

GILA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

October 1 2024

Vol 14 No 4

Editors Betsy Kaido and Jeff Boyd

Bulletin 2024: 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

It's the last Bulletin of the year and my final President's Message; my term ends on December 31. Most nonprofits with our level of activity have regular paid staff. It's inspiring how much we accomplished with our dedicated volunteers!

Some of our public activities in the last quarter included:

- A lively reemergence celebration for the Children's Butterfly Garden in cooperation with Heart of the Gila. Over ninety people attended, including many children under five years old, and more than a dozen volunteers. Many hours of work went into making it a success.
- Planting agaves on GNPS members' property in cooperation with Bat Conservation International.
- Becoming a sponsor of the Gila River Festival.
- Participating in a Welcome Back Bash for Western New Mexico University students.
- Another wildly successful annual Native Plant Sale.
- Two wildflower field trips led by Andrew Tree and a Know Your Trees field trip led by Don Graves.
- A deer grass rescue organized by Don Graves at Camino de Sueños on Brewer Hill.



Many thanks to everyone who volunteered in 2024, including serving on committees, helping at events, working in the botanical garden, contributing to the Bulletin, welcoming new members, and serving on our board. GNPS is likewise grateful to those of you who made financial contributions.

Some of the crowd at the Children's Butterfly Garden event.

Board elections for officers occur in even years, for a two-year term beginning January 1, 2025. We have a great slate of officers for the membership to vote on in November: Donna Stevens (president), Cara Staab (vice president), Cathleen Norman (returning as treasurer), and Betty Spence (returning as secretary). I'll remain on the Board as past president. You'll be hearing more about the elections later.

I hope to see you at our Holiday Party on Sunday, December 8.

-- Margie Gibson

Email: gnpspresident@gmail.com

Activities for This Quarter

This fall evening programs will be on the third Friday of the month in October and November at 7:00 pm. Programs will be hybrid – live and via Zoom. To attend live, come to room 111 in Harlan Hall on the corner of 12th and Alabama Streets. Gila Chapter members will automatically receive a Zoom link by email. Any others may request a Zoom link from GNPS at gilanative@gmail.com. All are welcome.

Add these dates to your calendar:



Saturday, October 12, 2024, 9:00 am-11:00 am:
“A Walk on the Wild Side” Join Don and Wendy Graves on a landscaping tour of their property on Brewer Hill, a neighborhood once known locally as Perros Bravos. Their 1880s adobe is comfortable and efficient and is now surrounded by native plants and fruit trees. Participants will see firsthand how Don and Wendy are transforming their half-acre and will learn about methods and techniques they have employed over the past six years. Participation is not limited, but Don and Wendy need to know how

many are coming. Please RSVP to gilanative@gmail.com, and we will send you directions.

photo by Don Graves

Friday, October 18, 2024, 7:00 pm: “Exploring the Flora of Silver City (2022-Present): Adventure, Discovery and Fun.” The Silver City Flora team members, introduced by William Norris, Professor of Biology at WNMU, will discuss an ongoing plant inventory in Silver City. Team members will present topics including project goals, methods, results to date, and interesting discoveries.



photo by Russ Kleinman



Saturday, October 19, 2024, 9:00 am to noon:
Plant Hike at City of Rocks State Park

Join four local botanists to wander the Chihuahuan Desert at City of Rocks State Park to enjoy and learn about some of the more than 300 plant species - cacti, yuccas, agaves, mesquite, creosote, crucifixion thorn, Arizona juniper, desert grasses, etc. - known to occur here. Co-Leaders: Ed Leuck, Russ Kleinman, Andrew Tree, William (Bill) Norris. Co-sponsored by Friends of City of Rocks and the Gila Native Plant Society.

Meet at the City of Rocks State Park Visitor's Center at 9:00.

photo by William Norris

Sunday, October 27, 2024, 5:00 pm: Volunteer Appreciation Potluck at Casa Santa Rita next door to Don and Wendy's place at 310 Silver Street. Open to all members. Bring your dish to share and your own plates, cups and utensils. Let's show our appreciation to our indispensable volunteers. Please RSVP to gilanative@gmail.com.

Friday, November 15, 2024, 7:00 pm: "Gila Flora: Observations from the Field"

Donna Stevens and Jim McGrath, seasonal botanists with the Gila National Forest, will present a program about their 2024 fieldwork and current projects. Topics will include invasive plant status and removal strategies, invasive plant problems in the wilderness, inventory and monitoring of the Gila's rare plant populations, and the history and current status of the Cherry Creek restoration project.



photo by Scott Zager



White Fir (*Abies concolor*) photo by A. Tree

Friday, November 1, 2024, 8:15 to noon – Field Trip: "Fall in the Black Range"

Railroad Canyon in the Black Range has a mix of riparian and montane forest. Join Andrew Tree for a hike up the canyon, focusing on tree and shrub identification. We will follow the trail but be aware that the frequent (dry) creek crossings are stony and uneven. Meet at 8:15 am at the Visitor Center to carpool to the trailhead.

Sunday, December 8, 2024, 12:30 to 2:30 pm: Annual Holiday Potluck at the Silver City Women's Club, 411 Silver Heights Blvd in Silver City. Bring your best potluck dish, plates, cups, and utensils, and let's celebrate the holidays. Note that the Women's Club does not allow alcohol on its premises. More details will follow as the date approaches.

Program Refreshments Needed

PROGRAM REFRESHMENTS NEEDED



We need a volunteer to bring light refreshments for our October 18 or November 15 programs. Something to nibble on (fruit, crackers, cookies, etc.) and a beverage like sparkling water or juice would be appreciated.

If you can volunteer for one of these dates, or for more information, please email: gilanative@gmail.com.

Children's Butterfly Garden Re-Emerges



Over ninety people celebrated the re-emergence of the Children's Butterfly Garden at Silva Creek Botanical Garden on September 14.

Visitors included plenty of children, who enjoyed netting, identifying, tagging, and releasing butterflies, watching a "Pollinator Power" puppet show, singing a call-and-response song to dedicate the garden, and eating some fine (and finely decorated) cake.

GNPS partnered with Heart of the Gila to honor three young people, Ella Kirk, Ella Myers, and Michael Mahl, who were strong environmental stewards. They died ten years ago in a tragic plane crash. The re-creation includes a beautiful stone butterfly with walkable pathways, three tiled benches by artist Zoe Wolfe, and

plenty of butterfly-attracting milkweeds and other plants.

The Children's Butterfly Garden will be part of a larger, interactive Children's Pollinator Garden. Its re-opening marks the beginning of several new projects that are part of the garden's long-term Master Plan.



The Children's Butterfly Garden was the result of many, many volunteer hours, financial support from the Town of Silver City, and a Trails + grant from the New Mexico Department of Outdoor Recreation.

-- **Marty Eberhardt**

photos by Cathleen Norman

Volunteers Needed for Native Plant Society of New Mexico Positions

At the risk of being redundant, and echoing the recent messages from our Native Plant Society of New Mexico Newsletter and our bulk email, we are still hoping that individuals will step forward to help lead our NPSNM board. We still do not have candidates for the vice president and the president of the NPSNM board.

At this level, being on the board is really more about people, specifically the people within the NPSNM, and far less about plants. Yes, we are all working together to promote and protect native plants, but “together” is the keyword. The only way forward for our organization is by people working with people!

Please, if you have any interest in serving on the NPSNM board, send an email to president@npsnm.org. We can then set up a time for a phone call and answer all of your questions!

Here's another NPSNM opportunity:

Are you good at social media? NPSNM's Facebook and Instagram pages are in the doldrums and could use a shot in the arm. In July, the NPSNM Board authorized the creation of a committee to restructure the organization's social media, including defining desired content. Russell Davis, President of the Otero Chapter, has volunteered to chair it. The committee would meet via Zoom for just two months (October and November this year) and present its report to the NPSNM Board in January. Russell already has volunteers from some other chapters. If you are interested, contact us at gilanative@gmail.com, and we will put you in touch.

-- **Don and Wendy Graves, NPSNM Co-presidents**

Plant of the Quarter -- *Helenium Autumnale* (False Sunflower)

As its name implies, this long-stemmed member of the Aster family is an autumn bloomer that thrives in sandy loam and clay; it prefers moist soils such as prairies, meadows, and woodlands. Its common names include False Sunflower, Yellow Star, and Autumn Sneezeweed. The latter hints at its one-time medicinal use: the flowers were pulverized to make a snuff that induced sneezing to clear the head and relieve headaches.

This common forb is found in most states in the continental U.S. states and several Canadian provinces. The two- to five-foot-tall plant has many elongated leaves and



numerous yellow flower heads.

The plant's two to six-inch-long, lance-shaped leaves are alternate and smooth-edged. Leaves are mostly cauline - growing on the upper part of the stem.



This winged stem bears yellow flower heads two inches in width with circular raised centers ringed by wedge-shaped, dog-toothed petals.



The flowers attract butterflies, bees, and wasps and host the Silvery Checkerspot butterfly. The blooms produce thousands of seeds that are enjoyed by the birds. Its bitter foliage discourages deer and rabbits. The plant, however, is toxic to livestock, especially sheep.

Helenium autumnale can be propagated from cuttings, by division, and from seed. It flourishes with companion plants that include Bee Balm (*Monarda* spp.), Brown-Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), and Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*).

The genus is thought to have been named by Carl Linnaeus for Helen of Troy. The legend is that the flowers sprung up from the ground where her tears fell. Its Navajo name is Ni' fiii' nit.

-- **Cathleen Norman**

photos by Cathleen Norman

Suggestions, comments, or corrections can be emailed to catnorman33@gmail.com.

Planting for the Bats

Many thanks to GNPS members Linda Moore and Hong Lee, Angela Brightwell and Henry Meyer, Ron Parry, Dave Becker, and Donna Stevens for offering their properties for the planting of agaves in support of the Lesser Long-nosed Bat. This ongoing project between Bat Conservation International and GNPS has resulted in the planting of hundreds of agaves for these nectar-

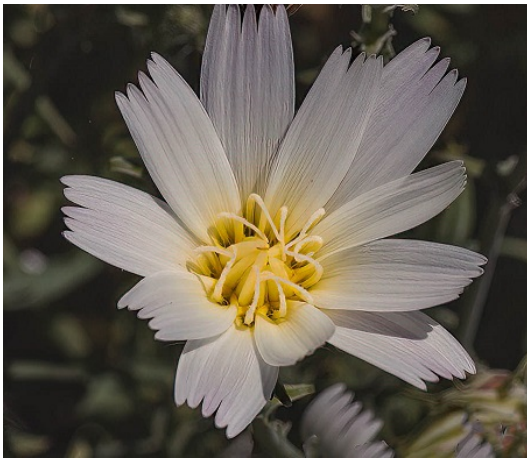


feeding bats who depend on the nectar of agave flowers for their survival. As the popularity of mescal increases in the US, more and more Northern Mexican agave plants are harvested to produce this traditional spirit. Unfortunately, harvested agaves are never allowed to bloom, as the harvest is timed to maximum sugar levels in the “heart” of the agave, just as the inflorescence is beginning to grow upward. ¡las murciélagos te agradecen!

-- **Don Graves**

photo by Elroy LImmer

Works By Members



Dennis Switzer captured these two flowers, Desert Chicory (*Rafinesquia neomexicana*), left, and a Gilia (*Gilia* spp.), right, in Hidalgo county near Verdun.



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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