

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF NEW MEXICO

NEWSLETTER

May/June 1987

Volume XII No. 3

CALENDAR

- May 2 SANTA FE plant sale 9:00 am to 11:30 am. Museum International Folk Art.
- May 6 ALBUQUERQUE monthly meeting Museum of Albuquerque 7:30 pm
- May 9 OTERO chapter plant sale. 9:00 am to 2:00 pm Garden Center
- May 9 SANTA FE car trip and short walks along Highway 14 to Golden. Meet at P.E.R.A. parking lot 9:00 am. Bring lunch and water.
- May 10 LAS CRUCES trip to Three Rivers-Carizozo Lava Flows. 7:00 am meet at NMSU Pan Am Center parking lot.
- May 13 LAS CRUCES meeting Louis Meisner, "Flowers of the North Woods". 7:30 pm. NMSU Ag. Bldg. Room 190
- May 23 SANTA FE trip to North Mesa of Los Alamos and potluck. 9:00 am Call for more information; Mimi Hubby, 983-1658.
- May 30-13 OTERO trip to McKettrick Canyon-Guadalupe National Park. Plan to camp. Plan for alot of walking, much of the terrain is rocky. For more information contact Jean Dodd, 434-3041.
- June 7 LAS CRUCES fieldtrip to Old Refuge. 8:00 am Pan Am Center parking lot.
- June 7 SANTA FE car trip and short walks to Hyde Park Ski Basin Road. 9:00 am P.E.R.A. parking lot.
- June 10 LAS CRUCES meeting Helen Polley and Sandy Anderson "Endangered Plants of New Mexico. 7:30 pm NMSU Ag. Bldg. Rm 190.

***** calendar continued next page *****

June 18-19 SOUTHWESTERN NATIVE PLANT SYMPOSIUM, University of New Mexico
Albuquerque.

June 20-23 NATIONAL PENSTEMON MEETING, St. John's College, Santa Fe.

June 27 OTERO fieldtrip to Capitan area. Meet at 10:00 am at the bank
parking lot in Capitan.

June 27 ALBUQUERQUE fieldtrip to Cactus Hill. For more information
contact Ethel Ringer, 266-6038.

July 5 LAS CRUCES Karr Canyon Pot Luck Picnic. 7:00 am Pan Am Center
parking lot.

July 8 LAS CRUCES Show and Tell "Strongly Scented Plants". 7:30 pm

July 25 OTERO Home of Thomas and Nelia Perea, Cox Canyon. Meet at
10:00 am at parking lot of Cloudcroft's Medical Center.
Bring picnic lunch.

Aug. 9 LAS CRUCES fieldtrip to Aguirre Springs. 8:00 am



1987 NPS-NM OFFICERS

President--Lisa Johnston
Vice President--Tom Wootten
Recording Secretary--Dovie Thomas
Treasurer--Jean Dodd
Membership Secretary--Judith Phillips

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CHAPTER REPORTS

Las Cruces Report

Our first meeting of 1987, held Feb. 11, was attended by 18 people who enjoyed slides and presentation by Bob Reeves on his European tour of botanical gardens in England, Holland, Germany, and Switzerland. Wow, what colors. Our business meeting consisted of approving a suggested schedule of field trips and programs and discussion of some local conservation matters. We will be represented in a coalition of local organizations and agreed to participate with the BLM on an errand of mercy and reclamation.

The errand of mercy was made Feb. 15, when 9 of us joined Linda Siebert, wild life biologist with the BLM and Ryan Cook, a work-study student from NMSU, for a trip to the mountains south of town. There are three areas here where a prospector has a permit to dynamite and retrieve soil and rock. Our mission was to try and protect one endangered species of cacti not in ground zero, and to remove what vegetation we could from the actual site. We did remove a number of Turk's heads, haystack cactus and rainbow cactus and a small number of yucca. In line with our agreement with the BLM, a few of these specimens will be planted at homes of NPS members while the bulk are being stored for revegetation purposes, assuming further development of the area does not take place. The day was beautiful, the work a little hard, but we contributed to the preservation of a number of real beauties. Opportunities like this are rare, however with the success of this venture we hope we can continue to work with the BLM with similar circumstances arise. Member Larry Mitchell asked about steps that could be taken to save other specimens in urban areas. Las Cruces has no such plan. Do other cities???

Otero

The Otero Chapter especially thanks Nancy Hutto for having the potluck and seed exchange at her beautiful, new home in March. Also Ad Hanawalt and Henrietta Mitchell deserve thanks as well for their help in making the afternoon a success. We surely have good cooks in the NPS! Another large thank you to new member Tom Perea for reading the script for "Remedios and Healing Herbs of New Mexico" prepared by Jim Sais, Extension Urban Horticulturist.

Tom even added an incident or two he remembered from his own family. Many members requested copies of the script but Jim said "no". We did, however, learn that the Pharmacy in Tularosa carries Michael Moore's book "Los Remedios de la Gente" as well as a display of herb packets labeled with the title of his little book and then the name of the herb.

Albuquerque

Those few of us who attended the April 1 meeting were in for quite a pleasant surprise. Michelle Peters and other volunteers from the Wildlife Rescue League put on a super presentation. The league is a nationwide network of dedicated people who take in sick and injured wild animals and nurse them back to health. They use the most sophisticated and up-to-date techniques and medicines. Many of the creatures make it and are returned to the wild; other too badly injured to fend for themselves are kept as educational aides.

We enjoyed a slideshow of some of the charges treated: birds of prey, baby hummers, possums, squirrels. But the highlight of the evening was of course the live animals we saw: a bullsnake that had been stepped on by a horse, a turtle with sore eyes and many birds with broken wings and other hurts, all chipper and on their way to recovery. These volunteers operate a 24 hours hotline (344-2500) and spend a great deal of time and money on their mission.

They deserve our wholehearted support!!

Santa Fe

In March Jim Sais, Urban Horticulturist for Cooperative Extension Service, NMSU, gave an expert introduction to the many native plants of New Mexico used in landscaping. Plants, shrubs, trees and zoning in landscaping were illustrated in his beautiful colored slide program. Conservation of water is a priority item utilizing native plants through the seasons along with colorful, natural beauty of the many species available.



AGAVES of NEW MEXICO



Across southern New Mexico in the spring and summer months, the agaves send up some of the most amazing flower stalks in the plant kingdom. Agaves are also called century plants due to the mistaken belief that they require one hundred years or more to flower. Actually, flowering may begin after only ten years. Other names for agaves include maguey and mescal, the latter also the name of a distilled liquor in Mexico. A further refined liquor made from the agave is tequila. The name mescal also gave its name to the Mescalero Apache, who utilized the agave as an important food source by roasting the wild mescal heads.

Six agave species are found in New Mexico. Agave lechuguilla is found across the southern border roughly from the Rio Grande east to the southeastern corner between 3,000 and 7,500 feet in elevation. Considered to be a primary indicator plant, Agave lechuguilla has one of the largest ranges of any agave, extending into central Mexico. This is one of the smaller agaves, but also one of the most plentiful, forming large colonies along limestone ridges. This plant is also found along the canyon slopes in the Guadalupe Mountains and in the Carlsbad National Park. Flowers appear in June and July.

Another small agave similar to Agave lechuguilla is Agave schottii, which is found in the extreme southwestern corner of the state in the Peloncillo Mountains above 3,000 feet in elevation. It has small yellowish green to green rosettes. The tubular flowers appear in May and are pollinated by bees and bats. Like A. lechuguilla, Schott's agave forms dense plant colonies.

Our largest agave is Agave palmeri found in the woodlands and grasslands of southwestern New Mexico between 3,000 and 6,000 feet in elevation. The long, lanceolate leaves are used for fiber by the Indian tribes in the area. The tall flower stalks shoot up 18 feet in June and July. While hummingbirds and other birds are attracted to the flowers, night-flying bats of the genus Leptonycteris are the primary pollinators of Agave palmeri.

The last three agaves are closely related in the group Parryanae. Agave gracilipes is found in the Guadalupe

Mountains above 3,600 feet. It is the smallest of the Parryanae and is very similar to Agave neomexicana. In certain areas, this plant is found in the same habitats as A. lechuguilla and A. neomexicana. A. gracilipes has apparently crossed with A. lechuguilla; however, it has not crossed with A. neomexicana, as A. gracilipes blooms in the fall whereas A. neomexicana blooms in the spring.

Agave neomexicana is medium sized between A. gracilipes and A. parryi and is found in south-central and south-eastern New Mexico from 5,000 to 7,000 feet. This species was the primary mescal used by the Mescalero, whose range was essentially the same as the agave. Flowers appear in May.

The largest of the Parryanae, and the agave found at the highest elevation, Agave parryi is found in the southwestern corner of the state from 5,000 to 8,000 feet in elevation. In addition, A. parryi is found further north than any other agave. This large species, second in size only to A. palmeri, the plant's gray-green leaves are the widest of our native species. Also known as mescal, this plant was also important to various Apache tribes in the area.

Agaves are among the easiest plants to grow in the landscape and are among the most drought tolerant native plants. They prefer full sun, good drainage, and lean soil. In the landscape they make dramatic accent plants, especially A. palmeri and A. parryi. Agave lechuguilla and A. schottii are better suited to the desert garden where they can spread freely. A. gracilipes and A. neomexicana are good choices for smaller gardens. Agaves should not be planted near walkways or other activity areas where the large spines may be injurious. The spines may be clipped from the plant without harming the plant.

Most agaves offered for sale are collected from the wild. This depletion of the wild populations is unnecessary as agaves start easily from both seeds and offsets. Collect seed in late summer or fall, sow them in half potting soil and half sand in spring, summer, or indoors anytime. Water generously and keep moist and warm until seeds germinate.

AGAVES

After germination, allow the soil to dry out between waterings.

Offsets can be cut away from the parent plant's base. Allow them to dry for three or four days and pot them up in any potting soil suitable for cactus. (Agaves are often confused with cactus; however, they are included in the family Agavaceae.)

All native agaves are hardy in the southern part of the state and as far north in the Rio Grande Valley as Albuquerque. A. parryi is one of the hardiest agaves known and should be tried throughout the state up to 8,000 feet.

A large agave used in landscaping in southern New Mexico is not a native. Agave americana is from central Mexico. Reaching a gigantic size and with a flower stalk equally large, this species grows under the same conditions as our native agaves.

For more information on agaves, Howard Scott Gentry's book Agaves of Continental North America is the definitive work. Agaves have been used by people for centuries for fiber, food, and drink. We can still grow them for these reasons, but we can also grow and appreciate them for the living sculptures that they are.

Ted Hodoba

Collecting, Processing and Germinating Seeds of Wildland Plants by James A. and Cheryl Young. Hardcover. 236 pp and 30 black & white illustrations. \$24.95 + \$2.50 postage. Timber Press, 9999 S.W. Wilshire, Portland, OR 97225.

Part I of this book contains general principles and techniques of collecting, after-care storage and germination; lists specific plants after each discussion. Part II presents chapter by chapter germination guidelines for wild grasses, broad-leaved herbaceous plants, trees and shrubs.

If you have this book, drop us a line and tell us if this is a useful book for our area or is more broadly based information without much substance.

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Art Show

The Council of Albuquerque Garden Clubs and the Naive Plant Society are extending an invitation to their member artists to submit paintings for exhibit during the Council's Garden Tour on June 13 and the Southwest Native Plant Symposium Tour on June 19, 1987.

The exhibit will hang in the studio of Jean Heflin at 443 Live Oak Loop NE. Space is limited and early entry is encouraged. Artists have the option to hang their paintings in both tours.

Each artist may submit two (2) paintings not to exceed a maximum of 45 inches in any direction. This show is for exhibit only, NO SALES. The theme of the paintings are to be floral or garden related.

For further information and entry form, contact the Garden Center at 296-6020 from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm Monday through Friday. Also more information can be obtained from Lisa Johnston at 865-7340 working hours.

Books

Last newsletter issue Judith Phillips wrote about Eric Johnson coauthor of Landscaping To Save Water in the Desert in the "Meet Our People" column. Mr. Johnson has offered his book to NPS-NM members at a savings. If you would like more information, contact Lisa at 865-7340 or write to NPS-NM Books, P.O. Box 934, Los Lunas, NM 87031

SALVIA LOVE

Often I am accused of being one of the many Penstemon maniacs, and I plead guilty. Many of you may not know, however, that a severe infection of Salvia adoration is also rampant. There is no denying the year-round attraction of most species of Penstemon, with their evergreen foliage complemented by beautiful purple, pink or red flowers (yellow is present, but is tricky to grow here). The Salvia, on the other hand, are more generally herbaceous perennials or deciduous shrubs. The bloom period on most species is extremely long, often giving spectacular shows for the entire growing season. Because many are shrubs, this gives an additional dimension.

Generalizations often get one in trouble, but for those interested, we have found that the seeds should be sown with little or no covering soil. Generally we cover our seed with a very thin layer of perlite. Seeds should be completely mature. Once started, the species we have tried will adapt to some of our worst soils without any supplemental fertilizer. In general, the species appears particularly sensitive to excessive nitrogen, especially when plants are small. Maintenance requirements generally just consist of pruning back the tops on the herbaceous perennials and possibly a light shearing of the shrubs in the winter. Water requirements vary with the species, but generally are modest, depending mostly on exposure. Branches often are quite brittle, so plants should be protected from damage.

Unfortunately for those who confuse southern New Mexico with the city limits of Albuquerque, they will see very few Salvia in the natural habitat. According to The Flora of New Mexico, Salvia is definitely a southern genus, with only a couple of annual species found in the northern counties of New Mexico.

Rather than describe each species which we are working with here at Dry Country Plants, we will just list them. We encourage your interest and will try to answer your questions and welcome hearing of your experiences with this


genus. In some cases we do not have large numbers, but hope you will stop by and view the specimens. We are developing the following species (not all are native to New Mexico):

Salvia azurea grandiflora (sky blue sage), S. farinacea (mealy cup sage), S. henryi (crimson sage), S. leucantha (Mexican bush sage), S. officinalis (garden sage), S. chamaedryoides (bluefire sage), S. greggii (autumn sage), S. lemmoni (Hildalgo sage), S. lyciodes (canyon sage), S. pinquefolia (rock sage) and S. regla (mountain sage).

Beware, a contagion is present!!!

Tom Wootten

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Dan Scurlock, Naturalist-Cultural Historian will be leading numerous explorations and fieldtrips in the coming months. In early May Dan will lead a trip to Chaco Canyon. In June several trips are scheduled including a trip to Casas Grandes, Chihuahua. For those interested in archaeology as well as native plants, Dan's tours are quite exciting. For more information contact Dan Scurlock at 1212 Saiz Road, NW, Albuquerque, NM 87104, Phone 242-1635.

A Rainforest Conference was held in Boulder, Colorado, February 5-8, 1987. About 50 speakers, including panels, presented aspects of the tropical tragedy. Hundreds of forest acres per SECOND are raised in the tropics; fires burn out of control in many equatorial countries. 1985 saw the largest forest fire in history burn 15 million acres of Borneo. The hydrological cycle is breaking down in parts of Africa, Asia and South America, causing fires to not go out. The silt from resultant erosion is killing the oxygen-creating power of surrounding oceans by removing the plankton.

We were also told about the indigenous people, how much they know about their forests. Time is the most scant resource. Can the countries like the USA muster the political will to help, even by diminishing consumerism, before most of the genetic bank represented by the tropical forests is lost?

As proponents of life we should be depressed and motivated by such conferences. The 150 people in attendance at Boulder left with resolve to inform the American public of the grave situation.

If you are interested in more information contact:
 Rainforest Action Network
 466 Green Street
 San Frisco, CA 94133

submitted by Stan Renfro

Several first aid kits are needed for the friday morning, June 19 tours, part of the native plant symposium. If you care to loan us your first aid kits for that morning, please contact Peg Wells at 256-1920 immediately.



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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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 ___ Informal classes
 ___ Newsletter ___ Youth projects
 ___ Organize new chapter
 ___ Membership drive
 ___ Other (please specify)

How would you describe your level of expertise? What areas would you be willing to help with?

Are you a member of an organization with related purposes (Garden Club, NM Wildflower Association, etc.)?

RIPARIAN REVEGETATION

Riparian plant communities of the Southwest are recognized as having beneficial functions, including bank stabilization, erosion control, water quality maintenance, wildlife habitat, and recreational uses. Recently, there has been large-scale losses reported of the native riparian communities due to a variety of factors.

The Soil Conservation Service has been cooperating with other agencies to develop establishment techniques and propagation of plants native to the riparian communities.

The Native Plant Society has been invited to provide input on such things as : compiling a list of potential species for repaving damaged or destroyed riparian communities and ways to accelerate testing and release of new materials to commercial growers.

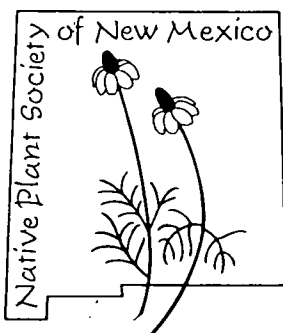
If you have any comments or views to share, please contact Lisa Johnston by May 20th at 865-7340 working hours. The comments will be combined and presented at a meeting May 28th, 10:00 am at the Plant Materials Center, Los Lunas.



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From National Gardening, September '86....

Mesquite may become the soybean of the eighties. Southwest ranchers know the weedy shrub as a pest, and trendy restaurant goers enjoy mesquite-smoke flavor in their grilled food. But soon, mesquite may appear in tortilla chips, crackers and even ice cream.

A simple, automated procedure developed by Dr. Robert Becker and colleagues of USDA's Agricultural Research Service converts dried mesquite pods into high-protein, seet-tasting flour or gum that can be used as a thickening additive in foods.

In taste tests, crackers and tortilla chips containing some mesquite flour were preferred to those made with conventional flours alone.

The natural gum in mesquite pods may replace guar gum as a thickener in ice cream, salad dressings, puddings and other foods.