

SFEMG and the Randall Davey Audubon Center *20 Years of Gardening for Birds, Bees and other Wildlife*

By Celia Baldwin

In 2003, Santa Fe Master Gardeners Joy Mandelbaum, Donna Neusch and Zella Cox wrote a grant in support of a collaboration with the Randall Davey Audubon Center (RDAC) that would emphasize the location's connection between native plants and wildlife with demonstration gardens. At the time, the area under consideration needed just about everything: hardscaping, erosion control, irrigation, landscape design and wildlife-friendly plantings. Twenty years and thousands of volunteer hours later, their vision of gardening for wildlife greets visitors from all over the world.

"I can't say enough about the significant impact the Master Gardeners have had at the center," says RDAC Manager Carl Beal, who has led the center since 2009. Current Project Leader Colleen Madrid is now expanding on this foundation with an emphasis on teaching gardening that supports the interdependence between New Mexico's native plants and wildlife.



The SFEMG Native Pollinator Garden at the Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary
Photo courtesy Colleen Madrid

Asked to reflect on her nearly two decades leading the Master Gardeners at Audubon, Joy Mandelbaum stressed that she found the educational opportunities rewarding. "It was great being able to make learning sessions out of RDAC events, such as fruit tree grafting with Gordon Tooley, native bee identification with a New Mexico State University graduate student, butterfly



**SAVE THESE DATES!
Ask a Master Gardener**

Master gardeners will be in the Botanical Garden on the following dates to answer your gardening questions and discuss good gardening practices:

- **Tuesday, July 4 (Independence Day)**
- **Thursday, August 3 (National Watermelon Day)**
- **Monday, September 4 (Labor Day)**

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Our Mission

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.
sfemg.org

SFEMG is one of more than a dozen county-based master gardener programs run under the auspices of New Mexico State University’s College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences.
aces.nmsu.edu

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identification and having a Master Gardener table at the Audubon-sponsored Great Backyard Bird Count." She is especially proud of these major projects at the site: reclaiming a hillside that had been clear-cut for fire prevention, restoring terrace rock walls, planting native shrubs and a new pollinator garden, creating Santa Fe's first bee house and establishing a wildflower garden alongside the administrative building. "Joy was the driving force behind the success and beauty of the gardens," recounts Beal. "She would often appear in the evenings and weekends to make tweaks to the irrigation or pop in a new plant."

Amateur birder Chris Durlak joined the effort in 2011, thinking "What could be better than gardening near the birds?" A former school social worker, she was soon leading Master Gardeners in Audubon Day Camps. "The children amazed us with their curiosity, diligence and spirit." A young boy who carried a notebook full of bird sketches announced, "I'm going to be an ornithologist!"

Susie Sonflieth became Co-Lead in 2012. She described how fruit trees and some berry-bearing natives could be a magnet for wildlife, presenting both a blessing and a challenge. "Currants and fruit trees are like a neon sign for bears. Even a mountain lion came in one time and killed a deer." Mandelbaum, too, recalled the constant wildlife interactions: "Always the deer, always birds – including the wild turkeys that descended the hillside in the winter to feast at the bird feeders and trample the gardens!"

By 2015, Sonflieth and Mandelbaum initiated a demonstration pollinator garden, which won third place in the International Master Gardener Search for Excellence category of Demonstration Garden in 2017. "The Boy Scouts from Santa Fe High created the walkway. We had an agricultural

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Marta Gyeviki, Susie Sonflieth and Joy Mandelbaum at the 2017 International Master Gardener conference in Portland, Oregon | Photo courtesy Ron Mandelbaum

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club at the high school. Kids started seedlings for us; they put them out in early May. It snowed and they died!" Sonflieth reflected, "You have to be philosophical to be a gardener. Everything changes."

Marta Gyeviki started leading in 2016. At the time there was no drip irrigation in the pollinator garden. She spent two summers hand watering it a couple of times a week from the acequia and often spotted wildlife while watering in the early morning.

Mandelbaum retired as project leader in 2020. Wildlife biologist Colleen Madrid thought project leadership at RDAC offered a great fit. She is deeply grateful for the years of hard work that have created the gardens. "Joy and her team did a wonderful job. My intent going forward is to focus on creating more habitat and forage for wildlife." Seeding for a native prairie began in 2022 and additional native plants continue to be added.

"Going forward I would love to blend Audubon and SFEMG priorities to ensure we can continue this wonderful partnership of projects and education for the next 20 years," states RDAC's Beal.

When asked why SFEMG interns should consider volunteering at Audubon, Madrid is forward-looking. "The gardens at Audubon have a bigger purpose beyond growing something pleasing. They are a lesson on how to sustain plants and animals that have been dependent on each other for their shared well-being for millenia. Our job is to teach people that they can do it too, one Master Gardener at a time and one visitor at a time."

Tucson-based plein air painter Greg Wallace captures the beauty of the Harvey H. Cornell Sr. Memorial Rose Garden on the morning of June 21, the summer solstice. It was the first time he and fellow Tucson painter Denyse Fenelon, president of the Sonoran Plein Air Painters, had visited the site.

The garden is a joint project involving the SFEMG, the Santa Fe Rose Society and the city of Santa Fe.

Photo courtesy Kathy Haq





A Message from SFEMG Board President Anne Rivas

As I write this I have COVID-19. My husband and I were so careful during the pandemic that we managed to avoid it, but the minute we let down our guard, bam! He got sick and after four days of caring for him (thinking it was the flu), I came down with it. I spent the first three days in bed. My gardening consisted of reading parts of "New Mexico Gardener's Guide" by Judith Phillips. I love that she gives elevations and heat zones as well as growing zones and where the plants originated.

The rains this spring have allowed me to leave the gardens alone and it's true that native plants really do thrive on neglect. The penstemons and pussytoes are blooming, and the Agastache and sages are coming up. Unfortunately, so are sprouts of Russian Sage, which I have battled for the past few years. I love the bloom color and if it would mind its manners and stay put, I wouldn't mind having it as part of the 20 percent in the equation of 80 percent native plants and 2 percent Old World plants. In the spring I start digging up the sprouts as soon as I start watering. The Russian Sage (*Salvia yangii*, previously known as *Perovskia atriplicifolia*) is going to have to be moved from the small front garden to an area where it can spread to its heart's content. Today, day five with COVID-19 and day two of taking Paxlovid I'm finally hauling the hoses out.

I worried about the native plant habitat kits from the Xerces Society that I put in last fall but have seen more plants coming back up in the last two weeks. Phillips says that Giant Four O'clock (*Mirabilis multiflora* var. *glandulosa*) takes longer to come up after a cold wet winter, and it I thought mine were dead until I saw them peeking over the pine needle mulch a week ago. Last fall I put the plants from the Xerces Society in different areas of my property, watered according to directions and hoped for the best. The ground freezes here in winter so I didn't water as much as was recommended for warmer areas around town. I also didn't put up cages to protect them from deer and rabbits, but in general, three out of four plants of each species have survived. I look forward to seeing them spread in the next couple of years and begin to re-seed themselves. It feels good to be in the garden again.





Rocky Mountain Maple (*Acer glabrum*)

By Celia Baldwin

Rocky Mountain Maple is a native deciduous shrub or tree found in the mountains of western North America, ranging northward to southeastern Alaska and as far south as northern California; east to British Columbia, Alberta, Idaho and Montana; and south to Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico. Present between 5,000 and 12,000 feet, it can be found along canyons, dry ridges and stream banks at low to middle elevations and moist sites in montane regions. Long-lived and shade tolerant, it grows happily as an understory tree or as a multi-stemmed shrub in Ponderosa Pine forests.

It is interesting to note that *Acer* is a very large genus of about 150 species worldwide. Though most are temperate, several species extend into subtropical and tropical regions in parts of the Americas and Asia. *Acer* is at its most diverse in east Asia, with over 100 species native to the region. About a dozen *Acer* are native to North America, with *glabrum* exhibiting the northernmost range.

Rocky Mountain Maple is also sometimes referred to as Rock Maple, New Mexico Maple, Greene's Maple, Torrey Maple and Douglas Maple. The last three names reference botanists Edward Greene, John Torrey and David Douglas, each of whom independently documented the species in the wild during their expeditions in the 19th century. *Glabrum* is Latin for "hairless," referring to the smooth leaves and stems. This deciduous tree can be multi-stemmed and reach from 10-30 feet in height with a 10-15 foot spread at maturity. With small fragrant yellow-green inflorescences appearing in early spring on reddish petioles, growth is accompanied by the



Courtesy Sally and Andy Wasowski,
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

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emergence of shiny green leaves that eventually turn yellow to orange-red in fall. Reddish samaras persist through the winter. The reddish-brown tree bark is smooth while young, eventually becoming rougher as the plant matures.

Although all our native maples are popular ornamental plants, Rocky Mountain Maple is far more common as an understory plant in the West than its more majestic cousin, Big Leaf Maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), which is also more drought tolerant but less suited to smaller settings. Rocky Mountain Maple is a good choice for low-maintenance landscaping, as it is moderately fast growing and long-lived, and tolerant of a variety of soils provided drainage is good and regular watering can occur. Moderately xeric once established and well-mulched, it can be grown to provide a privacy screen or as a specimen plant along pathways where its fetching features can be seen up close. This tree is also a great choice for watershed protection and erosion control on larger properties, but it should not be planted where it is exposed to strong winds or intense sun.

As a native tree, Rocky Mountain Maple is an important plant for pollinators and wildlife. According to wildlife ecologist Douglas Tallamy, the *Acer* genus as a whole supports 285 species of butterflies! Consultation with Xerces confirmed that *Acer glabrum* serves as a larval host to dozens of species of lepidoptera in the West. Rocky Mountain Maple is an important species for foraging animals large and small. Browsed in summer, it provides winter forage for deer, elk, moose and bighorn sheep. The seeds are an important food source for small mammals, for grouse as well as smaller birds, notably grosbeaks.

Landscape use: Suitable as a native specimen planting (substitute for Japanese Maple), for screening in low-maintenance landscapes with moderate irrigation and for erosion control on banks in higher elevations

Propagation and care: Pollinated by wind and insects, seed propagation is difficult due to low germination rates. Rocky Mountain Maple requires minimal care once plants have been properly trained and pruned. Remove unwanted low branches while the tree is small. Occasional removal of sprouts growing from the base of the tree may be required. Recommend pruning in late summer due to sap runs in late winter and early spring. Supplemental irrigation and mulch to conserve moisture is advised in home landscape plantings, particularly in the first few years.

Plant type: broadleaf deciduous small tree or shrub

Bloom time: branched clusters ¼ inch wide greenish-yellow April to June; fruiting one-seed samaras in August to October, ¾-1 inch paired forking reddish-brown

Size: 10-30 feet in height, 10-15 feet spread

Sun: sun to part shade, most successful in moist areas with part sun

Soil and habitat: Moist soils along canyons and mountain slopes in coniferous forests. In the home landscape, prefers well drained soils and shelter from strong winds.

Water: medium once established

USDA zones: 5-10

Elevation: 5,000-12,000 feet

References:

"Field Guide to Trees: Western Edition," National Audubon Society

Love, Stephen. "[Rocky Mountain Maple in the Landscape](#)," Native Plants for the Intermountain West. University of Idaho.

Backyard Bugs



LEFT: Larvae feeding on cottonwood leaves in the Leonora Curtin Wetland Preserve. The larvae are not particularly susceptible to predation; the small white spots are scent glands that emit a pungent odor when the animal is disturbed.

BELOW: Pupae hanging like bats from a twig. Adults will emerge 5 to 10 days after pupation.

Photos courtesy Sylvan Kaufman



Cottonwood Leaf Beetle

Chrysomela scripta (family Chrysomelidae: leaf beetles)

By Pam Wolfe

The cottonwood leaf beetle, the most common of its genus, ranges from Canada to Mexico. The larvae skeletonize the leaves of willow (*Salix*) and poplar (*Populus*), leaving the midrib and veins. Adult beetles consume entire leaves. [Yellow or red eggs](#) are oval and can be found in clusters of 25 or more on the underside of leaves. Depending on climate there may be up to 5 broods per year; the animal overwinters in the [adult stage](#) under bark or in leaf litter.

[Featured Creatures](#), published by the University of Florida, describes both cultural and biological control of the cottonwood leaf beetle.



Let's Grow is a **free public education series** for home gardeners and the garden-curious who want to learn about soil, compost, native plants, creating habitat for pollinators and more! Mark your calendars! No registration required.

JULY

9 a.m.-Noon Saturday, July 8 | How to Remove (deadhead) Spent Rose Blooms Properly

Harvey H. Cornell Sr. Memorial Rose Garden Park, 1315 Galisteo Parkway

Proper deadheading stimulates new growth and offers the opportunity to shape the bush.

Instruction from 9-9:30 a.m., hands-on pruning from 9:30 a.m.-noon.

Bring hand-held pruners, gloves, drinking water and a light container for cut rose canes.

Wear long-sleeved clothing. Hats and sunscreen recommended.

1-2:30 p.m. Saturday, July 29 | A Plethora of Plants for Plentiful Pollinators

Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary classroom, 1800 Upper Canyon Road

Join Kaitlin Haase, Southwest Pollinator Conservation Specialist with the Xerces Society, for a presentation on planting for pollinators in Santa Fe. Kaitlin will discuss which native plants support New Mexico's diverse pollinator species and how to promote a year-round pollinator-friendly landscape. With a focus on drought-tolerant, resilient plants that provide blooms from early spring to late fall, this presentation will review the numerous plants that are essential to supporting native wild bees, butterflies and other pollinators. Following the presentation, the group will walk through the Audubon gardens to observe plant and pollinator interactions.

AUGUST

5:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, August 1 | Planting Your Fall Vegetable Garden

Santa Fe Public Library Southside Branch, 6599 Jaguar Drive

Yes! August is the month to plant a Santa Fe vegetable garden. Join Jannine Cabossel, "The Tomato Lady," to learn how to plant a successful fall garden. Offered in conjunction with the Santa Fe Public Library.

9-11 a.m. Saturday, August 12 | Landscape Design Basics: Revitalizing a Flower Bed

Garden at El Zaguán, 545 Canyon Road

Learn to create site-appropriate, sustainable and stunning gardens using a historic property as an example. Discover how style, water access, soil, microclimates, color, structure and seasonality shape plant options and placement, and how climate change and biodiversity are inspiring innovative designs and gardening.

6-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, August 22 | Creating a More Resilient Santa Fe Through Seed Saving

Santa Fe Public Library Southside Branch, 6599 Jaguar Drive

Santa Fe Seed Stewards Diane Pratt and Susie Sonflieth will take participants on a journey of why seed saving is so important today. Basic seed-saving methods will be covered along with good techniques for harvesting and storing your seeds. Offered in conjunction with the Santa Fe Public Library.

SEPTEMBER

1-3 p.m. Saturday, September 30 | Save Seeds & Contribute to the Resiliency of Santa Fe Gardens

Under the Exhibit Hall portal, Santa Fe County Cooperative Extension Campus, 3229 Rodeo Road

Learn the basics of harvesting, processing and storing a variety of seeds, and experience hands-on demonstrations with materials covering basic seed-saving methods for vegetables, herbs and flowers.

Presented by Santa Fe Seed Stewards and Master Gardeners Diane Pratt and Susie Sonflieth.

Calendar

Please read the fine print!

- Master Gardeners must complete 10 hours of continuing education (CE) by Nov. 30 and are encouraged to record CE credit hours in [Track It Forward](#) as soon as possible after completing the activity.
- If there is a dollar sign, there is a fee.
- **Many of these courses require pre-registration.**
- The acronym "phc" means Master Gardeners can earn 1 credit hour of continuing education for each hour attended.
- If there are other opportunities, suggestions, or questions please send them to Stephanie Deutsch: deutsch.stephanie@gmail.com

8:30-10:30 a.m. Friday, July 14

["How to Create a Pollinator Garden"](#)

Santa Fe Botanical Garden Director of Horticulture Linda Churchill
Garden Conversations at Weldon's Museum Hill Café / \$ / 2 CE

9 a.m.–noon Saturday, July 15

["Regenerative Water Strategies"](#)

Santa Fe Community College / \$ / 3 CE

6:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 18

[Santa Fe Cactus and Succulent Club Monthly Meeting](#)

Free and open to the public / 1 CE

3-4 p.m. Wednesday, July 19

[Soils Topics](#)

NMSU Ready, Set, GROW! webinar series / 1 CE

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Friday, July 21

["Bumble Bees of New Mexico"](#) with Kaitlin Haas of the Xerces Society

Santa Fe Botanical Garden / \$ / 1 CE

Friday-Saturday, July 21-22

["Seed the Future: Grow Something Good"](#)

Seed Savers Exchange Virtual Conference / \$ / 0.5 CE phc

4:30-5:30 p.m. Thursday, July 27

["Moth Ecology and Conservation"](#)

New York Botanical Garden Continuing Education / \$ / 1 CE

"Let plants choose their destinies."

– Author and naturalist Nancy Lawson, founder of The Humane Gardener

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. The articles were published in 2023 unless otherwise indicated. **Note that some of these sources may have paywalls.**

[“Embracing the “no mow” movement”](#) by Emeritus Master Gardener Laurie McGrath, shared with permission of *HOME/Santa Fe New Mexican* (June 8)

[“Federal agencies scrap aerial pesticide spray”](#) by Scott Wyland, *Santa Fe New Mexican* (June 30)

[“The miller moth is hard to love, but it deserves our respect”](#) by Samuel Shaw, *High Country News* (June 27)

[“What are edimentals and why should you be planting them at home?”](#) by Harry Holding, *House & Garden* (June 27)

[“9 Black Flowers That Will Add Drama to Your Garden”](#) by Ann Hinga Klein, *MarthaStewart.com* (June 26)

[“Insecticides from above? Not in the Rio Chama watershed”](#) *Santa Fe New Mexican* editorial (June 26)

[“Critics fear USDA’s planned insecticide spray will kill bees, butterflies”](#) by Scott Wyland, *Santa Fe New Mexican* (June 24)

[“Let weeds and climbers grow to help wildlife beat heat, says top gardener,”](#) by Helena Horton, *The Guardian* (June 23)

[“To Deadhead or Not to Deadhead, That Is the Question”](#) by Joy Yagid, *Gardenista* (June 22)

[“Why You Should Always Clean Garden Containers Before Potting New Plants”](#) by Lauren David, *Southern Living* (June 22)

[“Expert Gardener Debunks Bizarre New Gardening Trend: ‘It’s almost certainly not effective in any material way.’”](#) by Frankie Kavakich, *The Cool Down* (June 22)

[“Should you deadhead lavender? Expert tips on getting more flowers by removing old blooms”](#) by Drew Swainston, *Homes & Gardens* (June 20)

[“Completing Genome of Rusty Patched Bumble Bee May Offer New Approach to Saving Endangered Bee”](#) by Kim Kaplan, USDA Agricultural Research Service bulletin (June 20)

[“Fungus farming ants work hard to maintain healthy gardens”](#) by Eric Ralls, *Earth.com* (June 19)

[“‘Bee-ing’ a part of the pollinator conservation movement”](#) by R. Scott Gerdes, The University of New Mexico press release (June 12)

[“NSMU Extension specialist hones expertise in helping pecans prosper”](#) by Tiffany Acosta, NMSU press release (June 9)

[“NMSU Extension’s AgXplorer program teaches value of agriculture”](#) by Tiffany Acosta, NMSU press release (June 8)

The Garden Journal Radio Show



Every Saturday
10 to 10:30 a.m. on KSFR 101.1 FM

July 1: Slow Food Santa Fe Outloud Edition

Slow Food Santa Fe's Lissa Johnson and Nina Rosenberg talk with three women farmers who compare experiences farming in northern New Mexico: Mary Dixon of Green Tractor Farm, Jennifer Fresquez of Monte Vista Organic Farm and Annie Krahl of Annie's Herb Farm.

July 8: SFEMG Edition

Host Alexa Bradford talks with Steve Cary, "The Butterfly Guy." Steve has authored two books on New Mexico butterflies and his [New Mexico Butterflies blog](#) on the Pajarito Environmental Education Center website is regularly updated.

July 15: Food, Farms and Friends: Black Health New Mexico Edition

Join host Sunshine Muse and producer Carrie Core for the Black Health New Mexico Edition, featuring discussions on food, diet, traditions, culture and equity through the lens of the Black experience. This new "Garden Journal" edition is a conversational plate of intentional food for thought. You may never look at history, the present, or the food you eat the same.

July 22: The Santa Fe County Cooperative Extension Office Edition

Extension Office Director Tom Dominguez, Host Alexa Bradford and Family and Consumer Science Agent Michelle Stizza talk about upcoming events and new initiatives. See more at: <https://santafeextension.nmsu.edu/index.html>

July 29: Home Grown New Mexico Edition

Host Alexa Bradford talks with Jannine Cabossel, "The Tomato Lady," about vegetable gardening in August in Santa Fe County. See more at [Giant Veggie Gardener](#).

You can find past episodes of The Garden Journal here at sfemg.org.



We are here to help!

If you have gardening questions,
Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners
are available to help.

You can pose your questions online [here](#).

We'll do some research and get back to you.