

# GILA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

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Betsy Kaido, Editor

## Bulletin 2024: Quarter 2

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

There is a myth about the Gila Native Plant Society that is simply not true. You don't need to be a botanist to be involved. I'm a perfect example. When I became a member in 2019, I knew the genus and species names for very few native plants – and not necessarily how to pronounce them!

I joined GNPS because I am a nature devotee. The majority of our members are like me. I'm interested in plants and all the creatures that depend on them. And I believe, in the words of Muhammad Ali, "*Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on Earth.*"

We are an active chapter with a variety of programs. I am not the only one who feels overloaded: we need people to step up. Everyone has skills, and our programs depend on help from you, our members.

There are many small jobs, like volunteering at a garden work party, helping to water, bringing refreshments to a monthly program, doing kid's activities at an event, planting agaves, or submitting something to our Facebook page. We have several committees that would welcome an additional member, including Education, Field Trips, Fundraising, and Programs.

Here are a few specific jobs we need to have filled:

#### **Events Coordinator**

Schedule volunteers at our booth for Earth Day, Give Grandly, the Hummingbird Festival, and the Mimbres Harvest Festival. You don't need to be at the booth yourself.

#### **Social Events Committee and a Coordinator**

Members are interested in more social events, like our May picnic and December holiday party. Some ideas include a brown bag lunch in the garden, something at Little Toad Creek or Open Space Brewing, or a family day with kids' activity in the botanical garden. There could be a separate volunteer for each.

If you have an idea about something you'd like to do or want to learn more about what we need, please email me. I hope to hear from you. As John F. Kennedy said, "*Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try.*"

-- **Margie Gibson**

Email: [gilanative@gmail.com](mailto:gilanative@gmail.com)

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## **GNPS Is Planning a Lively 2nd Quarter of 2024 for All of Us**

#### **Tuesday, April 9 – Hidalgo County Chihuahuan Desert Wildflowers Field Trip**

Andrew Tree will lead our first field trip of the year. You can watch for the details in a separate email.

#### **Friday, April 19, 7:00 pm – Program "Insect Galls of the Southwest"**

For our last evening program until fall, we have invited Quin Baine, Research Fellow at the Museum of Southwestern Biology, to give a presentation on the galls that appear on some of our native plants. If you have seen them, you may have wondered: what is the function of these weird growths, and how can I identify them? Quin will talk about the main groups



of insect gall formers, their specialized relationships to plants, and how to recognize common galls of native plants of the southwest.

This program will be live at Harlan Hall, Room 111, on the WNMU campus at the corner of 12th and Alabama Streets. It will also be available via Zoom. GNPS members will automatically receive a Zoom link by email about ten days ahead. Others may request a Zoom link from GNPS at [gilanative@gmail.com](mailto:gilanative@gmail.com). All are welcome, in person or online.

*(photo provided by Quin Baine)*

**Saturday, April 20, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm – Gila Earth Day/CDT Days in Gough Park.** GNPS will have a table and activities for kids of all ages.



**Grandly 2024, Mainstreet Plaza behind Bullard between 7th and 8th Streets.** Once again, GNPS will participate in this great annual fundraiser for local non-profits. Come see us at our booth at Mainstreet Plaza or donate online from April 20 to May 20 at [www.givegrandly.org](http://www.givegrandly.org). A portion of the donations we receive will help make our ambitious plans for the Silva Creek Botanical Garden a reality. Look for more information on how to donate as the date gets closer.

**Sunday, May 19, noon. Annual Picnic at the Gomez Peak Picnic Pavilion.**

Please bring your best potluck offering to share and your own plate, glass, and utensils (including a serving utensil if needed for your potluck contribution). Beverages and hot dogs with their fixings will be provided.

**Gila Wilderness Centennial Week – May 25 – June 3**

The U.S. Forest Service has called for activities to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Gila Wilderness, the very first designated wilderness area, and GNPS will take an active part. Here are the activities that GNPS is contributing:

**Saturday, May 25, 10:30 am – Willow Creek/Iron Creek Botany Field Trip with John Gorey**

**Wednesday, May 29, 10:00 am – West Fork Gila River Botany Field Trip with Bill Norris and Russ Kleinman**

**Saturday, June 1, Noon to 4:00 pm – Main Gila Centennial Celebration in Gough Park.** GNPS will have a table and activities for kids of all ages.



**Saturday, June 1, 7:00 pm, Talk: “Pollinators, Larval Host Plants, and Their Interactions.”**

Don Graves and Elroy Limmer of the Gila Native Plant Society will present on this topic, including magnificent photographs of pollinators, before leading a botany hike on Sunday morning into the Wilderness at Spring Canyon. Venue TBD.

*(photo of Colletee Bee by Elroy Limmer)*

**Sunday, June 2, 9:00 am – Spring Canyon Botany Field Trip with Don Graves and Elroy Limmer.**

You will be hearing a lot more about the Centennial, including how to participate in GNPS activities.

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## **Silva Creek Botanical Garden**

We had our first work party of the year on the cool morning of March 8th. We expected some easy weeding and maybe some other new growth because of the nice wet February. Betsy Kaido, who keeps records of this sort of thing, said this February has been one of the wettest in recorded history. She recorded 2.39” at her house. The February average for the years 1869 to 2010 was a mere 0.85”. There were indeed quite a few unwanted annuals (a.k.a. weeds) to tackle. The most common were London Rocket (*Sisymbrium irio*), Henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*), and Red Stemmed Storkbill (*Erodium cicutarium*). It's a good bet most of you have seen them in your yards. The flowers are so pretty, but they're exotics and will take over if not checked.

London Rocket (*Sisymbrium irio*)







Henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*)

Red Stemmed Storkbill (*Erodium  
cicutarium*)

(All photos courtesy of The Dale A. Zimmerman  
Herbarium, WNMU.)



We also cut back some of the larger perennials and grasses. New growth has started on most of the grasses and on the Chamisa, Maximillian Daisies, and Prickly Poppies. We hope to see many of you again later this month.

It's a lot of fun and so satisfying to see what a group can accomplish in just a few hours.

-- **Susan Thompson**  
Garden Management Team

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## Plant of the Quarter

### ***Ephedra trifurca***

*Ephedra trifurca* is a medium-sized, woody shrub topped with dense clusters of erect twigs. The intricate network of brittle, practically leafless, green twigs is a prominent characteristic of the plant. It is found in desert scrublands of the Chihuahuan Desert, Sonoran Desert and Baja California.

Ephedra is an ancient genus found in fossils reaching back 125 million years ago, a time when dinosaurs roamed the earth. There are 70 species worldwide growing in desert regions. *Ephedra trifurca* typically grows two to three feet tall, sometimes in mats that

measure ten feet or more in diameter. The sprawling shrub has nodes along its twigs marked by tiny pairs of vestigial leaves. Because it lacks traditional leaves, the plant relies on photosynthesis occurring in its green, jointed stems.



Ephedra is a gymnosperm (seed-producing plants including conifers) rather than an angiosperm (plants that flower and produce seeds). The wind-pollinating bush is dioecious - the male and female reproductive organs occur in separate plants. Male plants produce yellow pollen cones forming at the nodes. Meanwhile, female plants produce seed cones containing two seeds each. Ephedra species prefer full sun and well-drained sandy or gravelly soils. In our region, *Ephedra trifurca* is found at 3,000-7,500 ft. elevations in desert shrub lands, on dry rocky slopes, and growing up canyon walls. You can also see this species growing in the Silva Creek Botanical Garden cactus bed. Information on growing the Ephedra is available at

[https://plants.usda.gov/DocumentLibrary/plantguide/pdf/pg\\_epvi.pdf](https://plants.usda.gov/DocumentLibrary/plantguide/pdf/pg_epvi.pdf)

The bush provides cover for birds and small mammals, and its nutlike seeds are eaten by quail and other birds. It is also browsed by pronghorn, deer, and livestock. Its common name is Longleaf Jointfir. Two other common names, Mormon Tea and Mexican Tea, reveal that it has been used traditionally as a beverage or medicine. However, in the early 2000s, ingesting Ephedra was linked to toxic cardiac arrest, prompting the Food and Drug Administration to ban sales of supplemental capsules sold in health food stores.



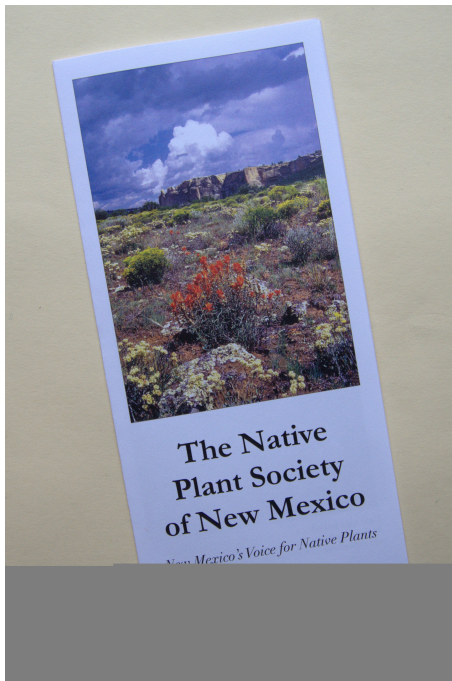
-- **Cathleen Norman.**

For comments, corrections, or suggestions, contact Cathleen Norman at [catnorman33@gmail.com](mailto:catnorman33@gmail.com).

(1st photo courtesy of Cathleen Norman; close-ups, the Dale A. Zimmerman Herbarium, WNMU)

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**NPSNM has a New Membership Brochure!**



When Don and I went to the winter Board Meeting of the NPSNM this past January, we had less than 50 membership brochures for the organization in tow. With the planned membership drives and other chapter activities, these brochures were quickly distributed, with the last bunch being mailed to the El Paso chapter after the meeting. Of course, Don and I had planned to be in Mexico for five weeks starting in the last week of January, so getting a new brochure before the spring and summer tabling season was going to be difficult.

We are eternally grateful to the Gila Chapter, specifically President Margie Gibson, for volunteering to review the previous membership brochure and design an updated version – while we were out of town, no less! Margie found some new photographs for the brochure, contributed by Elroy Limmer and Kevin Floyd (El Paso chapter president). Also, the

draft review was provided by Sharon Bookwalter and David Phillips, with a small contribution by Don and me.

Margie's home also served as the delivery place – for pre-printing drafts as well as the final shipment, so that when we arrived back in town, the brochures were here and ready to be distributed among the various chapters. It was a great relief to arrive home and have this large task done, and we are eternally grateful to Margie for managing it!

-- **Wendy Graves**  
*co-president, NPSNM*

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## Works By Members





Val Weston created this watercolor, titled *Ocotillo Sunset*.

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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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