

Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners Newsletter

The California Botanic Garden

A somewhat familiar place

Story and photos by Kathy Haq

Overgrazing and the success of invasive species on the Channel Islands off the Southern California coast have made the Island Bush Poppy (*Dendromecon harfordii*) a rare plant. One place to see its beautiful, bright yellow flowers is at the California Botanic Garden, which I visited in June.



Island Bush poppy (*Dendromecon harfordii*)

A sign in the garden tells visitors that this plant blooms year-round on only three of the islands: Santa Catalina, Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa, all of which I had the privilege of visiting during my pre-retirement life in Southern California. I do not recall seeing the blooms during these visits but admit that I probably did not look as carefully at individual plant species at the time.

These poppy bushes, which have lovely blue-gray foliage, are found throughout the California Botanic Garden, which rebranded itself in 2020 after nearly a century of operation as the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont. “For 93 years, our garden has been at the forefront of California native plant conservation and celebration,” David Bryant, the garden’s former director of visitor experience,

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Desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*)

and Lucinda McDade, its executive director, wrote in the American Public Gardens Association's monthly magazine.

At an elevation of slightly more than 1,300 feet, the 86-acre garden sits more than a mile lower than most gardens in Santa Fe, yet Northern New Mexico gardeners will see several familiar 'faces' there. The garden's collections include desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*), Apache plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*), prickly pear (*Opuntia* spp.) and other cacti, varieties of agave, and even a "Pinyon-Juniper Woodland" that bears only a slight similarity to the Piñon-Juniper Woodland currently unfolding at the Santa Fe Botanical Garden. The California garden also features one of Santa Fe-based artist Kevin Box's origami-themed sculptures, "Rising Peace." Box's work was featured in the Santa Fe Botanical Garden in 2014.

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Editor: Kathy Haq
Art Director: Jannine Cabossel

Contact us at:
news.sfemg@gmail.com

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The garden's gift shop and restrooms were closed on the day of my visit, and my friends and I were greeted at the front entrance by four cacti humorously outfitted in sunglasses and facemasks, the latter required unless you were more than six feet from other visitors. Still, it was a wonderful visit, and I would recommend the garden to any of you, particularly those interested in native plants.

Disclaimer: Haq is an employee of the Santa Fe Botanical Garden.

Source:

“Small Garden, Big Impact: California Botanic Garden” *Public Garden Magazine*, Volume 35, Issue 4, 2020



Signs of the Times

This sign at the Randall Davey Audubon Center is one of many new signs that appeared this spring at Master Gardener-supported projects throughout Santa Fe. The signs are part of a renewed effort on the part of the SFEMG to increase public awareness of the organization's contributions to the gardening community in Santa Fe and its partnerships with long-established, popular locations such as the Audubon Center, El Zaguán (the historic James L. Johnson house and garden on Canyon Road), and the Harvey Cornell Rose Park at Galisteo Parkway and Coronado Road.

A Message from SFEMG Board President Wendy Wilson

If you subscribe to the SFEMG Newsletter you are either a master gardener/intern or a community gardener. You are interested in plants that enhance your outdoor living space, that can thrive with minimal water and attract pollinators, and can feed wildlife and provide habitat.

SFEMG has several established programs that have been working toward the above goals for years. Described in more detail on the SFEMG website, the [Santa Fe Native Plant Project \(SNaPP\)](#) published a fully illustrated “[Guide to Native Plants for the Santa Fe Landscape](#)” in 2019. Our volunteers create, maintain and expand gardens that demonstrate the use of native and xeric plants. The Native Plant Demonstration Garden is currently under development on the south side of the Santa Fe County Extension office at 3229 Rodeo Road.



The SFEMG partnered with the [Randall Davey Audubon Center](#) in 2003 to develop and maintain demonstration gardens at the Center. The gardens include a Wildlife Attracting Garden, native perennial and shrub beds, a small cactus bed and a Pollinator Garden.

SFEMG’s [Santa Fe Public Spaces Tree Inventory project](#), in conjunction with city and community volunteers, aims to collect species, diameter, condition and location data; identify trees and pests that afflict the trees; and troubleshoot factors influencing tree health.

In addition to established SFEMG projects, we have an exciting new project that will be piloted in 2021-2022. Based on Douglas W. Tallamy’s 2019 book, “Nature’s Best Hope,” the **Yard Habitat Certification Project** will provide education, and possible certification, to gardeners across Santa Fe. Interested gardeners can have a trained Master Gardener and Intern come to their yard to assess existing plants, water availability and habitat, and to discuss maintenance. We will generate a wholistic plan to attract, feed and shelter pollinators, birds and wildlife. Established yards can opt into the certification program and receive a yard sign indicating inclusion of all elements necessary for a healthy environment. Stay tuned for more details.

The Xerces Society is working to establish the Santa Fe Pollinator Trail. The project aims to address habitat loss in urban areas by creating connected, climate-resilient pollinator habitat through the distribution of habitat kits and development of partnerships with local organizations to conduct pollinator conservation outreach.

As part of this initiative, Xerces is offering free native plants to local residents and organizations who commit to providing the time, labor and space to establish these plants in yards and gardens.

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Demonstration habitat kit for Santa Fe Pollinator Trail

To participate in this habitat kit program, please fill out an interest form by midnight Sunday, July 11. The habitat kits contain 32 native perennials and one tree or shrub. These plants will support a variety of pollinators from spring to fall and are grown pesticide-free by the Santa Ana Native Plant Nursery from locally sourced seeds of wild plants. All selected participants in the habitat kit program will receive a Xerces Pollinator Habitat sign to display with their habitat plantings. For more information, please visit the [Santa Fe Pollinator Trail habitat kit program](#) webpage and feel free to email kaitlin.haase@xerces.org with any questions.

If you are interested in participating in the Xerces Santa Fe Pollinator Trail, please fill out an interest form online:

- [Residential Interest Form](#)
- [Public Space Interest Form](#)

As always, the Master Gardeners are here to help you achieve your gardening goals and answer questions. Ask a Master Gardener sites are staffed on Saturday mornings at Reunity Resources Farm (1820 San Ysidro Crossing) and the Railyard Farmer's Market and Friday afternoons at the Eldorado Farmer's Market. Come visit us! If you can't make the markets, [AAMG Online](#) is a great place to ask questions and get a timely, well-researched answer.

We look forward to collaborating with you in building a connected, beautiful and thoughtful environment in Santa Fe for our pollinators, birds, wildlife and human inhabitants.

Wendy

Backyard Bugs

Silver-spotted Tiger Moth (*Lophocampa argentata*)

by Pam Wolfe

The rest of the story ...

Last month's featured creature was the [Silver-spotted Tiger Moth](#) (*Lophocampa argentata*). The identification was tentative, based on observation of larval and pupal stages. Both specimens emerged from their pupae in the interim, in all their silver spotted finery.



Adult *Lophocampa argentata*
Photo by Pam Wolfe

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.



Webinars, Etc.

July 1

[The Wondrous World of Fireflies](#) (XS)

1 CE

July 7

[Ready, Set, GROW!: Plant Diagnosis](#) (NMSU)

1 CE phc

July 8

[Finding Franklin's Bumble Bee](#) (XS)

3 CE

July 21

[Ready, Set, GROW!: Medicinal Plants](#) (NMSU)

1 CE phc



Beargrass (*Nolina microcarpa*)

by Susie Summers

Other Common names: sacahuista, palmilla, small-seed nolina

Not to be confused with other plants called Bear Grass, this is a northern New Mexico native. While it looks like a grass and can be a welcome addition to any ornamental grass landscape, it is not a grass. It is a hardy, evergreen succulent in the family Ruscaceae.

Many narrow, grass-like leaves grow up to 3 feet long and arch gracefully from a central trunk. The leaves have sharp serrate edges. Woody flower stalks emerge from the center of the foliage mound with hundreds of small, nearly white flowers. Native Americans and early Spanish settlers used the leaves to make mats, baskets, cords, and thatch. The small three-sided seeds were eaten raw or pounded into flour. The roots were used to make soap.

Landscape Use

Beargrass often is used for erosion control. It works well in rock gardens at higher altitudes. Hummingbirds love beargrass flowers, making this a surprising addition to a hummingbird garden. Deer avoid beargrass, which is another good reason to plant it.

Planting and Care

Beargrass is very adaptable to variation in soils and wide fluctuations in temperature, and it is drought tolerant. It requires no maintenance unless you wish to remove spent flower stalks for a neater appearance. Plant 3-4 feet apart.



Photo credit: Joy Mandelbaum

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Propagation

The easiest method is to divide the root ball and plant in spring or fall. Sow seeds directly outdoors in the spring after an overnight soak in hot water. It grows very slowly with only 10 leaves in the first two years.

Plant type: Evergreen succulent

Bloom time: Early summer

Size: 6-8 feet high, 4-6 feet wide

Sun: Full sun, but will tolerate partial sun

Soil: Prefers sandy loam, but tolerates most other soils, no fertilizer necessary

Water: Very low

USDA Zones: 6b-10

For a detailed description of this versatile plant, read the charming article by Janice Tucker that was published in the [April 2017 Santa Fe Botanical Garden Newsletter](#).

Resources

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, [Nolina microcarpa](#).

Salman, David. High Country Gardens blog, [Beargrass: A Drought Resistant Treasure for Dry Landscapes](#).

NMSU Desert Blooms, Southwest Yard and Garden Plant Advisor: [Nolina](#) spp.



“Weeds thrive in the company of humans. They aren’t parasites, because they can exist without us, but we are their natural ecological partners, the species alongside which they do best.”

– Richard Mabey, who some consider Britain’s foremost nature writer, discussing how weeds have always been essential to human lives in his 2010 book *“Weeds: In Defense of Nature’s Most Unloved Plants”*

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: Growing an herb-tea garden”](#) by Laurie McGrath, shared with permission from *HOME/Santa Fe New Mexican* (June 2021)

[“Preserving wildlife habitats: No yard is too small”](#) Story by Jessa Cast/Photos by Gabriela Campos, shared with permission from *HOME/Santa Fe New Mexican* (June 2021)

[“Time Traveler: An artist’s quest to document the world’s oldest trees,”](#) Photos by Beth Moon/ Story by Robert Moor, *Sierra* magazine (Summer 2021)

[“One of the ‘deadliest plants in North America’ is blooming. What to know about poison hemlock”](#) by Mike Francis, *Daily Reuters* (June 21, 2021)

[“Chelsea Flower Show to feature garden with ‘strong political message’](#) by Joanna Taylor, *Independent* (June 19, 2021)

[“Garden designers on how to make a wildlife-friendly garden”](#) by Arabella Bowes, *House & Garden* (June 17, 2021)

[“Gardening: For easy, effective weeding, go back to the hoe \(The old garden hoe isn’t in vogue these days\)”](#) by Lee Reich, *Associated Press* (June 15, 2021)

[“The 6 Biggest Garden Trends of 2021”](#) by Arricca Elin SanSone, *PureWow* (June 14, 2021)

[“Wild is Best: A Low-Water, High-Spirit Garden in a Small Footprint for an Architect”](#) by Annie Quigley, *Gardenista* (June 9, 2021)

[“11 Landscaping Ideas to Add a Touch of Red”](#) by Michelle Slatalla, *Gardenista* (June 8, 2021)

[“Hardscaping 101: Woven Fences”](#) by Clare Coulson, *Gardenista* (June 7, 2021)

[“Plant pandemics are on the rise, and we need a plan to stop them”](#) by Philip Kiefer, *Popular Science* (May 26, 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

July 3: Slow Food Santa Fe edition

Robert Egger joins hosts Lissa Johnson and Nina Rosenberg to discuss food security.

July 10: SFEMG edition

Host Tom Dominguez talks with gardening experts from NMSU.

July 17: Food, Farms & Friends edition

Host Carrie Core and her guest, organic farmer Dan Kittredge, the founder and executive director of the Bionutrient Food Association, share more Soil Stories.

July 24: A-Dae Romero-Briones (Cochiti Pueblo/Kiowa), Director of Programs, Native Agriculture and Food Systems, discusses Indigenous Agricultural Models and First Nations Perspective on Food.

July 31: Home Grown New Mexico edition

Jannine Cabossel, "The Tomato Lady," shares her hard-earned vegetable gardening wisdom and a to-do list for August. More info at [Giant Veggie Gardener](#).

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."

July 16

[Methods of Collecting and Documenting Bees](#) (OSU) 1 CE

July 18

[Hypertufa Planter Workshop & Demo](#) (HGNM) 2 CE

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

HGNM: [Home Grown New Mexico](#)

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

OSU: [The Ohio 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.

