

# GILA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

January 1 2025

Vol 15 No 1

Betsy Kaido and Jeff Boyd, Editors

## Bulletin 2025: Quarter 1

This quarterly Bulletin of the Gila Native Plant Society of Silver City, New Mexico, provides the latest communications between the society and its members. It is also available on the GNPS website <http://www.gilanps.org>.

### In this issue...

- [President's Message](#)
- [Activities for This Quarter](#)
- [Silva Creek Botanical Garden](#)
- [Plant of the Quarter](#)
- [Bat Conservation International](#)
- [The Dale A. Zimmerman Herbarium:](#)
- [December Holiday Potluck](#)
- [Richard Felger's Latest Book Now Available](#)
- [Patty Manning Pollinator Garden](#)
- [Works By Members](#)

# President's Message

## Two Lessons: One Funny, One Not

Many years ago, I volunteered for a native plant activity with fourth graders at Jose Barrios Elementary School. I sincerely hope the students learned something interesting that day. I remember well the two things I learned. One was amusing, the second—not so much.

In trying to convey to the students the importance of plants and the concept that everything we consume was originally a plant, I asked them what they ate for breakfast that morning. Cereal? Easy – that's grass, probably wheat or rice or corn. Sausage wasn't quite as straightforward, but I explained that sausage comes from pigs, and pigs eat plants. The kids were smart, and they caught on quickly. What I learned was how many kids ate hot Cheetos for breakfast. Not very nutritious, but amusing.



I like to think I have a good sense of humor, but I couldn't find anything funny about the second thing I learned. I had brought to the school some native plants I'd collected that morning. It was October, so there wasn't much blooming, but I had managed to find sacred datura (*Datura wrightii*) in flower. The students were fascinated by the datura, as I explained that the night-blooming flowers emit an intoxicating perfume, but that they're deadly poisonous.

I also had a globe mallow (*Sphaeralcea* sp.) flower, and that's how I learned lesson number two. "My dad calls that a weed," a little girl said of the lovely orange flower. The proverbial light bulb switched on in my brain as I realized that many – most? – people think there are two types of plants: desirable ones that you place in your garden, and weeds. Nothing in between.

This girl's father, like so many of our neighbors, apparently had no sense of a native flora, no appreciation for the fact that southwest New Mexico hosts an amazing diversity of native plants.

It's my hope that the students went home that long-ago day and, when asked what they learned in school that day, talked about flowers, instead of saying "nothing" as they rolled their eyes. I choose to believe that the fourth-grade girl excitedly told her dad that globe mallows are native plants, and that there are hundreds more to see, if only he stops to look.

Now that's a lesson I learned long ago. And I'm betting you did, too.

The Gila Native Plant Society's challenge, as always, is to bring that awareness to the rest of the community. As the incoming GNPS president, I'm happy to hear all your suggestions, amusing or otherwise.

-- Donna Stevens

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

---

## Activities for This Quarter

**Upcoming evening programs** will be hybrid whenever possible. To attend in person, come to Room 111 in Harlan Hall on the WNMU campus at 7:00 pm. Gila Chapter members will receive an email with the Zoom link; all others are welcome and can request a link from [gilanative@gmail.com](mailto:gilanative@gmail.com)

**January 17, 2025, 7:00 to 8:30 pm – “NMDOT Vegetation Management and our Gila Highways: Working on a plan to improve what’s being done”**

**Bill Hutchinson, NMDOT Roadside and Community Design Manager**

**Andrew Alderete, NMDOT Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM)**



The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) maintains approximately 25,000 miles of roadsides. While safety is always a primary driver, NMDOT is also responsible for good environmental stewardship within its rights of way. To that end, it implements an Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) program. Bill and Andrew will explain what the IVM Program is and what is being done to improve vegetation management. They will then introduce the Gila Vegetation Management Plan.

**February 21, 2025, 7:00 to 8:30 pm – “Native Landscaping Is Not a Crime”**

**Val Weston and J Courtney Brandon, Silver City Homeowners and GNPS Members**



Val and J bought one of Silver City’s fixer-upper houses in 2021. Alongside a complete home renovation, they also planned to rehabilitate the yard with native plants. They will discuss the challenges they faced and how they navigated the charges against them when they were cited under Silver City’s nuisance ordinance for their initial efforts in the yard rehabilitation process. Val’s

photo shows the "before." Come to the talk to learn the results of their efforts.

**March 21, 2025, 7:00 to 8:30 pm – “The Night Shift: Moths as Nocturnal Pollinators”**

**Kaitlin Hasse, Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, Southwest Pollinator Conservation Specialist**



The work of pollination is never over—even after dark! When our day-active (diurnal) pollinators turn in for the evening, nocturnal pollinators such as moths, bats, beetles, and even some species of bees take on the night shift to feast on nectar. We are just beginning to understand the importance of these nocturnal flower visitors for pollinating wild and managed plants.

## Field Trip

**Friday, January 10, 2025, 8:00 am to 3:00 pm (includes travel time)**



Join Andrew Tree for a winter field trip in the Peloncillo Mountains of Hidalgo County. Our destination is the canyon home of a grove of Mexican Blue Oak (*Quercus oblongifolia*), nestling under Granite Peak. Along the way, we'll see and identify many native Chihuahua desert species, some of which are uncommon in NM. The total distance will be no more than three miles, most of it on a rough two-track but with little elevation change.

**Note:** The canyon is thick with catclaws and other spiny species, so appropriate clothing is essential! Space is limited, so please email [gilanative@gmail.com](mailto:gilanative@gmail.com) to sign up.

---

## Silva Creek Botanical Garden

### Happenings in 2025

If you've been to the garden in the last few months, you've seen quite a few changes which are part of Phase One of our Master Plan. More changes are imminent.

The Butterfly Garden remodel has taken flight. The artwork panels have been moved along the Silva Creek banks, in order to make way for the new wall around the iconic tank, and the splendid mural which will be designed by the Youth Mural project. The Habitat Thicket has been planted. Look for interpretive signs there this spring!



Landscape architect Steve Morgan has designed (pro bono) a new front entrance for the

garden. It will include a beautiful welcome sign, with a map of the garden, and highlighting our three themes... the relationships between native plants and the wildlife, people, and climate of the region. We'll have a gathering area with desert willows, pavers, and a bench underneath shade sails. Two rough-cut metal signs will announce the entrance to the garden from each direction. Look for more information about the front entrance soon.

Well-known New Mexico landscape designer Judith Phillips is working on a plan for the Front Yard Garden, and our Master Plan designer, Ashley Pedersen, is hard at work on drawings for a Children's Pollinator Garden. The latter two projects will be part of Phase Two, which will kick off down the road.

There will be much to do and see in the garden in 2025!

-- **Marty Eberhardt**

---

## Plant of the Quarter

### Plants We Love To Hate

We enjoy hardy plants that thrive and sustain pollinators and wildlife, but a few aggressive species that I found in my yard were hard to overcome.



**Goathead**, also known as puncture vine, was the plant I persistently pulled from my gravel hardscape my first two summers in Silver City. *Tribulus terrestris linnaeus* is an annual plant in the caltrop family (Zygophyllaceae). Widely distributed around the world, it can thrive in hot and dry climates like ours. *T. terrestris* is dreaded because of its small woody fruit – the bur whose sharp and strong spines resemble a goat's head. The spiky burs can penetrate bare



feet, shoe soles, pet paws, and the mouths and skin of grazing animals, as well as bicycle tires. With persistence, you might get ahead if you pull the ground-hugging, branching spreading plant before or while it is in bloom, before the yellow blossoms ripen into the spiked pods each containing five or six seeds. I still police my yard weekly in summer and pull the occasional plant. Another suggested solution is dissolving a half-cup of Epsom salts and a half-cup of vinegar in a gallon of water and applying liberally. This, however, will render the area unsuitable for further planting.

A second weedy guest I encountered was **Purple Nightshade** or Silverleaf Nightshade. *Solanum elaeagnifolium* is a native perennial herb with star-shaped, purple flowers that ripen into small, yellow or orange fruit. The one to three-foot tall plant has multiple stems and lance-shaped leaves that are one to six inches long, wavy-edged, and silver or gray-green in color. The small, round seed pods are bright yellow. Stems are



covered with short, fine thorns, necessitating thick gloves when dealing with the plant. I diligently pulled the bumper crop that filled my yard, rushing out after a monsoon rain or dampening the ground first to dig out the root. After two summers of pulling and digging, I triumphed over the nuisance. The plant propagates from its deep vertical roots and creeping horizontal roots, as well as the seed pods, so it's essential to remove the entire plant and dispose of it immediately I am on guard against this intruder and pull it weekly if it shows up at my yard edge.



**Mullein** (*Verbascum thapsus*) is an exotic biennial plant that grows in dry soil or gravel. Its Navajo name is Bìjìhyiljáa'í. In its first year, basal woolly leaves grow from its base; in its second year, it shoots up a tall, tapered, leafy stalk.

The mullein's inflorescence consists of a long, crowded spike of yellow flowers that mature into two-chambered, star-shaped capsules partially enclosed by leafy bracts. These dry out into brown capsules that split open to spread hundreds of tiny, rugose (wrinkled) brown seeds. It's essential to remove the plant or cut the seed stalk to prevent an invasion of mullein. I allowed a couple of them to grow to provide shade for the perennials I planted, of course vigilantly removing the flower stalk before it ripened into seeds.



-- **Cathleen Norman**

Suggestions, comments or corrections can be emailed to [norman.cathleen@gmail.com](mailto:norman.cathleen@gmail.com).

*top four photos courtesy of the Dale A. Zimmerman Herbarium, WNMU; bottom photo courtesy of M. Licher, NMSU*

## On the Other Hand ...

*Editors' Note: As Cathleen noted at the beginning of her article, even plants we're not in love with have redeeming values. Naava Koenigsberg provides these traditional medicinal uses for the three plants Cathleen discussed.*

### **Goathead** (Puncture Vine, Abrojo)

Supports healthy cholesterol levels and increases testosterone levels. Traditionally used as a diuretic and for various kidney issues. Currently being studied for various benefits, including pain relief, immune system support, combatting inflammation, cardiovascular health, inhibiting the growth of certain cancer cells, regulating blood pressure, diuretic effects, reducing kidney stones and gout, enhancing eyesight, and supporting liver function. Often confused medicinally with various species of the Asian plant *Epimedium*,

commonly known as Horny Goat Weed.

**Silverleaf Nightshade** (Trompillo, Buena Mujer)

While considered toxic, it does have considerable ethnobotanical uses, including the fruit being used as a rennet substitute to curdle cheese, the root being chewed for toothaches, and as a treatment for snakebites. It is also used traditionally to alleviate sneezing.

**Mullein** (Gordo Lobo)

The flowers are infused into olive oil for middle ear aches and infections. The leaves are smoked or used as a tea to break up mucus and aid with coughs. The roots are used for certain types of incontinence, uterine or bladder prolapses, and hernias.

---

## Bat Conservation International Agave Restoration Initiative

Again, this past fall, GNPS volunteers, along with the folks from Bat Conservation International, helped plant agave in support of the lesser long-nosed bat. A huge thanks to the members who offered their properties for agave planting. Those participating included Dave Becker, Angela Brightwell/Henry Meyer, Donna Stevens, Ron Parry, and Linda Moore/Hong Lee!



*Photos by Elroy Limmer*

We'll be at it again this coming year, so if you would like to participate by offering a chunk of your property for our nectivorous bats, contact Don Graves at [gilanative@gmail.com](mailto:gilanative@gmail.com).

**-- Don Graves**  
**GNPS BCI Coordinator**

---

## The Dale A. Zimmerman Herbarium: What's in it for you?

An herbarium is a collection of preserved plant specimens available for study by scientists, citizen scientists, students, and the interested public. These collections are documentation of plants growing locally and sometimes from other areas around the world, wherever plant hunters may roam and bring back plants. The largest herbarium in America is the New York Botanical Garden, offering a peek at seven million plant specimens. Our herbarium at WNMU was started in 1957 by Dale A. Zimmerman, a long-time professor of botany at

WNMU, who traveled the world for seven decades studying plants and birds. The Southwestern United States has attracted plant collectors since before Silver City became a town in 1870. The settling of the West opened vast new territory for the discovery and identification of previously unknown plants.

Our herbarium is a tremendous resource for anyone interested in botany or other plant studies. Several classes at WNMU utilize these specimens, and so could you, Dear Reader. It can help you learn or verify plant identification – have you keyed out that plant correctly? Maybe you know the genus but not the species. Are you wondering what a certain plant even looks like? Are you looking for a certain plant and wondering where it might be found? The herbarium is not just a collection of plants. Extensive details are recorded for every plant, including the family, binomial (genus and species), description, collection date, location, habitat, associated plants, GPS coordinates, altitude, and name of collector. Theoretically, you could return to the same spot and find that plant. This is an asset for anyone planning a field trip, learning when a plant is in flower or fruit, determining plant distribution, looking for artist drawings or other illustrations of plants, or conducting scientific research. You can even find information about a rare/endangered plant from our area (e.g., *Asclepias uncialis* [Dwarf milkweed]), a plant spotted on one of the Flora of Silver City plant collecting outings. The Flora of Silver City group has been collecting plants within the Silver City limits for two years and will continue to do so for at least another year.

Our herbarium currently houses 34,600 specimens. About 6,000 are Bryophytes (mosses and liverworts), and there's a small collection of Lichens. There are also about 500 plants collected as part of the Flora of Silver City study. Who knew there were so many different plants within the town limits?

**If you go:** The herbarium is located in Harlan Hall at WNMU. Hours are Monday and Tuesday 10:00 am – noon, or preferably by appointment by calling Dr. William Norris at 575-538-6625, or Angela Flanders at 575-534-9355. A tour of the facility can be arranged.

Once you have examined all these specimens and are hungry for more, plan to visit the largest herbarium in the world, which is part of the National Natural History Museum in Paris, France with over 9.5 million specimens. Send me a postcard.

-- **Monica Rude**

***Desert Woman Botanicals***

*with special thanks to Angela Flanders, Herbarium Volunteer Extraordinaire*

---

## December Holiday Potluck

Forty-four GNPS members enjoyed a holiday potluck at the Women's Club in Silver City on December 8th. Don Graves and his volunteer crew decorated the tables with beautiful arrangements of native plants. Everyone filled their plates with Elroy Limmer's pork roast and a dazzling array of offerings provided by those who attended. The new president, Donna Stevens, and new vice-president, Cara Staab, spoke. Don Graves made a persuasive pitch for folks to help with the 2026 Plant Society of New Mexico Conference, which will be held in Silver City in 2026. The conference committee, headed by Elroy Limmer, is busy gearing up. Margie Gibson, outgoing GNPS President, was presented with a thank you gift certificate in grateful acknowledgment of her two years of leadership.

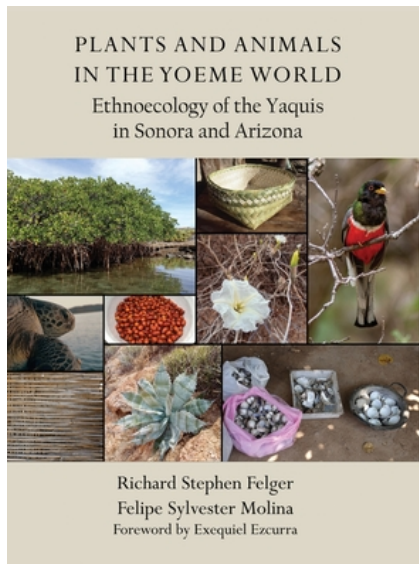




Photos by Elroy Limmer

---

## Richard Felger's Latest Book Now Available



Many of you will remember Richard as a fellow hiker and passionate botanist who enriched our lives with his plant knowledge and willingness to share his expertise with everyone. His posthumous book, *Plants and Animals in the Yoeme World: Ethnoecology of the Yaquis of Sonora and Arizona*, co-authored by Felipe Silvestre Molina, offers a unique perspective on the plants and animals in the Yoeme homeland and the enduring nature of an ancient way of life. The Yoeme, the Yaquis name for themselves, inhabit the Yoem Bwiara, their sacred homeland in Sonora, Mexico, centered along the lower Río Yaqui, and communities in south-central Arizona. In this biological ethnography, Richard and Felipe have documented over 415 plant species and more than 600 kinds of animal life. The

413-page book is available as a free download at Richard's website, <http://www.desertfoodplants.org>, with information on purchasing a hardcover copy also provided.

---

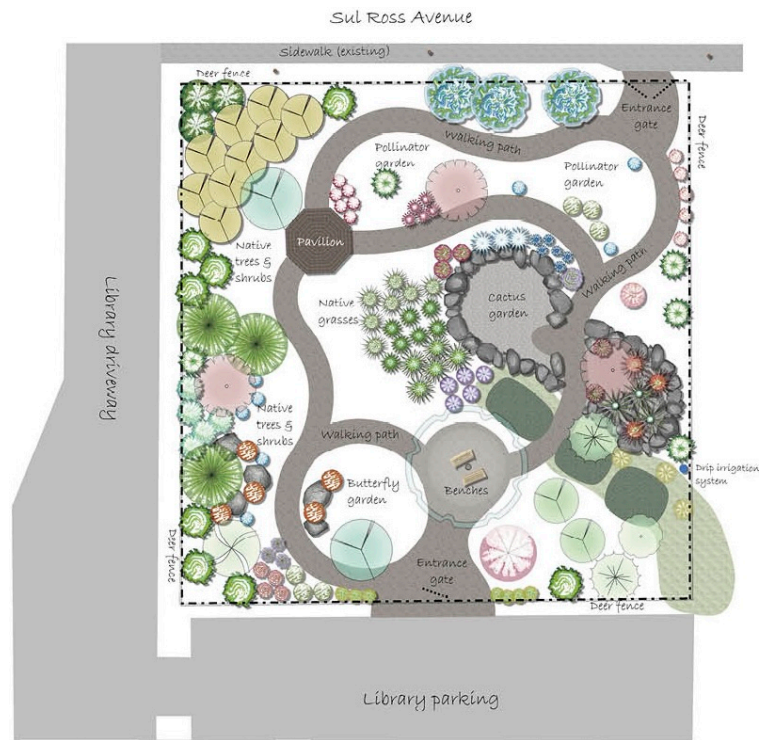
## Patty Manning Pollinator Garden

Many of us who attended the NPSNM statewide conference in Alpine were charmed by Patty Manning's presentation on growing southwestern plants. So much so that Don Graves and I tried to sign her up for one of our GNPS programs in the fall of 2023. She was enthusiastic about coming to Silver City but was undergoing chemotherapy, and we couldn't work it out.

Patty was described as "having a love affair with native plant propagation." She and her spouse, Cyndi Wimberly, ran Twin Sisters Natives, which grows many native plants unavailable in the nursery trade. While in Alpine, we bought several for the Silva Creek Botanical Garden, including a Taperleaf shrub, *Pericome caudata*.

We recently learned that Patty passed away in September. Fundraising is underway to create a pollinator garden in her honor at the Alpine Public Library. Donations can be made through the Big Bend Chapter of the Texas Native Plant Society, either online (<https://square.link/u/6WAKEs3e>) or by mailing a check to NPSOT, PO Box 1265, Alpine, TX 79831.

-- **Margie Gibson**  
**NPSNM President**



## Works By Members



Elroy Limmer is exploring abstractions of his plant photographs. Here is another in his series of prickly pear skeletons.

**Our mailing address is:**

PO Box 457  
Silver City, NM 88062

**Our email address is:**

gilanative@gmail.com

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

