

Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners Newsletter



Hellebores flower. Photo by Sarah Baldwin.

Garden Life Goes On

by Sarah Baldwin

These days I head out to the garden first thing in the morning. Not much is happening there yet—deep yellow crocuses and purple iris *reticulata* have come and mostly gone; daffodils are on the cusp; tulips and grape hyacinths are awake but not quite blooming; the tiny dark buds on the redbud tree are biding their time. But the morning light is calm and warm enough. I drink it in for at least fifteen minutes before going back inside and opening my laptop for the obligatory slam of frightening news.

It's such an odd tension, the sweet, ephemeral beauty of early spring quietly unfolding in a mind-bending global crisis. We wash our hands until our knuckles are raw, fret over sanitizing steering wheels, cancel dentist appointments, meetings, dinner dates. Still, when I'm out in the backyard, my fingers are not fearful of the dirt. I want to touch everything out there. The contact is different from human-to-human contact, but it is real and satisfying.

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Garden Life Goes On—cont. from page 1

We've been told to isolate, or "distance," ourselves from each other and stay put as much as possible, and most of us are complying, painful as it may be. The enormous momentum of the season, with all its optimism and plans, and the demands of the current human situation seem to contradict and frustrate each other. But gardeners still have their gardens. While the larger world appears to be morphing into something unrecognizable, we can step outside and interact with the eternal and the familiar.

I had big plans for the garden this year. Some or most of those plans may not come to fruition. A few local nurseries were open as of this writing, but they may not be in a week or two. If you've been growing plants from seed, good for you—I'm not among you. But I have established plants to tend to, and I am grateful for the opportunities they give me. They'll get a whole lot of love this year.

One thing I am already doing is looking more closely. Several years ago, I planted some hellebores in a small shady area where nothing else I tried did well. The late winter sun is low enough to reach this patch and gives the very early blooming hellebores just enough light to bloom well. Recently I lifted one of the nodding, cream-colored flowers and noticed the petals were delicately freckled with purple, something you would not normally see because the flowers face downward.

I also plan to spend some time learning to identify the insects that visit various plants. I can tell the difference between a bumblebee and a honey bee and a tiny native bee, but I'm pretty ignorant beyond that. SFEMG's own Pam Wolfe, who knows much about the insect realm, recommends a couple of NMSU guides: [One Hundred Common Insects of New Mexico](#) and [Backyard Beneficial Insects in New Mexico](#).

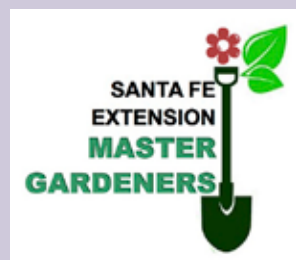
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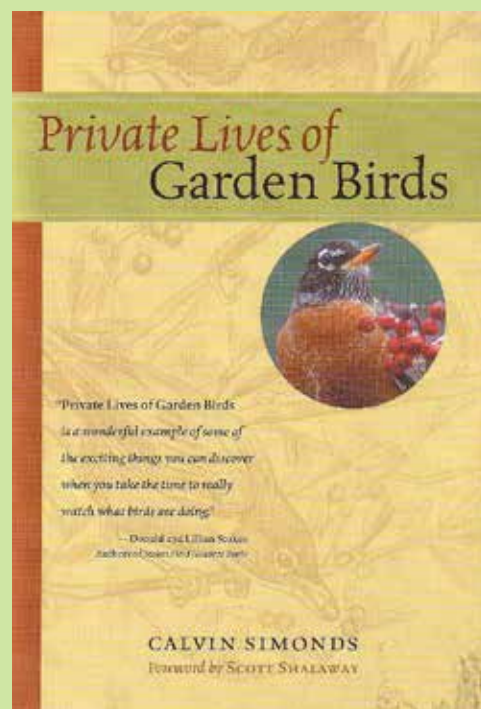
Wasp, in Ichneumonidae family.
Photo by Sarah Baldwin.

I've been diving into a stack of unread or only partly read garden books as well as revisiting some I know well. A few months ago, I was at a used bookstore in town and was lucky enough to come across a full-color edition of Robert Nold's *High and Dry: Gardening with Cold-Hardy Dryland Plants* (Timber, 2008). I highly recommend this entertaining and beautiful book as a great, if idiosyncratic, resource for gardening in our climate. Unfortunately, it is currently only available through print-on-demand, with the interior in black and white; if you

find it online from a reseller, be sure to ask first if it is the full-color edition; Nold's many photos and his wife's exquisite illustrations are a big part of the book's appeal.

If you pay attention to birds, now you have more time to do that, and it's a good time of year for it. A charming book to get you in the spirit of close watching and listening is *Private Lives of Garden Birds*, first published in 1984 (but get the 2002 Storey Books edition). Written by a naturalist under the pen name of Calvin Simonds, the book looks lovingly at 11 common backyard birds. The author's folksy tone and amusing personal anecdotes belie his rigorous scientific background—the reader feels encouraged to sit outside and make her own observations.

It's a deeply unsettling moment we're in. All the more reason to take refuge in the places where we can connect with nature, whether in the privacy of our yards, on a late-afternoon walk, or through reading about the plants and creatures whose lives are going on all around us.



Message from the President

by Wendy Wilson

Well, here we are. Staying home to “flatten the curve” of the coronavirus transmission. I don’t know about the rest of you, but when someone tells me to do something, my first inclination is often to do the opposite. Please don’t.

NMSU has asked us to postpone or cancel all meetings, work sessions, and classes through May 15, or to meet electronically when feasible. These guidelines are in keeping with the governor’s directives. Obviously, this is disappointing to all of us who are anxious to get into our project gardens. The Herb Garden planning and propagation class was cancelled. The Master Composter series is cancelled as well. The Veggie Garden has put its cold-crop planting on hold. The Cornell Rose Garden will go unmulched, as will El Zagan. Most of the continuing education classes at the Botanical Garden and at Santa Fe Community College are cancelled at least through mid-April. Our annual Garden Festival has been cancelled for this spring; we are contemplating rescheduling it for the fall. Countless hours of planning were for naught, and personally I’m rather sad about it.



2020 SFEMG Board President Wendy Wilson

The intern classes will be presented through NMSU’s Zoom format. Happily, those classes will also be available to the general MG population. Additionally, the Education Committee will keep updating learning opportunities for you. Webinars are a great way to learn and earn CE hours (see page 5).

Knowing many of you are concerned about your volunteer hours this year, we have come up with a prorated schedule for OS, PE, and CE hours through the end of the gardening season. *The hours listed here represent the total hours that would be required for the year based on when we are able to get back to work.*

	May	June	July	August	September
OS	10	7.5	5	2.5	0
PE	4	3	2	1	0
CE	5.5	3	2.5	1	0

Finally, as in your garden, a bit of neglect won’t stop SFEMGs from growing. We may be a bit weedy as we emerge from our seclusion, but tender care will get us back to normal. Please contact each other, especially those gardeners that are elderly, frail, or in need of kindness (probably all of us). Please let me know if there is anyone you think I should contact. I am glad to be of service. Be healthy, be safe, and know that our gardens will welcome our return.

Webinars: Excellent Resources for Learning (and Earning CES)

by Terry McGuire

[Note: The following was first published in the March 2019 SFEMG newsletter.]

A webinar is a live, web-based presentation on the internet, connecting the presenter to a worldwide audience of viewers. The host speaks about a topic and typically includes slides, videos, and/or demonstrations. There are many webinars offered through university websites and professional organizations that provide research-based gardening information.

Webinars need not be passive. One I recently “attended” on [urban trees](#) offered online polling, a chat room where participants commented and shared additional references, and a question-and-answer session at the end of the talk. In many ways, participants are more connected to the speaker than is possible in a traditional lecture.

Often webinars are both live and on demand, so you don’t have to miss one because of time conflicts. With a recorded version you lose some interactivity, but you have the ability to pause to take notes or to back up the presentation if you missed an important point. Easy to view, these can often be streamed through YouTube.

One snowy afternoon I attended a webinar by Gail Langellato on the [latest research on bees in the garden](#) (Oregon State University Extension); a second webinar, by Elizabeth Brown, called [Drain Flies, House Flies, and Fungus Gnats](#) (part of the 2017 All Bugs Good and Bad webinar series at eXtension.org); and a third, by Rick Carr, on composting, at the [Rodale Institute](#). You would be unlikely to find this many diverse seminars available on a single day in Santa Fe.

In general, look for webinars from universities, professional organizations, or governmental agencies (see partial list below). All of the webinars I attended were free. For members of SFEMG, many of these classes are accepted for CE credits. Live webinars will be announced by eBlast, while recorded ones may be chosen from an approved list of organizations.

Free webinar sites currently accepted by SFEMG:

[American Public Gardens Association](#)
[Conservation of Natural Resources](#)
[eXtension Learn](#)
[Iowa State University Extension](#)
[Ohio State University Bee Lab](#)
[Oregon State University Extension](#)
[Utah State University Forestry Extension](#)

SFEMG’s Christine Salem recommends [Urban Farm University](#), which is currently offering a daily series of webinars called Victory Garden Challenge 2020.



The artwork on the license plate was created by Albuquerque Sign Language Academy 6th grader Jazlyn Smith.

The New “Protect Pollinators” License Plate

by Laurie McGrath

During the 2019 session of the New Mexico legislature, participants in the Wild Friends program of the University of New Mexico law school achieved passage of Senate Bill 234, which was signed into law by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham that April. The bill creates a special license plate with proceeds going to the Department of Transportation (DOT) to fund the planting of native flowers and grasses along state highways. In addition, DOT will create pollinator-friendly demonstration gardens at rest stops that will include informational signage.

Who are the Wild Friends? They are students in grades 4 through 12 from schools across the state. Partnered with UNM’s School of Law and Institute of Public Law, the program provides civics education on government and public service. Teachers, law students, and volunteers help engage the students in projects to learn about wildlife and habitat issues, which they themselves choose by ballot. More than 12 thousand students have been involved since 1991.

Pollinator plants have often been a focus of their activities at the legislature. In 2010 they helped pass a native-pollinators memorial urging state agencies and schools to plant pollinator-friendly plants. In 2016 a “Bee Aware Day” memorial was passed, and in 2017 a joint memorial was passed creating a voluntary plant-labelling program to identify pollinator-friendly plants at 20 nurseries across the state.

It’s heartening to know that New Mexico students are being effective advocates for our environment. “I always say one of the most powerful lobbying groups that we have in the state of New Mexico are our Wild Friends,” comments Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales on their website. As teacher Jennifer Chavez-Miller points out, “Students get to see in real time how powerful advocacy and civic engagement are, and how they too have a voice in making change.” To read more about the accomplishments of Wild Friends, visit their [website](#).

The plates will be available starting this month. They can be purchased at MVD offices. The cost is \$25 for the first year and \$15 to renew annually.



Prairie Verbena (*Glandularia bipinnatifida*)

by Malissa Haslam

Prairie verbena is one of the first flowers to show up in our yards each spring. I first noticed a single mound several years ago, but after the good moisture of our 2018/2019 winter, it was rampant, particularly in the area with landscape rocks, where it gets absolutely no supplemental water. The plant grows from a tap-root into a low mound with five-petaled, lightly fragrant flowers and hairy, grayish green foliage. At maturity the calyx surrounds four nutlets that look like cigar butts. It is found in fields, grasslands, and scrublands from most of the Great Plains states to southern California, as well as into the Southeast.



Photo by Sue Carnahan via SEINet

Early on, its name unknown to me, I called it “wild verbena” because it resembled the cultivar my mother often grew in her Alabama gardens. Upon researching, I learned that it does indeed belong to the *Verbenaceae* family, having the word “verbena” in its several common names: purple prairie verbena, Dakota vervain, Dakota mock vervain. Spanish speakers may know it as *moradilla*, meaning “little purple one,” although its blooms can also be pink or lavender. The genus name *Glandularia* means “with small glands”; *bipinnatifida* means “twice pinnately dissected,” referring to the leaves.

Landscape use: As a nectar source, prairie verbena attracts birds, bees, and butterflies. Being very xeric, it makes an excellent companion in cactus gardens or xeristrips; its seeds may also be included with prairie mixes and native grasses. It would combine nicely with chocolate flower, California poppies, salvias, and gaillardias. It does well in containers with other drought-tolerant plants as well as sown in wildflower meadows and butterfly gardens since it readily reseeds itself (but not invasively so). This is a great plant for the far corner of your yard where the hose doesn’t reach since it requires virtually no maintenance.

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Prairie Verbena—cont. from page 7

Planting and care: Our front yard was landscaped about 45 years ago with the awful black plastic and bland rocks that prove to be the perfect environment for *Glandularia bipinnatifida*, indicating that it thrives in inorganic mulch as well as in bare dirt areas. Although it does best in poor soil with little water, it is also found in a wide range of soils, including clay and limestone. In my experience prairie verbena is happiest in part shade, especially during our summers' late afternoon heat. Trimming it back in mid-summer will give it a neater look as well as increase fall blooms. The plant is highly deer resistant and appears to be pest-free.

Propagation: Ideally you would sow seeds just prior to an early spring snow; the melting snow provides just the right amount of pressure for the seeds to be pushed to the perfect depth for germination. That said, volunteer seedlings are easy to dig up and transplant.

Plant type: perennial or annual herb

Bloom time: early spring to early fall

Size: 8 inches tall x 24 inches wide

Sun: full sun, part shade

Soil: sandy, clay, limestone

Water: low

USDA zones: 4–9

References:

High Plains Gardening, [Glandularia \(Verbena\) bipinnatifida](#)

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Plant Database, [Glandularia bipinnatifida](#)

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

SEINet, [Glandularia bipinnatifida](#)



As we breathe life back into the soil, we breathe life back into ourselves.

—Alan Chadwick (1909–1980)

What's That Weed?

Russian Knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*)

by Pam Wolfe

This class B [noxious weed](#) is native to the Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia. Russian knapweed takes over disturbed areas, flourishing in saline clay, sandy, or rocky soils, and threatens rangeland throughout the western United States; its presence is documented in all but eight New Mexico counties. It will readily invade riparian areas, as it has done at the Leonora Curtin Wetland Preserve. Both prolific seed reproduction and adventitious buds on the extensive creeping root system allow this plant to spread rapidly. There is some controversy over [allelopathy](#) (chemical inhibition of competitors' germination), which may contribute to its success. Stressing the plant by repeated removal of above-ground vegetation is an alternative to [chemical control](#), but establishing more desirable plants after removal is essential. A 2009 greenhouse study suggests incorporating *Lupine* spp. and other legumes to resist allelopathy and support native grasses, especially in low-nitrogen settings. Field research is needed.



Flower, showing distinctive bracts.
Photo by Jerry Oldenettel.



Seedling. Photo by Steve Dewey,
Utah State University (via bugwood.org).

In a [field guide](#) for managing knapweeds in the Southwest, the U.S. Department of Agriculture points out the first principle for *prevention*: limit disturbance and promptly revegetate disturbed areas. For more detailed information on identification, see [Know Your Knapweeds](#), a publication of North Dakota State University. The illustrations include seedlings, flowers, and bracts useful in distinguishing among Russian, spotted, and diffuse knapweed.



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.

Let's Grow 2020



A **FREE** Monthly Education Series for the Home Gardener
from the Santa Fe Extension Master Gardener Association

Soils Testing Workshop (two-part class!)

Sun, Feb. 23 & Sun, March 15, 9 am-12 pm each day Large annex, SF County Fairgrounds

Learn how to prepare paperwork and package soil samples for testing at CSU Soils Lab. Demonstrations on how to cheaply, easily and accurately determine your soil structure, how to use the soil triangle, and why knowing your soil is important. Return March 15 to learn how to interpret the results from the CSU Soil Lab, including amendments recommended to add to soils for certain conditions. Both sections taught by Sandy Powell and Steven Fellows.

Rose Pruning Clinic (hands-on!)

Sat, April 18, 9 am-12 pm or Tuesday, April 21, 10:30 am-1:30 pm Harvey Cornell Rose Garden

Bring your handheld pruners, gloves and long sleeved clothing. Learn the correct way to prune roses from Nationally Certified Rosarians Katherine O'Brien (Sat) or Jack Ortega (Tues) and then enjoy a picnic in this historic garden at 1315 Galisteo Parkway, corner of Galisteo and Cordova Road.

What's the Buzz about Native Bees? How to Attract Them to Your Yard

Saturday, April 25, 10 am - 12 pm Randall Davey Audubon Center

Find out the basic facts about native bees and how we can help them for food and beauty. Learn about resources to help you welcome these wonderful creatures into your yard. Santa Fe Native Plants Project will be on hand to distribute helpful information. A tour of the Audubon Gardens will follow. Taught by Ann Caudell and Susie Sonflieth.

Cactus Propagation

Saturday, May 16, 9 am - 11 am County Fairgrounds Cactus Garden

Learn to divide cactus and how to grow more. Tips on soil preparation, planting and maintenance. Drop-in demos every half hour. Taught by Cullen Hallmark.

Basic Composting (hands-on!)

Saturday, June 13, 9 am - 11 am County Fairgrounds Compost Area

The first hour will meet in the Master Gardener fairground classroom to learn basic composting methods. The second hour will be held at the compost demonstration area to view compost systems and participate in hands-on practice. Taught by members of Santa Fe Compost Action Team (SCAT).

Selecting Native Plants for Your Landscape

Saturday, June 20, 10 am - 12 pm Randall Davey Audubon Center Pavilion

What should I plant that will thrive in our challenging environment? Learn what is native to our area, why it works and how to plant and maintain it. Taught by Pam Wolfe, Lesley Mansfield, and Susie Sonflieth, followed by a tour of native plants in the Audubon Gardens, including a pollinator garden.

Historic Garden Restoration

Friday, July 24, 5 pm- 7 pm El Zagan Garden at 545 Canyon Road

Tour the garden with Lissa Johnson, Nyla Rasmussen, Joan Dayton and Karen Ramage. Learn how to plant and maintain it. Learn how Master Gardeners are restoring this garden and maintaining its historic layout and ambiance with plants appropriate for our current climate.

How to Plan a Fall Vegetable Garden with Cool Season Crops

Sunday, August 16, 12 pm - 2 pm County Fairgrounds Vegetable Garden

Learn how to plan for fall gardening. Tips on extending your growing season and things to consider while the summer winds down. Taught by Jannine Cabossel and Bob Zimmerman.

Seed Stewardship: Why and How to Save Seeds

Saturday, September 26, 1 - 3 pm Randall Davey Audubon Center Pavilion

Humans have been saving seeds for at least 10,000 years. In this workshop you'll learn the advantages of locally adapted seeds and how they offer resilience to the impacts of climate change; how to know when seeds are ready to collect and how to store them; techniques for determining the viability of seeds; and why saving seeds from hybrid varieties is problematic. Taught by Susie Sonflieth, Dianne Pratt and Jody Pugh.

For more information, visit sfemg.org and please LIKE us on Facebook



If you are an individual with a disability who is in need of an auxiliary aid or service please contact County Extension Office at 505 471 4711. NMSU is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and educator.



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, [Are the Great Outdoors Off-Limits During a Pandemic?](#), by Erin Beresini

Botany One, [What real people think about plants](#), Nigel Chaffey

British Nature Films, [Summer in the Meadow: Diary of a Vanishing World](#), by Stephen de Vere

Garden Professors, [Planting Prognostication: Understanding last frost and planting dates](#), by John Porter

Garden Rant, [The Cloistered Garden](#), by Allen Bush

The Guardian, [Birds, buds and bright days: how spring can make us healthier and happier](#), by Amy Fleming

The Humane Gardener, [From Parks to Parking Strips: Finding Nature](#), by Nancy Lawson

New York Times, [Down on the Farm That Harvests Metal from Plants](#), by Ian Morse

New York Times, [The Beautiful World Beside the Broken One](#), by Margaret Renkl

New Yorker, [How South Korea Is Composting Its Way to Sustainability](#), by Rivka Galchen

Prairiebreak, [A few A-listers to look out for! \(plant faves beginning with A\)](#), by Panayoti Kelaidis

The Reporter, [Season's Eats: Green stuff's growing out of the ground again](#), by Cole Rehbein

Santa Fe New Mexican, [Raucous corvids bring joy in time of COVID](#), by Anne Schmauss

Southwest Yard & Garden (NMSU), [Rarin' to Grow: Get Outside and Show Those Weeds Who's Boss](#), by Marisa Thompson

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.

- April 04 Santa Fe Botanical Garden edition with host Lindsay Taylor
- April 11 SFEMG edition with host Christine Salem; conversation with *Grassroots Rising* author Ronnie Cummings on regenerative agriculture
- April 18 Santa Fe Farmers Market Institute edition—Food, Farms & Friends—with host Carrie Core
- April 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 classes and face-to-face events through at least May 15 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.



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