

GILA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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Betsy Kaido, Editor

Bulletin 2021: 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>.

President's Message

WE COULD USE SOME HELP!!!



The Gila Native Plant Society depends on a wide variety of volunteers to carry out its mission. As is true of most small non-profit organizations, there always seems to be a need for more help. Do you have a special expertise that we might tap into? For example, do you have a background or interest in education? We have several educational projects on hold due to the pandemic, but will be ramping them back up once it is safe to do so. The Silva Creek Botanical Garden brochure, along with other GNPS literature is in need of updates. Do you have a knack for layout and design or have ideas for something we should be promoting? We have a great website, but it needs some updating and the more eyes we have looking it over, the better it will become. Do you have an interest in social media? Perhaps you could help GNPS have a stronger social media presence in order to attract and appeal to a wider audience.

We have almost 150 members so I know that there is talent out there that could be a vital asset to GNPS. If you have a special expertise or a desire to help promote our mission in the greater community, please contact me. We can discuss available volunteer opportunities. Thank you so much!

-- Don Graves

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Holiday Video

In case you missed the holiday video showcasing several talented Gila Native Plant Society members, click [here](#) to view this 25 minute video.



GNPS Elects New Officers

At its November, 2020 meeting the Gila Native Plant Society elected these officers for terms of two years beginning today, January 1, 2021:

President: Donald Graves

Vice-President: TBD

Secretary: Betty Spence

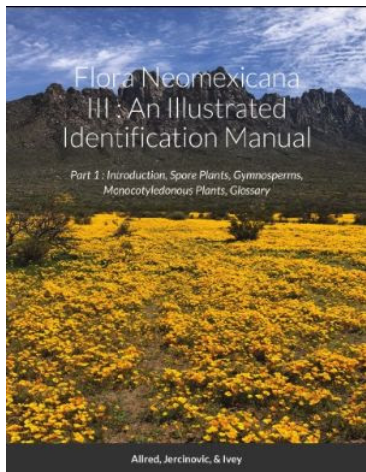
Treasurer: Wendy Graves

Activities for This Quarter

Virtual meetings will be held via Zoom on the third Friday of the month at 7 pm. Free and open to the public. Chapter members will receive a Zoom link by email; any others interested may request a link from gilanative@gmail.com. All are welcome. For more information check our website at www.gilanps.org/events/programs.

Friday, January 15, 2021, 7 pm – Virtual Meeting. “What in the World Was I Thinking? Or, The Making of *Flora Neomexicana*” – presenter Kelly Allred

Flora Neomexicana, the definitive guide to the vascular plants of New Mexico by Kelly



Allred and Eugene Jercinovic, with illustrations by Robert DeWitt Ivey, is now out in revised editions of four and a half volumes. Kelly will explain how he got caught up in such a monumental task.

Kelly Allred, former professor of botany at New Mexico State University and emeritus curator of the herbarium, was raised in the Bay Area of California. He schooled at universities in Utah and Texas, and has lived and worked in New Mexico since 1979.

Friday, February 19, 2021, 7 pm – Virtual Meeting. “Plant Root + Fungal Interactions = Mycorrhizae” – presenter Keller Suberkropp



Mycorrhiza literally means fungus-root. A variety of fungi colonize plant roots to form mycorrhizae and, in natural environments, most vascular plants are mycorrhizal. Keller Suberkropp will introduce the major types of mycorrhizae and discuss the interactions between plant and fungus. Most interactions are mutualistic, although in some cases the plant may parasitize the fungus or vice versa. Overall, the mycorrhizal association appears to be important in natural plant

communities.

Before his retirement, Keller taught introductory biology, mycology, and microbial ecology at New Mexico State University and the University of Alabama. His research examined the role of fungi in decomposing leaves in freshwater streams. Since retirement, he has taught about fungi at Western New Mexico University.

Friday, March 15, 2021, 7 pm – Virtual Meeting. “Management of New Mexico Rare Plants” – presenter James McGrath



Jim McGrath will discuss the evolution of the New Mexico Rare Plant list into the New Mexico Rare Plant Conservation Strategy rare plant list. Numerous sensitive plant lists maintained by different government agencies and the New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council (NMRPTC) have been merged into a single list of rare plants on the New Mexico Rare Plant website (<https://nmrareplants.unm.edu/>). A New Mexico Rare Plant Conservation Strategy website is currently under development.

During his 16 years as a contract botanist, Jim performed threatened and endangered plant surveys on proposed construction projects. He has also performed botanical inventories and wetland delineations during his 25+ years as a botanist. Jim has an M.S. degree in Zoology (Ecology) from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. Mostly as a volunteer, Jim collaborated with three other botanists in re-writing plant descriptions and keys to the genus *Carex* for the new edition of *Flora Neomexicana III: An Illustrated Identification Manual, Part 1, 2nd Ed.* (Allred, Jercinovic and Ivey 2020).

Landscaping Course to be Offered in February

We are planning to offer our popular online course *Landscaping with Native Plants* February 1 - 28, 2021. This four-part course will utilize Western New Mexico University's online teaching platform, Canvas. Course cost will be \$25, which includes a copy of our new *Beginner's Guide to Planting Native Perennials of the Gila Region*. Participants will be able to access the four modules at any times convenient to them. Participants will:

- be introduced to basic principles of landscape design
- learn about the variety of plants (trees, shrubs, vines, herbaceous perennials, cacti, etc.) that can be used to create a landscaped garden or space
- learn how to plant, prune and care for native plants
- take a virtual tour of local environments landscaped with native plants.

We will need to have at least eight participants to run the course and we will cut off registration if and when the number of participants reaches 25. For information about how to register, or if you have any questions, email us at gilanative@gmail.com.

Silva Creek Botanical Garden Steering Committee Established

Earlier this year, the GNPS board voted to establish the Silva Creek Botanical Garden (SCBG) Steering Committee. The committee consists of GNPS members who are interested in planning for the future of the SCBG. This new committee, working by consensus, currently consists of Susan Campbell, Angela Flanders, Naava Koenigsberg, and Elroy Limmer, with facilitation by Wendy Graves. The group has been meeting since July of 2020 and is now meeting once each month. The purpose of this group is to engage in planning, drafting policies and making decisions regarding SCBG.

The GNPS Board recently passed a motion that clarifies a decision-making process regarding SCBG. In essence, the SCBG Steering Committee makes decisions that are then passed along to the GNPS Board for final approval. If the Board disagrees with the decisions made by the steering committee, the matter then returns to the steering committee for further consideration. All of this is an effort to involve additional voices in the important day-to-day operations of the SCBG.

GNPS Signs Maintenance Agreement with Town of Silver City

The Gila Native Plant Society has entered into a Professional Services agreement with the Town of Silver City to provide maintenance, planning, improvements, upkeep and overall management of the Silva Creek Botanical Garden (SCBG). This agreement with the city will provide up to \$15,000 per year to GNPS for performing these services. This is a win-win for both GNPS and the Town of Silver City. GNPS has been maintaining and improving the SCBG for years and in 2020, we have begun projects adding up to several thousand dollars. Read the Silva Creek Botanical Garden Report below for more details on what we have accomplished and planned for the SCBG, the best kept secret in Silver City!

Silva Creek Botanical Garden Report

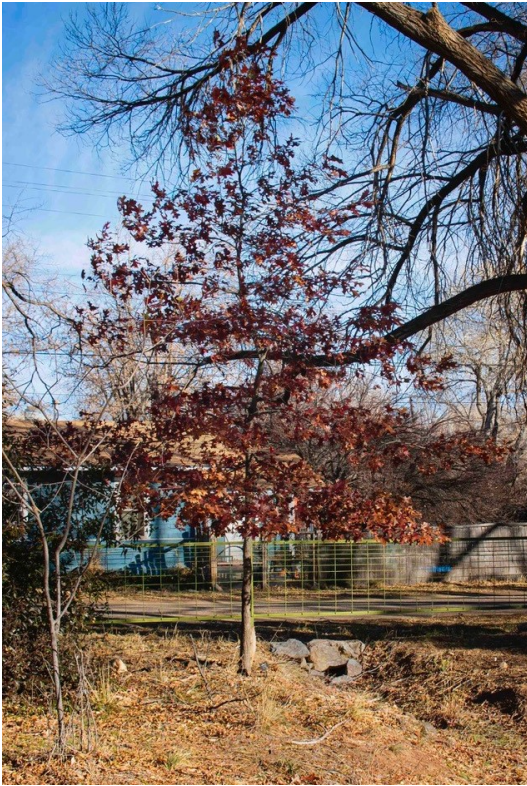


Thanks to grants and generous donations, major projects are completed or on the way. New fencing has been installed around the storage area. Thanks to Wendy and Don Graves for taking the old fence down. Early in 2021 we will need to stain the new fence, so if anyone is willing to help with this project, please call Elroy at (575) 538-5513. We will need to work in small groups and social distance.



There is a new storage shed next to the existing building. It incorporates some of the old fencing material. We can now secure things that don't need a great deal of weather protection, and we can more easily access tools previously crammed into the existing shed.

Most people fail to notice the Gambel's Oak (*Quercus gambelii*) at the north end of the garden. It was planted under the shade of the Siberian elm trees about 12 years ago and was mostly hidden. It has had to compete for light and space, consequently it was not doing well. We hired an arborist to open up the area to give the tree more light and room to grow. It is now quite visible and should thrive.



The most exciting news is that we now have a contract to have a roof installed over the amphitheater. Many of us have wanted this for a long time, and it has been a struggle to get to this point.

Thanks to a couple of very generous donations, and a lot of work and planning, it should be completed in the early part of this year.

-- Elroy Limmer, Garden Chairman

GNPS and SW Audubon Strengthen Bond

For several years, the Gila Native Plant Society has been working cooperatively with SW Audubon on a variety of projects that reflect the missions of both organizations. The Pollinator Mural, completed in 2019, is one such example of collaboration. We are now working on a joint SW Audubon/GNPS YouTube channel that will provide short videos on conservation, natural history and the like for use by school teachers. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in the need for more online instruction. Teachers have told us that short, five-minute videos featuring local professionals can be fit into the curriculum at various points, and highlight a variety of careers and subjects that students might explore. In addition, we plan to post GNPS and SW Audubon programs on this channel. We are just getting started, but stay tuned as we develop additional videos. If you would like to get a preview of what we are aiming to do, visit <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWbwzLgBuQ1e1Q4sjsn8ZXw>.

Plant of the Quarter

Piñon Pine (*Pinus edulis*)



Piñon pine is a small to medium sized tree (up to 35 feet tall) in the Pine family (Pinaceae). It is the state tree of New Mexico and grows throughout the state. It is common in the Piñon-Juniper woodlands around Silver City. Trees are slow growing and can live 250 years or more. This tree occurs from New Mexico to California and north to Wyoming at altitudes from 4500-7500 feet. It is heat and drought tolerant.

Piñon pines produce blue green to yellow green needles with two needles per fascicle, each about two inches long. Needles remain on the tree for eight to nine years.

Trees are generally monoecious, in the spring producing two types of cones: male or pollen cones, and female or seed cones.



male or pollen cone



female or seed cone

Once pollinated, female cones mature in the second year and produce seeds. These are piñones or pine nuts that are enjoyed as food by humans, small mammals and birds. Seeds are nutritious and energy rich, containing oleic acid, vitamin E, and calcium. Large seed crops are produced every three to four years.

Trees produce a taproot with a number of lateral roots. Roots form mycorrhizal associations (a form of symbiotic relationship) with a variety of fungi that produce subterranean fruiting bodies. Piñon pines produce a large amount of resin. The resin has been used by Native Americans to waterproof baskets. More recently, small trees have also been cut for use as Christmas trees.

-- Keller Suberkropp

Sustaining Means Diversifying

As many of you can attest, there are plenty of things to get involved with in Grant County and GNPS is just one of the groups I devote my time to as a board member. While mission statements and activities vary, the thing I see in common among many groups is that the participants are largely white, over the age of 60, and moved here from outside of New Mexico.

Many organizations are reckoning with how their membership became such a narrow demographic and are thinking about how to become more representative of the communities in which they exist. These discussions are bigger than what can be addressed in a short newsletter but are incredibly important.

How do we continue work within our GNPS mission statement while more accurately representing the Gila Region? Given that one of the key parts of our mission statement is conservation and we hope for this to be a long-lived organization, diversifying the age, interests, family status, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status of the people we reach couldn't be more important.

Here are a few things we should ask ourselves when thinking about what activities will appeal to a broad range of people in our community:

- Is the event appealing to people of different ages, including children?
- Can people with varying formal education levels take something from the event?
- Does the time and location of the event work for people who work full time?
- Is the location welcoming?
- How and where are we doing outreach?

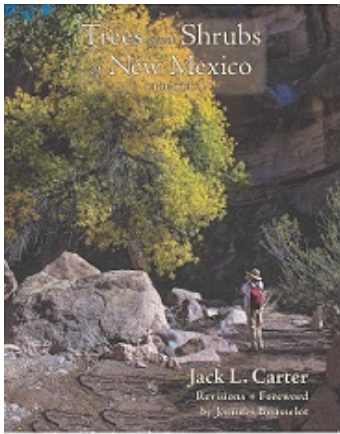
GNPS had wonderful outreach activities planned for 2020, including education programs at Stout Elementary, our native plant sale, and our plant walks. Covid-19 squashed a lot of those plans but not our momentum! With any luck, we'll have the opportunity to give some of these a try in 2021.

The enthusiasm of the people I've met in GNPS and other groups is part of the reason I chose to make Silver City my home and I know this organization can expand on the great things it already offers. This is a call for ideas and committed volunteers to care about seeing GNPS encompass stakeholders truly representative of this diverse area! Email gilanative@gmail.com to answer this call.

-- Emily Pollom, GNPS Board Member

New Edition of Jack Carter's Trees and Shrubs of New Mexico

The third edition of Carter's *Trees and Shrubs of New Mexico* is here! The Gila Native Plant Society has updated this valuable resource, which should be available by early-mid January, with the cost of \$30. Once again, GNPS will be the sole distributor of *Trees and Shrubs of New Mexico*. Many thanks to members Bill Norris and Russ Kleinman for updating the nomenclature and reviewing the final draft. The beautiful photograph of the



Lower Box of the Gila adorns the cover and was photographed by Elroy Limmer. Jack Carter wanted GNPS to have the rights to this edition and he was working tirelessly on it until his death. Many thanks to the Carter family for this honor!

Remembering Botanist Richard Felger (August 19, 1934 – October 31, 2020)

Russ Kleinman and Bill Norris, two of Richard's colleagues, have written these remembrances of him.



Richard did extensive research for his books and articles on trees of the Gila region. We did quite a bit of hiking together to find many of the trees he included. One problem for Richard was having an adequate comparison for the height of a tree. Frequently, Richard would ask one of his hiking buddies to stand next to the tree in question. At other times, Richard would use his hat to indicate the size of the trunk. Most of Richard's hiking buddies will remember this particular hat (with *Salix bonplandiana*), though there were likely many others used in prior years!

-- Russ Kleinman

Whenever Richard Felger was asked to introduce himself, he invariably replied, "I'm just a botanist" which does no justice to his long, distinguished career as a plant scientist, enthusiast and champion. Upon moving to Silver City, he immediately set about to learn everything he could about the flora of the "Gila Region" with which he was less familiar at the time. Richard took every opportunity to accompany other botanists, especially Russ Kleinman, on field trips into the Gila to observe and learn about new plant species. I fondly remember one excursion when Richard, well into his 70's, hiked with us to the top of Hillsboro Peak (10,000 ft. elevation) in the Black Range.

Always eager to share his enthusiasm for botany, Richard was active in the Gila Native

Plant Society. He was also a frequent contributor to the Natural History of the Gila Symposium and the Gila River Festival, and collaborated with me, Kelly Kindscher, Russ Kleinman and Patrice Mutchnick on a comprehensive plant inventory of the Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument (2013-present). During one memorable field trip for this project, I'll never forget Richard's sharp eyes picking up Little Red-Stemmed Monkeyflower (*Eryanthe rubella*) growing on thin soil over rock adjacent to the main dwellings, a population which I would certainly have overlooked.

One of Richard's passions was to identify native plants well adapted to arid conditions that could serve as future food crops. He worked with young people here to grow, harvest, and process Giant Sacaton, Honey Mesquite and Apache Red Grass to show that their seeds and grains could be turned into food.

Most of us would do well to rise to Richard's standard of "just a botanist".

-- **Bill Norris**

Many of Richard's works of botany and ethnobotany are available as links or for purchase on his web site, which is likely to be up for quite a while (<https://www.desertfoodplants.org/>).



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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