden into a demonstration and learning site with the goal of shaping our neighborhood into a blueprint for urban ecosystem restoration in the desert southwest.

**Ferns and Fern Allies of New Mexico**

In 1954, the first published checklist of all the ferns and fern allies for the state of New Mexico was released. While recent state floras boast multiple updates, there is still much work to do when it comes to synthesizing updated nomenclature, updating distributions, as well as in uncovering undocumented populations. This project aims to produce a publicly accessible annotated checklist grounded in refreshed field work, a thorough and recent collections synthesis and modern taxonomy, accented by modern scientific illustrations.

**Conservation, etc. of *Dasylirion*: Asparagaceae**

*Dasylirion*, a key Chihuahuan Desert genus and source of sotol, a distilled spirit, faces increasing pressure from wild overharvest. The three US species used in production—*D. leiophyllum*, *D. texanum*, and *D. wheeleri*—are poorly defined with preliminary genetic evidence, challenging current morphology-based taxonomy. This project combines detailed morphological analyses with evolutionary and population-genomic data to evaluate species boundaries, providing a robust framework to guide conservation, management, and protection of *Dasylirion*'s genetic diversity.

**Arroyo Seco Community Center Native Plants and Exercise Loop**

NPSNM's Jack and Martha Carter Conservation Fund will provide signage for Arroyo Seco Community Center's newly created Native Plants and Exercise Loop. The signs will provide the names of the various native plants as well as their traditional and, if applicable, me-

dicinal uses. We are creating an educational and inspirational native garden with more natives to be planted next spring. It is a community endeavor that will benefit greatly from this necessary educational signage component.

**Wetland Restoration Education in Lower Embudo Valley**

In collaboration with Ecotone Landscape Planning, Rivers & Birds will involve students in an ongoing wetland restoration project in the Lower Embudo Valley and work to reestablish native riparian flora. We are applying for funding to take five third grade classes on excursions to learn about wetland and riparian ecosystems, identify native plants, and work to revegetate a riparian zone.

## Wootten Family Student Conservation Grant Awards

Last August, we established the Thomas H. Wootten Family Student Conservation Grant as a special part of the Carter Fund and accepted applications for this year's funding. It is for university students in conservation-related fields, and we approved three grants.

**Plants for Native Bees: Pollen DNA Metabarcoding**

Understanding how mutualists interact is essential to predict extinction risks, especially under changing climates that threaten New Mexico's native plant and bee communities. I will combine field and molecular techniques to characterize key bee-plant interactions and identify which plant species are most likely to be indirectly affected through declines in their bee partners. This work will provide new data to predict native plant vulnerability to climate change and identify new targets for conservation.

**Success of Agave Restoration in Southwestern New Mexico**

Transplanting *Agave palmeri* is a major component of restoration efforts to bolster migratory habitat of the endangered Mexican long-nosed bat. Understanding the drivers of transplant success is essential for favorable restoration outcomes. This study evaluates how vegetative community, soil moisture, slope, and aspect drive transplant success near the Gila National Forest, NM and Animas, NM. We hypothesize that agaves in native perennial grasslands and sites with higher soil moisture will have the most success.

**Taxonomic and Phylogenetic Complexity of *Ericameria parryi* in the Western US**

*Ericameria parryi* represents a taxonomically challenging group of shrubs distributed across semi-arid habitats throughout the western US. Despite ecological importance across *Ericameria* species, boundaries within this complex remain unresolved. This project combines fieldwork and molecular phylogenomics to investigate morphological and genetic diversity across the twelve varieties of *E. parryi*. This study will produce a robust phylogenetic framework to assess current taxonomy, conservation, and rarity status of *E. parryi*. ❖

## Errata

In the January 2026 issue of the newsletter, in acknowledging our members who renew at a Friend or higher level, Laura McGrath's name was misspelled. Bob Pokorney had renewed his membership at the Sponsor level, but his name was inadvertantly left off the list. Our sincere apologies to these members for our mistake.

## NPSNM Lifetime Members

Our organization depends on memberships, financial contributions, and service. Your support allows us to further our mission of educating the public about native plants through your passion and dedication to our programs, our outreach, and our grants. We would like to acknowledge and thank our Lifetime Members for their commitment to the NPSNM.

**Pre-2003**

Wynn & Kym Anderson
Thomas Gibbons
Grace Gordon
Lisa Johnston
Dr. Eugene Majerowicz
Judith Phillips
Judy Tribble
Peggy Wells
Mary & Stephen Whitmore

**2003-2010**

Kelly Allred
Christine Baker
Carolyn Gressitt and
John Freyermuth
Loline Hathaway
Beth Herschman
Lisa Mandelkern
Roger Peterson
Ms. Judith Reynolds
Robert Sivinski
Pat Ward & Hildy Reiser
Eleanor Wootten

**2011-2015**

Karl Anderson
Ray & Sylvia Bowers
Charles & Yvonne Keller
Alan Krueger
Pamela McBride
Helgi Osterreich
Betsy Shillinglaw
Barbara Weintraub

**2016-2020**

David Lee Anderson
Wes Brittenham
Barbara Funk
Esther Fyock
Gail Haggard
Katie McLane
Tom Stewart
Marisa Thompson

**2021-2025**

anonymous
Danielle Allen
Thomas Antonio
Carol Conoboy
Peg Crim & Ron Hannan
Suzanne Davis
Hobey Dixon
CN & AO Flanders
Sheila Gershen
Margie Gibson
Janet Lydia Gilchrist
Katherine Gould-Martin
Don & Wendy Graves
Jen & Michael Gruger
Rachel Jankowitz
Debby Knotts
Kathryn Mayer
Elva Osterreich
Jeff & Mary O. Parker
Arian Pregenzer
Allan Sauter
Miriam & Robert Vaughn
Paul Walmsley
Glenna Winnie
Marianne Wootten
Shelley Wright
Laurie Zunner &
Sayan Mukherjee

# Cultivating Conservation: How a Native Plant Society Grant Helped Grow a Greenhouse and a Movement

*Kerry Ann Gardner, VP Keystone Heritage Park Board*

In the heart of the Chihuahuan Desert, where wetlands meet archeological wonder, the seeds of conservation have sprouted in more ways than one. Thanks to a grant from the Native Plant Society of New Mexico (NPSNM) Carter Conservation Fund, Keystone Heritage Park (KHP) in El Paso has launched the Keystone Heritage Park Native Plant Greenhouse, a vibrant new hub for desert restoration, education, and community collaboration. This grant-funded project is more than just a structure of poles and shade cloth; it's a catalyst for regional habitat restoration and a beacon for native plant advocacy.

The newly constructed structure was already hard at work by September 2025. Image: Kerry Ann Gardner

## A Park Rooted in Purpose

Keystone Heritage Park is no ordinary park. Spanning 58 acres, it features restored wetlands, a bird sanctuary, desert botanical gardens, and an archaeological site dating back to the Middle Archaic Period. Run by a dedicated volunteer board and visited by more than 15,000 people annually, KHP has been a leader in habitat preservation and environmental education since 2002. Central to its mission is the protection and restoration of the Northern Chihuahuan Desert's unique plant communities. With the help of NPSNM's support, KHP took a significant leap during 2025.

## Greenhouse Grown, Mission Driven

The new greenhouse, constructed in partnership with High Desert Native Plants (HDNP), is now actively cultivating 536 native plants. These include iconic desert species such as netleaf hackberry, honey mesquite, Rocky Mountain juniper, desert willow, Arizona sycamore, Rio Grande cottonwood, a variety of agaves (*A. parryi*, *A. palmeri*, *A. lechuguilla*, and others), and cacti like torch cactus, fishhook barrel, and Texas rainbow cactus.



HDNP, a long-time tenant and collaborator at KHP, brings expert staff in native horticulture and ecological restoration, making them ideal partners in this endeavor. Their specialty, connecting water to plants using passive harvesting and innovative "tall pot" techniques, has proven especially effective for arid-land restoration.

## Education and Engagement Blossom

The greenhouse quickly became a dynamic educational space. Under the guidance of Josh Johnson, Head Gardener at HDNP, numerous training sessions and workshops were held for board members


Outside the nursery, plants soak up some El Paso sun. Image: Kerry Ann Gardner

and volunteers from regional organizations, including the Trans-Pecos Chapter of Texas Master Naturalists, Frontera Land Alliance, Eco El Paso, El Paso Cactus and Rock Club, and El Paso/Trans-Pecos Audubon Society. These sessions covered everything from native plant propagation to water-wise gardening techniques and ecological restoration practices.

### Seed to Success: Expanding Impact Across the Region

Led by Eco El Paso board member Fernanda Lugo, KHP volunteers collected seeds at Keystone for propagation in the greenhouse, further rooting the project in the local ecosystem. This partnership will grow to include seeds from Ascarate Park, with the greenhouse now serving as a nursery for broader regional restoration initiatives, such as Doña Ana County's NeighborWoods project. We will later include trees grown for Eco El Paso's Million Trees El Paso initiative.

Thanks to this work, native species like netleaf hackberry and honey mesquite are now being cultivated for the Doña Ana NeighborWoods project, a collaborative urban forestry program led by the Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District, Tree New Mexico, and Cruces Creatives.

And in another exciting development, several greenhouse-grown agave species have been designated for Bat Conservation International's Agave Restoration Project. These plants will help support migratory bat populations by restoring critical nectar corridors, including those at KHP, bringing pollinators back to the desert and strengthening the region's ecological web.

### Lesson Learned: If You Build It, They Will Come

The creation of the Keystone greenhouse has proven the truth of that saying—wildlife and native plant enthusiasts, volunteers, and partner organizations have all rallied around this new resource. What began as a vision for a native plant nursery has blossomed into a multi-faceted restoration and education hub. The outcomes have been wide-reaching:

- Strengthened native plant availability for local restoration projects,
- Expanded partnerships across the El Paso–Las Cruces region,
- Increased public engagement with native plants and habitat conservation,
- Enhanced biodiversity through targeted pollinator and reforestation initiatives.

### A Growing Legacy

The NPSNM's investment in the Keystone Heritage Park Native Plant Greenhouse is yielding dividends far beyond its initial scope. It is fostering a legacy of conservation, education, and community involvement—all rooted in the resilient beauty of native plants.

In a landscape often underestimated, this project is a shining example of what's possible when passionate people, strong partnerships, and native plants come together. From seed to shade, from greenhouse to grove, the future of the Chihuahuan Desert looks a little greener. ❖


Plants are ready to move to their new home. Image: Kerry Ann Gardner

# 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 our program coordinator, Tom Stewart at tomstewart [at] swcp.com. For more information on field trips, or to volunteer as a leader or co-leader, contact our field trip coordinator, Lee Regan at lnbregan2 [at] 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.**

**Apr 1** Meeting. "Habitat Connectivity with Backyard Refuges." Laurel Ladwig, Backyard Refuge Program Coordinator with Friends of Valle de Oro NWR and Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District will discuss reclaiming a place for wildlife through this program, which is going statewide. We can share the success right in our own yards and flower beds.

**May 6** Meeting. "New Mexico Butterflies, their Host Plants, and the Threat of Unintended Chemical Contamination." Kaitlin Haase, Southwest Pollinator Conservation Specialist with the Xerces Society, talks about our butterflies and reveals the unexpected results of host plant analyses done in Albuquerque.

**Jun 3** Meeting. "Native Seed for Restoration in Southwest Forests and Rangeland." Mia Brann and Clay Meredith are ecologists with the Institute for Applied Ecology in Santa Fe. They explain the work of the Southwest Seed Partnership, developing ecologically appropriate seed sources. Following ground-disturbing fuels reduction treatments, seeding with native understory species can deter establishment of invasive plants, increase species diversity, and establish fuel breaks.

**Field Trips** Spring field trips will include visits to familiar local destinations in the Manzanita and East Sandia Mountains. Specific dates will be determined based on weather and growing conditions. In **March or early April**, we will conduct our annual "Pasque-flower hunt." In **May**, we look forward to visits to Petroglyph National Monument and Placitas Strip Mine Trails. We're also working on a few special excursions to: Jason Roback's seed plant nursery and East Mountain property; the Socorro trail system and The Box; and Caja del Rio west of Santa Fe (with a leader from New Mexico Wild).

Several Albuquerque Chapter members are participating in the Rare Plant Watch program, initiated by the NM State Botanist, Dr. Erika Rowe. (See her article on p. 6.) With help from a grant from NPSNM, this project promises to be a sophisticated citizen science approach to fill a long-needed gap in field data.

The Chapter also refreshed our relationship with Petroglyph National Monument and several members participated in their annual training day. Our continuing effort is to address weed encroachment on the popular Rinconada Trail. We have also been asked to prepare a handout for visitors highlighting some native plants they are likely to see.

There will be a volunteer workday at Oso Grande Park Pollinator Habitat on a Sunday in **May TBA**. Albuquerque Chapter dates for field trips will depend on trail, weather and plant conditions. Hope to see folks at the meetings or on the trails!

## 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**

**Apr 4** Meeting. So, You're Ready to Try Native Plants? Come and Enjoy Gardening Again! Come and enjoy a personal story of how and why Mike transitioned from a traditional garden to a more native-friendly landscape. Rekindle your joy of gardening and see what plants at the April 11th FloraFest Native Plant Sale at UTEP could suit your garden. Mike Banales has been a gardener at the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens at UTEP's Centennial Museum since August of 2021 and became a Master Gardener in 2018. Prior to that he worked in the medical field for 36 years, 31 of which were in a cardiac cath lab and serving for a combined 12 years as a supervisor in local hospitals.


**Apr 11** Join us for the Spring FloraFest native plant sale! The gates open at 9 am, and the sale ends at 3 pm. Shop early for the best selection. Support the UTEP Chihuahuan Desert Gardens while adding beauty to your yard. Learn more at utep.edu/florafest

**May 2** Peek behind the walls and fences to see how El Paso gardeners are bringing the desert to life at home during the 2026 Garden Tour! Members of the El Paso Cactus and Rock Club & El Paso Native Plant Society are opening their private gardens exclusively for this event, offering a rare chance to see how passionate local gardeners create thriving, water-wise landscapes in the heart of the desert. Whether you love bold desert design or peaceful, wildlife-filled retreats, you'll find ideas and inspiration around every corner. Check our social media for details in mid-April.

**Jun 6** Meeting. Cacti of El Paso. With about 45 species of cactus, the El Paso area, including the Franklin Mountains, is a hotspot for succulents. Learn about almost all of these species and see photos of them taken in their natural habitat. Dr. Ad Konings is an accomplished photographer, cactus and succulent enthusiast, and author. With his wife Dr. Gertrud Konings, Ad has traveled extensively throughout Texas to locate and photograph each and every cactus species in its natural setting. These efforts culminated in the coffee table book *Cacti of Texas in Their Natural Habitat*, which was published in 2009.

## 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 [at] gmail.com. Check the website for the latest field trip information: https://gilanps.org/events/field-trips/**

**Apr 17** Meeting. Jonathan Titus, retired professor of biology, will present "Mycorrhizae: what are they?" Mycorrhizae are the mutualistic relationship between soil fungi and most plant species. The fungi obtain nutrients, especially phosphorus, for plants, enhance water uptake, and help defend against pathogenic fungi. In addition, mycorrhizae are a communication network between plants via fungal hyphae. Resources are also transferred from one plant to another via the fungi. Most plants cannot survive without the mycorrhizal relationship and donate 20-50% of the carbon they produce in photosynthesis to the fungi. In this talk we will explore the fascinating world of the world's most important relationship. Jon's presentation will wrap up our spring program meetings. They will begin again next fall.

Mycorrhizal network.
Image: Uchechukwu Onyebuchi

**Apr 18** We will participate in Give Grandly, the annual fundraising event hosted by the Gila Community Foundation. This event brings the community together in support of local nonprofits across Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, and Catron counties.

**Apr 25** We will provide educational materials and book sales during the annual Continental Divide Trail Days. Silver City is an official gateway community on this 3,100 mile National Scenic Trail.

## 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.**

Our **January** monthly meeting featured Enrico "Ric" Rao and his "Dyeing With Native Plants" (plus insects, animals, and minerals). Combining historical lore, scientific research, hands-on enthusiasm, and alchemical magic, Ric replicates processes used for centuries to turn sheep into spectral skeins, then into socks, scarves, bags, and decorative art.

Field trip participants appear dwarfed in the awe-inspiring landscape of the CDNP. Image: Gordon Berman

Our first field trip of 2026 took us to the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park (CDNP), owned and operated by the Asombro Institute For Science Education. The CDNP is a "feets-on" wonderland of native plants, panoramic views, and eco-enlightenment. Led by Park Manager William Lukefahr, we plant-surfed along Discovery Trail and Vista Hill. Asombro collaborates with iNaturalist to catalogue and map native plants within the Park. Eager to participate, we submitted relevant photos with their coordinates.

Sadly, January also revealed the torching of several sotols on Picacho Peak. The charred remains were photographed and reported to BLM which promptly referred the matter to its law enforcement wing. We have been impressed with BLM's support of ecologically sensitive concerns.

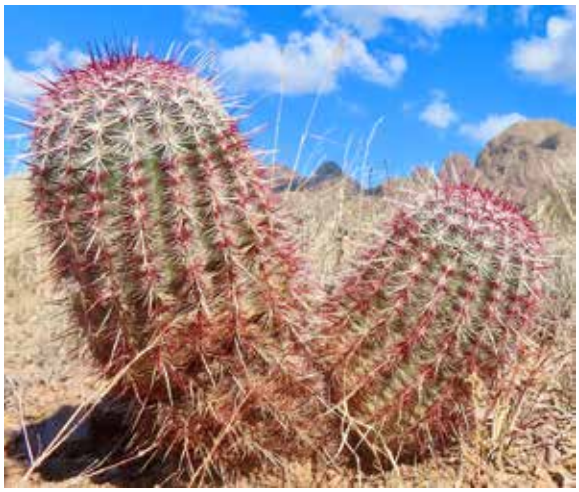
**February**'s meeting focused on Otero Mesa, one of the largest and wildest remaining Chihuahuan Desert grasslands, a checkerboard of publicly and privately owned land spanning the New Mexico/Texas border. Co-presented by New Mexico Wild's Conservation Organizer Shelby Bazan (B.S. Biology, UNM) and Friends of The Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks Community Outreacher Kyla Navarro (B.A. Government, NMSU), their twin goals are the inventory and preservation of a threatened environmental treasure trove.

Our February field trip took us to the Baylor Canyon Trail on the west side of the Organ Mountains. Within the recently soaked OMDP-NM, super blooms of poppies and bladderpods interspersed with locoweeds, lupines, desert dandelions, desert chickory are expected (ok, hoped for) this spring.

**March** took us on a 3/14 field trip to Bar Canyon to observe the early blooming Chihuahuan Pineapple Cactus (*Echinomastus intertextus*) and New Mexico Rainbow Cactus (*Echinocereus chloranthus/viridiflorus*). We went to Spring Canyon on 3/21 with Friends of The Organ Mountains to clean up the site and continue our joint effort to remediate decades-long degradation of this rare surface water feature.

During the March membership meeting, we voted to fill the vice president's vacancy, replace Mary Steigman whose term as treasurer will expire, and replace John Freyermuth who will step down as membership secretary. Shabana Shoukath with New Mexico's Environmental Department spoke about the State's Wetlands Program.

In **April,** we will collaborate with El Paso-based Celebrate Our Mountains and return to Spring Canyon, emphasizing its floral and geological resources.



New Mexico Rainbow Cactus (*Echinocereus chloranthus/viridiflorus*)
Image: Gordon Berman

**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.**

Tularosa Winery field trip where we learned about New Mexico's mission grape heritage.
Image: Elva K. Österreich

In **February** the Otero chapter enjoyed a field trip to the Tularosa Winery with former long-time owner Dave Wickham to learn about Mission grapes and their legacy and importance in New Mexico. Chapter member Rod (Rodney Poole) set up the visit.

The chapter is busy collecting seeds for sharing—we are taking note of the Taos Chapter leadership in this endeavour.

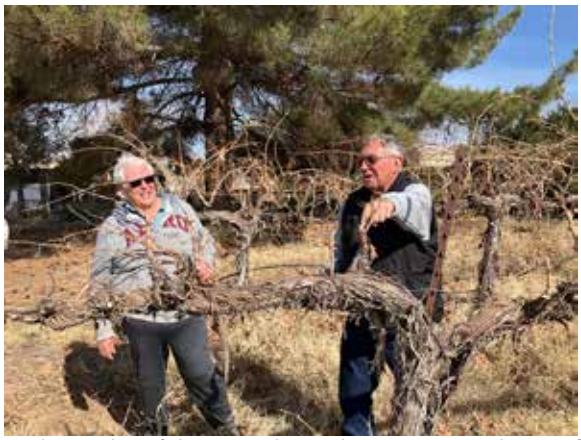
In a busy upcoming **April** the Otero Chapter is returning to its long-standing fundraising effort by holding a native (and xeric) plant sale. We'd love to see you there on Saturday, **April 11** at the Alamogordo Community Garden located at the intersection of Puerto Rico and 16th streets. The chapter also participates in the community Earth Day Fair, Saturday **April 18** at Alameda Park Zoo in Alamogordo, where we share information about area native plants and sell books, as well as any plants that might be left over from the plant sale.

We are hoping for some glorious **May** and **June** adventures which (depending on the weather) could include field trips to Otero Mesa and the San Andrea Wildlife Refuge, along with a presentation on native plant propagation and seed collection.

## Mission Grapes in New Mexico

***Laurel Berry***

A well-attended field trip in February to the Tularosa Vineyards resulted in learning the story behind the mission grapes, which date back 600 years. The Spanish missionaries brought the grapes with them from the Canary Islands to make their own communion wine. This was 200 years before the first grapes were planted in California. They have been growing in local backyards and wild along the acequia system ever since. Members in attendance learned how to prune the vines and everyone went home with cuttings to plant in their own yards.



Rod Poole, member of the Otero Chapter, learns pruning techniques from viniculturist David Whickham during a field trip in February, 2026.
Image: Laurel Berry

**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.**

**Apr 14** Meeting. Simon Doneski, UNM graduate student, will present "Native Flora, Native Fauna: Using Host Plant Data to Guide Conservation Decisions."

**May 12** Meeting. Melissa Houser, Stewardship Director, Santa Fe Conservation Trust, will present on caring for Dovetail, the Santa Fe Conservation Trust's 300 acre property in the Galisteo Basin.

New Chapter Conservation Representative! At the Santa Fe chapter board meeting in January, the board appointed Rebecca Koskela as the new conservation representative from our chapter. Among other careers, Rebecca studied Systematics at NMSU and worked on rare plant surveys. Many thanks to Rebecca for taking on this chapter board role!

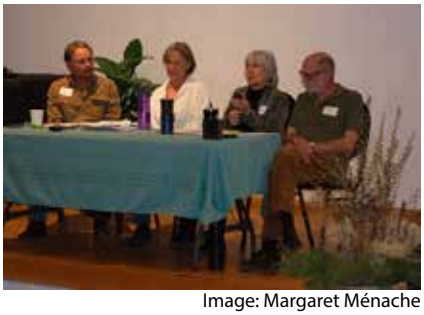


Image: Margaret Ménache

The **Mar 8** special event, "Landscaping in New Mexico, 50 Years of Change," was well-attended. Speaking to a full house, the panelists Judith Phillips, Linda Churchill, and Charles Doerwaldnof addressed a series of questions on past, present, and future of landscape design and practices, plants, and hardscaping materials that were posed by moderator Tracy Neal. Following that discussion, the panelists took questions from the audience. The following reception allowed time for conversation and further interactions after the formal event ended. The event was recorded and has been posted on the chapter's youtube channel: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3efxLArEWbc

**Oral History Project**.

Do you have experience with oral history projects or know someone who can help? For NPSNM's (and our chapter's) 50th Anniversary, we would like to start an oral history project about the early days of the organization. Barbara Fix is leading the project, but we need professional assistance. Please reply to santafe [at] npsnm.org with contacts.

**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.**

Wildflower walks and other activities will be announced when scheduled and will be posted at https://www.npsnm.org/taos/.

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