

# Native Plant Society of New Mexico

## *NEWSLETTER*

January, February, March 2007 Volume XXXII Number 1

Membership Secretary

### Survey Results: New Members' Interests

By John Freyermuth

The Society is working hard to serve our members and keep new members after they join. Now we have some more information we can use when planning chapter and statewide annual activities.

For the past two years, your NPSNM membership secretary has been tallying results of the surveys regarding people's interests from the new membership application forms. Not every new member filled out the survey, but more than 200 did. Here are the results.

Landscaping & Gardening	67%
Field Trips	61%
Classes & Workshops	60%
Lectures & Programs	52%
Site Revegetation/Restoration	50%

Conservation	49%
Seed Exchange	31%
Photography	28%
Propagation	22%
Ethnobotany	18%

For those who chose 'Other' and wrote in their areas of interest, the most common write-in by far was Botany with seven votes. Cooking With Native Plants received two write-ins, as did Butterflies (Pollinators). Receiving one vote each were Taxonomy, Plant Identification, Drawing, Curanderismo, Hummingbirds, and Ecology.

If you're among the group who's interested in landscaping and gardening, check out the announcement on Page 9 for the workshop on Landscaping for Birds, Bees, and Butterflies coming up in May.

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## *From the President*

Chick Keller

The big upcoming date for NPSNM is the State Board Meeting: Friday noon to Sunday noon, January 19-21, at Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge just north of Socorro. We need to have much thought and discussion, and I recommend that any of you with thoughts on the subjects below get in touch with me or your board representatives.

All members are welcome to attend the meeting.

In addition to the yearly reports and work of the Board, we will be looking at new topics, some of which I mentioned in the last newsletter, such as how to increase value to chapters from the state organization, how to retain new members, and prioritizing state projects. I have already heard from some of you on aspects of how the state can be of value to the chapters.

One issue that keeps coming up is help in getting good speakers. A while back, state attempted to set up a listing of good speakers (like a speakers bureau) with chapter input, but few volunteered anyone. I'd like to revisit this. All of you have heard talks in the past year that were really good and might be shared with other chapters. Let's see if we can revitalize this sharing.

I'd also like to see if we can use cyberspace to increase chapter sharing in other issues, such as how to raise funds, improve native plant recognition, raise awareness in your communities,

etc. Maybe we should set up a discussion email address to do this.

I guess what I'm looking for is to use the combined experience of the membership to help the society as a whole. This newsletter is one excellent way to share ideas and activities that worked by having you contribute short articles. At the board meeting, each chapter will be giving reports of last year's activities. It might be a good idea for state to highlight in the newsletter some of the more exciting ones. The rationale of the state organization is that the whole is larger than its individual parts. Let's think creatively about how we can most effectively communicate both our successes and problems with a view to bringing new ideas to all chapters.

Finally, I've been thinking about the possibility of having NPSNM help with getting a better idea of plant distribution across the state. Recently I was up north of Tucumcari at the Trigg Ranch and found it to be an unexpected place for both eastern and southern flora. Perhaps chapters can individually work on plant lists for their areas. The resulting distribution maps would be useful to both state and local planners and give us a baseline for learning about plant migrations.

This is an exciting time for NPSNM. Let's make the most of it.

### Staying at Sevilleta

Sevilleta NWR is just off I-25 about 16 miles north of Socorro, on the west side of the interstate. Signs are well posted to identify the exit. Rooms are \$30 per night per person. There is no linen service, so come prepared. Cabins are equipped with fridge, stove, pans, dishes, and furniture. Bring breakfasts and lunches. Friday evening there is a reception at the president's cabin. Then some of us will strike out for dinner in Socorro; Saturday, too. We have cabins reserved for up to 25 people, so please email Chick Keller ([alfanso@cybermesa.com](mailto:alfanso@cybermesa.com)) if you're planning to come and you're not on the Board.

### Annual Finance Committee Meeting

The annual Finance Committee meeting will be Saturday, January 6, at Sevilleta NWR, beginning at 10 am and adjourning around 3 pm. The objective is to prepare a draft annual budget for 2007. Total income and expenses for 2006 will be reviewed and expenses for 2007 estimated. Each item on the budget will be considered and costs reviewed. The budget then goes to the full board meeting, where they may approve, reject, or approve with changes. This meeting is open to all members. Bring a sack lunch. Contact chairman Jack Carter ([jmcarter@zianet.com](mailto:jmcarter@zianet.com) or phone 505-388-9221) if you wish to attend.

**Don't miss the next Annual State Meeting  
in Farmington, NM,  
on the spectacular Four Corners region  
August 3-5, 2007**

This NEWSLETTER is published quarterly by the Native Plant Society of New Mexico, a nonprofit organization, and is free to members. The NPSNM is composed of professional and amateur botanists and others with 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.

Manuscripts and artwork are welcome and should be submitted to the editor, Renée West at:

*keywestern@hotmail.com* OR:

*1105 Ocotillo Canyon Dr., Carlsbad NM 88220*

### **Next Deadline is March 1, 2007**

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 and as a water conservation measure. Members benefit from chapter meetings, field trips, publications, plant and seed exchanges, and educational forums. A wide selection of books dealing with plants, landscaping, and other environmental issues are available at discount prices. The Society has also produced two New Mexico wildflower posters by artist Niki Threlkeld and a cactus poster designed by Lisa Mandelkern. These can be ordered from our Poster Chair or Book Sales representative.

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**Membership Secretary**

**P.O.Box 2364, Las Cruces NM 88004**

## Book Review

### ***The Reluctant Mr. Darwin: An Intimate Portrait of Charles Darwin and the Making of His Theory of Evolution***, by David Quammen.

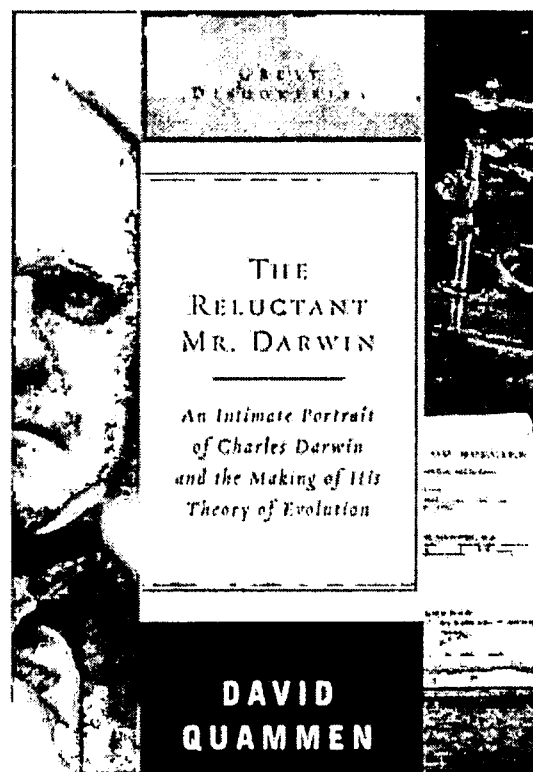
Atlas Books, LLC. 2006. ISBN-13:978-0-393-05981-6. (Hardcover). 304 pp.  
\$22.95

Estimates are that only about one person per 5,000 in the United States has taken the time to read Charles Darwin's, *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, yet so many people seem certain they understand the content of the book or at least the implications of the book for the biologic sciences, medicine and science in general. Many people take sides on the issue of evolution, either for or against, with little understanding of what Charles Darwin was actually saying.

In my personal library I have more than 40 books addressing the biologic concept of evolution as science, and as a political, social and cultural idea. Most of these are books by scholars for scholars and involve considerable deep reading. These are exhaustive studies, thick books, often requiring extensive time and knowledge of evolution.

David Quammen has produced a book that I consider an exception to the idea that you must read a thousand or more pages in order to get a handle on an important idea. I recommend this 300-page book for the educated layperson because it is free of jargon, and it reaches into Darwin's family background and life in Victorian England and into science and society issues confronting present-day America. Most of the book actually covers the period of Mr. Darwin's life following the trip on the *Beagle* from 1831 to 1836. However, it makes many connections with his earlier experiences as a student and during his travels.

The reader learns why Darwin was reluctant to become a medical doctor or a pastor and why he had trouble relating his enthusiasm for beetles, birds, plants, rocks, and natural history to his father. You come to understand why he moved so gingerly towards placing what he had learned during his travels in a book that even his deeply religious wife Emma didn't want to believe. While receiving pressure from several of his scientific friends to publish his conclusions, he recognized



that a number of his former friends, professors, and some leaders in the scientific and religious communities would disagree with his conclusion that natural selection is a major player in the evolution of living systems.

Perhaps it is because Quammen is not a scientist but has an extraordinary command of the English language, has considerable interest in the biologic sciences, and is an excellent storyteller, that the book flows so well. As you read each page you are challenged to learn more about each of the many friends and enemies of Charles Darwin, those who accepted his basic premises, and those who rejected his relatively straightforward idea. I found the book difficult to put down.

For 55 of my 77 years I have taught evolution as

(Continued on page 5)

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## Book Review

one of the major concepts of biology, first as a science teacher in the schools and then as a college professor of biology, in both public and religious institutions – just as I taught genetics, ecology, reproduction, morphology, behavior, etc. Throughout these years I have never found Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics or members of the Reformed Church in America to have great resentment or fear of, or philosophical differences with, the concept of the origin of species by means of natural selection. They seem to maintain their religious faith, while accepting reasoned science as part of the modern world.

Perhaps today if we better understood how scientists continually challenge new concepts, how slowly science moves, and how long it takes for great ideas to become accepted by science, we could develop a basis for bringing the sciences, the social sciences and the humanities together for a better understanding of the place of all living things on Planet Earth.

—Reviewed by Jack L. Carter

## Redwood world's tallest tree

The new world record tallest tree is a 379.1-foot-tall redwood in northern California. Researchers waited until after the nesting season for the endangered marbled murrelet last fall in order to climb and measure the tree.

Steve Sillett, a forestry professor at Humboldt State University, confirmed the height of the tree, which grows in Redwood National Park. He said that woodpeckers had damaged the top of the tree, or it could have been even taller. Of course, people have named the tree. It's called Hyperion, and it is several feet taller than the previous record holder, a 370.5-foot redwood called Stratosphere Giant in nearby Humboldt State Park.

Michael Taylor and Chris Atkins, the naturalists who initially found Hyperion, said the chances of finding a taller living organism are slim because they have already searched about 95 percent of the prime habitat for big redwoods.

## Conservation Corner

## U.S. 62/180 Plant Salvage Update

By Jim Nellessen

We have been moving right along with our plant rescue operation along U.S. Highway 62/180 from Carlsbad south to the Texas border, a distance of 30 miles. The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) plans to widen the highway from its current two lanes to four.

Through November, an estimated 900 native plants, mostly cacti, have been rescued from certain destruction! Several NPSNM Chapters and some individual society members have been out working on this project. I started us off by retrieving about 40 cacti (from four different species) in late August. The Gila Chapter followed very shortly with a rescue team numbering seven people that retrieved about 250 plants from 17 different species, including 10 specimens of Torrey yucca (*Yucca torreyi*), 20 *Agave lechuguilla*, and three sotols (*Dasyilirion*).

The El Paso Chapter has been out twice, mid-October and early November, and has rescued a total of about 470 plants. Their first outing included seven volunteers, with six helpers on the second outing. The El Paso Chapter rescued representatives from 14 different species including three soap tree yuccas (*Y. elata*). A couple of folks from Santa Ana Pueblo have been out rescuing between 150 and 200 plants, including six small Torrey yuccas. In addition, the Albuquerque Chapter has also been out with a lot of help from the Cactus and Succulent Society.

Finally, Otero Chapter has been out to bring back plants for Oliver Lee State Park. I did not have plant counts from Albuquerque and Otero Chapters by newsletter printing time. Chapters are planning plant sales in the spring. So far, the combined efforts have saved specimens from at least 25 different species. A few more trips were still planned before the end of the year, including one by the Rio Grande Botanic Gardens in Albuquerque.

All salvage will stop by December 31, 2006. NMDOT plans to begin construction work in the


corridor early in 2007. After some of the early trips sent us past the 500 mark in rescued plants, I was hoping we would be able to break the 1,000 figure. It appears that is easily obtainable (if not already surpassed).

Thanks to all who have been out, and good luck to those making trips over the last month of the project.

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Available to the public for \$12.95 (plus shipping and handling). Discount available when purchasing ten or more copies. NPSNM members: \$10.00 each. Contact Katie Babuska at [katie@npsnm.unm.edu](mailto:katie@npsnm.unm.edu). For more information about NPSNM membership, publications, posters and t-shirts, visit our website at <http://npsnm.unm.edu>.

*NPSNM Plant Resources  
webpage:*

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In 2006

# Thank You to Our Member Donors!

-NPSNM would like to thank all members who have made monetary contributions above their regular dues in 2006. This list of names, up-to-date through November, includes only those who've sent in extra contributions in the past year with their NPSNM memberships. It doesn't include other contributions people make, such as those sent directly to the treasurer, gifts given to local chapters, or the immeasurable contributions of friendship, cooperation, and energy from the many wonderful members of this organization of volunteers.

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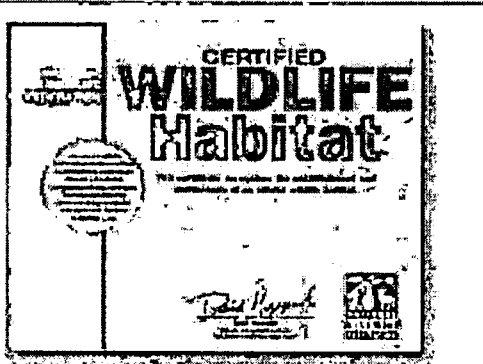
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--Robin Wall Kimmerer, in  
*Gathering Moss:  
A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*





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## Workshop

# Landscaping for Birds, Bees, and Butterflies

Albuquerque Garden Center

Friday and Saturday, May 18-19, 2007

Sponsored by the Albuquerque Chapter,  
Native Plant Society of New Mexico

Start changing your yard to a friendly place for wildlife as well as plants. Imagine bees buzzing on the desert marigold, butterflies flitting on a bank of coneflowers, birds perching in the New Mexico olive, lizards scurrying for cover in the cracks of a stone wall. What an exciting garden that is! Add a source of drinking water. A great place for wild things and humans.

Come to a 2-day workshop on wildlife friendly, low-water landscaping. On Friday there will be presentations on native plants, native plant communities, habitat requirements for lizards, birds, bees, and butterflies, and on the interrelationships between plants and animals. On Saturday we will visit wildlife-friendly demonstration gardens. Many of the gardens are certified Wildlife Backyard Habitats by the National Wildlife Federation. For more information on certification see <http://www.nwf.org/backyard/>.

Workshop will be limited to the first 50 participants.

### WORKSHOP REGISTRATION FORM

Please send a separate form for each attendee; forms and checks go to:

**Lolly Jones, PO Box 30282, Albuquerque, NM 87190**

Checks should be written to: Albuquerque NPS

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Registration Fee - \$55.00

Registration fee includes all presentations, Friday and Saturday lunches, and Friday dinner.

Late registration after April 15 - \$65.00

Cancellation policy: \$45.00 refund if cancelled by April 15

I enclose \$\_\_\_\_\_ for registration and \$15\_\_\_\_\_ for each guest at Friday evening dinner (vegetarian friendly).

Questions? contact Virginia Burris, 505-855-6772, or [vburris1@msn.com](mailto:vburris1@msn.com)

# Yerba Mansa, The Gentle Herb

By Linda La Grange

Associate Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences,  
NM Highlands University

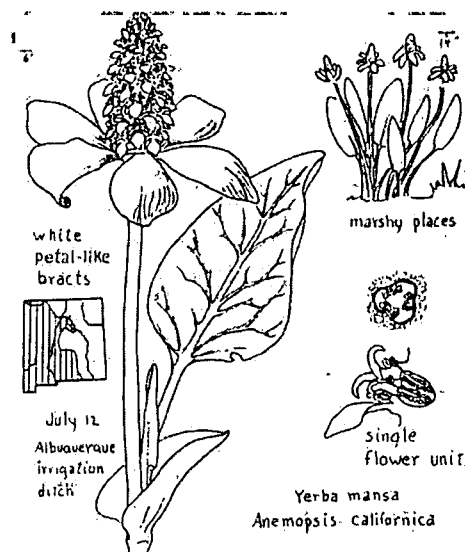
The third plant cited by Southwestern herbalist Michael Moore as one of the three most important herbal remedies in northern New Mexico is yerba mansa (*Anemopsis californica*). Its medicinal use was widespread among Native Americans of the Southwest and was enthusiastically adopted by early Hispanic settlers. The common name is Spanish for 'gentle herb.' The plant belongs to the Saururaceae family, so named because of the pink tail-like runners it sends out each spring. The genus name *Anemopsis* was probably derived from the plant's resemblance to anemones.

These plants are found in wet saline or alkaline soils. Yerba mansa's range includes areas in New Mexico, Utah, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, Arizona, Texas, and California. It is a hardy plant that can quickly spread and is considered by some to be invasive.

A perennial plant, yerba mansa grows to heights of 6-20 inches. The oblong basal leaves are 3-6 inches long, surrounding a single stem that is topped by a terminal spike of flowers. At the base of the spike are six white involucre leaves, which are often incorrectly identified as petals. By mid-summer the flowers begin to turn a burnt red color, and in early autumn the entire plant becomes deep red. The plant grows from rhizomes and sends out stolons for up to six feet, which eventually produce roots and, in a year, a separate plant. The plant's pungent odor, according to Moore, resembles a combination of camphor and eucalyptus.

Recently Andrea L. Medina and colleagues from New Mexico State University completed a study of the plant's composition and antimicrobial activity using leaf oil extracts. The primary constituent was elemicin, followed by piperitone, methyl eugenol, and  $\alpha$ -pinene. Other constituents were identified, but only those at more than 5% were discussed. Elemicin is a component of the essential oil of nutmeg and may contribute to the very slight psychoactive effects of nutmeg. Piperitone is responsible for the minty scent, also found in

*Mentha arvensis* and *Eucalyptus dives*. Methyl eugenol is known to be an insect attractant and is used as a low-risk pesticide. In the 2002 Report on Carcinogens, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition it was listed as being "reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen." However, in 2004, The European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products stated that, "...the present exposure to methyl eugenol resulting from consumption of herbal medicinal products (short time use in adults at recommended doses) does not pose a significant cancer risk." The fourth



Drawing of yerba mansa by Robert DeWitt Ivey.

constituent,  $\alpha$ -pinene is a monoterpene, a major component in tea-tree oils, and has a pleasant pine-like odor.

The application of a 0.1% solution of *A. californica* leaf oil to certain bacterial cultures inhibited growth up to 73% as compared with the control. Although  $\alpha$ -pinene is probably responsible for the antimicrobial activity, when a 0.005% (v/v) solution of pure  $\alpha$ -pinene was applied to the culture, the inhibition rate was not as high as expected, indicating a possible additive or synergistic effect of the whole leaf oil extract upon

(Continued on page 11)

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Widest selection of native plants in Southern New Mexico!

(Continued from page 10)

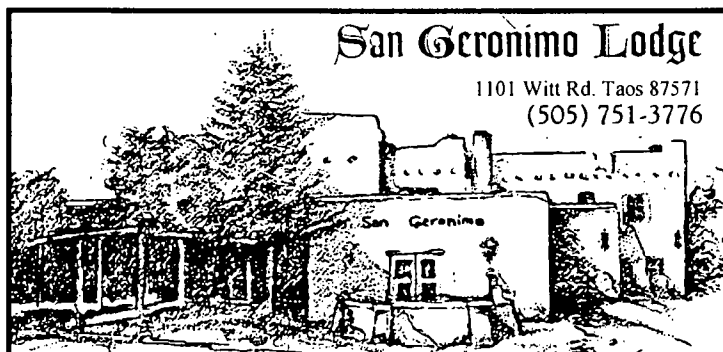
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The first medicinal uses of yerba mansa began centuries ago by a number of different Native American tribes. Inhabitants of Isleta Pueblo used an infusion of leaves as a blood medicine as well as for lung hemorrhages. They also made a poultice of damp leaves to dress open wounds. Some Native Americans chew the root and swallow the juice to alleviate coughing or other cold symptoms.

In her book, *Healing Herbs of the Upper Rio Grande*, L.S.N. Curtain provides an extensive description of yerba mansa's medicinal uses. Some of the methods of ingestion and preparation are unique. For use in the treatment of hemorrhoids, preparation instructions are very explicit. A pinch of *punche* (native tobacco), a plug of chewing tobacco, a piece of old sole leather that has been heated over a flame until red hot and then finely ground, an inch of pulverized root, and beef drippings are beaten together to create a soothing salve. Another use of yerba mansa is to treat dysentery. Early in the morning an egg is boiled only slightly, not allowing the egg white to harden. The tip of the shell is removed and a small quantity of the ground root is poured into the egg. The contents are gently shaken and then consumed.

And, from our friends at the National Eclectic Medical Association (Vol. 7 #2, p. 37, 1915), we find that Anglo Americans also valued the herb for its medicinal properties. In 1909, Dr. J.A. Munk introduced yerba mansa to the Los Angeles County Eclectic Medical Society as a treatment for catarrh. Professor S.O. Barnes developed a new preparation called oil anemopsis by digesting and processing the powdered root in neutral petroleum oil. Soon after, an anemopsis throat lozenge was developed. The oil anemopsis was also used in an atomizer, "which excites a copious secretion and discharge of mucous from the nose (p. 38)." For coughs, croup, bronchitis, and asthma, oil anemopsis was inhaled as a vapor from a steaming cup or tea kettle.

As always, in descriptions of the medicinal uses of wild-crafted herbs, overharvesting is a concern. However in the case of yerba mansa, because its medicinal applications overlap considerably with those of golden seal (*Hydrastis canadensis*), the use of yerba mansa might mitigate the current egregious harvesting of golden seal.



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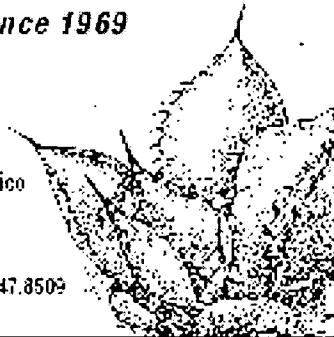
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# Chapter

## Activities & Events

### Albuquerque

**Most meetings are first Thursdays at 7 pm in the Pinyon Room at The Albuquerque Garden Center, 10120 Lomas Blvd (between Eubank & Wyoming Blvd.), in Los Altos Park.**

January 6 talk—“*Erigerons* of the Aster Family” by Chick Keller, president of NPSNM. NOTE: Saturday at 1 pm.

February 1 talk—“Grasses of our Region” by Kelly Allred, NMSU botanist and New Mexico’s principal authority on grasses. At 1 pm.

March 1 talk—“Ferns” by Patrick Alexander, graduate student in botany at NMSU. This enthusiastic young man has a delightful presentation and will charm you with all he knows about New Mexico’s ferns!

March 8-9—Xeriscape Conference, Albuquerque Convention Center. Albuquerque Chapter of NPSNM has a booth.

March 16-17—Science Fair judging & awards.

April 5 talk—“Observing Plant Surfaces: the beauty of plants that IS only skin deep” by Jerry Melaragno, retired biology professor from Rhode Island College and a new member. We will also have our Science Fair awards presentations.

April field trip—to be announced.

April 26-28—NPSNM Plant Sale at the Albuquerque Garden Center. If you can help, please contact Beth Herschman, Herschman9@aol.com, 892-8751, or Laura White, laura@unm.edu, or 243-5069. Set up is April 26 at 9:30 am to noon. Plant sale is April 27 from 1 to 4 pm and April 28 from 9 am to 4 pm.

### El Paso

**Presentations take place the second Thursday of the month at 7 pm at the Centennial Museum on the UTEP campus. For information on the meetings or field trips, contact chapter president Kathy Kiseda at 915-533-4615.**

January 11 talk—“The Mountains and the River: Different Strategies to Save El Paso’s Unique Treasures” by John Sproul of the Center for Environmental Resource Management at UTEP.

February 10 walk—Field trip to the dinosaur tracks on Mt. Cristo Rey.

March 8 talk—“When and how to prune your native plants.”

March 17 walk—Garden tour in El Paso.

April 12 talk—Wynn Anderson previews the native plants that will be offered at our annual Native Plant Sale April 28-29.

April 14 walk—Field trip to Orogrande for its special cacti.

April 28-29—Native Plant Sale.

### Gila (Silver City)

**All programs are free and open to the public.**

**Meetings are at 7 pm at WNMU’s Harlan Hall.**

January 19 talk—“Charles Wright and the Native Plant Society of New Mexico” by Rich Spellenberg. Rich is a long time member of NPSNM and has some wonderful stories to tell about Charles Wright.

February 16 talk—“What are the Connections between the Scientific Contributions of Charles Darwin and the Flora and Fauna that Surround Us?” by Jack Carter. Part of our celebration of the life of Darwin, who was born February 12, 1809.

March 16 talk—A program about the importance of native plants in biodiversity, restoration, and landscaping, by Mary Kay C. LeFevour, executive director of the Society for Ecological Restoration International.

### Las Cruces

**Talks are the second Wednesday of the month at 7 pm at University Terrace Good Samaritan Village, 3011 Buena Vida Circle.**

February 14 talk—“Plants of the Baja: An Extension of the Sonoran Desert” by Dr. Richard Spellenberg, Patrick Alexander, and Al Krueger. A tour of the Baja Peninsula in Mexico where they recently traveled to study the exotic plant life of this unique area. Come see the presentation and hear the stories they have to tell.

February 17 walk—Visit to the NMSU Dept. of Biology Herbarium. Come and visit one of the state’s largest collections of preserved plant material. The collection was initiated with the founding of the university and is the oldest in New Mexico. Includes a tour of the herbarium, a brief

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## Activities & Events

review of its uses in teaching, research and resource management, as well as an introduction to online botanical resources and NMSU Library resources for botanical study. We'll finish the visit with a tour of the horticultural gardens (weather permitting). The Herbarium is in Room 105 of the Biology Annex. Meet on NW side of the intersection of Stewart and Williams at 10:45 am. Parking lots nearby. For more information: <http://biology-web.nmsu.edu/herbarium/visiting.htm>

March 14 talk—"A classroom activity on the study of native plants" with Ray Bowers, biology instructor. Ray will present his methodology for teaching students about native plants of the Chihuahuan Desert found in the Las Cruces area.

March 17 walk—"Early Spring Flowers." Lisa, John, and Al will search for the best location for early blooms in nearby environs in the week prior. Meet at east end of the Rio Grande Bank parking lot on University and Telshor at 9 am to carpool to selected spot. May see some early poppies?

### Otero (Alamogordo)

January 26—Weather workshop, at Alamogordo Library from 2-4 pm, in cooperation with Otero County Master Gardeners. We will be trained in reporting area precipitation by Deborah J. Bathke, assistant state climatologist. This is a volunteer activity set up as Community Cooperative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network. Those interested in participating will receive the appropriate instruments and training. For information, contact Connie Klofonda, 443-1424, [jimklofonda@zianet.com](mailto:jimklofonda@zianet.com), or Helgi at 585-3315, [hkasak@netmdc.com](mailto:hkasak@netmdc.com).

February 3 talk—"Grasslands of New Mexico" by Dr. Kelly Allred, NMSU. At Alamogordo Library at 1 pm. For more information, contact Helgi, 585-3315, [hkasak@netmdc.com](mailto:hkasak@netmdc.com).

March 24 walk—Mineral Springs hike. Meet at 9 am at parking area just below Space Museum. Bring lunch, water. Hike is 3.8 miles roundtrip. For more information, contact John Stockert, 585-2546, [jwstockert@tularosa.net](mailto:jwstockert@tularosa.net).

### San Juan (Farmington)

Meetings are the third Thursday of the month at

7 pm at San Juan Community College. For more information call Les Lundquist at 326-7194.

January 18 talk—"A Fen, By Any Other Name..." by Allison Bradley and Sara Benton. A virtual exploration of the fens of southwestern Colorado, featuring environments and flora unique in the Four Corners. Meet in the Zia Room at the Health and Human Performance Center at SJC.

February 15 talk—"Those #@^%\* Yellow Composites!" by Ken Heil. A preview of the San Juan Basin flora project, with the recently developed key to the Asteraceae. You'll finally be able to tell your sunflowers apart! Meet in Room 1008 at SJC.

March 15 talk—"Springing into Spring" by Doug Abey. An accomplished xeric landscaper will provide tips for getting your low-water gardening off to a great start this spring! Meet in Room 1008.

### Santa Fe

Meetings are at 7 p.m. at College of Santa Fe, 1600 St. Michael's Dr., Luke Hall, Room 303. For more information contact: Tom Antonio at 473-6465, [tantonio@csf.edu](mailto:tantonio@csf.edu); or Carol Johnson at 466-1303, [gcjohnson@comcast.net](mailto:gcjohnson@comcast.net).

January 17 talk—"Plants and Soil Fertility in New Mexico" by Dr. Michael Meyer, Department of Natural Sciences at New Mexico Highlands University. He will cover the basic principles of soil nutrients, organic matter, and texture, how to use a soil testing kit, how this relates to your yard and garden and how to amend your soil to improve plant health and growth.

February 21 talk—"Who's in a Name? The People Behind Commemorative NM Plant Names" by Robert Sivinski, botanist for NM Forestry Division, where he coordinates various programs for rare plants and natural land conservation.

March 21 talk—"That Brown Crusty Stuff is Alive!" by Renee West, biologist at Carlsbad Caverns National Park. The talk will cover those exciting, tiny, non-vascular plants—algae, mosses, and lichens—that live on soil surfaces in arid areas.

### Taos

Meetings are second Wednesdays at 7 pm at the San Geronimo Lodge. Check daily listings in the *Taos News Tempo* or email Kathryn Peel at [HRXpert@msn.com](mailto:HRXpert@msn.com).

Events to be announced.

## News from the Chapters

### Taos Chapter

#### Remembering Tom Ferguson 1937-2006

NPSNM lost a distinguished member when Thomas Robert Ferguson passed away in May, 2006. He lived in Albuquerque and was a member of the Taos Chapter. A physicist by training, Tom was something of an amateur botanist in retirement and made some valuable contributions to the field of native plant study in New Mexico.

Tom took up the hobby of wildflower identification after he retired about 10 years ago and spent many hours in the mountains and desert learning about and identifying plants. He is co-author of the wildflower section of the book, *Field Guide to the Sandia Mountains*, published by UNM Press in 2005. He is credited for collecting and reporting the species *Mitella pentandra* for the first time in New Mexico. He was an avid hiker, leading many hikes for the NM Mountain Club. He ran a marathon at age 41 and ran the La Luz race to the Sandia Crest. His other hobbies included painting, wood sculpture, and other artistic pastimes.

A native of Roswell, NM, Tom had a Ph.D. in physics from the University of New Mexico. His dissertation investigated the properties of ring molecules related to the deoxyribose portion of DNA. He worked in laser research for the Air Force Research Laboratory at KAFB, NM. He published several scientific papers.

Submitted by Sallie Hoops

—>

Gila Chapter members show off their native ponderosa pine Christmas tree with decorations made from native plants. Left to right are Debbie Kleker, Angela Flanders, Joan Limmer, and Erma Falkler.

Photo by Elroy Limmer

### Gila Chapter

#### A Tree-Decorating GIFTTT

Members of the Gila Native Plant Society collected parts of native plants again in 2006 in order to make holiday ornaments for a live ponderosa pine entered in Penny Park's Festival of Trees. Penny Park is a community-built park in Silver City and a member of GIFTTT, Gila Institute For Tots To Teens. GIFTTT hosts its Festival of Trees every December. Local organizations and individuals pay a fee, then decorate a tree. The trees are viewed by the public and then sold, with the profits benefiting GIFTTT.

The GNPS tree was decorated entirely with ornaments made from native plants. This year's plant decorations included devil's claw (*Proboscidea parviflora*), buffalo gourds (*Cucurbita foetidissima*), ground cherries (*Physalis virginiana*), pods of screwbean mesquite (*Prosopis pubescens*) and honey mesquite (*P. glandulosa*), leaves of soaptree yucca (*Yucca elata*), and pods of oakleaf datura (*Datura quercifolia*). A quiz about the plants used to make the ornaments was available for passersby.

Since GNPS requested to have a native tree for decorating, the Festival of Trees has been ordering ponderosa pines. To improve survival of live Christmas trees, it is suggested that they be kept outside until just before Christmas and returned to the outdoors as soon as possible.

Submitted by Angela Flanders



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Although the flora of the Four Corners has a great

deal in common with other parts of New Mexico, it also offers much that is unique.

The forthcoming conference will include speakers and workshops of interest to native plant enthusiasts everywhere, as well as field trips to see some of our exciting variety of ecosystems. Mark your calendar, and...

Watch for complete conference registration information in the next NPSNM newsletter.

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