

## Native Plant Society of New Mexico

# NEWSLETTER

October-December 2001

Volume XXVI Number 4

## Native Landscape at Taos Visitors Center Taking Shape



Members of the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps take a break from preparing the wheelchair accessible paths that will connect nine native and historic gardens at the Center. The landscaping project is a joint effort of Los Jardineros, Taos garden club; the Taos Chapter of NPSNM, and the Taos Chamber of Commerce. Standing in the back row are (left) Barbara McCarthy, Chairperson of the Beautification Committee and (right) Sally Wasowski, Taos Chapter member and designer of the gardens. *Photo by Andy Wasowski*

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## THE REAL COST OF MANICURED LAWNS

*Excerpted from The Christian Science Monitor*

The air pollution from cutting grass for an hour with a gasoline-powered lawnmower is about the same as that from a 100-mile automobile ride, according to a new study at the University of Stockholm, Sweden. The small engines from lawn and garden equipment make up 10 percent of some types of air pollution, according to the EPA.

## *Pasco, Washington - The City That Outlaws Flowers*

In Pasco, Washington, growing native plants in one's yard can be challenging - not because of the demands of the plants, but because of the demands of city officials.

Carol Coker, a Washington Native Plant Society member, has created a beautiful landscape at her home featuring a variety of attractive, well-maintained, drought-tolerant native plants. City officials are not impressed. Carol was among nearly 200 residents of a Pasco neighborhood who received a "Correction Notice" from the city stating that the area between the sidewalk and street must have irrigation installed and be planted with grass.

However, the municipal code addressing these "planting strips" makes no mention of either grass or irrigation. Carol pointed out that the municipal code requires "lawns, trees, shrubs, living ground cover or a combination thereof." Since Carol's planting strip has an area of lawn (blue grama grass), and also has a variety of ground covers and shrubs, which are watered with a drip irrigation system, she believed that she could convince city officials that her yard was in compliance with all requirements. What optimism!

After a few months of trying unsuccessfully to communicate with city officials, Carol was surprised to read in the local paper that 89 residents of a neighboring subdivision had signed a petition opposing the city's efforts to force them to remove their landscaping and plant grass. This petition was presented to the city council, who agreed to put the issue on the agenda at the next council meeting.

Carol was one of several residents who spoke to the council at this meeting. Neighbors stressed the importance of drought-tolerant landscaping. Governor Locke had declared a drought emergency. The looming water shortage had been well reported in newspapers and TV. Farmers had been told that irrigation water would not be available for their crops. Many residents have no water available for their yards but city water taken from the Columbia River. Did it make sense, then, for the city to force people to irrigate lawns?

The response of the council?

*"Don't believe the media hype."*

*"We have an abundance of water."*

*"You live in an upscale neighborhood, and upscale neighborhoods have grass."*

At least some of the council was apparently convinced that Carol was correct in pointing out that the municipal code did not require grass. The council met again, and again faced vehement protests by residents, and then voted to send residents another notice. This notice would not refer to the municipal code, but would order residents to install irrigation and plant grass because of a "subdivision plan." The planting strip was now referred to as a "drainage swale."

Residents must remove their landscaping by May 31. Otherwise, the city will "help" residents comply by removing "unapproved materials" with backhoes. If they object? Too bad, the "swale area" is a public right of way. Then again, the city has another way to force compliance - a \$500 per day fine.

*Ed: This article is reprinted courtesy of the Washington Native Plant Society, Central Basin Chapter.*

### **LISA MANDELKERN NEW VICE PRESIDENT OF NPSNM**

Although I am saddened by Joe's temporary departure from the NPSNM Board, I do have some good news. Lisa Mandelkern has agreed to accept the nomination to NPSNM Vice-President. For those of you who do not know Lisa, she is the President of Las Cruces Chapter, a master gardener, talented artist (look at your T-shirts), and has an active interest in field botany and conservation. She's a hard worker and can make good things happen. I was initially worried about distracting Lisa from the Las Cruces Chapter, but she assures me the Chapter is active, becoming stronger, and will do just fine. So let's welcome Lisa to the Board. I hope she will enjoy it enough to stay through the next term as NPSNM President.

*Bob Sivinski  
President NPSNM*

**"We may differ about whether the universe was made by fiat or by the laws of nature, but on this point we are in profound accord: The Earth — with its gorgeous diversity of habitats and beings — belongs, if it belongs to any of us, to our children and their children, and on into the distant future. It is not ours to squander."**

*Carl Sagan*

**"A true conservationist...knows that the world is not given by his fathers but borrowed from his children."**

*James Audubon*

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:

*POBox 607, Arroyo Seco NM 87514  
andrzej@laplaza.org*

### **Deadline for next issue is Dec. 1st, 2001**

**Membership** in the NPSNM is open to anyone supporting our goals, i.e., 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. In addition, 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 which can be ordered by contacting our Poster Chair or Book Sales representative.

## **NPSNM Membership Application**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail/Fax \_\_\_\_\_

*I (we) wish to affiliate with the checked chapter*

- Albuquerque
- Carlsbad
- El Paso
- 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:**

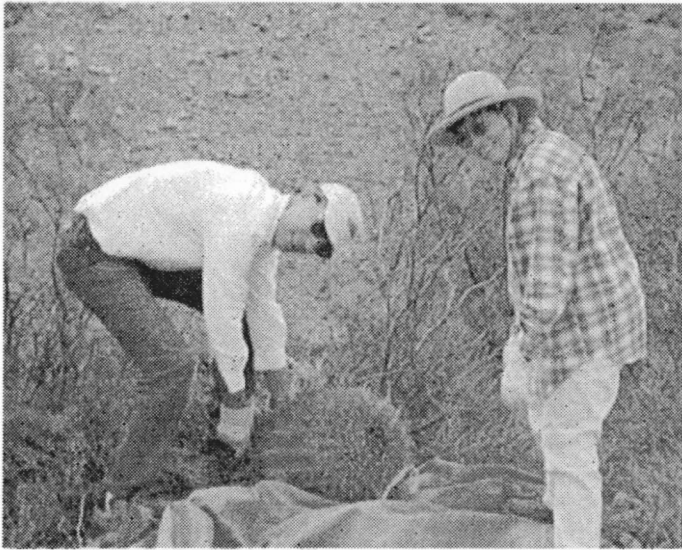
Individual or family.....	\$20.00
Friend of the Society.....	\$30.00
Supporting Member.....	\$50.00
Sponsor.....	\$100.00
Benefactor.....	\$500.00
Life Member.....	\$1,000.00
Limited Income Family, Senior (65 & over) and Students.....	\$12.00

Endowment contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

***Make your check payable to  
NPSNM  
and send to***

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



**Bob Sivinski and Sheila Richmond (BLM, Las Cruces) rescuing barrel cacti off of mine waste piles near Lordsburg. Over 20 cacti were saved and transplanted to Pancho Villa State Park.**

*Photo by Tim Lowrey*

## PLANT RESCUE REMINDERS

*Reprinted from the July/August Wild Ones Journal.*

Many of us are already deep into the plant-rescue season, but now would be a good time to remind ourselves of the premises by which we Wild Ones dig. Remember that Wild Ones members make an effort to save native plants that would otherwise be destroyed by construction equipment because of development.

Remember, too, that Wild Ones do not dig up native plants just because they are there. And, lastly, remember that Wild Ones do not dig up plants without the owner's permission, including private as well as public landowners.

It is sad we have to rescue a vital part of our environment from certain destruction, but, as Wild Ones, it is our privilege to be able to do so.

***Ed: For more information on plant rescues, check the Wild Ones web site: [www.for-wild.org](http://www.for-wild.org). Click on Wisconsin, then Fox Valley Chapter, then Additional Projects.***

*Has your chapter rescued any plants lately?*

## AMIGOS BRAVOS WANTS YOU!

Anyone who attended the Annual Meeting in Taos this past August well remembers the excellent presentation by Brian Shields, Executive Director of Amigos Bravos, "Friends of the Wild Rivers." Brian said that many of you came to him after his talk wanting to know more about their work and how to get involved.

Joining is, of course, a major way to help. Your membership adds to their growing voice, giving Amigos Bravos the democratic base for real influence in the complex work of protecting our rivers — an activity that is more urgent than ever.

Financial support is also needed. Only 16% of their budget is administrative; the rest goes to critical projects to clean up pollution and shape public policies to protect our rivers. Last year Amigos Bravos successfully concluded a lawsuit against the EPA forcing them to protect the Red River from 15.2 million lbs of mine pollutants annually. They also lobbied successfully for draft Superfunding for the Molycorp mine in Questa and helped found the Alliance for the Rio Grande.

Western Environmental Law Center called Amigos Bravos "One of the most effective, hard-working and talented citizen groups...seen anywhere in the West."

**For more information call 505-758-3874 or email at [bravos@amigosbravos.org](mailto:bravos@amigosbravos.org). Their web site is [www.amigosbravos.org](http://www.amigosbravos.org).**

And to learn more about the Rio Grande, read "Big River Between Us" by Carl Pope in the September/October issue of *Sierra Magazine*.



**"Gentlemen, it's time we gave some serious thought to the effects of global warming."**

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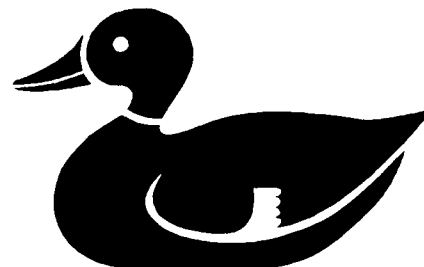
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Send Membership Dues & Changes of Address to:  
Membership Secretary,  
P.O.Box 2364, Las Cruces NM 88004

**OPEN HOUSE AT SEVILLETA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

Since its establishment in 1973, the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge (SNWR) has been open to the general public only three times. On October 13<sup>th</sup> of this year, refuge visitors will once again be able to tour areas ordinarily closed to the general public.



The SNWR Open House seeks to acquaint visitors with the beauty and importance of this natural resource. In addition, SNWR is preparing to mark another milestone in its 28 year history: the grand opening of its new Visitor Center. The opening ceremony is one of many events at this year's 4<sup>th</sup> annual Open House. Exhibits will include a live raptor display and booths from The Nature Conservancy, Hawks Aloft, Ducks Unlimited, the Bureau of Land Management and Hawk Watch International among others. The New Mexico State Duck Calling Championships will be held concurrently on the refuge grounds, and presentations by various nature specialists will run throughout the day. The various exhibits and presentations as well as the Grand Opening Ceremony for the Visitors Center are free to the general public.

Tours of the refuge include a birding tour, plant tour, geology tour, a tour visiting various research projects being conducted on the refuge, and a local history tour. The tour cost of \$6.00 includes either breakfast or lunch with proceeds benefiting La Joya community development projects, such as repairs on the local library. Reservations are required. For more information, call (505) 864-4021.

**THE TAOS CHAPTER WANTS TO  
EXTEND A BIG THANK YOU TO  
ALL THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTED  
ITEMS TO OUR SILENT AUCTION.  
IT WAS A GREAT SUCCESS!**

# Chapter Activities & Events

## ALBUQUERQUE

Meetings held at the Albuquerque Garden Center, 10120 Lomas NE, at 7:30 p.m.

**Oct 4.** *"The Nature Conservancy—A Special Kind of Conservation Organization."* Don Goldman, geographer and retired National Park Service Planner.

**Nov 1.** *"An Inventory of Exotic Plants of New Mexico."* George W. Cox, author and emeritus professor of ecology, San Diego State University.

**Dec 13.** *"Mistletoes of New Mexico"* David Conklin, forest pathologist, U.S. Forest Service. Potluck dinner will precede the talk at 6:30 p.m..

## CARLSBAD

**Nov 13.** *"The Landscaping Revolution."* Andy Wasowski. 7 pm at the Living Desert Gardens and Zoo State Park. NPS books on sale after slide presentation.

## EL PASO (Texas)

**Oct 11.** *"Flora of Fort Bliss"* and tour of Herbarium. Dr. Rafael Corral, senior botanist. To be held Fort Bliss Directorate of Environment Herbarium, Bldg. 624, Taylor & Pleasonton Rds, Fort Bliss Army Base. 7:00 p.m.

**Oct 13.** Workshop on "Basic Landscape Design." Cheryl Garing, Horticulturist at El Paso Zoo. At Ewing Irrigation, 3630 Duranzo, 9:00 a.m.

**November** meeting will be a social event for membership. Time and place TBA.

## GILA (Silver City)

**Programs at Harlan Hall, WNMU Campus at 7:00 p.m.**

**Oct 19.** *"Lessons from an Inventory of a Municipal Flora."* Bill Norris, curator of the WNMU Herbarium, came from Iowa State to replace professor of biology, Terry Heiner.

**Oct 21.** Field trip to Boston Hill. Meet at WNMU Fine Arts lot 8:00 a.m. Back by noon. Led by Gerry Niva, 388-8146.

**Nov 16.** *"Creating a Wildscape Garden."* Wynn Anderson, curator of the Centennial Museum at UTEP.

**December.** Holiday Social. Details TBA in Bulletin.

## LAS CRUCES

**Programs and Meetings at Southwest Environmental Center, 1494 S. Solano Dr.**

**Oct 10.** *"Southwest Horizons Nature Series"*: view one of three one-hour long videos produced by NMSU's Agricultural Communications Department. 7:00 p.m.

**Oct 13.** Field Trip to Bishop's Cap area. Leader: Terry Peterson. Typical Chihuahuan Desert shrub land and home to various cacti. Easy hiking. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at K-Mart Parking Lot on Hwy 70.

**Nov 10.** Annual Chapter Potluck at home of Jane and Ed Mount. Details TBA. 6:00 p.m.

**Nov 14.** Field trip to NMSU Herbarium, NMSU Campus. Hosted by Richard Spellenberg. Meet at northwest corner of Stewart St. and Williams Ave. 7:00 p.m.

**Dec 5.** Annual Planning Meeting for 2002. 7:00 p.m.

## OTERO

**Nov 3.** Annual Business/Planning Meeting at home of John & BethAnn Gordon. Business, pot-luck, and brainstorming for 2002. Call John Stockert for details.

## SACRAMENTO MTS (Ruidoso)

**Oct 6.** Annual meeting and potluck at Ranches of Sonterro Park. Time and exact location TBA. Call Bob Hall for more info 505-258-2440.

## SANTA FE

**3rd Wednesdays at the Evans Science Lab Bldg, Rm 122, St John's College, 7:30 p.m.**

**Sept 19.** *"Restoring the Natural Process of Our Soils Using the Soil Food Web."* Michael Martin Melendez, owner of Trees That Please Nursery.

**Oct 17.** *"Plant Material of Leonora Curtin Natural History Area."* Mark Kaltenbach, docent with the Santa Fe Botanical Garden.

**Nov 14.** *"History/Ecology/Fire and Landscape Change in Northern New Mexico."* Craig Allen.

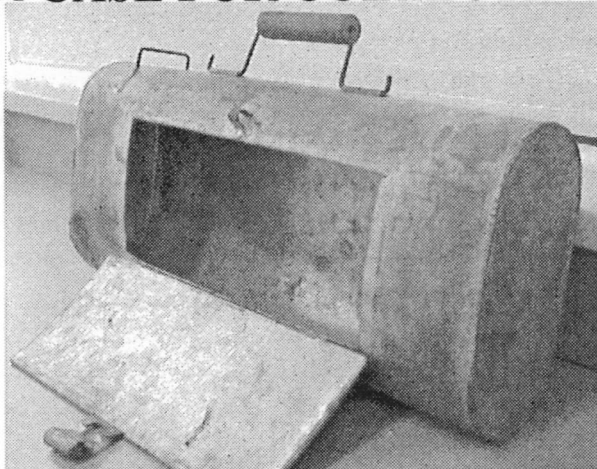
## TAOS

**2nd Wednesdays at San Geronimo Lodge, 7:00 p.m.**

**Oct 10.** *"Food for our Grandchildren."* John Kimmey. Preserving the genetic diversity of traditional indigenous crops through community food banks.

**Nov 14.** *"A Magazine Photographer's Guide to Landscape Photography."* L. Jane Ringe, Me Jane! Wildlife Photography, El Prado. Credits include *Cowboys and Indians* magazine, *New Mexico* magazine, *High Country* magazine, and *Albuquerque Journal*. Her work is also at the Nichols Fine Arts Gallery in Taos.

## A CASE FOR COLLECTING



by Jane Mygatt

Collection Manager, UNM Herbarium

Photo courtesy of Daniel Mosquin, UBC Botanical Garden

Time was when quality and craftsmanship were coveted; items from latchkeys to scientific instruments were carefully crafted of wood, glass, and metal. Some were complex, others simple, such as a botanist's companion - the vasculum.

A vasculum is a botanist's collecting case. These special cases were made of tin in the shape of a compressed cylinder and used for carrying freshly collected specimens. They had handles or woven cotton shoulder straps for ease of carrying and came in varying sizes. To prevent wilting of the specimens, wet towels were put inside the vasculum to keep the materials fresh until they could be properly pressed at a later time.

The first written accounts of the vasculum appeared by 1704 during *The Enlightenment* when botanical collecting became increasingly practical and profitable for the new science of medicine. By the 1770s British physician William Withering was recognized for introducing in print for the first time the importance of the screw-down plant press and the tin vasculum.

In 19th century Britain, knowledge of the local flora was required for qualification in the medical field. Renowned physician-botanists at the major universities undertook regular botanical excursions. Field collecting became popular and as a result of advances in technology, field equipment such as the vasculum became more available and affordable. In the 1830s the size of the vasculum increased and the shoulder strap was added.

Notable at this time was the secondary use of the vasculum for accommodating another British invention - the sandwich. This use became so common that the design of the British vasculum more and more took on the look of a standard sandwich-box. As a result, the British vasculum looked considerably different from the models made on the continent.

In the United States, the vasculum may have seen its heyday from 1870-1945 when botanical explorations accelerated after the Civil War. After World War II taxonomy expanded into the science of Systematics, which focuses on understanding plant relationships. The old science of taxonomy, once dominated by field collecting and describing and naming new species, took a back seat to new techniques used in the laboratory.

Vascula are still in use by the more traditional taxonomists. Debra Q. Lewis, Curator of the Ada Hayden Herbarium in Iowa, relates the story of the late Cornell botanist W.L.C. Muenscher. One day Dr. Muenscher was sitting in a bus station with his vasculum on his lap. A drunk kept staring at it and finally loudly announced, "Hey, everybody -- that guy carries his mailbox with him!"

The UNM Herbarium has a few examples of vascula that were used during the 1930-40s. These vascula are now bruised and battered, their straps long gone. The well-preserved vasculum is now highly collectible.

Current field botanists who have used our vascula say they worked well for the "gentleman botanist" who didn't have to hike long distances. They proved too unwieldy while hiking remote areas in rugged terrain. The straps would entangle in shrubs and foliage and the case itself chaffed the hip. They became scorching hot in the desert heat and they were heavy.

The traditional case for collecting has gone out of style with many botanists. Today, ease and convenience prevail; metal cases have been replaced by low-cost, lightweight, plastic bags. Many botanical web sites actually extol the use of plastic. A quote from one of these sites reads, "Any botanist worth his or her salt knows that a garbage bag with its inside moistened works just as well as a vasculum."

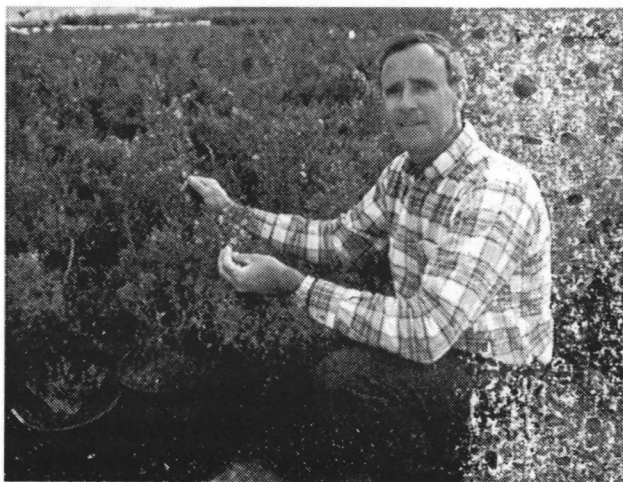
Maybe, but it has no class.

# REFLECTIONS ON A CAREER

by Ron Gass

Looking back at the last thirty years of growing native desert plants is sort of like driving on a highway at 75 mph and looking at the painted lines in the car's rearview mirror. They flash by in a blur!

The blur of those years can be divided into two parts: time with family and time at work. I must admit that there were periods when the two were totally entangled and, but for my wife Maureen's wisdom, fun time would probably have been excluded. It's an incredible balancing act, supporting a family while at the same time receiving the support of your family. These years have been a great learning experience



for me. My teachers were all around me — co-workers, customers, writers, educators and, yes, even competitors. Each day at work was, and continues to be, a learning experience.

What did I learn? For one thing, that many, many people are interested in native desert plants, and this attraction brings them together and encourages them to share their knowledge. A single person can certainly have a good time discovering, learning about, and growing wildflowers and other native flora. But they soon learn that pleasure is also derived from sharing what they've learned about the desert and its beautiful vegetation.

You can hear a person's heartbeat with a stethoscope, but I have discovered that you can also hear the heartbeat of a desert by listening to the wind stirring the branches of a paloverde or the leaves of a cottonwood. You can also hear it in the songs of

birds and the skittering sound of a lizard scurrying under a rock. Here we escape the artificial and recognize nothing but sky, plants and life.

Reality says we must live with the inventions of man, but reality can also lead us to recognize a harmony with deserts. And when we bring the desert to our homes, we are quickly rewarded. Once established, a true desert landscape — not the common caricature of gravel, a few lava rocks, and scattered yuccas — reveals to us an amazing array of textures and colors and fragrances. We are also surrounded by an incredible tapestry: flora and critters co-existing in perfect harmony. All of life is waiting to be noticed. Piece by piece and item by item, we can observe, enjoy, and even participate.

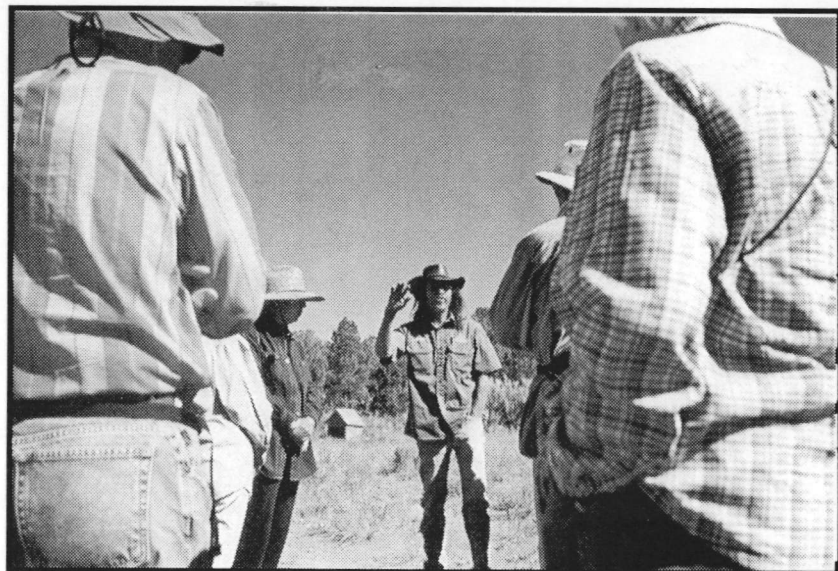
I've learned, too, that outside circumstances influence what we perceive and value and can change our lives. For example, we become aware of water shortages and are concerned about the future of this finite commodity, and this sparks an interest in drought tolerant plants. It just takes a nucleus of curiosity to build a new way of thinking

In many cities and in different years people first discover a fascination with native desert plants after observing them in conspicuous public landscapes. They are then moved to learn plant names and amass information, and soon these people are participating in the life of the desert by creating mini-deserts around their homes. And then, before long, these mini-deserts expand through the whole landscape because the heartbeat of the desert has moved us. These people have discovered that they can leave the artificial by merely stepping outside their homes and have sky, plants, and life even in the middle of a city. Our focus defines our sense of place.

Artificial distractions bombard our minds, but the desert can reclaim us and renew us. The desert doesn't resent being present in small places, it will flourish there, and the life of the desert will flow as readily as the birds and butterflies. The existence of homes, concrete and asphalt, and other symbols of modern life does not offend the desert. It is not put off by these parts of our lives, it waits patiently for us to recognize its presence and allow it to express itself.

***Ron Gass is the owner of Mountain States Wholesale Nursery in Glendale, Arizona. He is also a dedicated evangelist for native desert plants and for over 30 years has promoted their use throughout the Southwest and Southern California.***





Ancient Native American “dry-land farming” methods were demonstrated to members of the Taos Chapter by Gerald Nailor, Lt. Governor of the Picuris Pueblo. Nailor showed how rocks play an important role in catching and holding water, as well as providing nutrients —making it possible to grow squash, beans, and corn in this arid land. Twenty members of the chapter took part in this June 15th field trip which was organized by Kitty Bensusen.

Photo by Andy Wasowski

## POINT...COUNTER POINT

Want to start a heated discussion among plant people? Mention the Russian olive tree (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*). A horrible invasive, say some. Not true, say others. While most nurseries sell this alien and make no bones about it, a few staunchly refuse. We asked six of the sellers to defend their position in print and five declined. Here then are the two sides of the Russian olive debate:

### RUSSIAN OLIVE...DA!

by Dan “Vish” Miller  
Blossoms Garden Center, Taos

The Russian olive is one of the few deciduous trees that has naturalized here in Northern New Mexico. Its hardiness is characterized by its ability to thrive in conditions of wind, fluctuating temperatures, alkalinity, and dryness (or wetness). It provides food and shelter for birds and screening, shade, fragrant blossoms, and firewood for humans. It shades our houses in the hot summer and, being deciduous, allows warm sunlight to pass through in the cold winter. It makes an excellent windbreak, dust barrier, and privacy screen, creating a more tolerable, pleasant environment for us and our other landscaping. It also provides erosion control, and with proper management, can be easily pruned, transplanted, or otherwise thinned out to the land steward's desire.

I have lived near a river with Russian olives for twenty years, and have not found them to be at all invasive. Along the Rio Grande, Russian olives are here and there, but nowhere crowding everything else out like the ‘native’ stream willows do.

Only in other wet areas that have been poorly managed, i.e., grazed out by cattle, are they overly prevalent. With proper land management, Russian olives are a welcome addition to our landscape, and are particularly useful on the dry, windy mesas.

DM

### RUSSIAN OLIVE...NYET!

by Bob Pennington  
Agua Fria Nursery, Santa Fe

Agua Fria Nursery chooses not to sell Russian olives. It would be easy to say that the reason is that as of March 1, 2002, it ‘shall be illegal to sell or install Russian olive’ within the City of Santa Fe. As a member of the Landscape Ordinance Task Force, I helped draft the ordinance banning this tree (and salt cedar, too.)

Russian olives were banned because they are “invasive exotics.” Certainly there is room in our plant palette for exotic plants, especially sorely needed trees that can tolerate our weather and soil conditions. But not Russian olive!

If Russian olive did not produce copious pollen, adding to spring hay fever misery; if Russian olive did not migrate to water in the craws of birds, there to sprout and really spread; if Russian olive through its nitrogen fixing root system didn't alter soil chemistry, thereby favoring the establishment of other exotic plants to the detriment of native vegetation; if Russian olive were not so difficult to kill; and if these facts weren't true, then Russian olive would be a good plant and I'd sell it!

It is my belief that every nursery professional ought to seek out appropriate plants that enhance the beauty and diversity of our environment and not sell those products (Russian olive included) which damage the environment.

BP

# TORREY'S WOLFBERRY

## How to Lick Salty Soils

by Wynn Anderson

I'm often asked to suggest plants that can survive the silty, saline soils that plague many gardeners in the valley of the Rio Grande that bisects Socorro, T or C, Las Cruces, and El Paso. Commercially available choices are rather limited as not many plants can handle mineralized soil or the poor drainage characteristic of the valley bottom lands.

So we must look at halophytes, or salt tolerant species, native to the northern Chihuahuan Desert such as Fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), Tornillo or Screwbean Mesquite (*Prosopis pubescens*), Arrow weed (*Pulchea sericea*), Blueweed (*Helianthus ciliaris*), Jimmyweed (*Isocoma pluriflora*), Willow Baccharis (*Baccharis salicina*), Little and Giant Alkaline Sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*) and (*S. wrightii*), Saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), and even little groundcovering Salt Heliotrope (*Heliotropium curassavicum*).

Then there's a real favorite of mine, Torrey's Wolfberry *Lycium torreyi*.

This small to medium sized, deciduous, woody shrub prefers silty alkaline and saline conditions and can generally be found growing within the Rio Grande and Pecos River drainages, on the edges of ponding areas and old river cut-offs or ox-bow playas, along irrigation canals and drains, and on mineralized flats and similar silty alluvial areas of major river bottoms from West Texas, across southern New Mexico, to Nevada and California. This riparian association also gives rise to other common names such as River or Alkali Wolfberry.

Depending on the amount of irrigation this Wolfberry receives, size can vary from a tidy 3' x 3' to 6' or more, and sometimes the plant will happily spread by underground rhizomes to form thickets in well watered situations. Control size in a garden by limiting irrigation and/or root pruning periodically with a sharp spade.

*Lycium torreyi* is not grown for its flowers which are small (less than 2mm long), tubular, light greenish to pale lavender or white, and otherwise rather undistinguished. But insect pollinators of all types love them. The flowers rise singularly or in groups of twos and threes from the axils of usually spatulate, somewhat succulent, pale to bluish green leaves that are clustered along rather spiny stems. While the foliage in the summer is not unattractive, especially in an area where little else will grow, it is the abundant crop of bright red berries which follow summer flowering that gives this plant a very attractive visual, landscape quality.

*Lycium torreyi*  
drawn by Wynn Anderson



Another landscape use is as a so-called "security" plant—an appellation writers often give to spiny plants for which they find no other useful purpose. The spines of some species of *Lycium* are notably vicious, and while I place Torrey's Wolfberry in a more moderate class, neighborhood pets, small children and uninvited guests generally give it a wide berth after passing through it just once.

As a bonus, the plump, juicy, quarter-inch sized berries are tasty raw or cooked into a sauce. As members of the Solanaceae family, *Lycium* is related to tomatoes, chiles and several other cultivated edible plants. In Mexico this plant is known as Agrito and the fruit is commonly made into a salsa-like condiment. Unfortunately, every other living critter in the area, especially birds, and even box turtles, relish the tart red berries, too. In addition to its wildlife food value, the plant's stout woody spines and dense branching make it a great nesting plant.

While seldom available commercially, even from native plant specialty growers, it is easy to grow from collected seed, or from transplanted suckers with sufficient root mass attached. When making a selection in the wild, look for good fruiting quality and the character of the spines. Spination can vary, and you may be able to select plants with spines that are stout to weak, long to short, and even nearly absent.

So, if you've had little or no success trying to flush salts out of the soil, or building raised beds, stop fighting! Explore neighboring wildland for Torrey's Wolfberry — or some other suitable *Lycium*.

**Wynn Anderson is the designer and curator of the Chihuahuan Desert Garden at UTEP. He is also the Chapter Contact for the El Paso Chapter.**


The Gila Chapter in Silver City is hosting next year's annual meeting and they've picked August 15-18 as the dates. Mark your calendars.



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Jim Nellessen

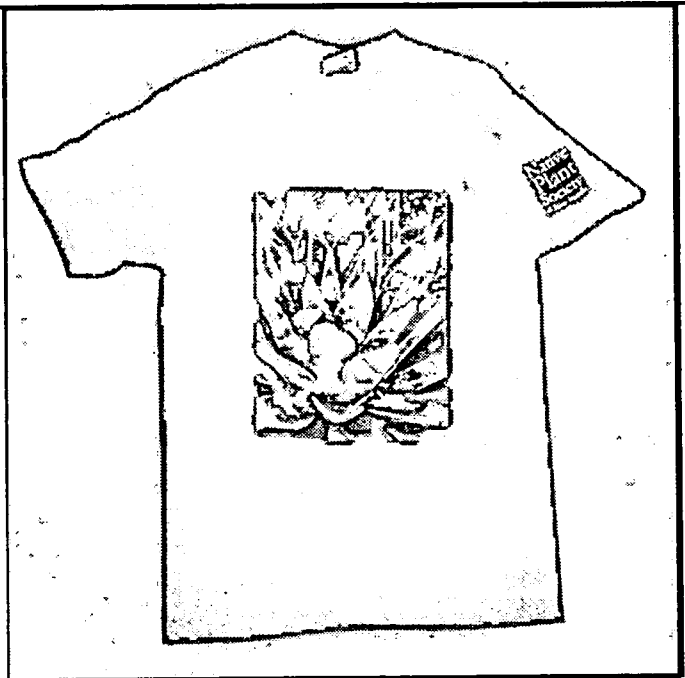
## Native versus Naturalized Species

Native plant species are those that have been determined to have evolved or originated within the area of interest or study, in our case, New Mexico and the Southwest. Naturalized species are those that have been deliberately or unintentionally introduced to an area where they did not originate, but over recent time have become adapted to and integrated into the local native plant communities.

Generally such "naturalized" species are not considered "noxious" weeds or pests, but depending on the species and the circumstances, this concept can easily be debated one way or the other. For example, the infamous tumbleweed (or Russian thistle), a plant that seems to characterize and symbolize the American Southwest to many people, is actually an introduced species from Russia, that has naturalized itself into this region. I've even heard of people boxing up tumbleweeds and sending them off to Easterners who want a little piece of the Southwest (this is probably not a good thing to do because who knows where the plant and its seeds may end up). Salt cedar is another nonnative that has been classified as a noxious weed by the State.

Grasses are particularly interesting when it comes to this native versus naturalized comparison. We have many grasses introduced for forage and range improvement that have become naturalized to the point that we do not even think about it any more. Some examples are: Timothy grass, orchard grass, smooth brome, tall fescue, perennial ryegrass, and crested wheatgrass. These grasses are all fine and certainly have value for livestock, but if one wanted to conserve, restore, or maintain their "back 40" with native plant stock, one should consider: western wheatgrass, slender wheatgrass, mountain brome (which is actually a form of California brome), wild oat grass, Junegrass, blue grama, side-oats grama, buffalo grass, the dropseed grasses, and Indian ricegrass to name but a few. What you should grow will depend on wherever your "back 40" is located.

My point is this: many naturalized species are fine and dandy, are not noxious weeds (although some can be invasive, depending on the situation), but do not reflect the biological/evolutionary history of New Mexico (but may reflect recent historical aspects). Just think carefully about what it is you want to do, what you will plant, and research your plants before you decide.



### New NPSNM T-Shirt Now Available

Charcoal gray, 100% cotton, in sizes from S to XL, Lisa Mandelkem's design features an agave print, with "Native Plant Society of New Mexico" printed in white on the left sleeve. The shirt wholesales to Chapters for \$11 each, and has a recommended retail price of \$15. These shirts are sure to go fast — so order pronto!

Contact Lisa at [lisamand@zianet.com](mailto:lisamand@zianet.com).



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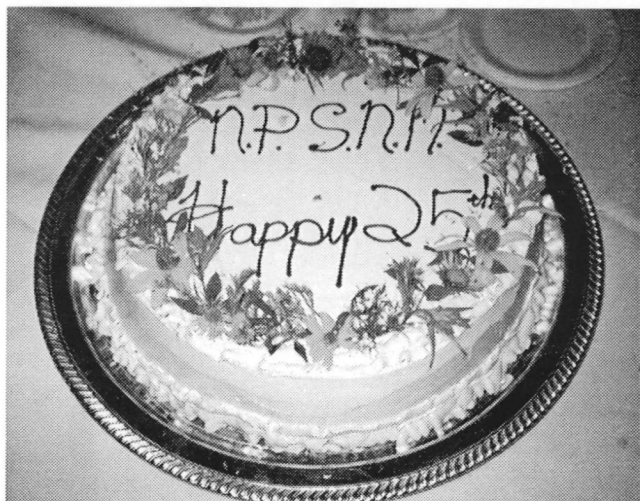
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# Annual Meeting Snapshots



A panel discussion entitled "Landscaping in Taos County" was presented during the Annual Meeting in Taos, August 18th, with the intention of introducing native plants to the general public. Panelists were, from left to right, Alex Tonneson, Western Native Seed; landscape architect Steve Domigan; Bob Pennington, Agua Fria Nursery; (not in picture) Judith Phillips, author and landscape designer, and Virginia Black, a member of the Taos Chapter and long-time area gardener. Over 35 Taoseños attended in addition to the 170 registered meeting participants.



The Annual Meeting of NPSNM was also our 25th Birthday, so two large piñon-nut cakes were baked to help celebrate the event. Before the cake cutting Bob Sivinski delivered a tribute to past presidents and newsletter editors. The cakes were made by the Dragonfly Café in Taos and were adorned with native wildflowers.

(L to R) Bob Hall, Pat and Bob Lanik, and Betsy Hall from the Sacramento Mountains Chapter sport Annual Meeting T-shirts on Sunday's Elliot Barker Trail Field Trip. Eight members of the chapter attended the annual meeting.



## SPECIAL MEMBERSHIPS

### A Very Special Thank You to:

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 James & Solveiga Unger (Santa Fe Chapter)

## Letters to the Editor

*Ed: The following was sent in response to "Totem Anyone" in the July issue.*

"With great reluctance, I passed up the notion of calling the newsletter "The Yucca Yak." Instead, I offer "The Piñon Press."

*Sandra Lynn, Carlsbad*

*Ed: And then, of course, there's "O-Piñons."*

**Are You Logging On to the NPSNM Web Site?**  
<http://npsnm.unm.edu>  
 Native Plant Articles, Chapter News, NPSNM Business (budget, by-laws, etc), and Botanical Links.



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# Book Reviews

## Building Inside Nature's Envelope: How New Construction and Land Preservation Can Work Together

by Andy Wasowski with Sally Wasowski,  
Oxford University Press, New York, 2000.

152 pp. \$27.50, hardback.

By Michael Parkey ASLA

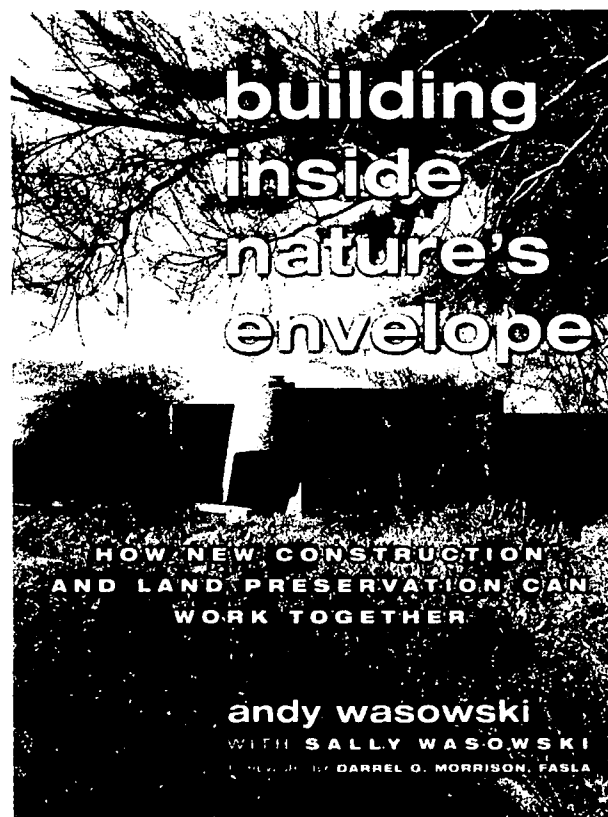
All of us with an appreciation of natural environments have seen construction projects that destroyed the very features of a site that made it attractive and desirable in the first place. In this very different "how to" book, readers can learn how to build homes, businesses, and other structures in a way that also preserves the natural qualities of the land they occupy.

The concept of nature's envelope is both simple and flexible. The land is evaluated for important natural features such as plants, topography, and drainage patterns that must be preserved. Based on this and other considerations, the best location for the intended building and other artificial features is selected. The "footprint" of the building is marked on the site, a small transition zone is established around it, and the rest of the site is preserved as an undisturbed natural zone. All construction activities occur within the envelope that encloses the footprint and transition zone.

The envelope technique is flexible enough to be used for a wide variety of projects, from single residences to large developments and corporate campuses. The main impediment to its use is resistance by developers, designers, and contractors who believe it will make their work more difficult and expensive. Here is one of the topics on which *Building Inside Nature's Envelope* really shines. The book shows a great variety of projects that were successfully completed using the envelope technique and discusses how this resistance was overcome in many of them.

The question of cost is covered in detail. Two separate studies are reported: one that analyzed the construction and maintenance cost of a restored prairie versus a conventional landscape for a corporate headquarters, and one that compared the cost of

an envelope home with the cost of one on a denuded site relandscaped with exotic species. In both cases, the envelope technique saved the owners significant amounts of money.



Although the primary use of the envelope technique, as described by the Wasowskis, is to preserve native plants and habitats, it has other applications as well. All effective tree preservation, whether of native or exotic species, requires some variant of the envelope plan. How much better it is to put the fence around the contractors to restrict their impact, rather than to put a fence around the trees and hope they live! Fences and other protective measures are thoroughly covered in *Building Inside Nature's Envelope*.

Anyone considering a construction project on a site with valuable existing vegetation, from a small house addition to a development of hundreds of acres, will find insight and useful information in *Building Inside Nature's Envelope*. Public officials responsible for planning and development standards in their communities should also read this book for examples of how the envelope technique can be incorporated into building codes.

*Michael Parkey is a Dallas-based landscape architect and a member of the Native Plant Society of Texas.*

## **GILA CHAPTER SPONSORS 3-DAY PLANT ID WORKSHOP**

“Dichotomous key,” “gymnosperm,” and “superior ovary” were terms introduced during a three-day plant identification workshop sponsored by the Gila chapter of NPS and Western New Mexico University. Organized by Chapter President Bill Davis, the workshop attracted twenty members and potential members on three consecutive Saturdays — June 30th, July 7th and 14th. Instructors were Jack Carter, Janet Gilchrist, Lynn Moseley and Donna Stevens. The objective was to develop the basic learning skills necessary to identify a selected plant and obtain the knowledge necessary to protect the fragile New Mexico environment. Field trips to locally varied habitats were scheduled, the herbarium at WNMU was available for identification and verification, and the students were encouraged to ask questions and share their knowledge with others. Thanks to a good monsoon season, the flora was spectacular and the most often stated evaluation was, "Let's have another workshop next year that centers on herbaceous plants!"



**Members of the Gila Chapter take a lunch break during the field trip to Whitewater Canyon on the final day of the chapter-sponsored Plant Identification Workshop. Seen left to right are: Kathy Cole, Polly Walker, Mary Ann Finn, Melvin Gelb, Donna Stevens, and D Nicholas.**

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