

GILA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

July 1 2022

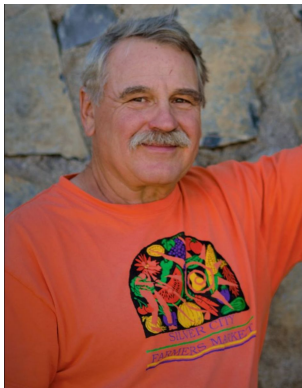
Vol 12 No 3

Betsy Kaido, Editor

Bulletin 2022: Quarter 3

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



As I've said on more than one occasion in this spot, our Gila Native Plant Society (GNPS) is only as strong and vibrant as our cherished volunteers. This message has been heard and I can tell you that my pleas for help have paid off in the form of new board members, help at the Silva Creek Botanical Garden (SCBG), our very own graphic designer, new members on the Education and Native Plant Sale Committees, help with our SCBG kiosk, and a volunteer to send condolences when one of our members is in need. So, thank you to those who have stepped up to help!

Here are Two New Special Opportunities for Gila Native Plant Society Members

GNPS Booth at Mimbres Hummingbird Festival



On Saturday and Sunday, July 30th and 31st, GNPS will be hosting a booth at the Mimbres Hummingbird Festival at the Mimbres Culture Heritage Site. Our booth will be an active one, including providing native plant activities for kids of all ages, answering questions about the GNPS, encouraging membership, and selling our GNPS-sponsored books and guides.

Can you help us staff our booth for two hours between 8:00am and 3:00pm on either day of the festival? For those new to the GNPS, you will be paired with members who have been around for a while, so you won't feel like you won't know what to do or say. There will be plenty of things to do at the festival before or after your shift, and I'll guarantee that you will see more hummingbirds and different species of hummers than you probably have seen before. If you are able to help out, contact us at gilanative@gmail.com. Here is more information on the Mimbres Hummingbird Festival to pique your interest!

<http://www.mimbrescultureheritagesite.org/events.html>



Bat Conservation International and GNPS Team Up to Protect Bats

Folks love their agave-based tequila and mescal, but the native agaves that Mexican Long-Nosed Bats rely upon for nectar are being decimated by agave-harvesting industries in Mexico. To help these bats, Bat Conservation International (BCI) has projects south of the border in Mexico and in the southwestern United States to plant agave on land not subject to harvesting for spirits.

It just so happens that, increasingly, the lesser Mexican Long-Nosed Bat is making its way to our Gila region. Many of our members have wondered how their hummingbird feeders can get emptied overnight and now we know why. This BCI/GNPS project is a long-range attempt to provide the most nutritious nectar source for these bats: native Parry's and Palmer's agave nectar! Here is where our GNPS members can enter the story to help!

For this phase one, six local landowners, mostly GNPS members, have agreed to have up to 50 agaves planted on their property over the time period of **August 2nd through August 4th or 5th**. We need GNPS members to volunteer to help plant these agaves alongside landowners and BCI professional staff. Three hundred agave plants sounds like a lot, but with the necessary planting power, we can do it. The agave transplants are relatively small, so it is not like planting an oak tree. Volunteers will meet new friends, get some exercise, learn about these wonderful bats from professional biologists and have a sense of accomplishment that they have done something good for our membrane-winged friends. If interested, please contact us at gilanative@gmail.com. For more information on this project, visit this page at the Bat Conservation International website:

<https://www.batcon.org/our-work/protect-restore-landscapes/agave-restoration/>.

--- **Don Graves**

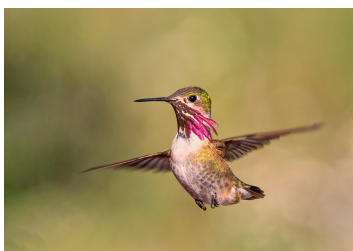
Activities for This Quarter

Evening programs will resume in October. Meanwhile, videos of our spring programs are available online at the chapter website, gilanps.org/events/programs/, including Russ Kleinman's recent presentation on penstemons.

Two field trips are planned, and more may be added as fire conditions allow. Check our website at gilanps.org/events/field-trips/ for more information about these activities, and for possible additions to those listed below.



Saturday, July 16, 2022, 8am – 12pm. Field Trip: Learn Your Trees. Leader: GNPS President Don Graves. This field trip is for those new to the Gila area, new to native plants or just wanting to brush up on their tree identification. The group will travel to Cherry Creek Campground, McMillan Campground and Meadow Creek. Participants will learn some botany basics, understand how plants are named and learn how to use a botanical key to identify local trees.



Saturday and Sunday, July 30 and 31, 2022. Booth at Mimbres Hummingbird Festival. The Gila Native Plant Society will have a booth at the upcoming Mimbres Hummingbird Festival on July 30th and 31st where we will have activities for the whole family, sell books, answer questions, and promote membership. In addition, we will present our Native Pollinators and Larval Native Plant Hosts program on both days of the festival, which is being held at the Mimbres Cultural Heritage Site.

Saturday, September 10, 2022, 10am – 2pm. Annual Native Plant Sale, at the parking lot on the corner of Pope and 12th Streets, across from Gough Park. GNPS has lined up six southwestern native plant vendors to sell their plants directly to the public.



Saturday, September 24, 2022, 8am – 12pm. Field Trip: Pollinators and Larval Host Plants of Signal Peak. Leader: GNPS President Don Graves, as part of the 18th Annual Gila River Festival. Join us on this exploration of Signal Peak, from the bottom wet meadow to the coniferous forest at the top. Along the way, we will experience these pollinators and native plants to better understand this fragile ecosystem. Participants will also learn strategies to help bring

this diversity to their own yards and landscaped spaces. Participants will need to register and pay for this field trip at <https://www.gilariverfestival.org/>.

Native Plant Society of New Mexico Annual Meeting August 5 - 7 in Albuquerque



Come together in Albuquerque to hear scientists, citizens, indigenous, philosophical, and data-driven perspectives explore how we can nurture a greater respect for nature and the land ethic we need for the future in New Mexico. The Albuquerque Chapter will present a variety of multimedia programs, speakers, workshops, field trips, book sales, a silent auction, and a banquet dinner.

The state conference offers a great opportunity to learn more about the wonderful diversity of New Mexico native plants. You will make new friends, hike in areas that you have never been to, and will leave with a new energy to continue to explore our amazing world of native plants. Several of our Gila Chapter members will also be attending and there will be plenty of opportunity to get to know them. Wendy and I highly recommend the conference. We hope to see you there! For details go to www.npsnm.org.

-- Don Graves

Joint GNPS/Audubon Picnic Held May 15



A good time was had by all. We filled the Gomez Peak Pavilion!

Photos by Val Weston

Silva Creek Botanical Garden

Thanks to our loyal volunteers, the garden is in fine form – despite our very dry spring.

There have been many comments from visitors about how good it looks. The last quarter saw the creation of a new bed next to the Medicinal Garden, allowing for its expansion and helping prevent flooding by street water. The removal of a non-native *Vitex agnus-castus*, which originates from the Mediterranean, was another project requiring some muscle. Plus, our volunteers did the usual weeding, pruning, and raking that keep the garden looking its best.



Along with helping at our work parties, Betsy Kaido, Tim Trofe and John Pecoroni undertook the additional job of applying a stain and sealer to the inside of the work area fence, which not only looks nice but helps ensure that the fence lasts a long time.

In other garden news, we hired Green Energy Now to mitigate potential erosion of the steep bank of Silva Creek caused by rainwater runoff from the amphitheater's butterfly roof.

Garden volunteers hope a storage tank could hold the roof water, and the stabilization structure would handle overflow when the tank was full.

-- **Elroy Limmer, Garden Manager**

Margie Gibson, Deputy Garden Manager

Traditional Medicine Garden

The Traditional Medicine Garden (TMG) has made it through its second winter! We did lose a few plants, but many are vibrant and flourishing, especially with the welcome rain.

This spring we held a few work sessions to weed, to re-stain the pergola (the parts that aren't already enveloped by the hops and the clematis – those will have to wait until the fall), and to properly install the metal top-cap. Thank you to Leo and Catarina. Elroy surprised us with a small crew that built a retaining wall for the area that will house some of the larger, sprawlier plants we hope to include eventually. Thank you to those workers!

In May we had two GNPS field trips in the garden. We looked at medicinal plants found both in the TMG and throughout Silva Creek Botanical Garden. We also held an impromptu class for a fire crew from California who happened to stumble in as we were ending a work session.

Last month we were thrilled to have what we thought was the solitary Pulsatilla (*Anemone tuberosa*) bloom, only to discover that it is in fact another species or a cultivar. Absolutely beautiful but we'll have to figure out what it is! The Blue Flag (*Iris missouriensis*) bloomed for the first time, and we also had great showings from the Inmortal (*Asclepias asperula*), Feather Dalea (*Dalea Formosa*) and Golden Smoke (*Corydalis aurea*).

Our current flower show includes California Poppy (*Eschscholtzia californica*), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Vervain (*Verbena macdougallii*), Cinquefoil (*Potentilla thurberi*), St. John's Wort (*Hypericum spp.*), Wild Oregano (*Monarda fistulosa* var. *menthifolia*), Missouri Goldenrod (*Solidago missouriensis*), Self Heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Desert Willow (*Chilopsis linearis*), Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), Alum Root (*Heuchera spp.*) as well as the Elder (*Sambucus mexicana*) and Prickly Poppy (*Argemone pleiacantha*) growing in the next bed over.



Clockwise from upper left: Vervain (*Verbena macdougallii*), Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), Alum Root (*Heuchera spp.*), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), and Wild Oregano (*Monarda fistulosa* var. *menthifolia*).



Come visit the Traditional Medicine Garden at Silva Creek Botanical Garden while it's in its glory!

Here's More About Desert Willow: A Traditional Medicinal Plant



As I'm sure most of you plant-savvy folks know, Desert Willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) is not actually a willow, but is related to Trumpetbush and Catalpa, as part of the Bignoniaceae family. It is a superb landscape plant, offering an open, multitrunked habit which can be pruned to be a fanning bush or a small tree up to about 20 feet. It provides dappled shade and beautiful, mildly fragrant, pink to purple flowers.



Although Desert Willow loves the extra water it has access to by growing in rocky washes, the monsoons here provide it with enough that, once established in your garden, you won't need to water it much. Its flowers attract pollinators – including hummingbirds, so it is wonderful in a habitat or pollinator garden.

While it has general antioxidant and antimicrobial properties, Desert Willow's use as a gentle and effective antifungal is what makes it popular with local herbalists. Its more exotic but medicinally similar South American cousin, Pau D'arco (*Tabebuia impetiginosa*) is in high demand for medicine and so has become endangered. Our lovely Desert Willow works just as well.

The dried leaves and flowers are infused in water which can be drunk as a tea, applied topically, or used as a sitz bath, douche, or sinus wash. It can also be made into an alcohol extract. We use it for any fungal condition including candida infection, athlete's foot, toenail fungus, jock itch, yeasty heat rash, and ringworm. It is safe enough to use on babies for thrush. Always seek the advice of a professional herbalist before experimenting with medicinal plants.

Text and photos by Naava Koenigsberg. All photos taken at Silva Creek Botanical Garden, June 2022.

Plant of the Quarter

(Yucca species)

This spikey succulent, a member of the Agavaceae family, is common throughout the arid American West. There are about 40 species of yucca all native to North America. Early European explorers named the plant Spanish Dagger, while Mescalero Apache called it

Huskane. The Yucca is the state flower of New Mexico. Two species native to the Gila region are Soaptree Yucca (*Yucca elata*) and Banana yucca (*Yucca baccata*).



The yucca's stalk, topped by clusters of white flowers, juts up from a cluster of narrow dark-green leaves that sharply taper to needle-point tips. Although various insects feed on the yucca blossom's nectar, the plant depends on the Yucca Moth for seed production. This moth is the only insect that can successfully pollinate yucca flowers. In an arrangement of "obligate pollination mutualism," the developing yucca fruits are the only larval food source for yucca moths. The Soaptree Yucca grows as tall as 30 feet in height and its roots can stretch for a hundred feet or more in search of water.



Its mature flower ripens into a three-chamber seed pod, each with two poker-chip-like stacks of flat black seeds.



The Banana Yucca grows closer to the ground, reaching typically five feet or less. Its yucca fruits are fleshy, soft and sweet when ripe.

Native tribes used the yucca in several ways. They wove its leaves into baskets and used its sharp leaf point as a needle. They extracted the strong coarse leaf fibers to be woven into sandals, mats, baskets and other items. The saponins concentrated in the roots of the Soaptree Yucca made it an excellent source for soap or shampoo. The Banana Yucca's tender fruit are a food source for insects, birds, animals and humans. Deer and cattle especially relish the young flowers. Packrats "prune" the yucca plants, adding yucca leaves to their nests.

The hardy yucca is ubiquitous in several Silver City neighborhoods. It thrives in sandy or rocky soil, and it subsists with minimal water. Transplanting requires digging up and replanting the plant's long vertical root. Starting yucca from seeds or leaf cuttings is also possible.

Suggestions, comments or corrections can be emailed to norman.cathleen@gmail.com.

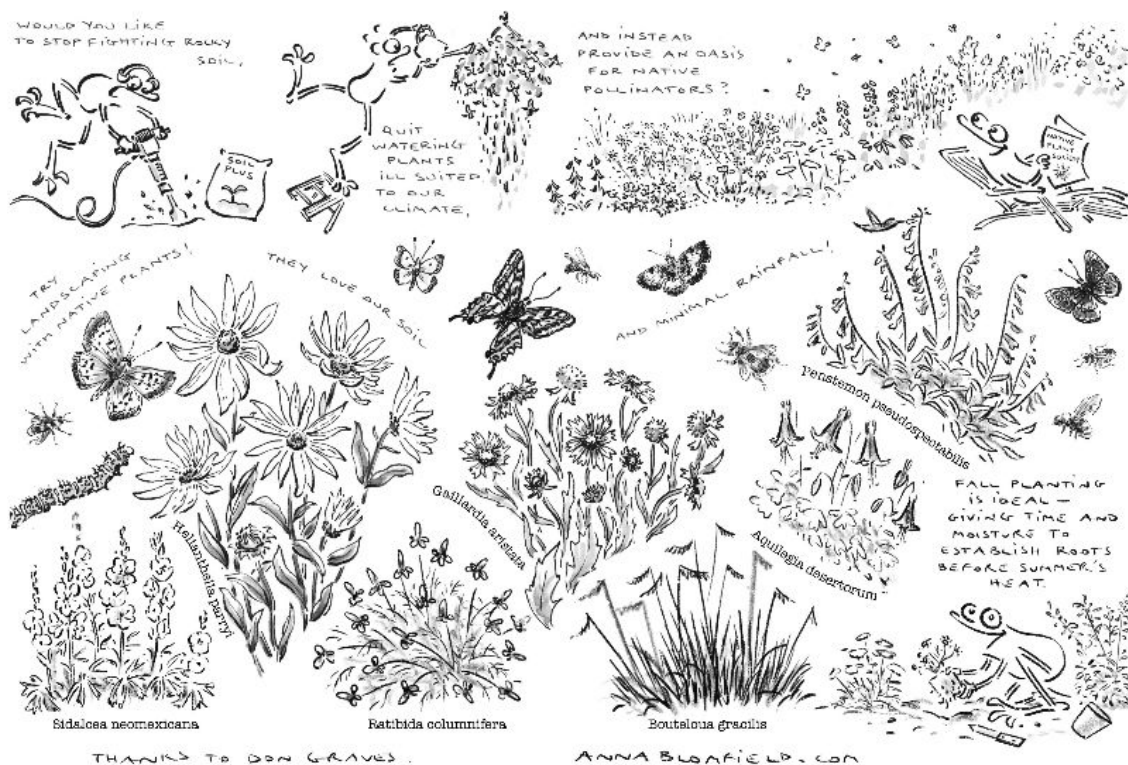
Works By Members



Les Brandt captures birds and Monarda.



Val Weston painted this magnificent red tailed hawk.



Anna Blomfield created this delightful combination of advice and art to encourage us all to make our own native plant gardens. Click on it to see a larger version.



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.

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)

This email was sent to <<Email Address>>

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

Gila Native Plant Society · PO Box 457 · Silver City, NM 88062 · USA

