



# **GILA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY**

---

January 2020

Vol 10 No 1

Don Graves and  
Betty Spence, Editors

---

## **Bulletin 2020: Quarter 1**

This quarterly Bulletin of the Gila Native Plant Society of Silver City, New Mexico, provides the latest communications between the society and the members. It is also available on the GNPS website (<http://www.gilanps.org>).

---

### **Activities for This Quarter**

Programs are free and open to the public. Meetings are the third Friday of the month at 7:00 pm at WNMU's Harlan Hall, unless otherwise specified. Refreshments follow the program.

Activity updates and further details are posted on the website. You will also receive an email reminder before the date of each meeting.



GNPS now has a Facebook page – check it out. Just search Gila Native Plant Society. You'll know you've found us when you see the Pollinator Mural.

## January

**Friday, January 17, 2020, 7:00 pm**

### **Meeting**

Harlan Hall, Room 219, corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and Alabama Streets



**Naava Koenigsberg will speak on “Medicinal Plants of the Silva Creek Garden.”** Naava’s talk will focus on some of the native plants that will be included in the new medicinal plant bed at the Silva Creek Botanical Garden, to be put in this spring. She will discuss the habitats and medicinal properties of several plants, as well as how to use them. Naava Koenigsberg is the owner of Bear Creek Herbs and has been a practicing herbalist for over 20 years. Naava moved to Silver City in 1996 after working for several years for Plants of the Southwest in Santa Fe. In addition to being a Clinical Herbalist, she is a Certified Permaculture Designer and Certified Ecological Horticulturalist.

## February

**Friday, February 21, 2020, 7:00 pm**

### **Meeting**

Harlan Hall, Room 219, corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and Alabama Streets



### **Zachary Rogers will speak on “Madagascar: The Red Island ... A Naturalist’s**

**Paradise.”** Madagascar, as the fourth largest island in the world, is home to tens of thousands of native species of plants and animals that only occur there and nowhere else. Over millions of years, these fascinating endemic species have evolved specialized, often unique, adaptations for survival, with all of this taking place in isolation from ancestors living on nearby landmasses like Eastern Africa, India, and small Indian Ocean archipelagos. Sadly, Madagascar, as a slowly developing country, also has one of the most highly threatened floras and faunas in the world. New Mexico State University plant scientist, Zachary Rogers will guide us on a virtual tour of the island surveying its “mega-biodiversity” while showcasing recent taxonomic plant research and new conservation efforts aimed at protecting the rarest, most threatened species. Zachary is Herbarium Curator in the Animal and Range Sciences Department at New Mexico State University. He also worked for many years for the Missouri Botanical Garden and has done extensive botanical research in Madagascar.

## **March**

**Friday, March 20, 2020, 7:00 pm**

### **Meeting**

Harlan Hall, Room 219, corner of 12<sup>th</sup> and Broadway



**Donna Stevens will speak on “Spring Blooms in the Southwest: Not Just Creosote Bush.”** Donna explains: “Not to disparage Creosote Bush, of course, which is one of the best smells on the planet. While spring in the Southwest is not the same as in the East, it still offers much to celebrate. If November is any predictor of winter precipitation, the spring 2020 bloom will be glorious.” This presentation will feature some of the most common spring wildflowers in southwest New Mexico. Donna Stevens is a co-author of *Common Southwestern Native Plants: An Identification Guide*, now in its third edition. Her idea of a good time is taking a hike to observe our beautiful native flora.

---

## **President's Message**

By Don Graves

## **Pollinator Mural Dedication and Native Plant Give-Away**



On October 26th, the Gila Native Plant Society, SWNM Audubon Society, Grant County Beekeepers and Grant County Archaeological Society helped dedicate a mural on the corner of Broadway and Texas streets in Silver City. Meant to celebrate native pollinators and the plants that they depend on, the mural was researched, organized and painted by the high school class from Aldo Leopold Charter School under the direction of art instructor Allison Phillips. Some of Elroy Limmer's photographs served as inspiration for several of the motifs on the mural, including the bee with so much pollen that it can't be easily identified, a two-tailed tiger swallowtail, sacred Datura and a black-chinned hummingbird!

As you know, a dear friend of GNPS, **Susan Clair**, lost her battle with cancer recently. Known by many as the initiator of the Grant County Beekeepers, Susan was also the one who initiated the idea for a pollinator mural in Silver City. The GNPS Board will soon begin discussion of a fitting way to recognize Susan's many contributions to our native pollinators.

### **New Board Members**

Beginning January 1<sup>st</sup> the GNPS board will be strengthened by the addition of three new members (elected in November): Les Brandt, Beth Leuck and Emily Pollom.

### **Back to School**



Twelve GNPS members signed up for an Asteraceae workshop this October which was facilitated by three of our esteemed GNPS botanists: Bill Norris, Richard Felger and Russ Kleinman. The Asteraceae contain more species than any other plant family and it is this that makes them a challenge for students. Each Tuesday evening in October, with collecting bags in hand, students ventured out to gather specimens, which would later be keyed out in the lab with the aid of hand lenses, microscopes and our expert instructors. The class was fun and informative, but we all realized that it will take many years to truly feel comfortable with the diverse array of species of the Astereaceae!

Your president really did go back to school and enrolled in Russ Kleinman's Plant Taxonomy course at WNMU this fall semester. Sometimes it is best to just jump in with both feet to get the most learning possible out of a course, so I took the course for a grade, forcing me to hit it hard. With numerous field collecting trips, a lot of time spent keying out species, a properly-labeled plant collection of over one hundred Gila species and numerous exams behind me, I feel like I have greatly increased my knowledge of the local flora, but realize that I still have a long, long way to go!

---

## Plant of the Quarter: Barrel Cactus (*Ferocactus wislizeni*)

**By Keller Suberkropp**

### **Description**





Barrel cacti grow in arroyos and washes in arid regions of southern New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas. These cacti are cylindrical and can become large. At maturity, they are typically 2 feet in diameter and 3 to 6 feet tall, but may reach up to 3 feet in diameter and 10 feet tall. They have 15-30 ribs around their circumference. Clusters of spines occur on the ribs, several are straight and one is hooked. This characteristic has led to another common name, the fishhook barrel cactus. Barrel cacti can live for 50-100 years. They are frost tolerant to 50 F so they may be found at higher elevations. They often lean to the southwest as they grow and, consequently, have also been called the compass cactus. They have shallow root systems so that if they lean too far, they may fall over on their side.

Barrel cacti form fiery orange flowers in a circle at the top of the plant in the late summer. The flowers are pollinated by cactus bees. The fruit is green and turns yellow as it ripens. Their fruit is eaten by birds, deer, and javelina. Legend tells us that the pulp of barrel cacti contains water that can be consumed by people lacking water in the desert. But it also contains oxalic acid which can cause diarrhea if consumed on an empty stomach.




---

## Silva Creek Botanical Garden Report

By Elroy Limmer, Garden Chairman



As always when I request help at the garden, our members show up. A dozen members (pictured are just a few of them) moved 21 yards of soil by wheelbarrow into the new medicinal plant bed. We couldn't get a truck closer than about a hundred feet without messing up existing beds, so it was hand work the rest of the way. After two days, four hours of hard work, it was completed. The next step this spring is to arrange the beds and get walkways established and plants installed.

Plans are in the works for a roof over the amphitheater. Don Groves and I met with the Town Manager and got approval to install the roof. The engineer is working on drawings so we can get the state permit to proceed with construction. This will be contract work, so no volunteers needed. Once the roof is built, we plan to install a water catchment system, to serve for both demonstration and irrigation.

The garden has become a must see stop for our visitors. All of you who have volunteered should take a lot of pride in your accomplishments. I met a couple from Ohio at the garden who had been told by friends back home that they must see the garden when visiting Silver City. They were amazed at how much our community works together. I receive compliments all of the time from folks in the community who are not members of GNPS on how nice the garden looks. I am quick to point out that it is all due to the volunteers, not me. Thanks to all you for helping make the garden the showpiece that it has become. Stay tuned, more improvements and plants will be coming in the new year.

### **New Bench in the Garden**



When the Children's Butterfly Garden was created, there was a vision and a design for the inclusion of a bench. The Heart of the Gila non-profit ), in collaboration with artist and arts educator, Zoe Wolfe, has donated this tile butterfly masterpiece for the Silva Creek Botanical Garden. The hope is to encourage people, and especially children, to linger longer in the Garden. The bench was created by Zoe Wolfe; the cement base was made and installed by Thatcher. Friends and family of Ella Kirk, Ella Myers and Michael Mahl helped throughout the day. To learn more about supporting pollination gardens like this one, visit [heartofthegila.org/butterflywayproject/](http://heartofthegila.org/butterflywayproject/).

---

---

## Native Plant Sale Changes

The GNPS plant sale is about educating our members and the public about native plants and to encourage and support gardening with native plants. GNPS will have one plant sale in 2020 that will take place around the third Saturday of August (New Mexico Native Plant Day).

There will no longer be a plant pre-sale, and GNPS will no longer be taking orders for plants. The idea is to let native plant producers (local or otherwise) sell their native plants to the public at an event sponsored by GNPS. A new committee will be established to plan, organize, and oversee the event. Anyone wishing to be on this committee, please contact Don Graves at <http://wdgraves@frontier.com>

---

## Activities Last Quarter

### October

#### Meeting October 18, 2019



The program featured a talk by Melanie Gisler of the Institute for Applied Ecology in Santa Fe on “State-wide Conservation Initiatives for New Mexico’s Native Plants.” The Institute for Applied Ecology (IAE) opened an office in Santa Fe in 2015 and has since initiated several new programs for native plants of New Mexico. Melanie provided an overview these conservation initiatives, including the IAE’s Gila-based work, and invite feedback on a vision for future native plant projects in New Mexico.

#### October 26, 2019 - Pollinator Mural Dedication at Broadway and Texas

The dedication included a plant give-away and was widely attended, as you can see from the photo.





## November

### **November 3, 2019 - Volunteer Appreciation Potluck**

Members gathered at Ann Hedlund's lovely home and gardens to celebrate this year's accomplishments and activities and to thank the volunteers who made it all possible!

### **Meeting November 15, 2019**



The program featured a talk by Patrice Mutchnick, “Gila Wilderness Canyon Flora: Natives and the Riparian Invasion.” This summer, with help from a grant from the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance, the Heart of the Gila organization held four canyon stewardship days and executed a five-day field trip to inventory canyon natives and identify and remove non-native species from riparian corridors. The talk included extensive photo documentation and data from the project and offered insights into the floral diversity of several remote side canyons of the Gila River. The group found that, while side canyons are generally intact botanically, the mainstem areas of the Middle Fork of the Gila River are inundated with non-native species.

## December

### **December 15, 2019 – Holiday Potluck at The Commons**

And a good time was had by all.



---

**Our mailing address is:**

PO Box 457  
Silver City, NM 88062

The Gila Native Plant Society is committed

- To promoting education, research, and appreciation of the native flora of the Southwest
- To encouraging the preservation of rare and endangered plant species
- To supporting the use of suitable native plants in landscaping.