

Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners Newsletter

Book Review:

Best Wildflower Hikes New Mexico

by Christina M. Selby
FalconGuides, 2020

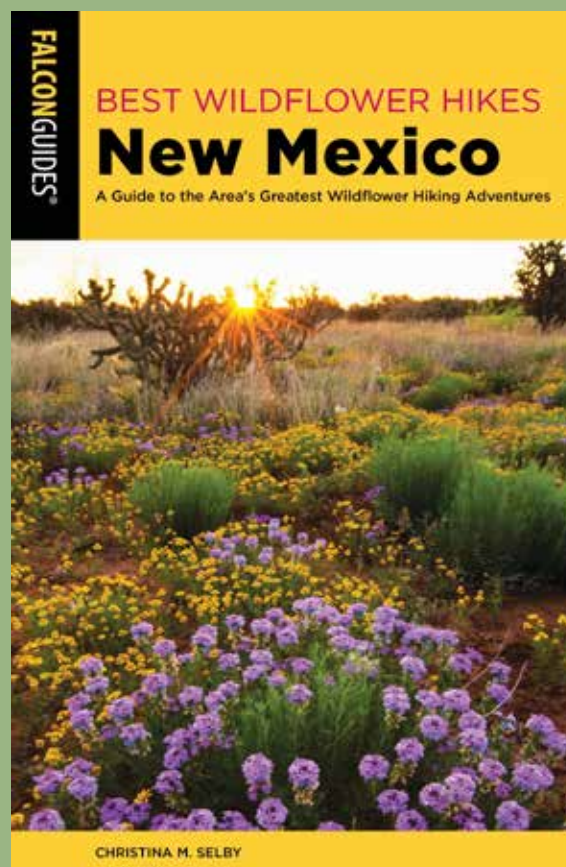
By Peggy Rudberg

Among the delights of hiking are the wildflowers that appear every spring to welcome us back to the trails. I have a dozen books on New Mexico hiking trails as well as a collection of regional wildflower identification guides, but until recently I did not know of any publication that combined these counterparts. *Best Wildflower Hikes New Mexico: A Guide to the Area's Greatest Wildflower Hiking Adventures*, released in 2020 by FalconGuides, fills that void. Author Christina M. Selby, a conservation photographer based in Santa Fe, shares her passion for wildflowers in this attractive softcover book that meets the publisher's high standards of production and content.

Selby spent two years hiking 600 miles of trails in search of New Mexico's immense diversity of wildflowers. She highlights 40 excursions worth exploring. Pursuing these flowers will lead you to some of the state's most beautiful places. Organization by geographic locale, with brief cultural and geological introductions, creates a backdrop for the region's hikes. Our state encompasses six life zones, biogeographical areas whose elevation and climate from desert to alpine provide habitat for many unique species of animals and plants. To represent all of these habitats, hikes are located throughout the state, but because our northern mountain regions and national forests support the richest assortment of wildflowers, the majority of hikes are in central and northcentral New Mexico.

Each hike includes instructions along with an abundant inventory of predominant blooms one might find during a given month. Trail overviews are comparable to standard hiking guides, except that

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Best Wildflower Hikes New Mexico—cont. from page 1

specific elevation range is lacking and trail maps do not include the shaded contour of the terrain that would convey topography.

The author's beautiful color photographs throughout the book illustrate many of the flowers highlighted in their settings. Twenty-four wildflowers are profiled in more depth, with tidbits of interesting ethnobotanical information. Interspersed are wildlife sightings and descriptions of the sounds and smells of the surrounding areas. But flowers are the *raison d'être* of the book.

Recognizing and identifying wildflowers is a learning process, requiring a keen eye and a good memory. For me, the most useful aspect of the book is the focus on specific plants commonly found at each location, given with common names and lively descriptions. Since our state has possibly 4,000 plant species, it is a relief that Selby narrowed down what to look for to some of the most notable or frequently seen ones.

Being an avid hiker, I am no stranger to most of the hikes in the northern part of our state, but given current travel restrictions I was able to explore anew only the hikes in the Santa Fe area. The way I used Selby's book was as a sort of field guide. First I read the hike's description, with potential flower sightings (flower names in bold type would have been helpful). I then searched for images of flowers unfamiliar to me and headed out with a goal of finding the plants I was familiar with, plus a few new ones. On trail I photographed what I found blooming, both familiar and unknown, and with Selby's book to help, I could identify many more than my usual number of wildflowers. For example, on the Lower Rio en Medio trail, of the more than 60 flowers recorded by the author, I was pleased to see and be able to name well over 20 of them in mid-May, a bit early in the season.

I whole-heartedly recommend this lovely book for any hiker wishing to increase her knowledge of New Mexico's truly enchanting backcountry and its flora.

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Message from the President

by Wendy Wilson

Confess! You know you have them. Ratty, tatty, stained, ripped, and completely inappropriate clothes that you know you should wear only in the garden. And then you end up at the grocery store, garden center, gas station, and coffee shop in them. Now here is the hope: while wearing a mask, maybe no one will recognize you. Laughing at myself, working in my garden, and preparing meals with produce from the farmers market has provided me with joy, humor, and inspiration during COVID-19 isolation.



2020 SFEMG Board President Wendy Wilson

The board, and especially Carla Self (treasurer), has been working on our 2020/21 budget for the last two months. Financially, we follow a July 1 to June 30 calendar, in sync with NMSU. Several programs that raise essential revenue for SFEMG, including the Garden Festival, were canceled due to the virus. The board wrote a \$10,000 grant request to the Friends of Santa Fe Master Gardeners legacy group to purchase plants for the 2021 Garden Fair. The legacy group operates as a 501(c)(3) stewarding money raised by Master Gardeners prior to the 2018 reorganization. We gratefully received the grant, and now all projects are fully funded through June 2021.

Our activities are likely going to be on hiatus for the remainder of the summer. That said, the project leaders have been authorized by NMSU to hold “maintenance” days. No more than five people are allowed at a time, masks are required, and social-distancing guidelines should be followed. If we are allowed to return to work as usual in August, the total required hours for 2020 will be 2.5 OS, 1 PE, and 1 CE. If not, there will be no required hours for 2020 to maintain MG certification.

Despite limited requirements for the year, the education committee has posted hundreds of CE opportunities this summer. Remember to report any hours you complete.

This month the SFEMG book club read *Rules for Visiting*, by Jessica Francis Kane. If you'd like to join us to talk about next month's book, please contact me (wendylinneawilson@hotmail.com).

Finally, I'm pleased to announce Cocktails in the Garden. The last Friday of each month, a member will virtually host us in their garden. Join us to chat, talk about the host garden, and remember what it is like to belong to this vibrant, interesting, and interested group. If you'd like to host an event, contact Karen Browne-Armijo (kebrowne@hotmail.com).



The vibrant pink of *Cylindropuntia imbricata* blossoms.
Photo © Al Schneider, www.swcoloradowildflowers.com.

Cold-Hardy Cacti for Santa Fe

by Liz Lee

One doesn't have to be a rocket scientist to recognize that environmental conditions in and around Santa Fe are changing. Actual climate scientists say our area is on track to get hotter and drier overall, with greater weather extremes to punctuate that trend.

What is a gardener to do? Fortunately, there are many glorious cactus and succulent species that thrive in the climate that is becoming the new

normal for the Santa Fe area. I spoke with Master Gardener Cullen Hallmark, project leader for the SFEMG Cactus Demo Garden, about his recommendations for cold-hardy prickly beauties that thrive on little to no supplemental water, withstand occasional temperatures below zero, and sport some gorgeous blooms to boot.

Cullen says that while many cactus species will make it here in Santa Fe, those from the Chihuahuan and Great Basin deserts tend to do best, as their higher elevations and periodic deep freezes mirror Santa Fe's own. He suggests a number of species that are attractive and thrive here with minimal care.

High on his list are several from the subfamily of Opuntias (prickly pears and chollas). Tree cholla (*Cylindropuntia imbricata*) is found in abundance in Santa Fe; it grows tall and features magenta blooms in summer. He also recommends Santa Fe cholla (*C. viridiflora*), our local species, which is more compact than *C. imbricata* and has lovely a salmon-colored flower. By finding a place for one or more Santa Fe chollas in a very dry area of your home garden, you'll be helping to rescue the species, which is endangered.

Among prickly pears, Cullen mentioned a number of options that do well in Santa Fe. Brittle prickly pear (*Opuntia fragilis*) is a low-growing species that tolerates cold and moisture, with tiny pads just an inch to an inch-and-a-half long and pink or yellow flowers. On the opposite

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Cold Hardy Cacti —cont. from page 4

end of the size spectrum is Englemann's prickly pear (*O. engelmannii*), with pads up to a foot wide, probably the largest pad of any cold-hardy cactus. It can grow into a fairly large clump and has yellow flowers and purple fruits.

Another colorful garden option is the black-spined prickly pear (*O. macrocentra*). This beauty features black spines with white tips, yellow flowers with red centers, and purple fruits. It turns a pale purplish color in fall.

Among the Cactoideae subfamily, Cullen recommends hardy claret cups (*Echinocereus coccineus*), also known as scarlet hedgehog, the common names referring to the bright orange-to-red blooms that generously cover the barrel-shaped plants in summer. This clumping cactus is one of the earliest to flower.



Claret cup cactus in bloom. Photo by Max Lichter via SEINet.

Beehive cactus (*Coryphantha vivipara*), native from central Texas to Canada, has stunning deep pink flowers. For contrast plant it with the grooved nipple cactus (*Coryphantha sulcata*), which glows with golden yellow flowers.

Most of these cold-hardy companions can be sourced at our local nurseries. (Please do not dig them up in the wild or on the side of the road; it is illegal.) For ideas and information on other regionally appropriate cactuses and succulents, Cullen recommends the book *Cacti and Succulents for Cold Climates*, by Leo Chance (Timber, 2012).

Though these plants are showy and relatively low-maintenance, they are not for everyone. It may seem obvious, but Cullen advises that chollas are not very compatible with kids and dogs. Even with careful handling, planting and pruning are challenges. As Cullen says, "Almost all of the Opuntiads have glochids, which are deciduous, almost invisible spines that will impale anyone who handles the pads." You will feel them even if you can't see them.

Once you get accustomed to handling these prickly friends, you'll find that their variety of blossom colors and retention of greenery through the winter provides year-round low-maintenance joy in any home garden.



Western Serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*)

by Lynn Hathaway

Before stay-at-home restrictions,

I attended a talk about shrubs suitable for Southwest gardens. I was surprised that the serviceberry bush was not mentioned, because it is one of my favorites. It has an attractive shape, with fragrant white flowers in the spring, tasty blue berries in the summer, and yellow to red leaves in the fall. In my garden, the berries are almost ripe just before summer solstice. They make



delicious jams and jellies and can be picked and eaten right off the tree. Native Americans used the berries for pemmican, a long-lasting food made from animal fat, dried meat, and dried berries.

Also known as Saskatoon serviceberry and juneberry, these shrubs grow along streams and under taller trees; they prefer morning sun and somewhat regular moisture. They grow at elevations from 6,000 to more than 9,000 feet. In a very hot summer with scant water, the berries dry up before they mature.

Landscape use: These large bushes/small trees are especially attractive in groups of three to five. A perfect shrub for a wildlife garden, it is loved by butterflies, birds, and bees. Also a good choice for gardens with children because of the edible berries.

Planting and care: Plant serviceberry on the east or north side of the house, where it will get some shade. It can be left shrubby or pruned up into more a lanky shape. Last fall I pruned my serviceberry bush, cutting out old wood and shaping it. This year it has more berries than ever.

Propagation: Can be rooted from early spring hardwood cuttings. Sow untreated seeds in fall or cold-stratified seeds in spring. Birds will disperse the seeds, which may sprout in other parts of your yard. Mine are coming up under the bluebird nesting box.

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Western Serviceberry—cont. from page 6

Plant type: deciduous shrub/small tree

Bloom time: spring

Size: 6–15 feet tall x 4–8 feet

Sun: partial shade

Soil: prefers well-drained clay and limestone soils

Water: medium

USDA Zones: 2–7

References:

Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center Plant Database,

[Amelanchier alnifolia](#)

SNaPP, [A Guide to Native Plants for the Santa Fe Landscape](#) (2019)

Photos via Wikimedia Commons



Audubon Project Leadership Change of Hands

by Joy Mandelbaum

After serving for 17 years as project leader of the Audubon Wildlife Demonstration Garden, I am pleased to announce that Colleen Madrid will be assuming the leadership role starting in 2021.

Two other Master Gardener interns and I wrote the proposal and started the project in 2003, while we were still in the SFMGA certification training program. The other two eventually left, but I stayed with it. After all these years, I can say that I have thoroughly enjoyed being the project leader. I've worked with a great team of co-leaders (who have changed over the years), appreciative and helpful Audubon Center staff

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Longtime project leader Joy Mandelbaum (at right) with new project leader Colleen Madrid, donning masks and social distancing at the Audubon Center.

Photo by Ruthbeth Finerman.

Audubon Project Leadership Change of Hands”—cont. from page 7

members (who have also changed over the years), and many MG and intern volunteers (yes, they've changed too). I've also enjoyed engaging with curious visitors to the Audubon Center and gardens.

Colleen has the education, expertise, and passion that I was hoping to find in a new leader. She has a B.S in wildlife biology and an M.S. in ecology. Prior to her career as a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Forest Service, she was a university lecturer. Colleen has been gardening for 26 years. She was a Master Gardener in Oregon and is now one here. This year she was also enrolled in SFEMG's SNaPP (Santa Fe Native Plant Project) training. These skills and her experience with habitat restoration will serve her well working with the staff at Audubon. She is interested in continuing to link the gardens with the wildlife that frequent them as well as in creating a peaceful and enriching environment for people. Her years of experience with conservation education are also an asset.

The project has grown over the years as opportunities have presented themselves. Now is the perfect time to reassess what we've accomplished and where we want to go from here. The COVID-19 shutdown has given us the luxury of time to train before the 2021 season starts. Colleen has met the co-leaders and the Audubon staff, joined in on work dates, and is learning the ropes in general. She already has lots of good ideas, and I really look forward to assisting her for as long as she wants. She is excited to be working with our team of talented co-leaders, the interns and MGs, and the Audubon staff. Mentoring someone with whom she can share leadership responsibilities is also a goal.

The Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary, state office of the National Audubon Society for New Mexico, is located at the end of Upper Canyon Road. The center is currently closed to the public through July, but the grounds and trails are open. Master Gardeners work at the gardens most Friday mornings from 10 to noon April through September. Visitors are welcome to stop by and ask questions during these times.

Free Webinar Series

The Xerces Society and New Mexico State University are partnering on a free, six-week webinar series about how to support pollinators and other beneficial insects in backyards and on farms. Get to know the bees and other helpful bugs in your area and how to create habitat to support them. The series runs from June 23 through July 28. Each webinar takes place on a Tuesday at 3 p.m. MT. For details and to register, click [here](#).

Backyard Bugs

Megachilidae Bee Family

by Pam Wolfe

Megachilidae is a cosmopolitan family of leaf-cutting, mining, resin, and wool carder bees, widespread in part due to their propensity to nest in wood. They are unique among bees in the location of their scopa (pollen-carrying hairs)—on the underside of the abdomen rather than the hind legs. Because these bees are opportunistic users of existing nest cavities, Megachilidae of commercial value are easily managed. They will nest and lay eggs in hollow tubes or predrilled blocks that are easily stored for overwintering and shipment to sites where the emerging bees' services are required in spring.



Megachile sp. mating in a cactus blossom.

Genera of commercial value include *Megachile* and *Osmia*. More efficient at pollinating alfalfa than the European honey bee (*Apis mellifera*), the alfalfa leaf-cutting bee ([Megachile rotundata](#)) was introduced to North America in the middle of the 20th century. The native blue orchard bee ([Osmia lignaria](#)), a pollinator of fruit trees and blueberries, is divided into two subspecies—*O. lignaria propinqua* (west of the Rocky Mountains) and *O. lignaria linaria* (east of the Rocky Mountains).

Here in Santa Fe there are several flourishing species of *Megachile*, the leaf-cutting bee. Some will take not dainty precise circles from the odd rose leaf but slabs of penstemon, prickly poppy, and cactus blossoms, almost too large to fly with, to line their nests. *Megachile* translates as “large lipped” and refers to the huge mandibles characteristic of this genus.

Reference:

Wilson, Joseph S., and O. M. Carril. *The Bees in Your Backyard* (Princeton, 2015)

New & Noteworthy

Have you recently read a plant-related article or book, visited a horticultural website or blog, listened to a podcast, or seen a nature show or documentary you think other gardeners would enjoy or find useful? Send a link to the newsletter (news.sfemg@gmail.com) and we'll include the information in the next issue. **Note that some of these sources may have paywalls.**

Atlas Obscura, [A Franken-Forest of Fruit Trees Is Growing on Governors Island](#), by Marina Wang

Botany One, [Law enforcement and ecologists will need to trade information in order to combat trading in endangered plants say crime researchers](#), by Alun Salt

Botany One, [The refreshing tale of gin and tonic \(well, half of it...\)](#), by Nigel Chaffey

Edible New Mexico: [A Sudden Flourishing: New Mexico CSAs and Local Food Subscription Services in the Time of COVID-19](#), by Pam Walker

The Garden Professors, [Summertime pruning](#), by Jim Downer

Mother Jones, [Gardens Have Pulled America Out of Some of Its Darkest Times. We Need Another Revival.](#), by Tom Philpott

The New Yorker, [The Essential Workers of the New York Botanical Garden](#), by Ariel Levy

Science Daily, [Tomato's hidden mutations revealed in study of 100 varieties](#)

Science Daily, [When planting trees threatens the forest](#)

Smithsonian Magazine, [Why Hawk Moths Are the Underdogs of the Pollinator World](#), by Abigail Eisenstadt

Southwest Yard & Garden (NMSU), [Bad Combo: Chlorosis and Water Stress](#), by Marisa Thompson

Southwest Yard & Garden (NMSU), [Juvenile Reddening: Red Tips and Purple Leaves on New Growth Help Plants Manage Stress](#), by Marisa Thompson

I can think of no better form of personal involvement in the cure of the environment than that of gardening.

—Wendy Berry (b. 1934)

The Garden Journal Radio Show

Every Saturday
10–10:30 a.m.

Live from the Farmers Market



Tune in to KSFR 101.1 FM on Saturday mornings from 10 to 10:30 to listen to a lively, entertaining, and informative gardening show.

- July 04 Santa Fe Botanical Garden edition with host Lindsay Taylor
- July 11 SFEMG edition with host Christine Salem and guest Dr. Bradley Tonnessen, NMSU, on the science of epigenetics
- July 18 Santa Fe Farmers Market Institute edition, “Food, Farms & Friends,” with host Carrie Core live from the Farmers Market
- July 25 Home Grown New Mexico edition with host Christine Salem and guest Jannine Cabossel, the Tomato Lady, offering tips and techniques for next month’s veggie garden; more info at [Giant Veggie Gardener](#)

Schedule subject to change. To listen to previous broadcasts, click [here](#).

Calendar of Events

Because of the COVID-19 crisis, most SFEMG classes and all face-to-face events through at least July have been cancelled or postponed. Some classes may be held electronically. Please check the SFEMG [website](#) as well as the websites of other relevant organizations for updates on the status of events.



We Are Here to Help!

If you have a gardening question, Santa Fe Master Gardeners are available to help. Go to our [website](#), click on the Garden Questions? link, and pose your question. Someone will do research and get back to you.



Mission Statement:

Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners is a non-profit volunteer organization whose mission is to learn, teach, and promote locally sustainable gardening through reliable, current research-based practices

New Mexico State University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and educator