

Native Plant Society of New Mexico

NEWSLETTER

July, August, and September 2006 Volume XXXI Number 3

A new champion tree for New Mexico

Making Water Run Uphill

By Martha Carter
Gila Chapter



Gene and Elisabeth Simon stand with
State Champion — and nominee for
National Champion — velvet ash,
Fraxinus velutina.

Gene Simon thought he was lucky when he survived a kamikaze attack on the aircraft carrier USS Belleau Wood, where he served three and a half years during World War II. Then, the plane he was supposed to take home to Pennsylvania for a 10-day shore leave crashed en route to him — lucky again! After the war and college, he got into the newspaper business in Tarentum, Pennsylvania, and 29 years later “retired” to New Mexico.

His newspaper was the *Valley Daily News Dispatch*, a Pulitzer Prize-winning*, employee-owned newspaper with a circulation of 44,000 in the valley of the Allegheny-Kiskiminetas Rivers. It was sold to Gannett in 1976. Gannett owned the

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Updates for the 2006 NPSNM Annual Meeting

August 10-13 in El Paso

Hotel and Registration:

Early registration will be available Thursday, August 10, from 4-7 p.m. at the Sunland Park Holiday Inn, Exit 13 on I-10 (two exits west of the meeting site at UTEP). Arrangements for the board meeting Thursday afternoon will be sent to board members by e-mail.

Regular registration during the meeting will take place at the conference center in the UTEP Union Building East, third floor (on the east side of campus at University Avenue just west of Oregon Street). Registration packets will include maps and guides to attractions and great places to eat in El Paso and Juárez. Commemorative T-shirts will be available to dress up your conference wardrobe.

The new Hilton Garden Hotel at UTEP is not expected to open in time for the conference. We regret the loss of the Hilton's special offer, but recommend the Holiday Inn at Sunland Park, a very comfortable full-service inn. Call 915-833-2900 and ask for the special Native Plant Society (NPS Group) rate of \$77.

Questions About the Registration Form?

The registration form in the April newsletter erroneously showed field trip G on the Saturday line. This trip to northern Chihuahua is a Sunday trip! A corrected version of the form is posted on the NPSNM web page, <http://npsnm.unm.edu>. The line for ordering guest banquet tickets applies only if you are bringing a guest; the registration fee includes one banquet admission. If you are bringing a guest(s), please advise us of the guest's entrée choice as well as your own. Thanks!

Don't Forget the Silent Auction!

Objects available through the Silent Auction during the El Paso meeting now include an assortment of Mata Ortiz pottery, turned wood bowls, plant photographs by Judson Caruthers, a print by El Paso artist Hal Marcus, and several other pieces of art, books, live specimens of native plants (including salvaged cacti), and several gift baskets crammed with material for enjoyment of

the animals and plants of New Mexico's habitats (bird watchers will love the Audubon basket). Contributions are welcome; anyone with items to donate may contact conference organizer Marshall Carter-Tripp (carter-tripp@earthlink.net).

A Thursday Night Event

Those arriving in El Paso Thursday might also enjoy the special show of artwork about the arroyos of El Paso's Franklin Mountains (a benefit for the Frontera Land Alliance land trust that is working to save open space in the northern Chihuahuan Desert region of west Texas and southern New Mexico). The show, called Save our Arroyos, can be seen at the Hal Marcus Gallery, 800 N. Mesa, one block from I-10 at the Mesa Street exit. The gallery is open 10-7 Thursday and 10-5 Friday and Saturday.

Field Trip Leaders/Organizers

Trip A. Wynn Anderson, Botanical Curator, Chihuahuan Desert Gardens, and Keystone volunteers

Trip B. Robin Hoffer, Dept. of Geology, UTEP

Trip C. John Sproul, Center for Environmental Resource Management, UTEP

Trip D. Keith Rhin, EPNPS, and Richard Worthington, Dept. of Biology, UTEP

Trip E. Wanda Olszewski, Park Ranger, Hueco Tanks State Park

Trip F. Betty Brown, EPNPS

Trip G. Rafael Corral, Botanist, Ft. Bliss Environmental Directorate

Trip H. Pat Alexander, Botanist, NMSU

Trip I. Peter Beste, EPNPS

Trip J. Gertrud Konings, EPNPS

Trip K. Greg Magee, NM Wilderness Alliance

Trip L. Wanda Olszewski, Park Ranger, Hueco Tanks State Park

Trip M. Betty Brown, EPNPS

***Don't miss the NPSNM Annual Meeting.
We promise a fine time in the Chihuahuan
Desert!***

**Don't miss
the 2006 NPSNM Statewide Meeting
in El Paso, Texas
August 10-13**

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 Sept. 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.

Proofreaders: Jane Mygatt, Donna Stevens, Steve West, and Sandra Lynn.
Mailing: Carolyn Gressitt.

Web site: <http://npsnm.unm.edu/>

NPSNM Membership Application

Name(s) _____

Address _____

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I (we) wish to affiliate with the checked chapter

- Albuquerque
- El Paso, TX
- Gila (Silver City)
- Las Cruces
- Otero
- Sacramento Mts (Ruidoso)
- San Juan (Farmington)
- Santa Fe
- Taos

I am interested in forming a new chapter in

Annual Dues:

Individual or Family.....	\$20
Friend of Society.....	\$30
Supporting Member.....	\$50
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Patron	\$250
Benefactor.....	\$500
Life Member.....	\$1,000
Limited Income, Family, Students & Seniors (65+).....	\$12

Endowment contribution \$ _____

Total \$ _____

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Ponderosa Ranch adjacent to the Gila Wilderness in New Mexico and had no plans for it. He decided he did not want to be a Gannett publisher. So Gene, and his wife Elisabeth, became owners of the Ponderosa Ranch, with its 105-section, 67,000-acre Forest Service permit, rather than receiving cash for his minority-interest newspaper stock. In 1979, because of three "too muches: size, debt, and age," the Simons moved to their present location in the lower Mimbres River Valley. They acquired 7,000 adjacent acres on land straddling Grant and Luna counties.

Now, another lucky unexpected event has come their way. While working on a stewardship plan with the Simons, Silver City state forester Gary Benevidez noticed several "real large trees." He contacted Nick Smokovich with the State Forestry's Socorro District for an official measurement. A velvet ash, *Fraxinus velutina*, measured 96 feet tall, 18 feet 6 inches in circumference, with a 95-foot canopy spread.

This tree is now the State Champion for New Mexico and is a contender to become National Champion Velvet Ash. The tree has been nominated to replace the current National Champion located in the Fossil Springs Wilderness Area in Arizona. According to American Forests organization in Washington D.C., nominators have until November 2007 to submit additional nominations or remeasure the current Arizona champion for the 2008 Register of National Champion Trees.

Another member of the Gila Native Plant Society chapter, Ralph A. Fisher, Jr., nominated and still holds the record for netleaf hackberry, *Celtis reticulata*, and Goodding's willow, *Salix gooddingii*. There are 17 National Champion trees in New Mexico. The American Forests website is an interesting place to look for this information, including State Champion Trees, trees that could be nominated, and how to establish records for trees that may qualify.

In the meantime Gene and Elisabeth, married for 64 years, are still actively engaged in ranching and conservation activities. In November of 2005 they deeded 550 acres to City of Rocks State Park near their ranch, doubling the size of the park. The New Mexico State Parks Department (NMSP) will

utilize the prime land to develop trails while protecting valuable natural and cultural resources in the area. Gene and Elisabeth have a cooperative agreement with NMSP and its foundation to provide substantial funding for expansion of the City of Rocks State Park services and programs.

At age 90, Gene Simon is not ready to trade his saddle for a rocking chair. His favorite saying about newspapering – and ranching – is, "One of the greatest things about newspapering is if you do it right, you can make water run uphill." He clearly believes in the impossible (if you do it right.)

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*Pulitzer Prize was for the photo of the Kent State shooting on May 4, 1970, by John Filo.

Check out the NPSNM Plant Resources webpage:
<http://npsnm.unm.edu/links.html>

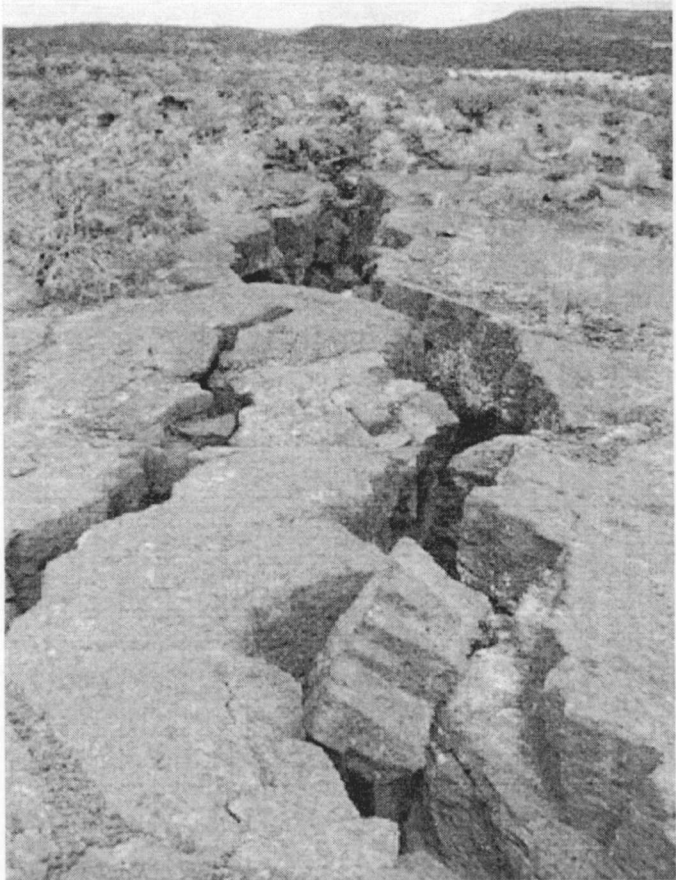


Photo by Bob Merkel

Enchanting lava landscapes greeted the Albuquerque Chapter's April field trip at El Malpais.

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Vice-President Chick Keller 662-7915
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Recording Secretary Sandra Lynn 234-1772
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Membership Secretary John Freyermuth 523-8413
jfreyerm@lib.nmsu.edu

Treasurer Donna Stevens 388-5296
donnastevens@aznexus.net

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Las Cruces Alan Krueger abkrueg@earthlink.net 532-1036

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Sacramento Mts Dave Lincoln lincolndk@hotmail.com 258-2143

San Juan Les Lundquist dalunk54@yahoo.com 326-7194

Santa Fe Tom Antonio tantonio@csf.edu 473-6465

Taos Judy Lister glister@newmex.com 776-1183

CHAPTER PRESIDENTS

Albuquerque Beth Herschman herschman9@aol.com 892-2230
or 892-8751

El Paso Kathy Reynolds agustusmc@sbcglobal.net 915-592-1705

Gila Donna Stevens donnastevens@aznexus.net 388-5296

Las Cruces Al Krueger abkrueg@earthlink.net 532-1036

Otero Helgi Osterreich hkasak@netmdc.com 585-3315

Sacramento Dave Lincoln lincolndk@hotmail.com 258-2143

San Juan Les Lundquist dalunk54@yahoo.com 326-7194

Santa Fe Thomas Antonio tantonio@csf.edu 473-6465

Taos Linda Malm lxyz@kucarson.net 758-8753

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Book Sales Lisa Johnston 748-1046 nps_nmbooks@hotmail.com

Poster Chair Gary Runyan 242-9758 grunyan@nmmnh.state.nm.us

T-Shirt Sales Lisa Mandelkern 526-0917 lisamand@zianet.com

Website Editor Lolly Jones 771-8020 ljones20@comcast.net

Newsletter Editor Renée West 885-3636 keywestern@hotmail.com

Conservation Jim Nellessen 867-7905 jnellessen1@taschek.net

Finance Jack Carter 388-9221 jmcarter@zianet.com

****all area codes are 505 unless otherwise stated.**

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

Drought Website

By Sandra Lynn
Carlsbad

If you're the sort of person who likes to take his or her bad news straight, undiluted by politicians or TV newscasters, this is the website for you:

<http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>

It presents the bad news about the current drought in maps, forecasts, and other forms of information from the following sources:

- Joint Agricultural Weather Facility (U.S. Department of Agriculture and Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)
- Climate Prediction Center (U.S. Department of Commerce/NOAA/National Weather Service)
- National Climatic Data Center (DOC/NOAA)
- National Drought Mitigation Center (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)
- U.S. Geological Survey (U.S. Department of Interior)
- National Water and Climate Center (USDA/Natural Resource Conservation Service)
- Climate Diagnostics Center (DOC/NOAA)
- Regional Climate Centers
- National Weather Service Hydrology (DOC/NOAA)
- State Climatologists

The website also provides numerous links. In places where the local leaders are ignoring the situation (no names will be mentioned), this website could provide a wake-up call.

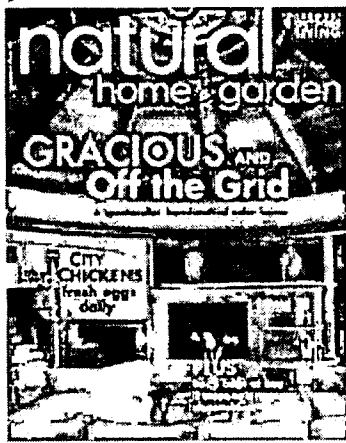
As far as I can tell from the map, in Carlsbad we are teetering on the brink of extreme drought. Much of the rest of New Mexico is already there in the red zone. The forecasts are not quite as hopeful as the ones on the evening news.

The Members Speak

Magazine Gets A New Face Lolly Jones

The almost-6-year-old *Natural Home* magazine has a new title - *Natural Home & Garden*. The magazine's mission to promote green living in all aspects of our lives has not changed ("living green, living well"), but there is a new dedication to coverage of gardens. The editor, Robyn Griggs Lawrence, says, "We started *Natural Home & Garden* to show people that living lightly on the planet is an inspiring and exceptional way to live." Her blog (www.naturalhomeandgarden.com) is full of interesting and timely information.

Does anyone remember a magazine called *Wild Garden*? It had a wonderful focus on resources for gardening with native plants and wildlife, but it only lasted a few issues. Supporting media that mirrors our priorities is a way to have our views counted.



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Damn the E.S.A. Tom Wootten

Certainly this title does not reflect my view, but it appears to be the view of many who continue to criticize and try to weaken the best and most important environmental law written. What leads me to this conclusion? The actions of some of our legislators, federal agencies, and individuals who could be adversely impacted by attempts to prevent

extinction of one of the earth's inhabitants.

The attempts to weaken the Endangered Species Act are well known and range from attempts to remove protection for habitat deemed critical for a species, to creating more delays to implementation of provisions of the act. Funding for endangered species protection continues to be cut from the federal budget. Even with my naiveté, I had anticipated these attacks. The shocker has been the often-covert and much more subtle actions taken, even by those charged with protection of species and implementation of the act.

Such actions as poisoning prairie dogs on public lands in South Dakota adjacent to a population of the endangered black-footed ferrets (who depend on prairie dogs for food and shelter) and removing endangered species protection from the lynx if it crosses into New Mexico from Colorado are just not understandable. The same agency proposes to designate the endangered aplomado falcon as an experimental population in all of New Mexico and Arizona as a condition for reintroducing the aplomado falcon in southcentral New Mexico. This maneuver will enable federal land managers in both states to ignore this bird's needs in habitat decisions, thereby sharply reducing the hoped-for natural reintroduction of the species from a known population in northern Mexico.

A newly released, peer-reviewed study traces the fate of endangered species in the northeast part of the United States. This study by the Center for Biological Diversity, one of the staunchest supporters of endangered species protection, shows the overwhelming success of the ESA. Maybe if they had a little funding, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service could have produced this report, but then that might have stepped on a political toe or two.

The Endangered Species Act works. It can work better with some improvements in funding and with a stepped up schedule for implementation. Most importantly, though, it will work better by a change from trying to avoid or circumvent provisions of the act to trying to faithfully fulfill the mandate of the law and acting within the spirit of the law.

(Originally appeared in *Desert Voices*, newsletter of the Chihuahuan Desert Conservation Alliance.)

Demystifying bark beetles

By Scott Hoffman Black
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

When people think about bark beetles – if they think of them at all – they likely picture destructive insect pests or visualize large swaths of dead and dying trees. News stories often give the impression that bark beetles are detrimental to our forests and have no intrinsic value. In fact, the conifer forests of temperate North America would not be the same without these small insects. Far from being useless, native bark beetles could easily be considered keystone species whose removal would have a profound effect on our forest ecosystems.

We often think that animals with a vital role in an ecosystem must be physically imposing. The elephant, for example, a keystone species of Africa's savannahs and forests, dramatically affects the structure of its habitat by creating gaps among the trees through which sunlight enters, enabling a more diverse variety of plants and small animals to flourish. As well, the seeds of many plant species must pass through an elephant's digestive tract in order to germinate. If the largest animal in Africa is a keystone species, can a tiny insect in our forests be considered one, too?

Bark beetles are small (less than a third of an

Native bark beetles function as nutrient recyclers, agents of disturbance, and regulators of productivity, diversity, and density.

inch, or about one to nine millimeters in length), cylindrical beetles belonging to a subfamily of the weevils called Scolytinae, a diverse lineage of more than 6,000 known species worldwide. Bark beetle species construct an egg gallery under the bark of their host tree. Eggs are laid and hatch into larvae, which feed on the phloem in feeding channels; after four instars, the larvae pupate and develop into adults, still under the bark.

Many bark beetles specialize in a single tree species, although some, such as the mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*), feed on a number of closely related species (in this case,

pinés). Bark beetles are important members of a complex, species-rich food web. These insects are hosts for parasites and are prey for a variety of animals, including birds, spiders, and other beetles. For example, over 70 enemy insect species have been recorded for the Western pine beetle (*D. brevicomis*) and over 60 for the mountain pine beetle. Insect-gleaning birds such as woodpeckers eat bark beetles, and the snags of beetle-killed trees create nest sites for hawks, owls, warblers, woodpeckers, and wrens, as well as bats, squirrels, martens, Pacific fishers, and lynx. One study in ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) forests found that the herbaceous biomass was 50 to 100 times as great in stands five years after an infestation of mountain pine beetles as in uninfested stands. This extra biomass provides forage for larger grazers, such as deer and elk, and shelter and nest sites for a variety of small mammals and birds.

Integral components of healthy forest ecosystems, native bark beetles function as nutrient recyclers, agents of disturbance, and regulators of productivity, diversity, and density. The turnover of plant parts – through mortality and decomposition – following a beetle infestation maintains the nutrient-cycling processes that are essential to soil fertility. By pruning and thinning trees, beetles indirectly reduce the competition among, and enhance the productivity of, surviving trees; this increases the diversity of structure and tree species, and also promotes the stability and recovery of the forest ecosystem.

Most bark beetles cause little or no economic damage; they normally thrive and reproduce in standing dead or severely weakened trees, or in downed wood. Only a relatively few species – such as the mountain pine beetle – attack and ultimately kill healthy trees. A small number of bark beetles have no chance against the defenses of a healthy tree, but by releasing pheromones they attract potential allies. The thousands of beetles that respond to these pheromones attack a tree en masse

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and can overwhelm its natural defense mechanisms. While a healthy tree normally expels beetles by flooding an entrance site with resin – drowning the invaders or pushing them out – it can't produce enough sap to thwart a mass invasion. In this way, bark beetles resemble mammalian predators that collectively attack and kill prey much larger than themselves. In addition, bark beetles have a mutualistic association with plant fungi, which are usually necessary to make the tree's cellulose digestible for the insects; this relationship plays a critical role in killing the attacked tree.

Species that cause the death of their hosts face a problem: if they become too efficient at finding and attacking their hosts, they may reduce their food supply to such a low level that their own extinction becomes a distinct possibility. This problem is particularly acute for those bark beetle species that require the thicker cambium of a more mature tree in order to reproduce. Complicating matters is the fact that host trees have evolved to maximize their own survival and persistence.



Adult
Dendroctonus
beetle

(from NM State Forestry
Division website)

Indeed, native conifers, beetles, and fungi evolved in concert over millions of years, leading to the forest ecosystems we know today. Through this process of co-evolution, a state of balance has developed. By contrast, non-native beetles and pathogens can wreak havoc on an otherwise in-balance ecosystem. Non-native Dutch elm disease, for instance – introduced from Europe in the 1930s and vectored by bark beetles – destroyed millions of American elm trees.

Despite the positive roles that native bark beetles play, they are often reviled as pests that threaten our forest resources, insects that must be controlled

or eradicated. Contrary to this popular view, bark beetles do not pose a threat to forest resources unless the conditions in the forest have already changed in ways that facilitate an increase in beetle populations. In the past, the old-growth forests that covered North American landscapes were remarkably resistant to devastation by beetles, largely because a great diversity of plant and predator species limited the ability of would-be pests to reach population levels high enough to be destructive to entire forests. Over the last century, however, epidemics of bark beetles have become more prevalent, in part because of the mismanagement of our forested landscapes. More than 90 percent of the old-growth forests in the United States have been cut. Logging and fire suppression have created forests that lack diversity of age, species, and structure. These managed landscapes are often highly susceptible to a variety of “pests,” including bark beetles.

For nearly a century, foresters have tried to control these beetles through logging. These efforts have not been successful at stopping insect infestations that are already underway. “Control” methods have, in fact, often made matters worse by removing large dead or dying trees that are critical habitat for many of the animals – such as woodpeckers and predatory and parasitic insects – that would otherwise help control beetles naturally. Control efforts such as logging will not succeed so long as the conditions that allow an epidemic to occur – drought, fire suppression, and uniform or monoculture stands – remain. 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.

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Hoffman Black, executive director of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation (www.xerces.org), is an ecologist and entomologist. His most recent publication is *Logging to Control Insects*. Reprinted with permission from *Wings, Essays on Invertebrate Conservation*, Vol. 28, No. 2; Fall 2005.

Inmortal:

A Favorite Northern New Mexico Remedy

By Linda La Grange, Ph.D.
New Mexico Highlands University

Michael Moore, a well-known herbalist of the southwestern United States, has identified *Ligusticum poteri* (Oshà), *Asclepias asperula* (Inmortal), and *Anemopsis californica* (Yerba Mansa) as the three most valuable traditional northern New Mexico herbal remedies.

Of these, the medicinal properties of inmortal are the least known outside of the southwestern United States. Other common names for inmortal are spider milkweed, antelope horns, and spider antelope horns. The name *Asclepias* is derived from the name of the ancient Greek god of medicine Asklepios, the descendents of whom were priests and physicians who were charged with maintaining the people's devotion to the god of medicine.

Inmortal is a perennial that grows to a height and width of approximately two feet. The small flowers that cluster to form the milkweed head range in color from pink to green, with a darker stripe down the center. The sweetly fragrant flowers appear in July and August and the seeds form in September and October. The flowers are comprised of five petals that curve upward, projecting slightly above and between the five hoods. Both the leaves and the seed pods are long and curved, resembling antelope horns. Tiny hairs cover the long narrow leaves as well as the stems. The plant contains a milky sap that is extremely bitter tasting and can cause skin irritation if applied directly to the skin. In fact, one identified use of the sap is that of wart removal. The plant seems to thrive on south-facing rocky slopes, sending its roots in a torturous journey over and around the buried rocks – a journey that has to be reversed when attempting to harvest the roots.

Inmortal is a hardy plant, surviving in extreme cold and dry conditions. It is not rhizomatous, and consequently, not likely to proliferate and take over areas occupied by other plant species. The glycosides contained in inmortal are poisonous to all types of livestock. According to the USDA, an animal has to consume green plant material amounting to approximately 1.2% of its body weight in order to reach toxic levels. The young

shoots and leaves are edible; however, because of the bitterness of the sap and the presence of the glycosides, as the plant is boiled the water should be changed at least three times. The flowers can also be boiled and eaten, having a slightly sweet taste. If the flowers are boiled slowly, a thick, sweet syrup is formed.

Inmortal contains the cardiac glycoside asclepiadin as well as other cardenolides. Currently, Dr. R.A. Martin, a chemistry professor at Centenary College (Louisiana), is systematically examining the more than 100 species of *Asclepias* milkweeds in a search for a safer cardiac glycoside to replace the toxic digitalis cardiac glycoside. The milkweed cardenolides are noteworthy because of their impact on insect/plant interactions.

The monarch butterfly uses the milkweed plant as a larval food host plant. As a consequence, the cardenolides are ingested and accumulate within the monarch's cell tissue, their presence a noxious deterrent to predators of the butterfly. This protection from predators extends to viceroy butterflies, which so successfully mimic the appearance of the monarch butterfly that predators avoid them, even though they have no glycosides.

Although the medicinal use of inmortal is fairly specific to northern New Mexico, people in other areas of the world are very familiar with the medicinal uses of a variety of species of *Asclepias*. In an excerpt written by Dr. Richard Kunze, from the Transactions of the National Eclectic Medical Association, Vol. X (1883), there is an extensive discussion of the medical properties of North American species of *Asclepias*. I quote an example of their praises of *Asclepias*: "Having broken or rather 'torn up' some very ancient adhesions of the pleura with *Asclepias*, we think that nothing short of a petrified individual could withstand the onslaughts of this Herculean agent." Also noted in this excerpt is that the use of *Asclepias* was originally learned from Native Americans. The

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monograph ran on for about 20 pages, enumerating the many virtues of *Asclepias*.

Closer to home, L.S.M. Curtain, in her book *Healing Herbs of the Upper Rio Grande* (1947), described the most common traditional preparations, methods and medicinal uses of inmortal. For example, a teaspoon of the powdered root was mixed in a glass of cold water and allowed to stand for 20 minutes. After the liquid turned yellow, the patient was to drink it before breakfast to treat fever, headache, and chest pain. Another remedy with meticulous instructions for proper administration was that of scraping the root and mixing it with enough warm water to form a plaster that was placed on the ribs. Simultaneously, as much of the powdered root as could fit on the point of a knife was mixed in a glass of water and consumed while holding the glass in the left hand.

In 1993 one of my students, Kevin Compton, did an independent study, "The Traditional Use of Inmortal Among Northern New Mexicans". Kevin lived in Vallecitos, along the banks of the Trampas River in northern New Mexico. He wrote of his friendship established almost 20 years earlier with a man named Bialquin Pacheco. At the time they met (1973), Bialquin was 58 years old, having lived his whole life in the valley except for a brief time in the military during World War II. He didn't own a car, lived without electricity, and used horse-drawn farming implements to maintain his small plot of land. Bialquin, who spoke only Spanish, began to teach Kevin, who spoke only English, the traditional way of life in Vallecitos. He gave Kevin some inmortal leaves and asked him to locate the plant but did not give him any clues about where he should look or what the whole plant looked like. After three days of searching, Kevin gave up, asked for help, and was promptly guided to Bialquin's own little inmortal patch. Once he knew what to look for, Kevin quickly located numerous clusters of inmortal in a variety of locations across northern New Mexico. For the next 20 years, Kevin supplied his elderly Vallecitos neighbors with freshly harvested inmortal roots. In exchange, they told him what they knew about its medical uses.

For instance, Kevin's friend Ben, age 78, took inmortal for the *corazon* and shortness of breath. He stirred a teaspoon of the ground root into a cup of tepid water and immediately drank it. This

routine was repeated every morning for 4-6 weeks. Ben also took inmortal in the same fashion to treat a sore throat. If he had the flu, he mixed the powdered root with lard and rubbed the mixture on his chest and between his shoulder blades. Finally, Ben mentioned that a teaspoon of the ground root stirred into a shot of whiskey given to a woman giving birth will "clean the woman out".

Kevin also interviewed Doña Jesusita Aragon, the famous Las Vegas, NM-area midwife. Jesusita began her life's work at age 14. Over the following three quarters of a century she delivered almost 12,000 babies. When Kevin asked her about inmortal, Jesusita said that her grandparents had learned of its healing properties from Native Americans. The list of conditions for which inmortal treatment was said to be beneficial included heart problems, stomach problems, ulcers, sore throat, colds, pneumonia, and loose teeth. In the case of loose teeth, the finely ground inmortal root powder was tightly packed around the loose tooth, causing the gums to tighten. As a midwife, Jesusita typically used the root to mitigate afterbirth pains and to hasten the expulsion of the placenta. She added that inmortal could be used to start the flow of a late menstrual period. Most people harvest inmortal in the fall, but Jesusita preferred to collect her inmortal roots on April 15th, which is *El Dia de la Virgen* – the day that the Blessed Mother blesses all herbs.

The use of inmortal as an herbal remedy by northern New Mexicans continues to be a strong tradition. Because of a resurgence of interest in herbal remedies in the general population and the herbal industry's use of web-based marketing, knowledge of inmortal has gradually been disseminated to areas beyond northern New Mexico. Of possible concern is that increased demand for the root will lead to wanton collection activities. For years and years northern New Mexico collectors have followed the dictum, "Harvest only one of 10 plants and always leave a portion of the root system of the harvested plant in the ground."

+++++

La Grange is Interim Associate Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, at NM Highlands University.

Editor's Note: Consumption of plants collected in the wild can be dangerous. Many plant families have edible members as well as lethal species.

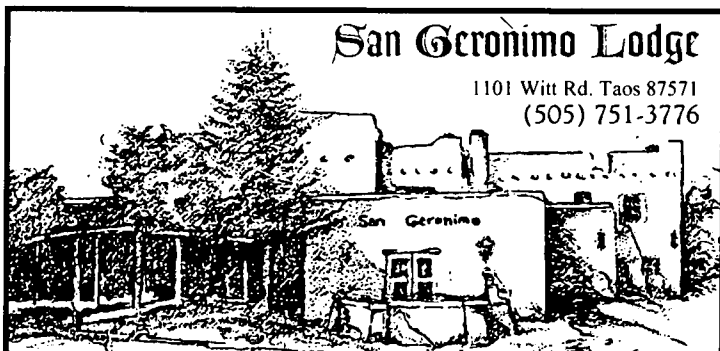


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Fern Research...

A botanist was trying to research some details about a particular kind of fern, so she sent a request to all her colleagues, asking them to send her any information they had about it.

Unfortunately, she didn't word her request very well, and all the botanists she'd contacted thought she was looking for details about any ferns, rather than just the one species. So within just a few hours of sending it out, her fax machine was buzzing with piles of useless documents about all kinds of ferns — there were tree ferns and wood ferns, ostrich ferns and cinnamon ferns... but very few about the particular type she wanted.

So she sent another message to everyone: If it ain't bracken, don't fax it.


Submitted by Marshall Carter-Tripp
 El Paso Chapter

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In the summer of 1996 human habitation on earth made a subtle, uncelebrated passage from being mostly rural to being mostly urban. More than half of all humans now live in cities. The natural habitat of our species, then, officially, is steel, pavement, streetlights, architecture, and enterprise – the hominid agenda.


With all due respect for the wondrous ways people have invented to amuse themselves and one another on paved surfaces, I find that this exodus from the land makes me unspeakably sad. I think of the children who will never know, intuitively, that a flower is a plant's way of making love, or what silence sounds like, or that trees breathe out what we breathe in.

Barbara Kingsolver, in *Small Wonder*

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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.

July meeting—None.

July field trip—Pecos River Ranch. We all enjoyed this ranch field trip so much last year when the penstemons and many other things were in bloom. We wanted to go back at a different time and take another look at this beautiful place. Tiana Scott is coordinating.

No local August meeting but don't forget to sign up to help out at the plant sale. We really need you! Contact Laura White at Laura@unm.edu (243-5069) or Beth Herschman at Herschman9@aol.com (892-2230).

August 18—Set up for plant sale. All volunteers get first choice of plants at 3 pm.

August 19—Annual Educational Fair and Plant Sale by Albuquerque Chapter.

September 7 meeting—“Unusual Death Valley Experiences” by Laura White and Beth Herschman. They have each been to Death Valley at different, very unusual times: Beth, in the fall of 2004, when there had been so much rain that it filled the “dry” lakebeds; Laura, in the spring of 2005, when there was an unprecedented bloom of wildflowers due to the rain. They will share their experiences in this very unusual ecosystem.

September 10 field trip—To monitor the Pecos sunflower in Santa Rosa.

October 5 meeting—“Seeds of Survival” by Pam McBride. Talk focuses on native plant use in antiquity, techniques used by Native Americans for cultivating plants in our arid environment, and slides of archaeological sites with outstanding preservation or unusual archaeobotanical assemblages. Pam is a paleoethnobotanist, interested in how plants were used in prehistory as well as historically, and how that knowledge is preserved for future generations.

El Paso

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

July 13 talk—“Four Seasons of Color” by Jackye Meinecke, owner of the Enchanted Gardens in Las Cruces. Jackye will highlight plants that bloom at different times of the year, enabling us to have gardens that bloom all year long!

September 14 talk—“Principles of Landscape Design for Your Home” by Cheryl Garing. Cheryl has a degree in horticulture and is a long-time member of the El Paso Native Plant Society.

Gila (Silver City)

All programs are free and open to the public. Meetings are at 7 pm at WNMU's Harlan Hall. Field trips depart the south parking lot of WNMU Fine Arts Center at 8 a.m. after organizing a car pool. Be prepared for field trips; bring water, hat, sunscreen, boots, and food. Free and open to the public. For more information call 388-8146.

July 16 field trip—To visit Gene and Elizabeth Simon's ranch off Highway 61 in the Mimbres. Expect to get your shoes wet crossing the Mimbres River to see their velvet ash which has been nominated as a National Champion Big Tree. The hike will be led by Martha Carter and Gene Simon.

August 20 field trip—Hike to Little Walnut area and AD Mountain, led by Gerry Niva.

September 15 talk—“Curanderismo and Its Use of Native Plants” by Dr. Gilbert S. Arizaga, a Silver City physician specializing in dermatology and pediatrics. Dr. Arizaga's mother was a curandera, and he has incorporated some aspects of this native use of herbal medicines into his practice.

September 17 field trip—Hike to Signal Peak Road, led by Gerry Niva.

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.

July 12 talk—“Ocotillo: The Ultimate Plastic Plant” by Keith Killingbeck, Visiting Professor of Biological Science from the University of Rhode Island, currently working with NMSU Biology Department and in Jornada Experimental Range.

July 15 walk—A summer drive by car through the desert, with Lisa Mandelkern, to observe several easily accessible and interesting areas

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

Activities & Events

around Las Cruces. 4-wheel-drive NOT needed. Meet at K-mart parking lot on Hwy. 70 at 10 am.

August 19 walk—A special tour up La Luz Canyon in the Sacramento Mountains with Lisa Mandelkern to view some of the summer flora in a beautiful drive through a mountain forest. Meet at K-mart parking lot on Hwy. 70 at 9 am.

September 13 talk—"General Changes in Vegetation and Landscape in the Chihuahuan Desert and Organ Mountains over Time" by William "Sandy" Dick-Peddie, NMSU Professor Emeritus of Biology.

September 16 walk—To the Pena Blanca area of the Organ Mountains to view it in the fall (return to same area we viewed in April), with Carolyn Gressitt, Tom Packard, and John Freyermuth. Meet at Ramada parking lot at Valley and University Ave. at 9 am.

October 14 walk—Photography workshop on the Pine Tree Trail near Aguirre Springs, Organ Mountains, with Lisa Mandelkern and members of NMSU Biology Department. Meet at K-mart parking lot on Hwy. 70 at 10 am.

October 27-28 field trip—Overnight to Guadalupe Mountains National Park. Get to park on your own. Group will meet early Saturday morning for a plant excursion by Charles Galt, a chapter member and expert on the natural history of GMNP.

Otero (Alamogordo)

July 22 field trip—To Ski Apache. Meet in the K-mart parking lot at the Mall at 7:30 am. Those who live north of Alamogordo can meet us at the parking lot at Ski Apache at 9 am. For more information, call Len Hendzel, 434-6261.

August 26 field trip—To Bailey Canyon. Meet at 7:30 am in the K-mart parking lot. Or if you prefer, meet at Bailey Canyon just off Hwy 82 at 8:30 am. For more information, call Len Hendzel, 434-6261.

September 16 field trip—To Otero Mesa. BLM personnel will lead the trip. Meet at the old WalMart at the junction of Hwys. 70 and 54 at 7:30

am. We will turn east at the Border Patrol check point. For more information, call Len Hendzel, 434-6261.

Santa Fe

Meetings are at 7 p.m. at College of Santa Fe, 1600 St. Michael's Dr., Luke Hall, Room 303. For all field trips bring plenty of water, food, a hat, sunscreen and good walking shoes. For more information contact: Tom Antonio at 473-6465, tantonio@csf.edu; or Carol Johnson at 466-1303, gcjohnson@comcast.net.

June 25 field trip—Native plant hike at Lenora Curtin Wetland Preserve with Nancy Daniel and Bob Pennington. Take I-25 south to exit at La Cienega. Turn right, then a right onto the frontage road going north. Follow the signs to the preserve. Hike begins at promptly 9 am. Drive from Santa Fe is approximately 20 minutes. For information call Nancy Daniel at 988-9141.

July 8 field trip—To Los Trigos Ranch in Rowe, NM. This is the old Greer Garson Ranch near the Pecos River. Departs at 9 am from main parking lot at College of Santa Fe. Enter the college campus from the 1600 S. Michael's Dr. entrance. Continue south through the traffic circle, and turn left at first stop sign into the parking lot; we will car pool from there. Driving time approx. 30 minutes. Max Weber will be leading this walk. For more information call Tom Antonio at 505-690-5105.

July 22 field trip—To Ortiz Mountains Education Preserve run by the Santa Fe Botanical Garden for "Plants Above 8,000 ft." Meet at 9 am at the parking lot near the end of Santa Fe County Road 55. The Ortiz Mountains Educational Preserve is in Cerrillos, NM, near the end of SF County Road 55, also called Gold Mine Road. We will car pool from there in 4WD vehicles up to the preserve. Take Hwy 14 south from Santa Fe to Cerrillos. Driving time about 30-35 minutes. For more information call the botanical garden at 505-428-1684.

August 19 field trip—To the Santa Fe Ski Basin area. Meet at 9 am in main parking lot near the chair lift entrance. Easy hike. You must let Tom Antonio know if you are going on this trip (505-690-5105): the forest may or may not be open. As a backup, we may go to the Santa Fe River Canyon Preserve.

(Continued on page 15)

Native Plant Society of New Mexico Election of Officers

The election for Officers of the Society takes place July 1-Aug. 1, 2006. Results will be announced Aug. 10 at the Board of Directors meeting held in conjunction with the annual state meeting. The two-year terms begin then. The Nominating Committee of the Board of Directors has nominated the following candidates:

President: Chick Keller

Santa Fe Chapter. Currently state Vice President; chapter Past President. Curator of Jemez Mountain Herbarium, Pajarito Environmental Education Center, Los Alamos, NM.

Vice President: Tom Antonio

Santa Fe Chapter. Currently chapter President and represents chapter on state Board of Directors. Associate Professor of Sciences & Conservation Studies, College of Santa Fe.

Recording Secretary: Carolyn Gressitt

Las Cruces Chapter. Currently chapter Vice President; bulk mailer of NPSNM newsletter. Instructional Specialist with Department of Instructional Support, Gadsden Independent School District.

Membership Secretary: John Freyermuth

Las Cruces Chapter. Currently state Membership Secretary. Retired from New Mexico State University library.

Treasurer: Stephen Robertson

Taos Chapter. Currently on chapter Field Botany Committee. Long experience with accounting and investments.

Election ballot on next page

(Continued from page 14)

Activities & Events

August 26—Aster/Sunflower Family workshop. 9 am-12 pm. Limited to 10 people. We will dissect composite flowers, learn their parts, and practice keying out live specimens. The mini-workshop will take place in Luke Hall Rm. 215 on the campus of College of Santa Fe. The workshop is free but you must register with Tom Antonio in advance at 505-690-5105.

Taos

Meetings are Wednesdays at 7 pm at the San Geronimo Lodge. Note: Program topics and field trips subject to change. Check daily listings in the *Taos News Tempo* and your e-mails from NPS-Taos for updates or e-mail Kathryn Peel: HRXpert@msn.com.

July 8 field trip—Annual Baca Park Habitat Restoration (Weed Discovery Field Trip!). Meet at 9 am at the Park.

July 13 field trip—To Williams Lake and beyond. Meet at 7 am at Hikers Parking Lot, Taos Ski

Valley.

August 6 field trip--To Indian Lake, Aqua Piedra Campground east of Tres Ritos. Meet at 7:30 am at Ranchos de Taos Post Office.

August 26 field trip—Herbarium tour and work session. Meet at 9 am at Taos County Agricultural Center.

Native Plant People Featured

Native plant people have been turning up lately on the pages of *New Mexico Magazine*, with two articles in the April 2006 issue. The "Turning the Page" column features "R. DeWitt Ivey, Illustrator's Career Still in Full Bloom." It highlights Ivey's botanical career from 1947, when he first came to New Mexico, to the publication of his field guide *Flowering Plants of New Mexico*, now out in its fourth edition and with 11,000 copies in print. In the same issue is an article called "Adapting to Our Climate, 6 Great Tips on How to Create a Successful, Water-Wise Garden" by noted author and nursery owner Judith Phillips. The article has very timely advice for using "less water in our gardens with excellent results."

NPSNM BALLOT -- Election of Officers 2006

(Candidate information on previous page)

This ballot may be duplicated for use by any NPSNM member. Only one ballot per member. All ballots must be signed or enclosed in a signed envelope by the voting member.

Only one vote for each position is allowed.

President: Committee Nominee, Chick Keller _____
Write-in _____

Vice President: Committee Nominee, Tom Antonio _____
Write-in _____

Recording Secretary: Committee Nominee, Carolyn Gressitt _____
Write-in _____

Membership Secretary: Committee Nominee, John Freyermuth _____
Write-in _____

Treasurer: Committee Nominee, Stephen Robertson _____
Write-in _____

Voter eligibility certification: I am a current member of NPSNM.

Signed _____

Ballots must be returned by August 1 to: Wynn Anderson, President, NPSNM, 3015 Piedmont, El Paso, TX 79902

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