9/78

Your dues are due

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO

September Newsletter, 1978

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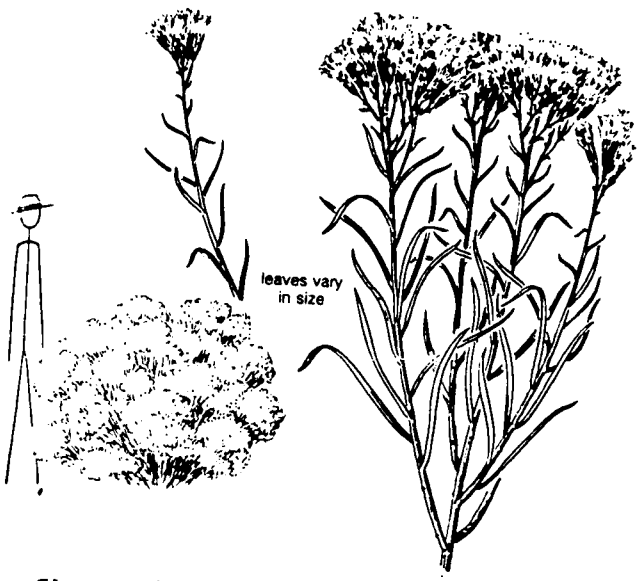


Chrysothamnus nauseosus
Rabbitbrush, Chamisa
Asteraceae (Sunflower family)
Flowers yellow

NEWS & NOTES

Santa Fe Chapter:
September 27 - Wildflower Slide Show. St. John's College, 7:30 pm. David Deardorff will introduce the members to Dog Canyon, one of the unique natural areas of New Mexico. Come to room 116 of the Laboratory Building.

Field Trip Report:
The select few who wandered the meadows of the Santa Fe Ski Basin were rewarded with a beautiful day for a mountain picnic. The meadows were particularly rich in gentians, the trippers having found three different species: Gentianella amarella, Little Gentian; Gentianopsis thermalis, Rocky Mountain Fringed Gentian; and Gentiana calycosa, the large, blue perennial gentian. A large-flowered composite Helenium hoopesii, Orange Sneezeweed, was in full bloom along with Erigeron divergens, Spreading Fleabane.

Fall is the time for composites, or daisy-type wildflowers. Rabbitbrush, or Chamisa (Chrysothamnus nauseosus), and Purple Aster (Aster bigelovii) are blooming across New Mexico.

Mushroom Shortage: Rumor has it that 1978 is proving to be a poor year for mushrooms because of the small amount of summer rain.

Plant Identification Books:
McDougall, W.B.; Seed Plants of Northern Arizona; Museum of Northern Arizona, 1973. Roger Peterson reports that this is a workable flora which will serve for parts of New Mexico. Users of Kearney and Peebles will be relieved to hear that there are species descriptions in the book.

Cronquist, A. Holmgren, N. Holmgren, Reveal, P. Holmgren; The Intermountain Flora, Volume Six; It covers the monocots and has excellent illustrations of all species as well as up-to-date nomenclatural information. This volume was preceded by Volume One, the gymnosperms and ferns. New Mexico botanists welcome this flora as an invaluable reference.

A Donation Funds Membership Roster:
Thanks to Bill Mayfield who donated the necessary funds for publishing and distributing a NPS membership roster. Another

project which awaits funding is the establishment of a slide collection for use in presenting talks around the state.

Booklets for Sale:

The two booklets prepared by the Native Plant Society are still available. Native Plants for Landscaping in Northern New Mexico ($.50) and Native Plants for Landscaping in Southern New Mexico ($.75) can be purchased at meetings of the NPS.

How to Join the Native Plant Society:

Send your annual dues to Phyllis Hughes, P.O. Box 340, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501. Send $6.00 for individual and $8.00 for a family membership. You will receive the monthly newsletter and notification of special events.

Aster bigelovii
Sticky Aster
Asteraceae (Sunflower family)
Flowers purple

Acknowledgments:

The editor wishes all to know that the line drawings in this issue of the newsletter are from William A. Weber's Rocky Mountain Flora and Francis H. Elmore's Shrubs and Trees of the Southwest Uplands. Jeanne R. Janish did the line drawings for Elmore's book and also the drawings for the Southwest Parks and Monuments Association Series of wildflower books, which we have borrowed from throughout the past year.

Gentianopsis thermalis
Rocky Mountain Fringed Gentian
Gentianaceae(Gentian family)
Flowers purple-blue

→ This list of readings accompanies Melvin Hecht's article, "The Decline of the Grass Lawn Tradition in Tucson" which is printed on pages 3-6.

on the grass lawn tradition:

J. B. Jackson. "A New Kind of Space." *Landscape*, 18:1 (1969), 33-35.

———. *American Space*. W. W. Norton & Co., 1972.

David Lowenthal. "The American Scene." *The Geographical Review*, 58 (1968), 61-88.

James Rose. "The Sensible Landscape." *Landscape*, 10:3 (1961), 24-26.

Frank A. Waugh. *Everybody's Garden*. Orange Judd Publishing Co., 1930.

on the symbolic character of townscapes:

James S. Duncan. "Landscape Taste as a Symbol of Group Identity." *The Geographical Review*, 63 (July 1973), 334-55.

on the changing appraisal of the Southwest:

Burl Noggle. "Anglo Observers of the Southwest Borderlands, 1825-1890: The Rise of a Concept." *Arizona and the West*, 1 (1959), 105-31.

Earl Pomeroy. *In Search of the Golden West*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1959.

Robert B. Riley. "Urban Myths and the New Cities of the Southwest." *Landscape*, 17:1 (1967), 21-23.

The Decline of the Grass Lawn Tradition in Tucson

by Melvin E. Hecht

Reprinted by permission from Landscape, Berkeley, California,

A quiet revolution in urban landscaping is underway in parts of the Sonoran Desert in Arizona. Gravel, rock, desert plants, bare earth, and paving are supplanting grass lawns in the front yards of homes, apartments, and commercial buildings in Tucson—Arizona's second largest city. Many Tucsonans have been persuaded to forsake the traditional green expanse out front for practical reasons, but underlying these conscious considerations is a change in their lifestyle and their appraisal of the region's heritage and natural environment. The new consciousness is marking the decline in one of the American landscape's most pervasive cultural symbols, the front yard grass lawn.

Before the railroad came to Tucson, Anglo settlers had followed Mexican building and landscaping practices more out of economic necessity than rapid acculturation. By 1880, however, a grass lawn with trees was the most popular symbol of the Anglo-American's conquest of a harsh, unfriendly desert environment. Old newspapers, pictures, and promotional material confirm that Tucsonans took great pride in converting the desert into a green, "civilized" oasis typical of the eastern towns they had left.

Not only were Anglos eager to conquer the desert; they also wanted to replace symbols of the older, "inferior" Spanish-Mexican culture. As residents of a "progressive" American city, they felt compelled to abandon the Spanish-Mexican custom of building residences at streetside property lines and maintaining private walled patio gardens. In housing and landscaping, as well as in most other areas of culture, newcomers of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries affirmed their Anglo-Americanism by rejecting the local Mexican culture, regardless of its practicality.

A small avant-garde group of southwestern Anglos did adopt non-grass landscaping and Spanish-Mexican building styles in the late nineteenth century. These *aficionados,* led by writer Charles Lummis, found the desert visually and spiritually rewarding. They felt the Indian-Spanish-Mexican heritage equal, if not superior to, the dominant northwest European roots of eastern America. In Tucson, the homes of these usually well-educated and wealthy residents were mainly on the outskirts of the city in open country.

Although this early interest in the Hispanic heritage eventually led to the widespread adoption of Spanish Revival building styles, the Spanish-Mexican tradition of landscaping could not dislodge the English-American front yard lawn of grass. Tucson subdivisions of the California and Santa Fe styles adopted the open grass lawn of American suburbia.

During the 1920's and 1930's, some architect-designed houses in the mountain foothills flanking the Tucson basin had non-grass front lawns, as did some suburban and rural homesites in the more gently sloping basin. Most basin homeowners who chose non-grass landscaping prior to World War II were responding as much to a limited private water supply as to a greater acceptance of a grass substitute. Before World War II, the small cactus garden or hedge that the city's Anglo residents cultivated in a corner or along the property line of the front yard usually provided their only clear recognition of the Sonoran Desert setting.

The Mexican population helped to keep the non-grass Hispanic tradition alive in their *barrios,* with their traditional folk landscaping of bare earth, trees, shrubs, and flowers in pots and beds. But as they prospered and moved to new eastern-style subdivisions with legally required front building setbacks, they too planted grass. Today, few Tucson streets have higher percentages of grass lawns than those occupied by middle- and lower-middle-income Mexican-American people. In contrast, non-grass lawns are most numerous in upper- and middle-income Anglo subdivisions. Each culture group has sought to identify with the other or has seen his natural setting with different perceptions.

The grass lawn tradition was not challenged seriously in the city until the early 1950's. Thousands of ex-servicemen who had been stationed in southwestern Arizona during the war returned to settle. Although climate was the chief attraction, the desert landscape also appears to have appealed more to them than it did to the settlers of 1880. To the newcomers of the 1950's and 1960's, the desert was a weekend playground rather than a hostile impediment to the good life. Many new settlers saw the same beauty, spaciousness, and natural drama in the desert landscape that appeal to readers of *Arizona Highways* and the works of Joseph Wood Krutch.

Abandonment of the front yard grass lawn began in the higher-priced subdivisions and gradually moved into the moderately priced developments. The popularity of such grass substitutes as desert shrub and stone, especially, has steadily grown until an estimated one-half of the houses built in Tucson during the past decade have non-grass landscaping. Recently, many residents in older subdivisions have started to convert their grass lawns to stone, desert shrub, or paving.

Stone is the most common lawn substitute for grass, and the most popular stone, three-eighths-inch pea gravel, is often colored green. A few liberated residents reject this obvious throwback to the grass lawn tradition and choose red, gold, blue, or turquoise-colored gravel, white marble chips, or even crushed brick. Through the years, Tucsonans have lost their need to have something green over the ground in front of the house, even if it is gravel. Now, natural colors, similar to the surrounding mountain rock walls and desert pavements, are more common in the city. Through the years, more residents have also selected larger stones and rocks or boulders, either scattered or piled in studied arrangements. Miniature desert landscapes are created outside the front door.

Bare ground and concrete or bituminous paving are the most radical departures from the grass lawn tradition—

aesthetically and materially. Most paved front yards, like some of the gravel, are designed for parking. This striking deviation from the American model restores utility to land that is largely unused elsewhere.

Today the distribution of grass lawn substitutes in Tucson has assumed a degree of spatial order not always obvious to the casual observer. The percentage of non-grass lawns increases as the size and price of lots increase, and shrinks with the increasing age of the subdivision. Fringe areas have fewer grass lawns than those nearer the central city.

The natural desert is most often left undisturbed on lots of from two to four acres in the foothills of the Santa Catalina and Tucson mountains where the unusual and mainly arborescent saguaro *(Carnegiea gigantea)* and palo verde *(Cercidium microphyllum* and *C. floridum)* dominate the Sonoran Desert vegetation. Plantings normally remain behind patio walls or, less often, at the foundation. The rich saguaro–palo verde association excites great interest among residents, writers, and the general public, and is the idealized homesite for many residents of the more densely built-up and landscaped city below. The giant saguaro, which apparently has become a symbol for the Southwest, is especially prized.

Natural desert is still the most common landscaping on acre lots, but not without modification. Small shrubs and ephemerals are sometimes removed, the grounds raked occasionally, and additional indigenous and exotic plantings added to the natural stand. Some acre lots developed in the 1950's retain this desert landscaping within the built-up city of today, especially in the foothills. Lots in the basin, in contrast to those in the foothills, have a poorer native cover, consisting mainly of creosote bush *(Larrea tridentata)* and velvet mesquite *(Prosopis juliflora)*. Native and exotic shrubs usually are added, but stone ground cover is rare. Among the common native additions are saguaro and palo verde trees, the barrel cactus *(Ferocactus wislizeni)* and ocotillo *(Fouquieria splendens)*. From more distant parts of Arizona and beyond come such favorites as the century plant agave *(Agave schottii)*, Joshua tree *(Yucca brevifolia)*, several kinds of prickly pear or flapjack cactus *(Opuntia)*, beargrass *(Nolina microcarpa)*, organ pipe cactus *(Lemaireocereus thurberi)*, and the senita or old man cactus *(Lophocereus schottii)*.

Lots of less than an acre vary greatly in the price of the house and lot and in landscaping. Those with frontages of from eighty to one hundred feet in the middle- to upper-priced ranges are most likely to have some form of non-grass landscaping if the area was developed after World War II. The most expensive, prestigious basin subdivision of large lots developed before 1940 has grass lawns, whereas gravel with scattered planted desert shrubs is the prevailing landscaping in post–World War II higher-priced developments. As the price of the house and lot declines and the frontage drops below eighty feet, grass lawns become more frequent. Non-grass lawns move more to extremes of either higher density plantings—they might be called cactus gardens but the plantings are not all cactus—or an open cover of stones. Smaller houselots of higher value will have borders and a variety of efforts at ornamentation. Natural desert shrubs seldom survive the builder's bulldozer on lots smaller than one acre.

Modestly priced houselots in older subdivisions of bungalow and Spanish Revival houses remain mainly in grass. Many of these blocks will present a streetscape of grass lawns just like any eastern American city. Yet, on a street a block away, half the householders may have converted to non-grass landscaping. Generally, blocks of less expensive houses seldom have more than twenty-five percent of their front yards in a grass substitute. In older sections of the city, apartments and rentals lead the way in abandoning the grass lawn.

Why are so many Tucsonans now abandoning the grass lawns which they previously adopted so enthusiastically? One frequently heard local explanation is that stone, desert shrubs, and paving require less work and money. Some Tucsonans and many visitors assume the changeover is a by-product of the growing water shortage, and other local observers feel the switch is a whim of fashion that defies rational explanation.

Identifying the forces responsible for changes in the landscape is a complex issue, not easily comparable to changing fashions in clothing. The grass lawn has been too stable an element in the American landscape to become either a victim of whimsy or of an obsolescence manipulated by business interests.

The grass lawn in front of a city or town house has a long history in the United States, dating back to the early 1800's. Expansive grass lawns and single-family dwellings came to characterize the farms, villages, towns, small cities, and suburbs of America by the second half of the nineteenth century. The residential suburb served by the railroad typically contained detached single-family dwellings surrounded by lawns. This landscape symbolized financial and social success and promised a healthier, more wholesome life for the children.

During the twentieth century, possibly no American tradition rivaled for consistency the residential setback with a grass ground cover. Even the smallest single-family residence on the least expensive lot had a front setback, as did city apartments. A front lawn without hedges or fences had become so entrenched a tradition that a 1930 landscaping guide by Frank Waugh declared that if householders wished to be good Americans, they would maintain a respectable, open front yard with a grass lawn. The grass lawn habit has persisted. A Harris poll reported in a 1969 issue of *Life* showed that "green grass and trees around me" was checked more frequently as a desire of the average American than any other item on a list of twenty-six.

Americans want these grass lawns for their visual qualities and for the lifestyle they represent. Except for extremely low-income families who may use their front setback for storage, repair, or recreation, few Americans find any nonvisual or nonornamental uses for their front yards. Grass provides a setting for the house itself and creates a parklike effect for what Garrett Eckbo calls the "landscape of the street." The homeowner who dislikes maintaining a grass lawn will have one, nevertheless, to insure the resale value of his property and to meet the minimum standard of acceptability set by his neighbors who are interested in their property values. But now the non-grass lawn is gaining respectability in Tucson. It

appeals to residents and potential buyers who appreciate its practical advantages.

There is little doubt that non-grass lawns are less work. A summer lawn of bermuda grass requires watering several times a week, cutting every seven days, and at least one application of fertilizer each year. Bermuda spreads rapidly, and needs regular edging and a major rejuvenation once every several years. It becomes dormant and brown in the winter. If a Tucsonan wants a green grass lawn in winter he must also cut his bermuda and plant rye grass, something few do anymore. Perhaps seeing brown, dry bermuda grass for several months every winter prepared many Tucsonans for abandoning the green ground cover during the summer as well.

The cost of watering grass lawns has undoubtedly contributed to their decline, but to a more limited extent than is generally thought. The cost of water for grass lawns can run from $5 to more than $50 a month in Tucson, and water rates are higher in the outlying areas where non-grass is more popular than in the city proper. But high cost of maintenance alone cannot explain the switch to non-grass lawns. The distribution of non-grass landscaping among subdivisions of different price levels provides clear evidence that grass substitutes reflect considerations other than a simple response to savings in money and labor. Stone, desert shrubs, and paving—all less expensive than grass to maintain—are most popular among the higher-income group. Conversely, residents least able to afford maintenance costs—excluding the poorest who do without front yard landscaping—have the highest proportion of grass lawns. Moreover, numerous non-grass areas can be found in the newer parts of the city itself where water rates are the lowest.

Another reason given for the rise of non-grass landscaping is the health hazard presented by bermuda grass lawns. The pollen can wreak havoc on hay fever and asthma sufferers who have often moved to Tucson for relief. Residents can minimize pollen production by continually fertilizing, watering, and cutting their lawns—chores onerous to many non-allergic citizens and a genuine burden to the allergic. To combat the problem, several subdivisions in the foothills, where the price of the lot reflects the presence of an assumed "pollen-free, dust-free" thermal belt contain deed restrictions against planting bermuda grass.

Grass lawns may also be losing popularity in Tucson because their heat-absorbing qualities became less important after the widespread adoption of cooling and refrigeration in the 1940's. Grass lawns certainly reflect less heat than do stones, desert shrubs, or bare earth, but residents seem indifferent to this characteristic. Perhaps the recent rapid increase in energy rates will place renewed emphasis upon the importance of grass and trees to summer cooling.

The older population of Tucson is contributing to the growth of grass substitutes, though many retirees still prefer grass. Every type of setting where retirees cluster, from new mobile home parks to luxury apartments in the foothills, has examples of non-grass landscaping. It is more practical than grass for residents who leave for several months during the summer and especially convenient for the infirm. Many retired newcomers also welcome the different landscaping as a symbol of the dramatic change in their lives. It is a subject for conversation as well as functional. It is different from back home yet very acceptable in Tucson, perfect material for adult "show and tell."

These factors which contribute to Tucson's growing preference for non-grass landscaping do not hold true for all nonresidential buildings and areas. When choosing landscaping for their public institutions, for example, Tucsonans fall back on tradition. Almost all government office buildings, libraries, schools, and churches are surrounded by grass lawns, yet only at schools do they really serve a function.

Median strips also offer some interesting comparisons with residential landscaping patterns. Most medians, especially those in business districts, have grass and palm trees, reportedly at the insistence of merchants who feel that style to be more attractive and easier to keep clean. Landscaping on medians and islands along residential thoroughfares more closely corresponds to the surrounding neighborhoods. Areas developed in the early 1950's have medians with some grass along with saguaro, ocotillo, and other planted desert shrubs. Medians from the late 1960's use more paving, large rocks, and exotic plants.

New tourist-oriented facilities reflect the move to non-grass lawns. Generally, their landscaping shows an awareness of the attraction of the region's natural setting which older tourist facilities do not. The airport terminal displays mostly rock and desert shrub, while grass and citrus trees surround the railroad depot built in the 1920's. Motel landscaping ranges from grass to desert shrub and stone in a general association with age.

The commercial establishments, institutions, and residents who prefer grass landscaping can cite several good reasons besides tradition for keeping their lawns. Grass lawn supporters point out that few non-grass lawn owners mention the considerable labor required to weed stone lawns and to remove litter, especially that of neighborhood pets.

There are other disadvantages. Stone, large and small, is unsuited for walking—too hot for bare feet in the summer and a nuisance to anyone in open-toed shoes. Gravel scatters easily, so owners must sweep walkways frequently. Desert shrubs and cacti catch general debris and removal efforts are sometimes painful as well as time-consuming.

Social pressure also keeps many Tucsonans from converting to non-grass lawns. Homeowners speak of their reluctance to convert to stone because of the pride neighbors take in the green, parklike qualities of their street. They fear the criticism, if not downright ill will, that converting to a non-grass lawn might generate. But social acceptability is related to price and setting. In some higher-priced condominium apartments in the foothills, grass is prohibited in order to promote the southwestern image.

More Tucsonans would undoubtedly convert their grass lawns to stone if the price of conversion were not so high. The changeover, however, can cost as much as $500. That money could cover watering bills for several years or pay for installing an automatic underground sprinkling system. The difference in cost for initial landscaping is now much less between the two, because more developers are offering purchasers a choice between grass and gravel at no extra charge.

And so, despite its several disadvantages, growing numbers of Tucsonans are joining the quiet revolution in urban landscaping. So far, the decline of the grass lawn tradition is a metropolitan phenomenon in Arizona, limited largely to Tucson and Phoenix. Phoenix residents have not abandoned the grass lawn as readily as have Tucson residents, partly because of cooperative flood irrigation techniques and the very low cost of water for homes on former agricultural fields and orchards within the Salt River Water Users' Association in Phoenix.

The grass lawn also remains entrenched in Arizona's smaller cities and towns. The percentage of bare and untended front yards is larger where poverty is greater, but in middle-priced districts of towns and small cities, the grass lawn prevails almost exclusively. Does this pattern reflect the desires of a more conservative, less mobile citizenry found in smaller communities? Not entirely. For example, one-half the houselots in the small but rapidly growing retirement and recreation settlements in the Chemehuevi and Mojave valleys of the Colorado River have non-grass landscaping. Water cost and availability alone cannot explain why small towns stay away from grass substitutes either.

What, then, are the factors that determine whether a community will retain the grass lawn tradition or experiment with substitutes? Certainly, grass substitutes have appealing cost and labor advantages for both the city and the country dweller. Witness their widespread use not only with apartments and commercial buildings in Tucson but their occasional use in the eastern half of the United States. A number of office buildings in Clayton, Missouri, for instance, used gravel for their front ground cover in 1971. But the labor and money costs of grass have not increased so strikingly over the past years that we can totally accept this practical explanation. The same cost and labor factors were at work years ago when Tucson residents regarded grass lawns as the only acceptable ground cover out front. Clearly, the aesthetic and social consciousness of many Tusconans has changed, making grass lawns no longer worth the time and cash so willingly invested by earlier settlers. These decisions about costs are made within the context of what David Lowenthal terms "landscape tastes."

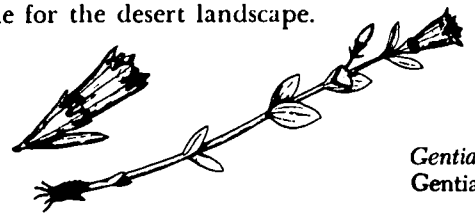
A new appreciation for the region is apparent in the attitude of many people and institutions that could easily afford to pay for keeping up a grass lawn. But growing grass in a near-arid, tropical setting no longer impresses many as a wonder of American technology and economy. Instead, more people are rejecting the grass lawn as a symbol of America's waste of water resources, although there has been no shortage of water in Tucson for many years. These changing attitudes occur more often among higher-income groups and help to explain the greater persistence of grass in lower-income, blue-collar neighborhoods.

Changes in lifestyle also help to explain the declining popularity of front yard turf. Mobility is a high priority among all sectors of the Tucson population because recreational activities, especially, are focused on the open country. Climatic amenities comprise one-fourth of the reasons given for moving to Arizona by settlers who arrived in the fifties and sixties. If hunting, fishing, and exploring the desert and mountains do not take these outdoor enthusiasts away from odious weekend lawn chores, golf and tennis do. They gain more satisfaction from participating in some leisure activity or watching television, than from their neighbors' and friends' approval of a "beautiful front lawn." Besides, neighborhood pressure to maintain a landscaping norm has seemingly all but disappeared in some areas where mobility and socio-economic mix have produced blocks of strangers with widely different lifestyles living in close proximity.

The changes in lifestyle may be more pronounced in Tucson and southern Arizona, but they are common to American culture and equally prevalent in other subtropical areas such as Florida and California. The grass lawn tradition is being challenged more successfully in Tucson than elsewhere, because its replacements provide a particularly appropriate substitute symbolism. Stone and shrubs, natural or prepared, reflect the growing acceptance of the Sonoran Desert landscape of southern Arizona. The Anglo's prevailing negative-to-ambivalent appraisal of the past has changed to one of positive approval. More and more people are "in love with the desert." Perhaps grass is not appreciated less, but the desert more. This appraisal is true not only in Tucson but throughout eastern America and the world. The use of gravel and desert-type shrubs for filling station landscaping in Pensacola, Florida, must stem from a growing acceptance of the ornamental attractiveness of desert material as well as its assumed practical value.

A reappraisal of the natural environment by itself has not made non-grass landscaping so much more acceptable in Tucson. The emergence of a distinctive culture region has accompanied the reappraisal, fostered by residents' enthusiastic adoption of specifically Mexican elements. Hispanic settlement preceded the arrival of the Anglo-Americans, and the two cultures have been able to work out a balance through the years not found elsewhere. Intermarriage has been common and the designation "Mexican" quite rightly acceptable. This balance has worked to preserve the unique elements of Arizona's experience with Mexican people and their culture—an experience which differs from that of Texas and California. The landscape bears witness to that difference in Arizona's version of the territorial house style, a local interpretation of the Spanish-Mexican traditional house which uses Mexican-made burnt adobe brick and other regionally distinctive contributions.

The decline of the grass lawn tradition in Tucson reflects the emergence of a culture region and a new appreciation of southern Arizona's natural setting and Hispanic heritage. This quiet revolution in urban landscaping also heralds the rise of a new tradition—one more practical and sensible for the desert landscape. □



Gentiana calycosa, Gentian

RARE II letters deadline September 30

The rationale for setting aside as wilderness large tracts of public lands which are pristine vestiges of our primeval natural heritage seems to embody at least two major objectives. First is the now widely substantiated idea that providing opportunities for wilderness experience may be necessary for the continued mental and spiritual well-being of the populace. This objective is tacitly incorporated in two of the primary criteria for wilderness (Potential for Solitude, and Primitive Recreation Opportunity) established by RARE II. Increasing population pressures on existing wilderness, encroaching urbanization, and environmental pollution are all compelling reasons for establishing additional wilderness areas. The second major objective is the preservation of the native flora and fauna - without which the designation "wilderness" in meaningless. It is with regard to this second objective - preservation of biological diversity - that the RARE II evaluation process is most inadequate.

The ecosystem approach adopted by the Forest Service specifies a minimum of 10,000 acres in order for an ecosystem to be considered for wilderness. Rare, endangered, and threatened species do not occur in 10,000 acre units or they would not be considered rare. In addition, the methods used by RARE II to define ecosystems are so large scale that biologically unique areas are often lost in the process of evaluation.

Buchloe dactyloides Buffalo-grass
Poaceae or Gramineae (Grass family)

Chamaebatiaria millefolium Fernbush
Rosaceae (Rose family)
Evergreen shrub, flowers white

Your opinion in this matter is very important. The period of public comment closes September 30 and we urge each of you to write a letter. We are sending the September issue of The Rio Grande Sierran to our membership because it contains specific information on how to write a letter, who to write to, and most importantly, the RARE II identification number of each area being considered for wilderness status. The letters do not need to be long or eloquent as they will be tallied by computer. It is the total number of letters received which counts, not the quality of the individual letters. If you have visited a particular RARE II area be sure to mention it, especially if the area contains one or more unusual habitats of high biological diversity.

Remember, the deadline is September 30, please write - your opinions are valuable and your letters can really make a difference.

Classified Ads

BEAR MOUNTAIN GUEST RANCH
Guided wildflower tours.

Myra McCormick
Silver City, N.M. 88061
Phone: (505) 538-2538

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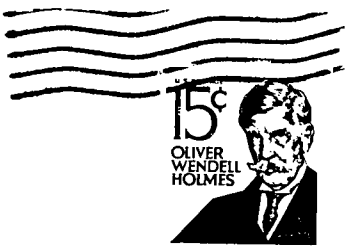

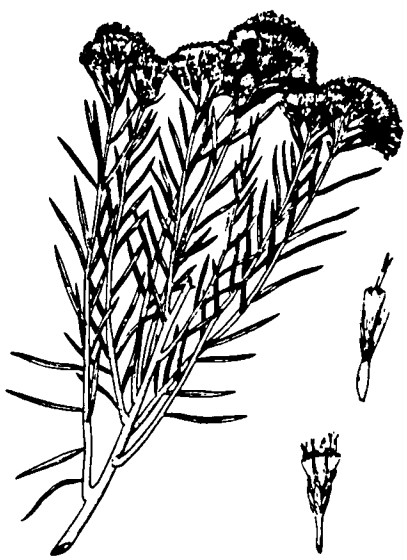

Chrysothamnus nauseosus
Rabbitbrush, Chamisa
Asteraceae (Sunflower family)
Flowers yellow