



**GILA
NATIVE
PLANT
SOCIETY**

B U L L E T I N

APRIL, MAY, JUNE 2015

Editor: Charles Holmes

PROGRAMS

All programs are free and open to the public. Meetings are usually the third Friday of the month at 7:00 pm at WNMU's Harlan Hall, with refreshments following the program.

Activity updates and further details will be posted on our website www.gilanps.org. You will also receive an email reminder before the date of each program.

2.

On Friday, April 17th in Harlan Hall on the Western New Mexico U. campus Bill Norris and Tim Geddes will provide an overview of an ongoing (since 2004) vascular plant inventory of the City of Rocks State Park

This will include discussions of the park's history, goals and the methodology of the inventory, findings to date and planned expansion of the plant inventory to encompass newly acquired land which has drastically increased the size of the park. The presentation, which will feature Tim's photography, will also discuss the importance of basic plant inventory work in this age of waning floristic research.

Bill Norris is a faculty member in the Natural Sciences Department of Western New Mexico University, where he currently teaches seven different courses in botany, ecology and ornithology. Over the past twenty years, he has enjoyed working with non-professional and professional botanists on numerous botanical research projects which focus on the flora of botanically significant areas in both New Mexico and Iowa.

Tim Geddes has been working as a citizen scientist with Dr. Norris in studying the flora of the City of Rocks. He has photographed much of their findings.

In April, the Gila Native Plant Society will begin our new season of native plant field trips in some of the best areas in our region for discovering native plants. The public is invited to join these events free of charge. Participants should meet at 8:00 am in the south parking lot of the WNMU Fine Arts Theatre to arrange for carpooling. Those attending must sign a release-of-liability form and will receive a list of native plants in the hike area.

Participants are asked to bring water, a lunch, a hat and sunscreen. They should also wear good hiking footwear. For more information on the field trips, call Kevin Keith, our new field trip leader, at 575 535-4064.

3.

On Sunday, April 19th, the Gila Native Plant Society will conduct a field trip to discover and discuss native plants along the Big Juniper Tree Trail (55A), north of Fort Bayard.

We will walk through a woodland/grassland mosaic and some riparian habitat along Cameron Creek.

On Sunday, May 17th, the Gila Native Plant Society will conduct a field trip to Sapillo Creek, Trail 247.

We will also take a small excursion (4 mile round trip in our vehicles) to see an impressive roadside population of *Pinus leiophylla* var. *chihuahuana*.

On Sunday, June 21st, the Gila Native Plant Society will sponsor a field trip to McMillan Canyon.

We will start at the campground and follow the canyon trail up through montane coniferous forest.

R E P O R T S

On January 16th Dr. Richard Felger informed a large crowd, including many newcomers, about New Food Crops: Botanical Adventures.

He began the presentation with the genus *Lepidium*, common name pepperweed. It is a member of the mustard family. Next he told us about Wild Tepary of the *Phaseolus* genus. It has become an economic crop that is likely to gain more widespread use in the future. A third example was Lemonweed, a prominent member of the *Pectis* genus. It contains lots of cumin and can be used for medicinal purposes. (Cont.)

4.

Dr. Felger then explained how *Panicum bulbosum* (Apache Red Grass) is a crop that requires no tillage. It is small seed millet. He then moved on to two species of the *Sporobolus* genus, both of which are very tall and not grazed by cattle. These species do not require tillage.

Dr. Felger's principal point is that there is a great richness of native plants in our local area that are suitable to our nutritional needs.

On Friday, February 20th, Dr. Russ Kleinman talked to us about Winter Botany, answering the question: what does a botanist do in winter?

One of the answers might be: work in a herbarium creating documentation on many as yet undocumented specimen. Another possibility is to create slides of bloomers that are just appearing above the snow or not-yet appearing. It is also possible to collect lots of data and slides of fungi and lichens which love the winter snows and are not yet in clear sight.

Russ told us that maybe his favorites are winter twigs of this year's growth, through which you may identify its plant from leaf scars and vascular bundle scars. We then were given actual twigs of several plants from which Russ showed us how to identify the features. What a treat!

On Friday, March 20th, Dr. Jose Herrera gave us some extraordinary explanations and facts about "Fungi Inhabiting the Roots of Native Arid Land Grasses".

He was talking about endophytes that inhabit the areas just outside the roots of many thousands of plant species. In fact they have been around for over 30 million years, mostly accompanying the roots of grasses of arid areas. His focus was on Dark Septate Endophytes (DSE) which actually penetrates inside the roots. He emphasized that most grasses require fungal assistance to survive and grow well. We also learned that many, many species of fungus inhabit a small section of soil. In fact, a single plant may accommodate hundreds of different species of fungus. Also, plants that are not doing well with the small amounts of water that they are getting need more fungi to survive.