

Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners Newsletter



Photo of Anne in her garden by Anne's husband, Frank Rivas

Confessions of a Dirty Old Lady

By Anne Rivas

“Gardening is my favorite activity, especially weeding. I sit in the dirt, dig in with a trowel, and vigorously shake the dirt off the roots of the plants I pull up. Within a short time, I’m contented and covered in dirt.”

I wrote that paragraph when I lived in Omaha, Nebraska. For over 60 years I lived with midwestern dirt. I composted religiously, loving the transformation of plant and animal waste into living soil. I planted a prairie pollinator garden, begun with sheet mulch and gathered seeds. The dirt was rich, full of worms, insects and fungus. I reveled in it.

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Fast forward to today. We moved to Santa Fe three years ago and I grieved for the garden that I had left. After a year I recognized that the piñon-juniper woodland we live in off Hyde Park Road is my garden and I would not be able to re-plant the garden I loved.

I have wanted to take Master Gardener training for a long time, and I signed up in 2020. Since then, I've heard a lot about New Mexico soil, mostly uncomplimentary, and I've learned about radish drills, cover crops, and Zuni bowls.

Because the soil in our woodland is reasonably deep and drains well, I decided to plant a New Mexico pollinator garden in the sunny strip of land next to the street. It was filled with overgrown Chamisa and Russian Sage, so I thinned it out to make room for additional plants. The Santa Fe Native Plant Project presentations this spring were very helpful, as was SNaPP's "[Guide to Native Plants for the Santa Fe Landscape](#)." I bought tiny starts and waded in, believing the soil would be richer there than in the woodland area because it was mulched and irrigated. Not so. It was hard as a rock. It looked like subsoil after everything good has been scraped off and heavy equipment parked on it. I gamely chopped the right sized holes with a shovel, mixed in some compost, Yum Yum Mix and mycorrhiza, and planted my new babies. I will mulch with a layer of compost after I repair shovel cuts in the underground irrigation system.

I wanted to re-create the life I'd left; at the same time I wanted to love New Mexico. I already love the mountains, the monsoons and the altitude. I'm learning as fast as I can about our plants and soil. Sitting in the dirt again, I am home.

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A Message from SFEMG Board President Wendy Wilson

Summer. Heat. Rain. Cherries. Apricots. Weeds. Abundance. Right now in the oven, I have a cherry pie to take to a celebratory picnic. Later in August, I'm celebrating my 60th birthday. Even typing that makes my stomach clutch.

How can I make a positive, ecological impact for my family, neighborhood and larger community? Fortunately, I have a vision — a way forward to unify our Santa Fe yards into linked corridors of plants, habitat, shelter and responsible stewardship for pollinators, birds and wildlife.

The SFEMG book club read Douglas W. Tallamy's "Nature's Best Hope" late in 2020. I felt the importance of implementing his ideas of connecting yards, parks, neighborhoods and towns with pollinator-attracting trees/shrubs and perennials, having available water sources, nesting sites, shelter and available food. Catherine Wygant, Amy Regalado, Elizabeth Fordyce, Janie Farler and I formed a Project Committee. We named the new project The Yard Habitat Certification (YHC) project. It was approved by the SFEMG board in June.

The most important parts of developing habitat are:

- Planting "keystone" plants that are hosts for moths and butterflies to lay eggs on. Plants that feed larva. Naturally these plants are native and in our case specific to the Southwest.
- Providing food plants that provide berries, nuts, seeds, leaves and nectar to feed our indigenous wildlife.
- Providing water sources for bugs, birds and wildlife.
- Retaining plant material throughout the winter to shelter bugs, birds and wildlife.
- Using organic methods of pest control (eliminating herbicide and pesticide use).

The YHC Project is based on helping all Santa Fe gardeners establish wildlife friendly yards. Paired Master Gardeners and interns will visit gardener's yards at the request of the gardener. Based on the SFEMG's Keystone Plant List, we will help with plant suggestions, recommend placement, advise on best practices for planting, watering, and maintaining and pruning new and existing plants. We will look at existing habitat, available water sources, sheltering spots and food availability. Yards that have all the elements outlined by Tallamy and our YHC criteria will receive a yard sign to display.

In the upcoming fall/spring we will pilot the YHC program. Once we have the bugs worked out (pun intended) we will roll out the certification program to all of Santa Fe. Beginning and advanced gardeners are encouraged to participate. We urge you to read "Nature's Best Hope."

Join the SFEMGs in creating a habitat friendly town. You are important in establishing habitat, feeding bugs, birds and wildlife, which is important to the ecology of your yard, neighborhood, town, country and world.

Wendy





Photo courtesy of Los Amigos de Rancho Los Luceros

Los Luceros Historic Site Seeks Garden Help

By Tamara Banar

Gardeners of all levels of experience are invited to lend a hand in revitalizing gardens at New Mexico's newest historic site — the 148-acre Los Luceros ranch.

Located 10 miles north of Española along the banks of the Rio Grande near the village of Alcalde, Los Luceros is one of the state's most picturesque and historically significant properties with a rich history of occupation — first by the ancient Tewans of Pioge and later as a military outpost for the first Spanish capital circa 1598.

Complete with an 18th century chapel, apple orchards, irrigated farmland, cottonwood bosque and a 19th century Territorial-style adobe hacienda that was home to wealthy Boston philanthropist Mary Cabot Wheelwright from 1923 until her death in 1958, the property has recently re-opened to the public.

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Site manager Ethan Ortega has scheduled biweekly gardening sessions from 9 a.m.-1 p.m on the following Tuesdays: August 10, August 24 and September 7.

The focus of initial sessions will be weeding pathways and beds and pruning trees, shrubs and perennials. Later sessions will involve identifying plants and planting perennials in the walled garden west of the Casa Grande and in the strolling/meditation garden east of the home.



Exterior of Los Luceros Hacienda
Photo by Gene Peach

Please bring your own gardening tools — pruners, trowels, weeders — and wear a hat, long-sleeved shirts and gloves. Apply insect repellent and sunscreen as needed. Water and snacks will be available on-site.

As a token of gratitude, participating gardeners will be eligible to receive an annual New Mexico Cultural Pass, which provides free entry to over 15 New Mexico cultural sites and museums. Hours worked at Los Luceros cannot be claimed as Program and Project Support (formerly OS) hours because the site is in Rio Arriba County, not Santa Fe County, SFEMG Board President Wendy Wilson explained.

For more information and/or to sign up for a gardening session, please contact Ethan Ortega at (505) 476.1165 or Ethan.Ortega@state.nm.us or Tamara Banar at (505) 473.3865 or tbanar@earthlink.net.

We are here to help!

If you have a gardening question, Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners are available to help. Go to sfemg.org and pose your question. Someone will do research and get back to you.



Backyard Bugs

Hump-backed Beewolf (*Philanthus gibbosus*)

by Pam Wolfe

According to [iNaturalist](#) *Philanthus gibbosus* is the most common bee-hunting wasp in North America.

Although the adult beewolf feeds on nectar, it is reported to prey on 35 species of bees and wasps to provision its larvae. The female digs a nest in coarse sand, sandy clay or clay loam. The cells where she lays her eggs are at the end of short tunnels off the main burrow, which may be as long as a meter due to expansion by several generations. Each egg cell requires several bees to support the developing wasp larva. Some nest sharing has been observed, but each female cares for her own offspring. An adult male may also share the parental nest.

Beewolves are beset by an assortment of parasites including “satellite flies” that follow the female to her nest and lay eggs at the entrance. The fly larvae make their way down the tunnel to parasitize the developing wasps. Generalist predators such as crab spiders and robber flies are hazards for adult beewolves.

The species name is from the Latin *gibb-* meaning humped. Habitat is forest edges, meadows, and yards. The female coats her prey with pollen before placing it in the egg cell, a behavior that sheds light on the lineage of bees (family Anthophila), direct descendants of pollen-collecting wasps (family Crabronidae).

References: [Eric R. Eaton’s blog](#), [iNaturalist](#), [bugguide.net](#)



Philanthus gibbosus (8mm) foraging on *Eriogonum wrightii* var. *subscaposum*
Photo by Pam Wolfe



“Flowers flourish when they’re watered, and shrivel up when they’re not. People are no different. The best leaders are the ones who look for the best in people.”

— Sir Richard Branson (from AZquotes and other sources)



Wooly Ironweed and Silver Ironweed (*Vernonia lindheimeri* and *Vernonia lindheimeri* var. *leucophylla*)

by Laurie McGrath

Named for English botanist William Vernon and belonging to the Asteraceae family, there are 350 species of *Vernonia* worldwide. I found 18 that are native to North America. Of those, wooly ironweed is found in open fields in Texas and New Mexico. The variety *leucophylla* is a neighboring native discovered in the Edwards Plateau of Texas by Ferdinand Jacob Lindheimer who is renowned for identifying hundreds of plants in Texas.

Landscape use: The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center describes wooly ironweed as a “great, underused perennial for the garden and meadow.” Perhaps the name ironweed puts gardeners off but it’s a beautiful addition to a dry or gravel garden and attracts native bees and several varieties of butterflies. It can also be used as a cut flower.



Silver Ironweed in spring
Photo by Laurie McGrath

Planting and care: Ironweed requires full sun and is adaptable to clay or sandy loam, even caliche soils. It establishes slowly but easily and requires little water; it needs good drainage. It’s pest free and requires no maintenance other than cutting back to new growth in spring.

Propagation: Ironweed is propagated from seed, which should be collected in the fall. Seed can also be purchased from purveyors of native plant seed. Ironweed develops a deep taproot so transplanting mature plants is not recommended.

Plant type: Tall, upright herbaceous perennial with narrow wooly leaves and conspicuous pink/purple flowers. The leaves of the varietal *leucophylla* are silver.

Bloom time: late summer into fall

Size: 18-24 inches wide and 3-4 feet tall

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Sun: full sun

Soil: sandy loam, clay, clay loam, caliche

Water: very low once established

USDA zones: 6-9

References:

[Digging](#) by Pam Pennick

[Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)

[Wikipedia](#)



Flowers of Woolly Ironweed
Photo by Ray Mathews via Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Give Us a Big Smile!

If you can't buy what you're looking for locally, you can buy from AmazonSmile and they will donate to the Santa Fe Master Gardener Association! SFMGA treasurer Cullen Hallmark has arranged for your AmazonSmile purchases to make the organization 50¢ for every \$100 you spend. SFMGA is the Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners' nonprofit sister organization and will donate your contributions to the SFEMG.

Simply follow the instructions below to select "Santa Fe Master Gardener Associatio N" as your charity. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** The name as shown is correct. This is not a typo. You will need to use your existing account or establish an AmazonSmile account to use this feature.

Here's how to set it up:

1. Open the Amazon Shopping app on your smart phone or tablet, or log into the website: smile.amazon.com.
2. If you are using the app, select the main menu and tap on "AmazonSmile" within the Settings or Programs & Features menu.
3. If using the website, enter AmazonSmile in the search box and follow the directions that are displayed.
3. Select "Santa Fe Master Gardener Associatio N" as your charity.
4. Follow the on-screen instructions to activate AmazonSmile.

Make your future Amazon purchases at the smile.amazon.com website. These donations will accumulate and help support SFEMG's local public programs.

New & Noteworthy

Have you recently read a gardening-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 try to include the information in the next issue. **Note that some of these sources may have paywalls.**

[“The Master Gardeners: Celebrate diverse agricultural traditions”](#) by Laurie McGrath, shared with permission from *HOME/Santa Fe New Mexican* (July 2021)

[“Gardening for pollinators: A New Book Focused on Native Southwestern Plants”](#) story by Jessa Cast and photos by George Oxford Miller, shared with permission from *HOME/Santa Fe New Mexican* (July 2021)

[“Water Matters: Community driven conservation”](#) by Christine Y. Chavez, shared with permission from *HOME/Santa Fe New Mexican* (July 2021)

[“7 Reasons You May Not Want to Kill Dandelions in Your Yard”](#) by Katie Dohman, *Family Handyman* (July 21, 2021)

[“They stole prized lumber from a national forest. The trees’ DNA proved it, feds say.”](#) by Jaclyn Peiser, *The Washington Post* (July 12, 2021)

[“How to Create Your Own Cutting Garden for Endless Bouquets”](#) by Elizabeth Yuko, *lifehacker* (July 11, 2021)

[“The bizarre botany that makes corn a fruit, a grain, and also \(kind of\) a vegetable”](#) by Sara Chodosh, *Popular Science* (July 8, 2021)

[“See the Insanely Imaginative Plantings From This Year’s Hamptons Gardening Competition”](#) by Mary Elizabeth Andriotis, *House Beautiful* (July 8, 2021)

[“Top 10 Heat-Tolerant Plants”](#) by Jill Staake, *Birds & Blooms* (July 6, 2021)

[“Desert Blooms: Over the Moon for Saskatoon”](#) NMSU Southwest Yard & Garden column by Dr. Marisa Thompson (July 2, 2021)

[“What Technology Could Reduce Heat Deaths? Trees.”](#) by Catrin Einhorn, *The New York Times* (July 3, 2021)

[“The Quest to Tally Alaska’s Wild, Wondrous, ‘Warm-Blooded’ Bumblebees”](#) by Gemma Tarlach, *Atlas Obscura* (June 23, 2021)

[“Western Wonder: This Santa Fe, New Mexico, Garden Is Full of Colorful Native Plants That Can Take the Heat”](#) by Jennifer Jewell, *Martha Stewart Living* (February 21, 2021)

The Garden Journal Radio Show

Every Saturday
10-10:30 a.m.



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. Show host: Christine Salem

August 7: Slow Food Santa Fe edition

Renee Fox and Dave Readyhough of Arable restaurant join hosts Lissa Johnson and Nina Rosenberg to discuss how the pandemic has and will continue to affect the restaurant scene in Santa Fe.

August 14: SFEMG edition

Arborist and horticulturist Tracy Neal in conversation with host Christine Salem on what climate change means for trees in the Santa Fe area.

August 21: Food, Farms & Friends edition

Host Carrie Core presents more Soil Stories.

August 28: Home Grown New Mexico edition

Jannine Cabossel, “The Tomato Lady,” shares her hard-earned vegetable gardening wisdom and a to-do list for September in a live broadcast from the Santa Fe Farmers’ Market. More info at [Giant Veggie Gardener](#).

Webinars

Aug. 20-22

[Native Plant Society of New Mexico Annual Conference](#) (live/virtual)

1 CE phc

Sept. 12-17

[2021 International Master Gardener Conference](#) (virtual)

1 CE phc

Calendar of Events

When looking into specific events, take care to note whether it is now online and/or live as the post-COVID landscape continues to evolve. Continue to check the SFEMG website and the websites of other organizations to see what's being offered. Note that "phc" stands for "per hour of class time."

NOTE: You can access previously-aired New Mexico State University "Ready, Set, GROW!" webinars [here](#) and those offered by the Xerces Society on the organization's [YouTube channel](#).
1 CE phc

August 4

[Ready, Set, GROW!: Container Gardening \(NMSU\)](#) 1 CE phc

August 12

[Eight Action Items to Protect Insects from Global Declines](#) 1 CE

August 15

[Dehydrating the Harvest \(HGNM\)](#) 2 CE

August 18

[Ready, Set, GROW!: Planning for Fall Vegetable Gardening with John Garlisch \(NMSU\)](#) 1 CE phc

August 20

[Insect Photography and Using iNaturalist to Observe and Document Wild Bees \(OSU\)](#) 1 CE

August 28

[Bees and Blooms: Find out why there's such a "buzz" concerning bees! \(PSU\)](#) 1 CE

August 29

[Getting Seedy: Why & How to Save Your Seeds \(HGNM\)](#) 2 CE

HGNM: [Home Grown New Mexico](#)

NMSU: [New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service](#)

OSU: [The Ohio State University](#)

PSU: [Penn State University](#)

XS: [Xerces Society](#)

See next month's SFEMG Newsletter for more Continuing Education options.

Members Only: For a complete list of Master Gardener projects and to sign up, please visit SignUpGenius, a link to which is in the Members Only section of the SFEMG website. To log volunteer hours worked, visit the NMSU tracking site that you can link to from the same location.



Mission Statement:

Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners is a nonprofit 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.

