



Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners Newsletter

November 2023 | Volume 13, No. 10

Santa Fe County Cooperative Extension Service Open House

SFEMG project leaders gave voice to the organization's demonstration gardens at the open house sponsored by New Mexico State University and the Santa Fe County Cooperative Extension Service Office on Oct. 14.

The event, held at the County Fairgrounds on Rodeo Road, was organized to give Santa Fe County residents a chance to learn more about the educational programming and other resources available through the Cooperative Extension Service. This will be an annual event going forward.

SFEMG volunteers were on hand to answer questions about the Santa Fe Native Plant Project gardens; the rose family, cactus, herb and vegetable gardens; the Santa Fe Seed Stewards, the Santa Fe Compost Action Team and Yard Habitat Certification Project.

Other Extension programs represented at the open house included 4-H & Youth Activities, the NMSU Tribal Cooperative Extension Service, the Santa Fe County Extension Homemakers, Family and Consumer Sciences, Ideas for Cooking and Nutrition, and Financial Health and Well-Being. For more information about these programs, see the [Santa Fe County Extension website](#).



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Happy
Holidays

Holiday Hiatus

This is the final issue of the SFEMG Newsletter for 2023. Enjoy the holidays and look for the next issue in February 2024.

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

NMSU is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer and educator.

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A Message from SFEMG Board President Anne Rivas

Hello gardeners! This is the last newsletter of the year and my last column until next year. It's time to finish up any garden chores while the weather is still decent. Rake in compost and soil conditioner if you haven't already done so. Our soil needs all the help it can get.

One of my favorite winter activities is graphing out and coloring in plans for next year's gardens. I'll have fun deciding which plants to move – either because they haven't done well where they are, or they've done too well and taken over. I mean you, Russian sage (*Salvia yangii*, formerly known as *Perovskia atriplicifolia*)! I intend to move those either to big pots or to an area where they can spread to their hearts' content. They're pretty plants, reliable bloomers and great for honeybees, but they were planted in a too-small area. I have added some earlier bloomers like penstemon (*Penstemon clutei* and *Penstemon strictus*), pussytoes (*Antennaria plantaginifolia*), Santa Fe phlox (*Phlox nana*) and winecups (*Callirhoe involucrata*). I plan to put in a shrubby cinquefoil (*Dasiphora fruticosa*), a fernbush (*Chamaebatiaria millefolium*) and a few pale evening primroses (*Oenothera pallida*).

I planned and planted a garden in back of my house last year. This year I had flowers, and I will save the seeds of some of them to plant in other areas. I'm also looking forward to seeing where the seeds I leave decide to plant themselves. That's one of the most fun parts of gardening, and I recommend that you save the seeds of your favorite plants as well.

If you choose to save seeds from your plants, consider sharing some with the Santa Fe Seed Library. The Santa Fe Seed Stewards Project is based at the Santa Fe Public Library's Southside Branch at 6599 Jaguar Drive. They will begin packing seeds during January for distribution starting in March. This is a SFEMG project, and the project leaders welcome anyone who wants to volunteer and learn the basics of seed saving and seed packaging.

This month is the beginning of the holiday season, and I hope all of you have a chance to relax with your beverage of choice, enjoy the fruits of your summer labors, and spend time with friends and family. Happy holidays, and happy garden planning to all!

SFEMG demonstration garden hosts bean experiment



SFEMG volunteers from the [vegetable demonstration garden](#) partnered with the Tucson-based [Native Seeds/SEARCH](#) nonprofit seed conservation organization this summer to grow two varieties of heirloom beans once used in the American Southwest. The trial focused on the beans' ability to grow and produce at Santa Fe's higher elevation (7,200 feet above sea level). When harvested, most of the seeds will be returned to Tucson with detailed growing reports and some donated to the Santa Fe Seed Library.

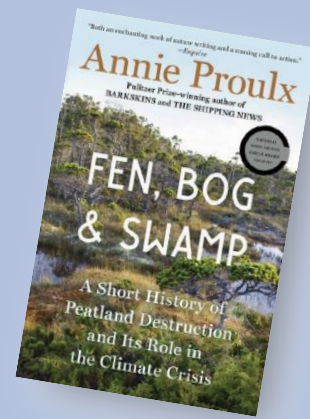
Taos red beans and bolita beans, two varieties of *Phaseolus vulgaris*, were tested in the vegetable demonstration garden this summer. Photos courtesy Delphine Douglass



David Salman courtesy SFBG | site of the planned tribute garden courtesy Kathy Haq

Santa Fe Botanical Garden plans David Salman Tribute Garden

When [horticultural pioneer David Salman](#) passed away in 2022, he left a legacy of sustainable gardening that inspired gardeners across Santa Fe and throughout the arid Southwest. His relationship with local master gardeners spanned more than two decades, and at the time of his death, he was working to augment the perennials collection at the Botanical Garden. Now the Botanical Garden, working with Ava Salman and Lauren Springer, an acclaimed garden designer and longtime friend of David's, is planning to develop a tribute garden in his honor. To learn more about the tribute garden and how you might support it, see: <https://santafebotanicalgarden.org/david-salman-tribute-garden/>



A Book Review

By Eugenia Parry

"It is possible to love a swamp."

The admired author of "Brokeback Mountain," "The Shipping News" and "Fine Just the Way It Is" turns her attention to threatened peat-producing wetlands. Why? Like some of her characters, they're dark, complex, ignored and repellent. Their value isn't as obvious today as it was to early British people who for thousands of years found a reliable food source in the starchy rhizomes of fen grasses and learned to harvest and burn wetland peat to keep warm.

Today these places have another role to play in returning balance to our disturbed planet. Joining the current "eco-grief" of our confusion, Proulx describes wetlands' superior fertility and their ability to capture and hold far more CO₂ than forests; the Amazon forest, for example, presently emits more CO₂ than it sequesters! She lists some of the "myriad species of stupefying variety" that survive or have surrendered to extinction in these fecund places. She laments the "global storm of greed" that "tears apart" bogs, fens and swamps to produce more lucrative corn rows, soybean fields, shrimp farms, hotels and parking lots. She warns against meddling with ancient forests and fens, which exposes humans to exposed viruses "better ignored."

"Drain the swamp!" – the current rallying cry against Washington D.C.'s political scene – deplors anything or anyone perceived as rotten. Proulx argues passionately for rot.

Taught to observe since childhood, she thrives on detail. Observant scientists support her task with 171 instructive "notes." She calls her book an essay. It's a primer that makes distinctions:

A fen is deep water fed by mineral soils from higher rivers and streams; it supports reeds and grasses. A bog's water source is rainfall. Shallower than a fen, it supports versatile sphagnum mosses that hold one-third of the earth's organic carbon. Trees and shrubs dominate swamps, shallower than fen or bog. All produce peat, "the color of chocolate pudding," compressed plant material that builds over centuries, holds CO₂ and preserves from decay anything submerged in it.

The phenomenon of bog bodies proves this. Intimacy with ancient wetlands in Northern Europe led to belief in their liminal power. They became human sacrificial sites to gods unknown. Hundreds of retrieved bodies, some in museums, reveal every walk of life and social class, allowing us to stare into the physiognomies of past millennia. Peat preserves skin, hair and clothing so perfectly that someone's high rank can be determined as much by manicured fingernails as by embroidered garments.

In clear, passionate language, Proulx presents a collection of detailed fragments, each with its own flavor. Her message: every swampland in the world is a threatened factory. From the Siberian Vasyugan Mire, largest wetland of the Northern Hemisphere, to South America's Pantanal (370 miles long), to Florida's Okefenokee, none are what they were. We need to reclaim their anatomies and restore how they breathe because their breath is ours.



Beargrass or Sacahuista (*Nolina microcarpa*)

(pronounced no-LEE-na my-kro-KAR-puh)

Narrative and photos by Stephanie Burns



A surprisingly versatile hardy native, Beargrass is an evergreen succulent you'd do well to consider including in your landscape. With its gracefully arching leaves and fountainlike form, beargrass could easily be mistaken for a middle-sized evergreen grass, but its ability to survive in poor soils, drought and temperature swings confirms that it's as tough as it is attractive.

Leaf margins are finely serrated and sharp, but curly fibrous threads at the end of each leaf tip give the plant some personality. Tall, plumelike spikes of tiny white flowers similar to *Yucca* or *Sotol* appear in early summer; these are favorite landing spots for hummingbirds and songbirds. Anchored by a deep-rooted stem called a caudex, *Nolina microcarpa* can regrow after its above-ground parts have been burned by fire.

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Like *Agave* spp. and *Yucca* spp., this member of the asparagus family (Asparagaceae) provided food, medicine, dyes, beverages and woven goods to many indigenous peoples of the Southwest. *Nolina* was named for its discoverer, the French arboriculturalist Abbé Pierre Charles Nolin. *Microcarpa* is horticultural Latin for “having small fruits or seed pods.” Sacahuista, the plant’s other common name, comes from two Aztec words meaning “thorn grass”: *zacatl* (grass) and *huitzli* (thorn).

Landscape use: In the wild, *Nolina microcarpa* is found on rocky slopes and hills, in piñon-juniper woodlands at elevations from 3,000-6,500 feet, and in dry plains and grasslands, so areas such as rock gardens and xeriscapes are ideal for these plants. They will thrive with very little maintenance, and even tolerate partial shade. Use as a single specimen, in small accent groupings or as a backdrop for more colorful flowering plants such as low-growing woody plants, cacti and other succulents, and drought-resistant perennials such as *Penstemon* spp., *Salvia* spp. and *Agastache* spp. Beargrass is deer resistant, but its flowers and seeds are poisonous to domestic sheep.

Planting and care: Deep rooted and very drought tolerant, some say beargrass thrives on benign neglect. Planting from seed is best done in warm spring soils, otherwise transplant 1- or 5-gallon potted specimens in spring or fall. Take care not to bury the crown and then mulch with gravel to keep it drier. Water seedlings and transplants sparingly so soil doesn’t dry out between waterings, but keep plants dry in winter to avoid root rot. Fertilizer is unnecessary. Leave seed heads till birds have harvested the seeds. Plants should remain pest-free unless stressed by overwatering.

Pollinators: Bees, wasps

Propagation: From seed or offshoots taken from mature plants

Plant type: Succulent

Bloom time: May to August

Size: 3-5 feet tall by 5-6 feet wide

Sun: Full sun

Soil: Rocky, sandy, loam, well-drained

Water: Very low

USDA Zones: 6a-10

References:

[Santa Fe Botanical Garden’s “Garden Explorer”](#)

[SEINet](#)

[Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#)



Phillips, Judith. “New Mexico Gardener’s Guide.” Cool Springs Press (2004).



**“Don’t think the garden loses its ecstasy in winter.
It’s quiet, but the roots are down there riotous.”**

– Rumi, the 13th-century poet, scholar, theologian and mystic



American bumble bee foraging in Rocky Mountain penstemon (*Penstemon strictus*)
Photo courtesy Kaitlin Hasse, Xerces Society's Southwest Pollinator Conservation Specialist

A special opportunity for current SFEMG members:

Santa Fe Native Plant Project (SNaPP) certification classes will be offered in 2024!

By Lesley Janis

If you are interested in learning more about how to successfully garden with native plants and want to help teach others about the importance of introducing more native plants into our local environment, please apply! The program is open to all current master gardeners.

The SNaPP certification curriculum provides a comprehensive overview of the ecology of the Santa Fe area and the native plants commonly seen here. Our emphasis is on using that knowledge to then educate local gardeners about the beauty and benefits of native plants and how to successfully introduce them to their own landscapes.

The certification program consists of approximately 18 hours of in-person lectures and field trips given by local experts covering core concepts that will enable each participant to effectively act as a resource to the public.

Topics include our local ecology and ecosystem services, water harvesting and management, native and drought-tolerant trees, woody plants, grasses, perennials, cacti and succulents, the very dry garden, pollinator gardens and basic principles of garden design.

Field trips to established gardens will be offered in the spring and summer to see examples of concepts introduced during the lectures.

Classes begin Jan. 27, 2024, at the Santa Fe County Cooperative Extension Office on Rodeo Road and meet for two to three hours beginning at 9 a.m. Saturday mornings for six to eight weeks. We will host an informational Zoom session in mid-November prior to opening registration on SignUpGenius in December. Watch your email inbox for the SUG announcement.

Enrollment is limited to 20. Attendance at all core classes is required. Registration cost is \$100.

If you have any questions or want more information, contact MasterGardeners@sfemg.org and put "SNaPP Query for Lesley Janis" in the subject line.

Backyard Bugs

Golden Paper Wasp (*Polistes aurifer*)

Narrative and photo by Kim Davis

Golden paper wasp, a member of the genus *Polistes*, is a cosmopolitan species found throughout the world. When people think of wasps, they probably picture *Polistes* species that make their distinctive paper nests under eaves and in doorways. The species pictured is *Polistes aurifer* [from the Latin](#) for 'gold-bearer' referring to the gold color scheme particularly noticeable on the abdomen. The species can have color variations depending on its geographic location. For example, northern specimens are mostly black, while southwestern specimens are predominantly gold with an almost completely [yellow metasoma](#) (all abdominal segments except the first, which is fused to the thorax).

Polistes aurifer can be found in sheltered locations in the garden, on building overhangs, or even on the trail! The species ranges in the west from southern Canada to northern Mexico to western Texas. It is a eusocial wasp meaning that its social hierarchies span multiple generations. *P. aurifer* is a parasitoid of soft-bodied insects such as caterpillars, which it takes back to its nest to feed to its larvae. However, the predator becomes the prey when certain braconid and other parasitoid wasps prey upon the species.

Polistes aurifer and other members of the genus are great for [integrated pest management](#) as well as pollination. They are not as protective of their nests as hornets and yellowjackets, so it is possible to co-exist with them even in high traffic areas. *Polistes* wasps help keep caterpillar populations and other soft bodied pests in check so that your plants do not get ravenously eaten. Though an oft-maligned insect, *Polistes* wasps are an important part of our backyard ecosystems so [invite them to stay!](#)



This handsome *Polistes aurifer* was found near the spring at Cerrillos Hills State Park.

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 MasterGardeners@sfemg.org and put "Calendar Question" or "Calendar Suggestion" in the subject line.

REGISTER NOW TO BE PART OF THE 2024 SFEMG INTERN CLASS!

1-3 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 4

["Shrub and Tree ID Walk"](#)

Pajarito Environmental Education Center / Free / 2 CE / Registration Required

4-5 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 9

["Seeds of Resilience: The Cultural Dimension of Plant Biodiversity"](#)

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

6:30-7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 14

["Forecasting Piñon Masting in New Mexico"](#) with Andrea Wion

Santa Fe Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico / Free / 1 CE

3-4 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 15

["Surface-water/Groundwater Interactions: Case Studies from the US Southwest"](#)

NMSU Ready, Set, GROW! Webinar Series / Free / 1 CE / Registration Required

11 a.m.-Noon, Thursday, Nov. 16

["In the Life of Western Monarchs: A Community Science Approach to Conservation"](#)

Xerces Society for Invertebrate Research / FREE / 1 CE / Registration Required

The event will be recorded and posted to the [Xerces Society's YouTube channel](#).

6:30-7 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 21

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

Free / 1 CE

3-4 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 13

["Ants"](#) with Dr. Joanie King, NMSU Extension Entomology Specialist

NMSU Ready, Set, GROW! Webinar Series / Free / 1 CE / Registration Required

Need additional CE credits? Check out these resources, available on demand:

NMSU Ready, Set, GROW! Webinar Series

To see previously-aired webinars from 2023, click [here](#).

Free / 1 CE / Registration Required

Watch ["Seed: The Untold Story"](#) / Free with ads on YouTube / 1.5 CE

[Smithsonian "Let's Talk Gardens" video library](#) / Free / 1 CE

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 or advertisements.**

["How to plant peony bulbs and why autumn is the best time to get planting"](#) by Ellis Cochran, *IdealHome* (Oct. 22)

["9 tree mistakes – and expert ways to avoid them"](#) by Ruth Hayes, *Homes&Gardens* (Oct. 22)

["4 unbelievable ways designers have created indoor gardens – they'll transform your unloved corners"](#) by Hebe Hatton, *Livingetc* (Oct. 22)

["7 simple ways to use eggshells in gardening for healthier plants – 'you'll never throw them away again'"](#) by Aditi Sharma Maheshwari, *Livingetc* (Oct. 21)

["Required Reading: Lindsey Taylor's 'Art in Flower'"](#) by Clare Coulson, *Gardenista* (Oct. 19)

["NMSU researchers share how to have successful jujube harvest for local growers,"](#) by Tatiana Favela, NMSU news release (Oct. 19)

["NMSU to lead project to reduce risks of common plant pathogen"](#) by Carlos Carillo López, NMSU news release (Oct. 11)

["Gardening 101: How to Propagate Your Annuals this Fall for Next Summer"](#) by Joy Yagid, *Gardenista* (Oct. 10)

["Freak of nature" tree is the find of a lifetime for forest explorer"](#) by Cathy Free, *The Washington Post* (Oct. 8)

["COVID-19 memorial garden dedicated at Cathedral"](#) by Carina Julig, *Santa Fe New Mexican* (Oct. 6)

["NMSU Board of Regents approves plan to upgrade AES research facilities statewide"](#) by Adriana M. Chávez, NSMU news release (Oct. 4)

["Teen arrested after felling of famous Sycamore Gap tree on Hadrian's Wall"](#) by Sammy Westfall, *The Washington Post* (Sept. 28)

The Garden Journal Radio Show



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

November 4: Slow Food Santa Fe Outloud Edition

Slow Food Santa Fe's Lissa Johnson and Nina Rosenberg interview Juliana and Tejinder Ciano, director of programming and executive director, respectively, of Reunity Resources farm here in Santa Fe.

November 11: SFEMG Edition

Host Alexa Bradford talks with Athena Beshur and Alex Schroeder, Master Gardener project leads for the Santa Fe Public Spaces Tree Inventory, conducted in partnership with the city of Santa Fe Municipal Tree Board.

November 18: Food, Farms and Friends Edition

Come join us at the table with Carrie Core and Kayleigh Warren for the Tewa Women United's edition of Food, Farms & Friends featuring discussions on food, diet, traditions, culture and equity through the lens of the Indigenous experience. This month Kayleigh is having a harvest season conversation with Pueblo chefs & Pueblo market farmers.

November 25: The Giant Veggie Gardener Edition

Host Alexa Bradford talks with Jannine Cabossel, "The Tomato Lady," about what to do in your vegetable garden in December. See Jannine's blog at [Giant Veggie Gardener](#).

Visit "[The Garden Journal](#)" page later this month to find programming details for December 2023 and January 2024.

You can find past episodes of "The Garden Journal" [here](#).



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.