



The acequia restored
Photo by Ruthbeth Finerman

El Zaguán Restores Historic Garden Acequia

**By Marissa Bingham and
Ruthbeth Finerman**

Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners are celebrating 10 years of work in the garden at El Zaguán, headquarters of the Historic Santa Fe Foundation on Canyon Road. The property dates to the early 1800s and is a vivid representation of local history, architecture and ornamental gardens. The site challenges us to respect the property's heritage while also putting into practice organic, sustainable gardening methods. For example, many plantings comprised colonial Spanish imports from Europe, and later homesteaders from the eastern United States introduced prestige specimens from across the nation and around the globe. SFEMG project leaders plan to integrate a wider selection of native and low-water plants with the garden's historic exotics.

A distinguishing feature of El Zaguán's grounds is its acequia. The stone-lined irrigation ditch was built by Maria Jesusita Johnson after the family purchased the property in 1854. Johnson used the water channel, fed by the Acequia Madre, to irrigate her famed flower garden.

Acequias evolved in areas ranging from the Middle East to Spain to the U.S. Southwest to deliver water for flood irrigation. In New Mexico they date to ancestral Puebloan societies but proliferated during colonization in the 17th and 18th centuries and continue to irrigate agricultural fields today. While some might claim that acequias are "inefficient," studies suggest that they provide an effective strategy to deliver water in the face of climate change and offer environmental advantages by supporting plant biodiversity and wildlife (Medrano, 2021). The term "acequia" refers to both the physical structure and the communal association of members who govern acequia maintenance and management in addition to sharing rights to water accessed through the channeled system (Crawford, 1988).

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International Master
Gardener Conference



June 18 – 22, 2023
Overland Park, Kansas

Save the Date!

Join the Johnson County Master Gardener Program and Kansas State University Research & Extension for the [2023 International Master Gardener Conference](#). [Click here](#) to check out concurrent sessions.

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We'd like to hear from you!
Responses requested by Friday, March 31

We're getting ready to update our website and would like very much to hear from you. Please read Anne's column on page 4 for more details.

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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Many acequias suffered lack of maintenance during WWII due to the shrunken labor pool. A number of the irrigation ditches, including El Zaguán's, were permanently shut after the McClure Reservoir opened in the late 1940s. The Foundation preserved remnants of its water channel, and tours of the property recounted the rich history of acequias. While under threat, about 700 of these conduits are still active in smaller farming communities across northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Local author Stanley Crawford, himself a garlic farmer in Dixon, wrote *Mayordomo*, a cherished chronicle that illuminates acequias as a living tradition.

The Historic Santa Fe Foundation contracted to rebuild its acequia in spring and summer 2022. The project was historically informed but proved disruptive to the garden. During renovations workers installed a well-water fed tank in a lower yard and a circulating pump by a manually operated flume gate near the building's portal and flower garden entrance. More crucially for the master gardeners and interns, builders closed off the garden's entry steps and trenched through flower beds where the acequia channel ran, pulling out the existing irrigation system. Project leaders were forced to hand water the entire garden twice each week from May through mid-August, when most of the irrigation system was finally restored. Irrigation lines for flower beds flanking the acequia remain out of order but should be repaired this year.

Sadly, many plantings near the trenched out acequia were also torn up or buried under massive stones dug out of the old acequia. Worse still, the roots of two historic trees were severed, threatening their long-term survival. SFEMG volunteers labored to preserve as many beautiful and historic plants as possible, and the Foundation will support project leader plans to redesign and replant the beds. The lush grounds will thrive once more as we replace damaged trees, shrubs and perennials. The silver lining will be new public education workshops on landscape design, soil building and planting skills, and more learning experiences and instructional opportunities for volunteer interns and master gardeners. Project leaders also hope to expand the variety of native plants, and to teach the public their value for reducing water use and supporting native bees and other beneficial insects. Despite some growing pains, the restored acequia will enhance the historic mission of El Zaguán, strengthen public education, and engage SFEMG in planning for a sustainable future for this and other gardens in our region.

References:

Crawford, Stanley. *Mayordomo*. New York: Anchor Books, 1988.

Medrano, Lourdes. *Climate Changes Puts New Mexico's Ancient Acequias to the Test: Communal irrigation systems that have sustained communities, culture, and birdlife for centuries are running dry in a drought-racked Southwest*. Audubon Magazine, October 12, 2021.



“The most noteworthy thing about gardeners is that they are always optimistic, always enterprising, and never satisfied. They always look forward to doing something better than they have ever done before.”

– English author and garden designer Vita Sackville-West



A Message from SFEMG Board President Anne Rivas

Our current website – sfemg.org – is in dire straits. We will have a new communications coordinator in April, and in the interim, we have a new volunteer trying to keep up with updates and requests. Please be patient. We will keep the current website up until the new one is ready to go.

The re-design of our website is the most important and public-facing project we are undertaking this year. The webmaster we have hired to do this advocates a data-driven approach. We need your feedback.

Our goals are to:

- Make it easy for you to find us,
- Improve our online presence,
- Make it easy for Extension Master Gardeners to find information and forms we need to conduct our projects,
- Provide online information to the community in research-based, locally sustainable gardening practices,
- Cultivate relationships that serve the Santa Fe County gardening community, and
- Interest more people in becoming master gardeners.

We want to hear from you. What has been your experience with our current website? Is our website easy to find? Have you been able to find what you were looking for?

We have had a difficult time keeping our information current the past couple of years, and you may have given up using the website as a result. Please let us know if this is the case. What would you like to see in our new website? Please tell us what would help you connect with us and with each other, with our projects and with your home gardens.

We are considering a news feed containing recent articles and new research as well as a FAQ page with answers to the 10 most-asked questions from the Ask A Master Gardener Project. Would you like an easier way to connect with the Ask A Master Gardener Hotline?

What information would you like to have about each project? If you are a project leader, what information do you want to share? Our current website has served us for several years. The format and some of the information are out of date. What kind of format would you like to see? Our current website has two major sections: a section for the public and a section for master gardeners and interns. We would like feedback from all of you describing what you would like to see and how you would like the website to function.

Please send responses to sfemg1@gmail.com no later than Friday, March 31, and put Website Feedback in the subject line.

Thank you!



Santa Fe Seed Library to Re-open This Month

By Susie Sonflieth



March 25 marks the re-opening of the Santa Fe Seed Library at the Santa Fe Public Library's Southside Branch located at 6599 Jaguar Drive. The Seed Library, operated by the Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners' Seed Steward project, houses thousands of open-pollinated vegetable, herb and flower seeds. The seeds are donated by local growers and commercial seed companies. Patrons may "check out" up to five packets at no cost. A library card is not required to use the Seed Library.

The Seed Library will be open during the library's regular open hours: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

To help patrons make selections and learn about seed-saving practices, the Seed Stewards along with other Extension Master Gardeners will staff an information table at the Seed Library from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturdays through the spring. Patrons will be offered resources on how to harvest seeds and learn how saving those seeds for planting the following years will result in locally adapted, climate-change-resilient varieties of their very own. Patrons are encouraged but not required to return part of their seed harvest to help increase the Seed Library's locally grown offerings.

The SFEMG Seed Stewards will offer classes on seed planting, harvesting and saving during the season. "Successful Seed Planting" with Jannine Cabossel, Santa Fe's own Tomato Lady, will be our first class of the year. This class is free to the public and will be held from 5:30-7 p.m. Tuesday, March 7, in the Community Room at the Southside Library.

Two seed-packing sessions are scheduled this month at the Southside Library café to help stock the Seed Library. These sessions will be 12:30-2:30 p.m. Saturday, March 4, and 5:30-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 8. The public is welcome to come help at these sessions.

Since its launch in 2019, the Santa Fe Seed Library has distributed nearly 18,500 free seed packets to the community. In January 2020 the *Santa Fe Reporter* named the Seed Library one of its "25 Things We Love about Santa Fe," and this January it was mentioned as one of the reasons the Southside Library made the list in 2023.

The Santa Fe Seed Library is grateful for the continuing support and partnership with the Santa Fe Public Library.

For more information, contact Susie Sonflieth at (505) 310-0529 or via email at sasonflieth@yahoo.com

Monday-Thursday, March 27-30

Native Seed Network's

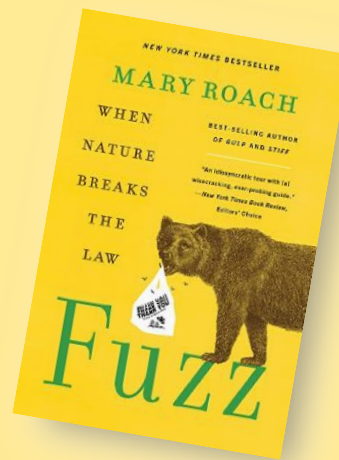
2023 National Native Seed Conference

Cultivating the Restoration Supply Chain

The Westin Alexandria Old Town, Alexandria, VA

A Book Review

By Eugenia Parry



Why can't we all get along?

Nature doesn't break the law. Nature does what it does. We humans get in the way. Mary Roach, heralded by enthusiasts as "the best popular science writer alive," loves making fun of stupidity. "We've behaved like an exclusive club that the animal kingdom can't wait to join," she says. This compelling book details that conflict.

It reports her two-year quest visiting and working with specialists world-wide who mine statistical data to explain increasing cases of animal aggression. These fuzz, "maul cops," as she calls them, analyze "wounds" on mannequins to study exactly how "man-eaters" kill. The experiments ponder the feckless coexistence of people with Canadian grizzlies, Indian elephants and leopards, California cougars, rapacious gulls at the Vatican, and even "dangerous" trees, all with shrinking geographies that have everyone so worried.

The subject of this book, a variant of climate change, clarifies another crisis of awareness. The story is sickening. Human beings are battling with animals to survive in the same spaces, and both sides are losing ground. Roach's passion is real, her message bold, and her science solid. She has spent time with dedicated informants and learned from them. She offers readers the lived realities that often conflict with meticulously gathered statistics.

Asian elephants, wandering into villages, kill some 500 people a year by anchoring their victims and tearing them apart. Horrifying. What to do? Obvious solutions become impossible. Kill the beasts? The villagers' response, thinking of Ganesh: "Why would you kill a god?" Or – "Kill them all! – Don't harm a single one!"

This book's sketch of the problem plunges us into the near-maddening intricacies of one of the most important relationships in the world. With less and less room for co-existence, which side has to give? The question seems absurd. The answer equally so. Roach's comedic takes on what the experts reveal exposes humans as selfish, wrong-headed stewards of the magnificent creatures on our planet.

We laugh with her because it feels better than crying. When Roach calls mere garbage left on a porch "the real killer," she's jabbing at our thoughtlessness and guilt.

She knows the issues: "It's hard to be tolerant when there's a bear in your kitchen." Yet she can't help but appreciate the marauder's connoisseurship as it deftly selects from the shelves of a fridge, not what it needs, but what it fancies. And so?

Fuzz is devilishly entertaining. Roach is praised as "your favorite party friend ... jaunty, snarky." Her digressions may not suit everyone's preconceptions about how to contemplate serious global matters; she's no Carl Sagan or Barry Lopez. And do we really care what kind of red shoes Pope Benedict actually wore, compared to the other popes? Non sequiturs aside, behind her stand-up-comedy-for-science is a dead-serious and learned reformer. Despairing. Ever hopeful.



Wright's Buckwheat (*Eriogonum wrightii*) Narrative and photo by Terri Smith

Eriogonum wrightii (pronounced er-ih-OG-uh-num RITE-ee-eye) is named after Charles Wright (1811-1885), a botanical specimen collector, land surveyor and educator. It is a member of the *Polygonaceae* (buckwheat) family. This woody shrub is found growing in southwestern canyons, washes and rocky slopes from California to Texas.

Wright's buckwheat has been used for food and medicine by the North American indigenous peoples. The seeds have been ground into meal and eaten by the Kawaiisu and used as an emetic by the Kayenta Navajo.

The narrow leaves of *Eriogonum wrightii* are whitish-gray and less than an inch long. The plant, overall, appears to be gray. The ¼-inch flowers are white, pink or rose, tubular and grow in clusters along the upper few inches of the stems. This growth pattern creates a lace-like impression of blossoms. Each flower has a reddish-pink stripe on the underside of the petal. The flowers will turn orange in cooler autumn temperatures.

Landscape use: Wright's buckwheat is good for erosion control on rocky hillsides or in rock gardens. The plant can be browsed by deer. In an ornamental setting, it is especially useful in bird, butterfly or bee gardens. It is a nectar source for butterflies. According to the [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#), *Eriogonum wrightii* is also known by ecologists for attracting native bees and other beneficial insects (predators and parasitoids).

Planting and care: Plant *Eriogonum wrightii* in well drained, dry, rocky soils. It is also suitable to plant in limestone-based sand or sandy loam soils. Spring and fall planting is acceptable. The growth rate is slow. The plant readily self-seeds and removal of unwanted seedlings is necessary. Cut back in the springtime.



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Propagation: propagate by seed with no special pretreatment

Bloom time: August to November

Size: 1.5-3 feet tall by about the same width

Sun: full sun to part shade

Soil: dry, rocky or sandy limestone soils with fast drainage are best

Water: low to extremely low water requirements once the plant is established

USDA zones: 6-9, grows well in extreme heat and cold hardy briefly to -10F

Elevation: 3,000-7,000 feet

References:

Phillips, Judith. *Growing the Southwest Garden*. Timber Press, 2015.
[Eriogonum wrightii](#), [Wright Buckwheat](#), Southwest Desert Flora (2016)



Courtesy Wynn Anderson, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Backyard Bugs

Leaf Beetle (*Calligrapha dislocata*) Narrative and photo by Pam Wolfe



This little beauty, measuring just 9mm long, was observed on *Sphaeralcea* sp in September 2022 at the edge of the Gila National Forest just outside Silver City, New Mexico

The family Chrysomelidae (leaf beetles) is a large and diverse family; some members are of economic importance, and some, due to specialization and a tendency to defoliate, have been recruited as biological control agents for such invasive species as tamarisk.

Larva and adults of *Calligrapha dislocata* are found on *Sphaeralcea* and other members of the Mallow family. [BugGuide](#) reports their range as California to Texas and into Mexico, but several observations have been posted to [iNaturalist Canada](#) from Kansas and Colorado as well.

Reference:

Arthur V. Evans. *Beetles of Western North America*. Princeton University Press, 2021.

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

Thursday, March 2

Ecologically-Sound Mosquito Management at Home
Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation / 1 CE

Friday, March 3

[2023 Annual Fruit Growers Workshop](#)

NMSU Rio Arriba County Cooperative Extension Service Office in Abiquiu / \$ / 1 phc

Tuesday, March 7

"Gardening Good Enough to Eat" with Bob Pennington
Santa Fe Community College / \$ / 2 CE

Tuesday, March 7 – Thursday, March 9

[Best Practices for Pollinators Summit 2023](#)

Pollinator Friendly Alliance, Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation / \$ / 1 phc

6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 8

"Soil Prep for Roses," Santa Fe County Extension Office
Santa Fe Rose Society / 1 CE

Wednesday, March 8

Beaver Reintroduction at Bandelier National Monument (in-person and livestreamed)
Pajarito Environmental Education Center / 1 CE

Saturday, March 11

["Backyard Composting" with Amanda Bramble](#)

Santa Fe Community College / \$ / 3 CE

10 a.m.-Noon Saturday, March 11

"Santa Fe Landscaping from the Ground Up" with Tracy Neal (session 1)
Santa Fe Botanical Garden / \$ / 2 CE

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Wednesday, March 15

["Seed Propagation, Transplanting, & Seed Storage" with Danise Coon,](#)

Senior Research Specialist, NMSU Chile Pepper Institute
NMSU Ready, Set, GROW! webinar series / 1 CE

10 a.m.-Noon Saturday, March 18

["Santa Fe Landscaping from the Ground Up" with Tracy Neal \(session 2\)](#)

Santa Fe Botanical Garden / \$ / 2 CE

1-3 p.m. Saturday, March 18

[Pruning Fruit Trees Lecture and Workshop](#)

Santa Fe Botanical Garden / \$ / 2 CE

Monday, March 20

[Pollinator Gardening & Conservation](#)

Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation / 1 CE

Thursday, March 30

["Respecting the Spirit of Place" with the Harris Bugg Studio](#)

New York Botanical Garden 23rd Annual Winter Lecture Series / \$ / 1 CE

6:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 5

"Bees in the Garden," Santa Fe County Extension Office
Santa Fe Rose Society / 1 CE

Tuesday, April 11

[Restoration of fire-adapted forests of the Southwest](#)

Santa Fe Chapter, New Mexico Native Plant Society / 1 CE



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!

Look for more Let's Grow sessions on our website (sfemg.org) and in future issues of the SFEMG Newsletter.

9 a.m.-noon Saturday, April 1

Clinic: How to Correctly Prune Roses

Harvey Cornell Rose Park, 1315 Galisteo Parkway

Bring hand-held pruners, gloves and drinking water. Wear long-sleeved clothing. Hats and sunscreen recommended. No registration required.

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.**

["Piñon pine"](#) by Emeritus Master Gardener Laurie McGrath, shared with permission of *HOME/Santa Fe New Mexican* (Feb. 1)

["Research reveals climate crisis is driving a rise in human-wildlife conflicts"](#) by Phoebe Weston, *The Guardian* (Feb. 27)

["9 Tips To Create an Authentic Backyard Japanese Garden"](#) by Chris Deziel, *Family Handyman* (Feb. 23)

["UNM researchers help create first Cannabis flower categorization system"](#) by Steve Carr, University of New Mexico press release (Feb. 22)

["Unraveling the myth of the green thumb"](#) by Catie Marron, *The Washington Post* (Feb. 22)

["NMSU Extension awarded funding for Northwest NM Agricultural Restoration Project"](#) by Tiffany Acosta, NMSU press release (Feb. 22)

["I'm a gardening expert and these are the three most poisonous houseplants for dogs"](#) by Veronica Lorraine, *The U.S. Sun* (Feb. 22)

["CSU's Prison Agriculture Lab researches the roots, impact of the prison agriculture industry"](#) by Stacy Nick, Colorado State University press release (Feb. 21)

["Surprising Benefits of Using Sheep as Lawn Mowers"](#) by Karen Nikos-Rose, University of California, Davis press release (Feb. 21)

["UNM Herbarium in Museum of Southwestern Biology hosts Plant Identification Night"](#) by Talullah Begaye, University of New Mexico press release (Feb. 20)

["DNA Research Finds Low Genetic Diversity Among U.S. Honey Bees"](#) by Autumn Canaday, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service press release (Feb. 15)

["10 Indoor and Outdoor Herb Garden Ideas That Guarantee Fresh Basil, Parsley, and More All Year Round"](#) by Madeline Buiano, *marthastewart.com* (Feb. 14)

["Getting to the nitty gritty of plants, roots and soils"](#) by Buck Hanson, *Santa Fe New Mexican* (Jan. 30)

["Understanding plants can boost wildland-fire modeling in uncertain future"](#) by Charles Poling, Los Alamos National Laboratory press release (Jan. 31)

["Garden trends in 2023: Xeriscaping, reusing and outdoor living"](#) by *Gardens Illustrated* team (Dec. 27, 2022)

["The Secret Life of Plant Killers"](#) by Sonya Bennett-Brandt, *WIRED* (Dec. 22, 2022)

The Garden Journal Radio Show



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

March 4: Slow Food Santa Fe Outloud Edition

Slow Food Santa Fe's Lissa Johnson and Nina Rosenberg will interview Jill Dixon, deputy director of The Food Depot, and Dwayne Trujillo, development officer with Kitchen Angels, two Santa Fe organizations concerned with making a difference in providing food to those in need.

March 11: SFEMG Edition

Hosts Christine Salem and Alexa Bradford sit down with Master Gardener Seed Stewards Marika Pineda, Susie Sonfleith and Donna Wynant for a program dedicated to seeds, seed saving and our own Santa Fe Seed Library.

March 18: Soil Stories Edition with Host Carrie Core

Join Carrie for an entertaining and thought-provoking "best of Soil Stories" episode, featuring favorites from previous Soil Stories programs.

March 25: Giant Veggie Gardener Edition with Jannine Cabossel, "The Tomato Lady"

Jannine shares tips and techniques for backyard vegetable gardening and a to-do list for April. 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.