

# GILA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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October 1 2020

Vol 10 No 4

Betsy Kaido, Editor

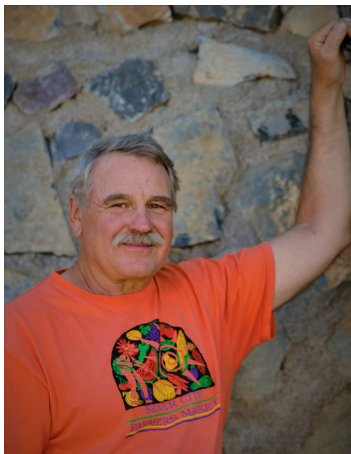
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## Bulletin 2020: Quarter 4

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>.

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### President's Message



Although COVID-19 has us all feeling more angst than usual, I will focus on some of the positive things that are happening in the world of the Gila Native Plant Society. Your GNPS has been very active!

After we decided that our planned face-to-face Landscaping with Native Plants course was not going to be possible, we scrambled to develop an online course, using WNMU's Canvas online learning platform. Jeff

Boyd, Betsy Kaido, Elroy Limmer, Wendy and I produced a course that attracted 36 participants, mostly from our Silver City area, but we also had participants from Albuquerque, Las Cruces and Socorro! This February, we will offer our Landscaping with Native Plants course a second time through the WILL (Western Institute for Lifelong Learning) curriculum.

Zoom allowed us to reach members from across the state through monthly programs. In addition, we took virtual wildflower walks to hot spots in the region. Check out <http://gilanps.org/events/field-trips/> to experience these events for yourself.

In order to learn as much as possible about our local flora, last year I took Plant Taxonomy with Russ Kleinman and learned so much about the plants of the Gila region. This year, I am working with Bill Norris to learn the grasses of the Gila. With a deep breath and a new stereo microscope, I am on my way to a new understanding of Family Poaceae! It is such an honor to study plants with such great local botanists!

-- Don Graves

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## Activities for This Quarter

**Zoom Meeting, Friday, October 16, 2020, 7:00 pm – “Reflections on a Plant Inventory of Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument (2013-2020),” presenters William (Bill) Norris, Kelly Kindscher, Russ Kleinman, Richard Felger and Patrice Mutchnick**



The presenters will report findings from their long term and ongoing study of the flora of the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument, including the discovery of 500 vascular plant and 100+ moss and liverwort species. They will also discuss a mystery: 90 vascular plant species documented previously at the Gila Cliff Dwellings have eluded the presenters to date despite eight years of intense field work. Finally, Bill, Kelly, Russ, Richard and Patrice will describe their plans to

complete this floristic inventory in 2021 and discuss how the results of this study have and will be used by educators, conservationists and biologists.

**Zoom Meeting, Friday, November 20, 2020, 7:00 pm – “Ferns of the Gila,” presenter Russ Kleinman**



Russ Kleinman will discuss unique characteristics of ferns and what it takes to survive as a fern in the Gila. We'll then take a look at many of the 37 species of ferns known from the Gila and how to tell them apart.

Prior to each of these meeting, GNPS members will receive an email invitation with the link to the meeting. Non-members who are interested may email us at [gilanative@gmail.com](mailto:gilanative@gmail.com) and request an invitation.

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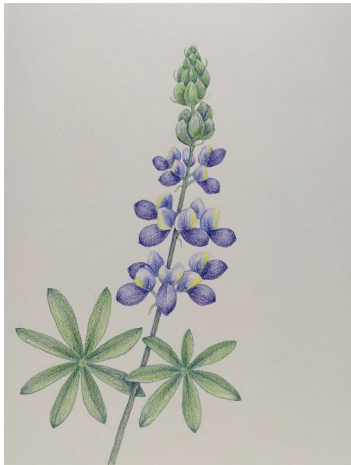
## Pretty Sketchy

Three GNPS members kept themselves busy before and during the COVID-19 pandemic sketching the world of plants and nature around us. The artists below have been regular volunteers for a variety of GNPS projects and initiatives.



Board member Les Brandt has been studying the art of the sketch as he documents nature around his home. His artist's notebook is full of interesting plants and wild things he notices around the yard, complete with field notes. Les has been instrumental in organizing our educational presence at such events as Gila Earth Day and Gila River Festival. He was an important voice helping Aldo Leopold high school artists create the wonderful pollinator mural in downtown Silver

City. Since moving to Silver City just a couple of years ago, Les is learning about the local natural environment and quickly becoming a fine field naturalist!



Member Susan Coe Brown spent her COVID-19 "self-quarantine" in and around her home, sketching plants with her new Prismacolor pencils. After returning from a trip, Susan set out to sketch for 14 days of quarantine, but this turned into 100 consecutive days of sketching. Her neighbor and good friend Simon Sotelo suggested that she use these sketches to help support the local Youth Murals Program. What resulted was an online auction on Facebook that raised over \$4700 for the Youth Murals Program!

Member Jackie Blurton has produced wonderful line art drawings and sketches that have become an integral part of the educational outreach for both GNPS and the SW Audubon Society. More recently, she sketched the native plants that became the backbone of our new *Beginner's Guide to Planting Native Perennials of the Gila Region*, now available at <http://gilanps.org/books/>. Jackie used her love of all things wild and native to make sketches of each native plant. For accuracy, she

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO  
PLANTING NATIVE PERENNIALS  
OF THE GILA REGION



regularly referred to specimens from the Dale A. Zimmerman Herbarium housed at Western New Mexico University.

## Silva Creek Botanical Garden Report

It's been water, water, water all summer as the monsoon season has been "dismal". That's a quote from the weather guy I follow. Native Plants will normally survive but we want them to thrive, so we water.



Despite the unusual times we are living in, things are progressing. We had three large Siberian elm trees removed so that they wouldn't damage the tool shed and nearby amphitheater. We are hoping to erect a shade cover over the amphitheater soon.

We have outgrown the tool shed and will be able to expand it with money Naava Koenigsburg has from her grant for the Healing Garden. Thanks, Naava.

Fencing around the storage area has outlived its useful life. Thanks to a generous donation we are able to replace the whole fence with steel framing and wooden slats. We will be looking for volunteers to stain the wood once the construction is completed hopefully in the next month.



Denise Friedrich donated a nice trellis that she made. Thanks to Gary Stayley and his group of students, we got it installed. They also did a great job cleaning the outdoor storage area, plus moving soil to divert water that was causing erosion.

I haven't asked for much help this summer but Betsy Kaido and John Pecoroni have been keeping the weeds in check and the grass mowed. Dave Cummings hauled junk to the dump and helped clean up the storage area. A big thanks to the three of them.



The season is winding down and most of the blooming plants are finished but it's still worth a stop to see the progress being made.

-- Elroy Limmer, Garden Chairman

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## Traditional Healing Garden

Things are moving forward with our installation of three beds that will showcase native plants traditionally used for healing.



Despite the heat and drought and a worldwide pandemic, we have finally been able to get plants in the ground! Over 30 volunteers came to the garden to help this summer and autumn. This includes members of the Gila Native Plant Society, local herbalists, community members, YCC students, Juvenile Probation Office youth, and a group of young folks from the LDS Church.

Now that school is back in session, the YCC garden crew is back helping us on Fridays. They have been

working on shaping the beds, installing the liner for the bog area, finishing up final autumn plantings, and mulching. We are getting ready to shift gears toward the winter projects of building the arbor, designing the main sign, and gathering plant names in multiple languages for the individual plant identifications signs.

-- Naava Koenigsberg

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## The Silva Creek Botanical Garden: A Valuable Teaching Resource during Challenging Times



Teaching field botany courses at Western New Mexico University is a huge challenge during the pandemic. Strict (and wise) university limits on the number of students who can assemble in a classroom or ride together in a vehicle have forced me to radically change how I teach Dendrology (current enrollment: 30 students). All lectures are taught on-line, and field trips to standard study sites (Iron Bridge, Mangus Springs, Signal Peak, City of Rocks etc.) in vans stuffed with students have been jettisoned. Learning tree

identification on a computer screen is a challenge and not ideal. How can I now introduce my 30 Dendrology students to woody plants of the Southwest in a meaningful way?

Here's my solution: divide the 30 students into five small groups who meet once a week during one of five 2-hour afternoon field trips (Monday - Friday) to drive in personal vehicles to local sites to observe, study and photograph trees. Destination number one: the Silva Creek Botanical Garden. Here, I show students three Agave species (Parry's, Palmer's and Lechuguilla) in a row for convenient comparison, as well as yucca, sotol, and cactus species they need to learn. On the perimeter of the garden, I show students riparian tree species that are difficult to find elsewhere in the city limits, including: Arizona Walnut, Western Soapberry, New Mexico Olive, New Mexico Alder, Net-Leaf Hackberry and Emory Baccharis. I always lead these small groups of students onto the bridge that crosses Silva Creek so that they can observe other more common tree species like Siberian Elm and Boxelder for comparison.

It is a delight to see the light bulbs go off in my students' heads (yes, visible behind their masks) as they recognize the above plant species. Next week, I plan to revisit the Silva Creek Botanical Garden during lab so they can study and photograph tree species more typical of coniferous forest and woodland communities, including Gambel's Oak, Silver Leaf Oak, and Black Cherry.

So, THANK YOU GNPS membership for all the work you have invested over the years hauling dirt, planting and watering plants to make the Silva Creek Botanical Garden a showcase for regional plants of the Southwest, and now a valuable educational resource for WNMU students learning how to identify woody and succulent tree species!

-- William (Bill) Norris

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## Plant of the Quarter

### Three Leaf Sumac (*Rhus trilobata*)

Three leaf sumac -- also called skunkbush, lemonade berry, and squawbush -- is in the Sumac family (Anacardiaceae). This deciduous shrub can grow to six feet tall and wide. It typically produces several trunks and can reproduce vegetatively by sending up sprouts to form thickets. This characteristic makes it good for erosion control on steep banks and slopes.



Young flexible stems have been used by Native Americans to make baskets and mats. The leaves are bright green and alternate. Leaves are compound, typically formed with three leaflets (hence the slightly mistaken common name). The leaflets are lobed or coarsely toothed. Crushed leaflets have a strong scent described as sweet by some and skunk-like by others. In the autumn, leaflets turn yellow to orange and red.

This shrub is widespread in New Mexico, and occurs from Texas to California and north to Canada at altitudes from 2500-9000 feet. It grows in partial shade but will take full sun, is heat and drought tolerant, fast growing, and tolerates most soils.

Three leaf sumac blooms in spring to early summer and produces clusters of small yellow flowers. The flowers develop into clusters of sticky red fruits (drupes) later in the year. Fruits are eaten by birds and small mammals. The fruits can be used to make tea or a drink that taste like lemonade.



photo by Russ Kleinman



photo by Russ Kleinman

-- Keller Suberkropp

## Wildflower Identification App

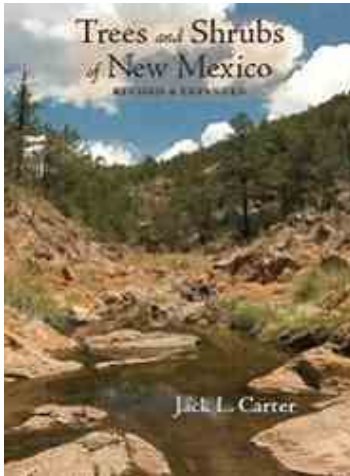


There are many competing apps for plant identification but New Mexico Wildflowers is my favorite thus far. The app lists 3,410 species including wildflowers, trees, shrubs, grasses, and more. Users can filter their search by characteristics such as color, number of petals, leaf arrangement, and location. Each plant has a description, photos, a distribution map, and links to sites with more information. While an app is no substitute for a taxonomic key, it can point users in the right direction and increase knowledge plant family characteristics. Users can also create daily plant lists, a feature that could contribute to citizen science efforts in New Mexico. The app is free and available for Apple and Android devices.

-- Emily Pollom

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## ***Trees and Shrubs of New Mexico*, 3rd edition by Dr. Jack L. Carter -- Coming Soon**



Editorial work on *Trees and Shrubs of New Mexico* by Dr. Jack L. Carter is well under way. Colorado State Horticulture and Landscape Architecture professor Dr. Jennifer Bousselot, who is overseeing the process, invited NM botanists Bob Sivinski, Russ Kleinman and William (Bill) R. Norris to review and comment on the content of the 2nd edition of Jack's book (published in 2012). Many of their suggestions will be incorporated in the upcoming 3rd edition of this book. A major goal of this editorial effort is to reconcile scientific names in

the latest version of *Trees and Shrubs of New Mexico* with those in the just published standard reference to the New Mexico flora, *Flora Neomexicana*, 2nd ed. by Kelly Allred, Gene Jercinovic and Robert DeWitt Ivey. After the above editorial work is complete, the final page proofs will be sent to the printer. The Gila Native Plant Society is paying for the editing, printing and shipping, and will be the sole distributor. Hopefully, *Trees and Shrubs of New Mexico*, 3rd edition by Dr. Jack L. Carter will be printed and ready for distribution by early 2021.

Although we lost Jack earlier this year, his legacy will live on with the publication of this standard reference to our state's woody plants!

-- **William (Bill) R. Norris**

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### **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.



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