

## Native Plant Society of New Mexico

# NEWSLETTER

January, February, March 2006 Volume XXXI Number 1

Plant Rescue Effort Coming Up

## *Have You Hugged Your Yucca Today?*

By Sandra D. Lynn

Perhaps like me you have wished that you could just get out there and do something real for conservation--get your hands dirty, sweat, and wrest a piece of the planet out of the grip of human development instead of having to sit at the computer or telephone and try to voice your distant concern to legislators.

We're about to get our chance.

Within the next year, perhaps as soon as next summer, the construction part of the process of expanding U.S. Highway 62/180 between Carlsbad and the Texas state line will begin; the planning process has already been underway for more than a year. The site is a 30-mile-long stretch of highway proposed for widening from two to four lanes. Up to sixty feet of new right-of-way (ROW) may be needed to add to the existing 60 feet of ROW on each side of the highway, resulting in a total of about 650 acres of native Chihuahuan Desert vegetation that could be lost. The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) could be expected to revegetate the area with readily available varieties of native grasses and forbs, and shrubs such as creosote bush and mesquite will probably recolonize on their own. However, two components of Chihuahuan Desert vegetation typically not part of post-construction revegetation and restoration are yuccas and cacti. Both currently make their homes on what would

*(Continued on page 2)*



Photo by Renee West

Soaptree yuccas slated for removal along U.S. Highway 62/180 south of Carlsbad.

### INSIDE

- Otero Chapter grants scholarships...pg 6
- Laura Jean Deal Desert Arboretum...pg 6
- Thank you to member donors...pg 7
- Details on membership...pg 9
- NPSNM at Festival of the Cranes...pg 9
- NPSOT honors Wasowskis...pg 10
- Some words on plants...pg 11
- Activities & Events...pgs 13-14
- Students, volunteers restore habitat...pg 15
- 2006 Annual Meeting in El Paso...pg 16

(Continued from page 1)

## Have you hugged your yucca?

become death ROW. The yuccas are particularly large, plentiful, and growing happily right next to the pavement. Their fate would certainly be the bulldozer.

When the first public planning hearing was held in Carlsbad in September, 2004, I attended. I sat in the back of the room and listened to the other speakers, local politicians and officials, present their case for a new four-lane highway to replace the current one. When they finished, I stood up and suggested to those present that while I was in favor of improving the highway, I was even more in favor of saving at least some of the plants that live alongside it.

I didn't know if the others present at the meeting would dismiss me as just a yucca hugger (ouch!), but I had to speak up. I couldn't bear the thought of all those tall, old yuccas (the state flower, after all)

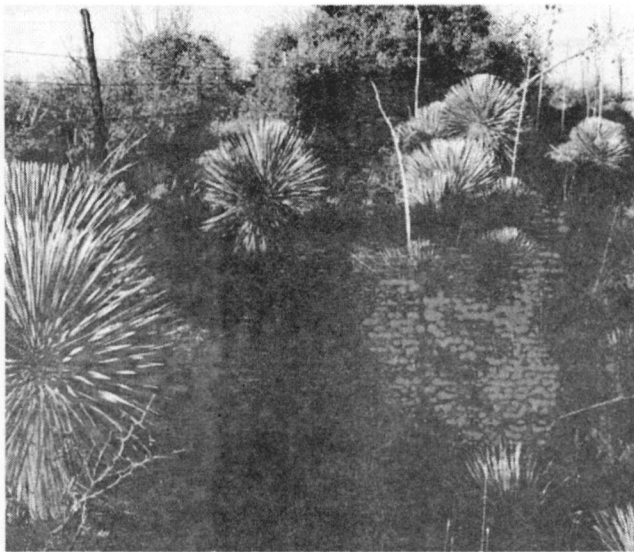


Photo by Renee West

being bulldozed, and I felt sure there were many other plants along the right-of-way that could be transplanted to new homes or restored to the roadside after construction. I had been warned that it was unlikely the NMDOT would be willing to allow plant salvage, but to my astonishment that night, my suggestion was met with encouragement.

Since then, others have taken up the effort, notably Jim Nellessen, Conservation Chair of the Native Plant Society. Jim is a plant ecologist and

field botanist who has done much of the plant surveying along the highway, along with Richard Worthington of the University of Texas at El Paso. Jim has written a grant application to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation on behalf of the Native Plant Society for funding to rescue plants along the highway corridor. Whether the grant is awarded or not, the Native Plant Society will be actively involved in the work of digging, transporting, caring for, finding homes for, and transplanting yuccas, cacti, and other plants.

If you are interested in being involved in this large plant rescue effort, you may have questions.

\*What's out there? Almost 320 species have been surveyed between Carlsbad and the state line: from *Abronia carletonii* to *Ziziphus obtusifolia*. Many cacti, sotol, six species of grama grass, *Datura*, three species of *Dalea*, black-foot daisies, *Ephedra*, Apache plume, ocotillo, four species of sunflowers, red-berry junipers, little walnuts, crown of thorns, eight species of *Opuntia*, skeleton-leaf goldeneye, and zinnias, to mention only a few from the list of species.

\*How many of them can we save? That depends on how many of us volunteer to work in the heat, digging and moving plants and then caring for them afterwards. It also depends on the number of pots we have available, the transportation available, etc.

\*Where will they go? Some will be "stored" so that mature cacti and yuccas can be restored to the highway corridor. The NMDOT would also like to see some transplanted to the landscaping of rest areas. Some could be moved to local parks, such as Living Desert State Park. Some smaller specimens might be made available to the public for private landscaping.

\*Where will the equipment come from, such as tree spades for the large yuccas? The Native Plant Society has applied for a grant for that purpose, to obtain funding for equipment and supplies. Some equipment and supplies may be loaned or donated.

\*How can I help? Volunteers will be needed to

(Continued on page

**Don't miss  
Petey Mesquity at the 2006 Statewide Meeting  
in El Paso, Texas!  
All the details next issue.**

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, 2006**

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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## CENTRAL NEW MEXICO

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A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO

Transform your yard into an inviting natural landscape using native plants! The Native Plant Society of New Mexico has produced an inexpensive, easy to use guide featuring 94 color photographs of trees, shrubs, vines, succulents, grasses and wildflowers suitable for landscapes in central New Mexico. Colorful and rugged, these plants look superb in gardens, require minimum water to maintain, and offer food and shelter to native wildlife. Color photographs and text cover how and where to plant, cultivation and maintenance.

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 505-975-0036 or [k\\_babuska@hotmail.com](mailto:k_babuska@hotmail.com).

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**Send Membership Dues & Changes of Address to:  
Membership Secretary,  
P.O. Box 2364, Las Cruces NM 88004**

(Continued from page 2)

## Have you hugged your yucca?

do the hard labor of removing and relocating plants and also to offer pots and lend shovels and wheelbarrows and to transport plants in pickups. If you have access to heavy equipment that could be borrowed, please let us know. If you want to write a check for purchase of supplies, we'll be grateful for that as well.

\*When will I be helping? As of this writing (Nov. 18), I don't have the answer to that question. Perhaps the work will begin in the summer of 2006, but, as we all know, delays are commonplace in highway construction.

It is vital that we do this in an organized, cooperative way, within whatever guidelines are provided by the NMDOT. To do otherwise would jeopardize this opportunity to save plants. If you would like to contribute to this project in some way, let me know by email or phone (505/234-1772 or sdlynn@zianet.com) or contact Jim Nellessen, our Conservation Committee Chair (505/867-7905 or jnellessen1@taschek.net). We will be keeping lists of those who are interested so that we can contact you when we get the go-ahead to proceed.

Don't stop writing those conservation emails and making those phone calls, but also plan to pull on your gloves, grab a shovel, and get to work rescuing some of our New Mexico natives who would otherwise become the victims of bulldozers.

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Sandra D. Lynn is NPSNM Recording Secretary.

Dec. 10 (2005) update

## Project definite for 4 lanes

According to an article in the Carlsbad newspaper, the *Current-Argus*, the New Mexico Department of Transportation announced that it definitely will be turning U.S. 62/180 into a four-lane highway from Carlsbad to the Texas state line. The article stated that the environmental studies and comment period are finished, and they got the go-ahead from the federal government Dec. 9.



## **Otero Chapter Grants Scholarship Awards**

By Chris Baker

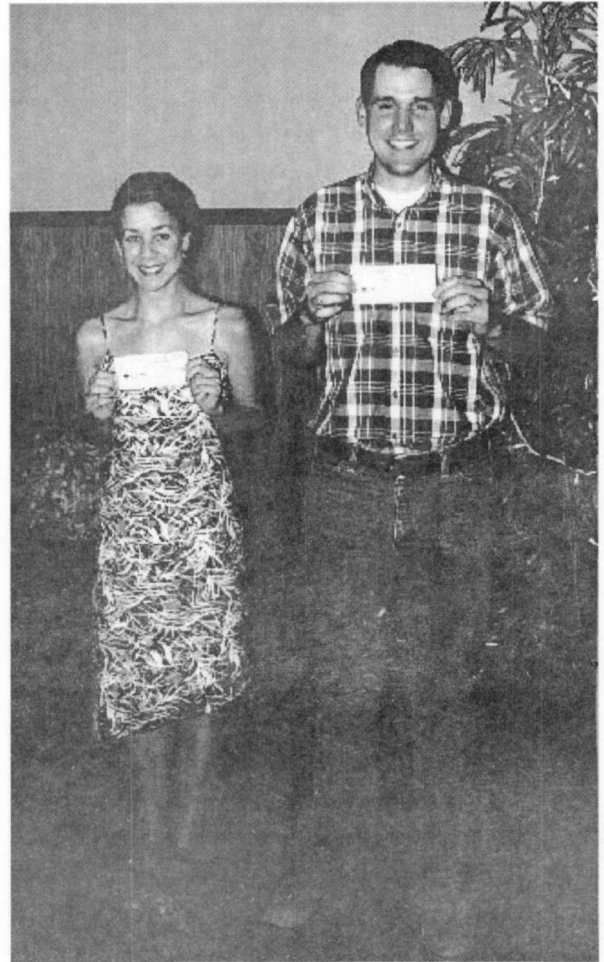
The Board of Directors of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico Otero Chapter, acting on behalf of the membership, awarded \$1,000 each to New Mexico State University students Lisa Schauer and Brady Allred.

Lisa has experience in forest conservation and is working in the NMC herbarium at NMSU. Brady is interested in range physiology, specifically grass physiology. With a grant from the National Science Foundation and Long Term Ecological Research, Brady is studying the physiological responses of black grama and purple threeawn grasses to prescribed burning. Both students have firm plans to continue with graduate training in these areas.

The awards were presented at a dinner hosted by the Biology and Range Sciences Departments in the University Club at the Stan Fulton Center Oct. 31.

In 2006, the Otero Chapter will be awarding a \$2,000 scholarship to a third- or fourth-year NMSU student majoring in a field of the biological sciences that will foster the understanding and conservation of the flora of New Mexico. Because there were two outstanding candidates this year, the award was divided.

The Chapter also donates yearly to the NMC Herbarium Endowment Fund in memory of the chapter's founder, Bill Mayfield.



New Mexico State University students Lisa Schauer and Brady Allred display their checks.

### **Native Plant Gem at Bosque del Apache**

#### ***Laura Jean Deal Desert Arboretum***

By Bob Merkel

In spring and summer Native Plant Society members who visit the Laura Jean Deal Desert Arboretum might also tour the riparian areas of the bosque to see migrating and nesting birds or walk the Chupadera Trail or Canyon Trail into the desert areas. Even in the winter during crane and snow goose season at the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, the little-known Arboretum is a very interesting place to visit.

By March early wildflowers will be blooming. Cacti and succulents (especially Chihuahua barrel cactus) put on a show into summer.

Starting from humble beginnings as a cactus garden in the spring of 1998 in front of the Friends' house at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, the Arboretum has grown to between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre over the last seven years. Several walking trails wind among the planted areas replete with desert trees and shrubs, wildflowers, agaves, cacti, ocotillos, sotols, and more. Visitors will also find benches handy for relaxing and soaking in the beauty around them.

The Laura Jean Deal Desert Arboretum is close to the Visitor Center at Bosque del Apache

*(Continued on page 7)*

(Continued from page 6)

NWR. Volunteers, including myself, have put in many hours over the past growing season adding more New Mexico cacti and other desert plants to enlarge the Arboretum plantings.

Laura Jean Deal was a photographer who dearly loved Bosque del Apache. Her husband Percy Deal chose to honor his wife by taking over primary responsibility for the care and continued improvement of the arboretum after she passed away. Under his leadership funds were raised through the Friends of the Bosque del Apache. Mr. Deal, a retired hospital administrator, played a major role in the construction, landscaping, and care of what is now an arboretum fully representative of Chihuahuan Desert flora.

If you come to Bosque del Apache, in whatever season, you might allocate a little extra daylight time to drive past Socorro on the Quebradas Scenic Backcountry Byway instead of I-25. From San Antonio take US 380 east a little past mile marker 11. Turn left onto the dirt road (County A129, as I recall). About three miles in (more-or-less straight north) is the first Quebradas sign, indicating a left turn to follow the byway. After about 25 miles it comes out on Route 1 between Escondida and Lemitar, where you can pick up I-25. Here are three comments: We really like traveling Quebradas south to north. Some stretches have really great spring wildflowers. And until they grade it again, it'll be most comfortable to drive it in a high-clearance vehicle.

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NPSNM member Bob Merkel of Socorro is active in the Friends of Bosque del Apache.

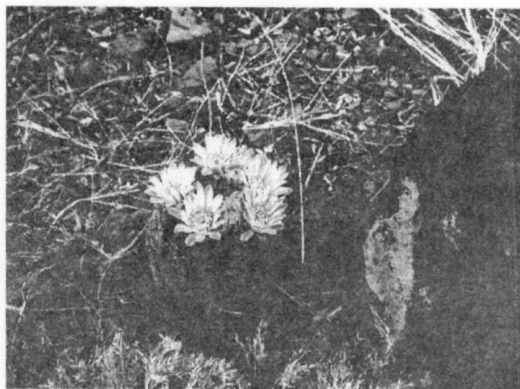


Photo by John Bertrand

Chihuahua Barrel (*Echinomastus intertextus*) at  
Laura Jean Deal Desert Arboretum

## Thank You to Our Member Donors!

NPSNM would like to thank all members who have made monetary contributions above their regular dues in the past year. This list of names, up-to-date as of Nov. 18, includes only those who've sent in extra contributions in the past year with their NPSNM membership. 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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(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

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## Details on NPSNM Membership

### ***Did You Know?***

By John Freyermuth, Membership Secretary

Members may not realize that 25 percent of their dues (\$20 and above) is returned to their chapter of affiliation. Thus, a \$20 membership returns \$5 to the chapter; a \$50 Supporting Membership returns \$12.50 to the chapter. If people affiliate with more than one chapter, then that 25 percent is divided. So, if a person affiliates with two chapters with a \$20 membership, then each chapter would be returned \$2.50.

It's okay to renew early. Members don't have to wait until they receive a reminder in order to renew. When they do renew, they should include pertinent information (changes of address, phone, name, e-mail). This information is forwarded to chapter membership secretaries.

When I accept a renewal, I advance the dues one year from the current renewal date regardless of the time when the membership renewal takes place. It saves the Society time and money when people renew in advance of their dues date, because in these all-too-rare occasions I don't have to use stamps, envelopes, and time to send out notices!

I only send a renewal reminder (remittance envelope) if I haven't already received a payment. The dues renewal date can be found at the bottom left of the recipient's address label on the newsletter.

After a newsletter issue goes out, I wait before sending out renewal notices in hopes that people will respond to the dues dates on the address labels. Otherwise I send renewal notices near the first week of each month. After a second notice, if no renewal is received after the end of another month, I delete the member from the active members list.

Once deleted, a membership can be easily reinstated upon receipt of dues. I do not reschedule a dues date unless newsletters have been missed. This usually amounts to more than 4 or 5 months. People who are less than two months late receive a final issue of the newsletter, unless we've received information that they will not be renewing.

If someone moves to a new location without informing us, then his/her newsletter will be returned to us. It is time-consuming, and it costs the

organization money. It is especially helpful when we receive notice from members that they are moving to a new address. I especially thank those members who fill out change of address cards. Thanks! It saves us a lot of time and saves a lot of additional postage costs too, because second copies of newsletters cannot be sent via bulk mail.

.....

Send memberships, renewals, or changes of address to:

NPSNM Membership Secretary  
PO Box 2364  
Las Cruces, NM 88004-2364

### NPSNM Participates in 2005 Festival of the Cranes



Santa Fe Chapter members Thomas Antonio, and Carol and Gary Johnson (above)—along with members Ellen Wilde, Judith Thatcher, and Samantha Clark—worked the NPSNM table during the annual Festival of the Cranes at the Bosque del Apache in November. The three-day event resulted in four new members signed up and over \$400 in books and posters sold!

## Award of Appreciation

### ***NPSOT Honors Wasowskis***

Last fall Sally and Andy Wasowski were honored with an Award of Appreciation with Honorary Life Membership for their contributions to the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) and to the use of native plants in the landscape.

Now Taos-area residents, both Wasowskis have been active members in the Native Plant Society of New Mexico. Until their recent retirement, Andy was NPSNM state newsletter editor and Sally was publications chair.

Sally was a charter member of the Native Plant Society of Texas. In 1980, her growing love of native plants led to a career change, from social work to landscape design.

But with the idea of using native plants in a landscape being very new, the Wasowskis realized that a book was needed, not just to show clients what the plants looked like, but how to use them in a garden setting.

That began another career phase for Sally—one that would soon involve Andy, too—as an author of books about landscaping with native plants. Sally co-wrote her first book, *Landscaping with Native Texas Plants*, in 1985 with another author and with photography and writing help from Andy.

In 1988 *Native Texas Plants: Landscaping Region by Region* hit the bookshelves, and quickly became the couple's signature publication. It is now in its second edition. Several other books have followed, including the delightful *The Landscape Revolution*.

Individually and together, the Wasowskis are popular speakers across the country, educating the public about the importance of using natives in the landscape. They have published numerous articles and photographs in magazines, including "Perennial", "Texas Gardener", "Life", "Fine Gardening", and "Sierra".

The Wasowskis maintain a website at [www.botanicalmissionaries.com](http://www.botanicalmissionaries.com).

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Adapted from an article in the NPSOT newsletter by Belinda McCoy McLaughlin.

## Xeriscape Conference

Outdoor and conservation writers including Gary Nabhan, Craig Childs, and Judith Phillips will be among the featured speakers at the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Xeriscape Conference March 9-11 at the Albuquerque Convention Center. Chris Martin, keynote speaker at last year's NPSNM annual meeting, will also speak.

The conference, titled "Restoring Our Waters: Think Globally, Act Locally," costs \$150 for the first two days and includes a free day open to the public on Saturday, March 11 (which includes free parking all day). Saturday's free seminars include talks on xeric plants by Judith Phillips, and on soil and mulch by Curtis Smith.

For more information, see the Xeriscape Council of New Mexico's website: <http://www.xeriscapenm.com/index.php>

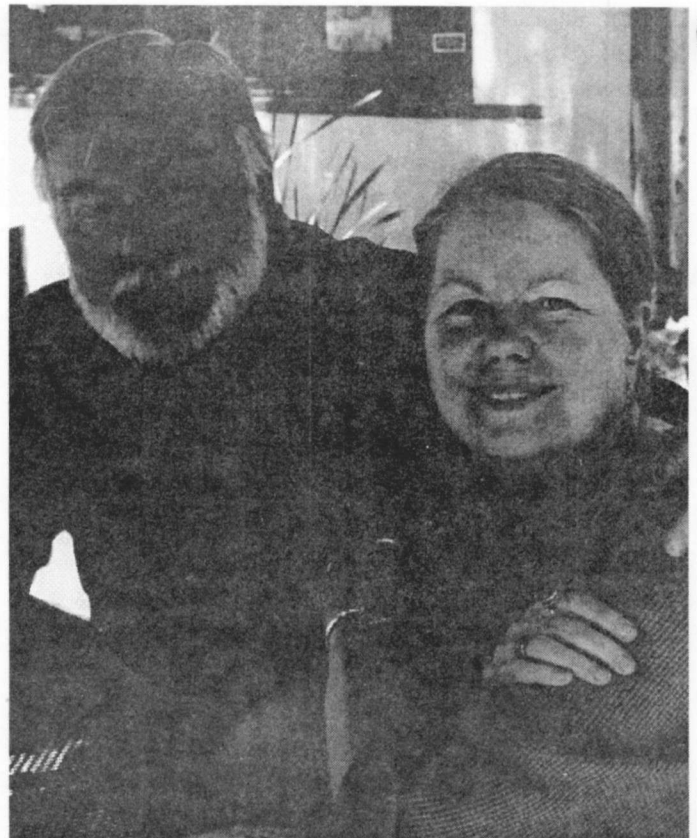
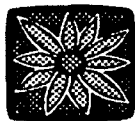


Photo by David Farmer

Andy and Sally Wasowski

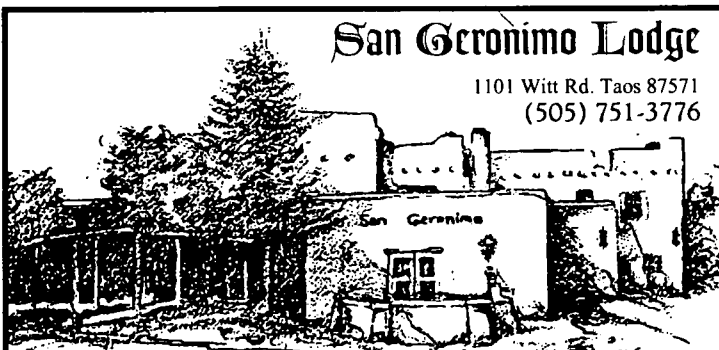


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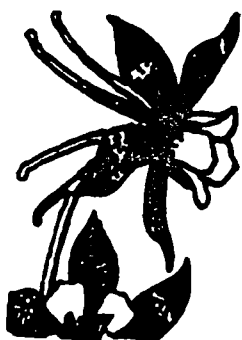
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## Some Words on Plants

By Marshall Carter-Tripp

**tropism** (TRO-piz-uhm) noun -- The turning or bending (typically by growth instead of movement) of an organism in response to an external stimulus. [From Greek *tropos* (turning). Ultimately from Indo-European root *trep-* (to turn) that also gave us troubadour, tropic, entropy, and contrive.]

If you've ever noticed a plant bending towards the light, you've seen an example of tropism. The term is usually applied to plants. The response to a stimulus could be positive or negative: towards or away from the stimulus. Some examples of stimuli are light (phototropism), gravity (geotropism), heat (thermotropism), touch (thigmotropism), and water (hydrotropism).

Darwin and his son Francis demonstrated that the tip of the plant detected light and if they covered just the tip, the plant would grow straight, not toward the light.


**godwottery** (god-WOT-uh-ee) noun -- 1. Gardening marked by an affected and elaborate style. 2. Affected use of archaic language. [From the line "A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!" in a poem by Thomas Edward Brown (1830-1897).]

Now here is a word with a dual personality. Poet T.E. Brown unwittingly helped coin it when he wrote a poem describing his garden filled with all that came to his mind: grotto, pool, ferns, roses, fish, and more. And when he needed a word to rhyme with the line "Rose plot," he came up with "God wot!" He used "wot", an archaic term that's a variant of wit (to know), to mean "God knows!" and it stood out among other contemporary words.

If you wish to create your own godwottery, we recommend sundials, gnomes, fairies, plastic sculptures, fake rockery, pump-driven streams, and wrought-iron furniture. A pair of pink flamingos will round it out nicely.

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Taken from "A Word A Day," an online service by Anu Garg. It's free but you are welcome to contribute at: [www.wordsmith.org](http://www.wordsmith.org).




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Instead of combating bark beetles as pests, society should view swings in their populations as the symptoms, not causes, of poor forest conditions and seek to address the underlying causes of these shifts. We should remember that the trees evolved with these tiny keystone species, without which our forests would not be the same.

—Scott Hoffman Black

## Chapter Activities & Events

### Albuquerque

Meetings are 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 5 meeting—“Collaboration in the Rio Puerco Restores a Degraded New Mexico Watershed” by Stephen E. Fischer from BLM. In contrast to previous efforts, the Rio Puerco Management Committee has been successful in initiating restoration of the Rio Puerco watershed, a large and degraded basin in northwestern NM.

February 2 meeting—“An Introduction to the Northern Chihuahuan Desert and Its Flora” and a summary of plans for the August 2006 NPSNM annual meeting to be held in El Paso, by NPSNM President Wynn Anderson. (If you’ve never attended an annual meeting, this is the time to think about it.)

March 9 meeting (Note change to second Thursday)—“My Experiment in Living by Foraging” by Gary Nabhan. Gary will be in town to give a talk at the Xeriscape Conference, and we are hoping to get him to come to speak to us also.

April 6 meeting—“Preventing Garden Predation with Native Plants, and other gardening questions.” Forum of Master Gardeners.

### El Paso

All programs are second Thursday of the month at 7 pm at Centennial Museum, UTEP campus.

January 12 meeting—“Landscaping for Attracting and Protecting Wildlife” by Scott Cutler, Curator of Collections and Exhibits at Centennial Museum. Ideas of what we can do to our yards to draw birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Scott will discuss placement of plant material and the plants that wildlife favor. Many of those plants should be available at the 2006 FloraFest the last weekend of April.

### Gila (Silver City)

All programs are free and open to the public. Meetings are at 7 pm at WNMU’s Harlan Hall.

January 20 meeting—“The 10 most common plant families and how to identify them” by Gila Native Plant Society President Donna Stevens.

February 17 meeting—“Landscaping using native plants” by Judith Phillips, author of *Plants For Natural Gardens* and *Natural by Design*, among others.

March 17 meeting--"Anatomy of a Plant Inventory, The Burros" by Bill Norris, recipient of a grant from Gila Native Plant Society, and Dr. Russ Kleinman.

### Las Cruces

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

January 11 talk--"Chihuahuan Desert Blooms--Throughout the Year" by Lisa Mandelkern. A visual cornucopia of flowering native plants and explanation of where and when to find them in the Las Cruces area.

January 14 walk--"Winter Conditions of Woody Plants" with Dr. Rolston St. Hilaire, horticulture professor at NMSU. A stroll through the NMSU campus identifying plants by bark and twig, and discussing plant responses to winter cold and light conditions. Meet at 1 pm on campus at the pond by the Ag Bldg. on S. Espina St., SW corner of the horseshoe.

February 8 talk--"How Ferns Do It in the Desert" by Patrick Alexander, botany grad student at NMSU. Presentation on ferns and their allies--their characteristics and varied distribution in the desert.

February 11 walk--A hike in the Dripping Springs area of the Organs with Patrick Alexander, in search of a diverse group of non-flowering plants--ferns, mosses, and others. Meet at 10 am at the parking lot east of the Bank of the Rio Grande, Telshor & University Ave.

March 8 talk--"Planting, Care, and Maintenance of Xeriscape Gardens" by John White, Doña Ana County Extension Agent. Discussion of horticultural techniques as they apply especially to spring activities in our gardens.

March 11 walk--"Mainly Mustards" with Lisa Mandelkern and Terry Peterson. A hike on the east side of the Franklins, just off Trans-Mtn. Road, to

(Continued on page 14)



(Continued from page 13)

## Activities & Events

look for spring flowers, mainly mustards but maybe some poppies! Meet at 10 am at the east end of the parking lot behind Bank of the Rio Grande, Telshor & University Ave.

### Otero (Alamogordo)

February 3 meeting—"Native Plants of the World," a slide show by Len Hendzel. Meet at 6:30 pm at Len and Pat Hendzel's, 58 Rodeo Drive, Laborcita Canyon. Bring dessert. For more information, call Len at 434-6261.

March 18 field trip—To NMSU Herbarium and a wildflower walk. Meet at 8 am in the parking lot of the old Wal-Mart (where Hwys 54 and 70 meet.) For more information, call Helgi at 585-3315 or Len at 434-6261.

May 13 field trip—White Sands Missile Range trip. More information in the next newsletter.

### 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; or Carol Johnson at 466-1303, gcjohnson@comcast.net.

January 19 meeting—"Sex & Violets" by Dr. Thomas M. Antonio, Associate Professor of Sciences & Conservation Studies, College of Santa Fe. A humorous and educational presentation on the sex lives of plants.

February 15 meeting—"UNM Herbarium: Resources and Research on New Mexico plants" by Dr. Timothy Lowrey, Associate Professor & Curator of Herbarium, University of New Mexico.

March 15 meeting—to be announced.

April 19 meeting—"Caught in A Web of Words: New Mexico Botany in the Genitive" by Dr. Kelly Allred, Professor of Range Plant Taxonomy,

Animal and Range Sciences Department, New Mexico State University.

### Taos

**Meetings are Wednesdays at 7 pm at the San Geronimo Lodge.**

February 8 meeting—"Keeping Your Plants Healthy" by Loretta Sandoval, horticulturist. Sandoval has a B.S. Chemistry & Biology and an M.S. Applied Chemistry from Colorado State University.

March 8 meeting—"Pruning & Planting Trees for Northern New Mexico" by Rich Atkinson, Southwest Trees, Albuquerque, NM.

March 9 field trip—Demonstration field trip, 10 am (Thursday).

April 12 meeting—"Water Conserving Permaculture & Composting in Your Landscape: Techniques You Never Dreamed Of!" by Jim Brooks, Soilutions, Tijeras, NM.

April 13 field trip—Demonstration field trip, 9

Let's imagine a goal: that at some time in the future, the value of a property will be perceived in part according to its value to wildlife. A property hedged with fruiting shrubs will be worth more than one bordered by forsythia... Buyers will place a premium on lots that provide summer flowers and fall crops of seed... A nursery colony of bats might be considered a capital improvement.

Oh, brave new world!

—Sara Stein in *Noah's Garden, Restoring the Ecology of Our Own Backyards*

*Check out the new  
NPSNM Plant Resources  
webpage:*

<http://npsnm.unm.edu/links.html>

At Carlsbad Caverns National Park

## **Students, Volunteers Help Restore Habitat**

Students from Carlsbad High School's Chihuahuan Desert Lab (CDL) and volunteers from the Chihuahuan Desert Conservation Alliance (CDCA) have been helping Carlsbad Caverns National Park restore nesting habitat for a New Mexico state-listed bird.

The state-threatened Bell's vireo, a small gray bird, has only two primary nesting areas in New Mexico, one of which is the forested riparian area at the park's Rattlesnake Springs. In early November volunteers from these two groups (ages 16 to 77) planted almost 30 saplings of native netleaf hackberry, western soapberry, and Goodding's willow. These saplings replace thickets of Russian olive trees that had been removed. Russian olives are state-listed noxious weeds that provided some of the dense shrubby habitat favored by Bell's vireos for nesting. Therefore, the park implemented a phased removal as part of its restoration plan.

The habitat restoration project actually began several years ago. First, the park's Exotic Plant Management Team gradually removed some of the Russian olives. Then, the park's biology staff collected seeds from the native trees at Rattlesnake Springs. The seeds were propagated at the school in the greenhouse at teacher Steve West's lab and

cared for by CDL students over several semesters before they were ready to be planted last fall. Even the park's maintenance crew got into the act, using their equipment to scarify the compacted soil and pull out dead Russian olive roots.

The CDL is a year-long class at Carlsbad High School, designed to use the resources of Carlsbad Caverns (NM) and Guadalupe Mountains (TX) national parks in order to foster stewardship of national park resources. It is part of the National Park Labs Program begun in 1997. Students receive classroom training as well as hands-on field experience with topics such as native plants, cave swallows, water quality, and prairie dogs.

The CDL is taught by CHS biology teacher Steve West, an NPSNM member who has worked with the program since its inception.

The CDCA is a conservation group co-founded by Steve West in 1986. Its members have participated in dozens of service projects on public lands over the years, including a previous willow-planting project at Rattlesnake Springs.

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Adapted from a park press release, with contributions from Steve West and Renee West, who is CCNP supervisory biologist (as well as editor of this newsletter).



Volunteers and students plant native tree saplings where a thicket of Russian olives was removed at Carlsbad Caverns National Park's Rattlesnake Springs riparian area. They include Margaret Waters, Liz Owsley, Hal Waters, Ronnie Lewis, and Lionel Granger.

Photo by Steve West

The El Paso Chapter Invites You

## ***Join Us for the 2006 Annual NPSNM Meeting***

Come on down for some border hospitality! The El Paso Native Plant Society will host the NPSNM annual meeting August 10-13, 2006, on the campus of the University of Texas at El Paso, with the sponsorship of the Centennial Museum and the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens.

Our program will offer three "tracks" of workshops and presentations, all related to the 2006 theme:

*One Desert, Two Countries, Three States:  
Native Plants of the Northern Chihuahuan Desert*

Track One will focus on Conservation; Track Two, on (Wise) Use of Native Desert Plants; and Track Three, on Chihuahuan Desert Botany. Follow these tracks to find out, just for starters, how to use this flora in landscaping and habitat creation; how native peoples have used these plants in their medical kits; what are the latest

developments in botanical studies of the Chihuahuan Desert; what's endangered out there; and what implications does global climate change have for desert plants and their animal companions? As the desert is not aware of our man-made boundaries, presentations will include perspectives on these topics from the Mexican side of the border *and even a field trip to the Chihuahuan Desert's largest sand dune field south of Juarez, near Samalayuca, Chihuahua.*

Our featured dinner speaker will be Peter Gierlach, better known as Petey Mesquity, one of the Southwest's most knowledgeable and entertaining musical raconteurs, and who also happens to be a native plant enthusiast. You'll be sorry if you miss his performance at our (guaranteed to be delicious) banquet!

Complete details and registration instructions will follow in the next issue of the newsletter but save the dates on your calendar now!

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