



Photos courtesy Kathy Haq | see photo key on page 2

## SFEMG Yard Habitat Certification Project

By Catherine Wygant

After its initial year as a pilot program the newest SFEMG project went public this spring. Yard Habitat Certification is a free-of-charge community project providing in-person reviews of residential yards to educate, inspire and support local gardeners in increasing wildlife habitat and resources for declining pollinator populations.

The project was inspired by Doug Tallamy's book, "Nature's Best Hope," and his idea for creating what he calls "Homegrown National Parks." Tallamy is a professor of entomology and wildlife ecology as well as biology at the University of Delaware. In his words the idea is to have "diverse ecosystems that sustain as much wildlife as possible, including birds, bees, butterflies, moths and other pollinators in suburban and urban areas – not just in our National Parks."

The [Yard Habitat Certification](#) project is described on the SFEMG website and has a dedicated email address where gardeners can request an in-person evaluation: [yhc.sfemg@gmail.com](mailto:yhc.sfemg@gmail.com). Included on the project page are two lists. The first is a resource list outlining ways to increase a yard's ability to sustain wildlife. The second is a list of "keystone" native plants. The idea of identifying a "keystone plant" goes a step beyond emphasizing the importance of growing native plants. Keystone plants are specific native plants that provide the greatest wildlife benefits of shelter, nesting sites and food.

This year project volunteers reviewed over 20 yards and expect to continue accepting requests for reviews through Oct. 15. The project informally met with several homeowner associations this

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## Yard Habitat Photo Key

The photos (from left to right and top to bottom) are images from our yard except where noted. These are but a few of the animals that frequent our property and other nearby locations: western honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) on aromatic aster (*Aster oblongifolius* 'Raydon's Favorite'), western bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*) at the Santa Fe Botanical Garden, Sandia hairstreak (*Callophrys mcfarlandi*) on Apache plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*), Colorado soldier beetle (*Chauliognathus basalis*) on common sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), western tiger swallowtail (*Papilio rutulus*) on hummingbird mint (*Agastache* x 'Blue Boa'), long-legged fly (*Condylostylus* sp.) on black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta* 'Denver Daisy' #1), white-lined sphinx moth (*Hyles lineata*) on blue sage (*Salvia azurea* var. *grandiflora*), western honey bee approaching Rocky Mountain bee plant (*Cleome serrulata*), broad-tailed hummingbird (*Selasphorus platycercus*) nectaring on hummingbird mint (*Agastache* x 'Desert Sunrise'). – KH

## 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](http://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](http://aces.nmsu.edu)

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

NMSU Cooperative Extension Service  
Santa Fe County Extension Office  
3229 Rodeo Road  
Santa Fe, NM 87507  
505.471.4711  
[santafeextension.nmsu.edu](http://santafeextension.nmsu.edu)

## Tom Dominguez

Director  
Santa Fe County  
Cooperative Extension Service

## Anne Rivas

SFEMG President

## Kathy Haq

SFEMG Newsletter Editor  
[news.sfemg@gmail.com](mailto:news.sfemg@gmail.com)



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summer and will be rolling out a formal presentation for other interested HOAs in 2024. There's a brochure for the public with basic information about the project criteria and the project's contact information. The brochure is available at SFEMG "Ask A Master Gardener" tables at the Railyard, Del Sur, Reunity Resources and Eldorado farmers' markets.

The Yard Habitat Certification project provides specific information to participating gardeners. A YHC team review generally lasts about 90 minutes, during which SFEMG members request basic information and ask about changes already made and changes pending. A walk-through of the yard starts by noting how many and what kinds of plants are present and their arrangement. Additionally, the team looks for habitat provisions for birds and pollinators and information about how the yard is being maintained, especially during fall and spring cleanup. The criteria used by the team has been gleaned from numerous scientific sources and continues to evolve as teams talk and meet with more and more gardeners in their yards.

The response after many of these reviews are different versions of "I learned a lot" or "I will be thinking differently about what to plant" and "it was very helpful."

A YHC team will visit your yard upon request. Email [yhc.sfemg@gmail.com](mailto:yhc.sfemg@gmail.com) and include your street address to request a review that can help increase your ability to sustain wildlife including birds and bees, butterflies and moths and their caterpillars.

## The Santa Fe Gardening Experience

A big shout out to those of you who shared your thoughts about gardening in Santa Fe! Not surprisingly, more than one person had one word for the experience: challenging.

If you are one of those who weighed in, you should see your responses reflected in the word cloud at the right. Others of you might want to check out the responses to see if these bring to mind your own gardening experiences.

There are a number of free word cloud generators online. I created this one in WordClouds.com.





## **A Message from SFEMG Board President Anne Rivas**

It's October and about two weeks until the average first frost date. It may be hard to believe after the summer we've had, but winter is coming. Santa Fe Extension Master Gardener Celia Baldwin gave a comprehensive talk about winterizing your garden Sept. 8 at the Randall Davey Audubon Center, and I thank her for the information in this column.

I'm sure we've all been diligent about weeding our gardens this summer. We need to continue to weed before undesirable plants drop their seeds. Perennial weeds with large root systems can sustain themselves through winter, so dig them up. Most home compost systems don't reach the high temperatures needed to kill weed seeds, so don't put these in your compost.

You may still have time to divide many of your perennials. We advise dividing them every three years or so to maintain vigor. This includes ornamental grasses and flowers. If you see a circle of grass with a dead center, it's time to divide it. Clumps of flowers that are losing their vigor can also be divided. Dig up the entire plant, remove as much soil as you can, and pry or cut apart the individual crowns. Make sure each crown has a set of roots and leaves. Replant them immediately before they dry out. Water well, and cover soil with mulch to help conserve moisture. Exceptions are milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.), lavender (*Lavandula* spp.), false or wild indigo (*Baptisia* spp.) and Oriental poppy (*Papaver orientale*), so know what you're digging up. Divided perennials need about six weeks before the ground freezes to establish their roots.

Perennials typically drop their leaves after a hard freeze. If you have had insect or disease problems, clean up this debris to discourage overwintering. Don't put this debris in the compost. Leave healthy stems to provide habitat for pollinators and to support birds and other wildlife. Stems provide housing for insect pollinators and energy reserves for root systems. They catch blowing snow that insulates plants and provides moisture. Walnut (*Juglans* spp.) and quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) leaves often have fungal and other problems so it's better not to use their leaves as mulch. Again, don't put these leaves in your compost.

Finally, you can scratch in a little balanced granular soil conditioner. Water it in well before the ground freezes and cover lightly with a mix of compost and mulch. Be sure to leave some patches of bare ground for ground-nesting pollinators.



# New Mexico State University Santa Fe County Extension

## Discover Extension

*Delivering Solutions to Improve Lives for All New Mexicans*

***Save the date!***

**11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 14  
3229 Rodeo Road, Santa Fe, NM 87507  
FREE admission and parking**

Here's your opportunity to learn more about Santa Fe County Extension's educational programs and all they have to offer to the Santa Fe community. Join local County Extension agents, Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners and 4-H youth development volunteers for a day of hands-on demonstrations, informed conversations, exhibits and garden and land-restoration tours.

Check here the week of the event for more details and updates:  
<https://santafeextension.nmsu.edu>



# ***Would you like to become an Extension Master Gardener?***

**By Terry Zane, 2024 Master Gardener Training Program Coordinator**

*An Extension Master Gardener is a person who has been trained in basic horticulture by the New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service, and in return shares that knowledge with others in the community. Once trained, Extension Master Gardeners volunteer their time, experience and knowledge through a variety of Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners (SFEMG) projects.*

**REGISTRATION OPENS WEDNESDAY, NOV. 1, 2023**

**Enroll in this 15-week research-based program  
that emphasizes sustainability**

**with a focus on New Mexico's changing climate  
and challenging growing conditions.**

To become an Extension Master Gardener in Santa Fe County you need to enroll in the training program sponsored by New Mexico State University, the Santa Fe County Extension Office and the SFEMG. Classes will begin online in early January 2024.

NMSU will provide 15 weekly classes that include prerecorded presentations on topics relevant to gardening in New Mexico. The presentations are research-based, emphasize sustainability and focus on our climate and growing conditions. The instructors include NMSU faculty and regional experts. The classes will include resource materials, weekly quizzes and live Q&A sessions via zoom. Participants must pass the quizzes with scores of 70 percent or better and will have several opportunities to take the quizzes.

In addition, SFEMG interns will have several opportunities to meet in-person for hands-on training in fun and friendly settings.

Topics include botany; soils and composting; climate and water; weed, pest and disease management; trees, shrubs and perennials; native plants and xeriscaping; vegetables and seed saving; and more.

Participating interns are expected to complete a practicum of at least 20 hours volunteering with a variety of local SGEMG projects by December 2024. This gives interns an opportunity to use the knowledge and skills acquired in the classes and learn from other local Master Gardeners. It is also an opportunity to meet others with shared interests in gardening.

The cost of the program is \$200. A refund of 75 percent of this fee is available after the first week of class if an intern chooses not to participate. There will be no refunds provided after that date.

All classes are taught in English. Program information and class materials are posted electronically, so individual internet access is required.

To register starting Nov. 1, go to the SFEMG website: <https://www.sfemg.org/become-a-master-gardener-sug> or [www.sfemg.org](http://www.sfemg.org) and click on the picture titled "Become a Master Gardener."

## Plant Bulbs Soon for the Spring Win

By Wendy Wilson

Do you want to plant something this fall that will fill your spring garden with wonder and glory? Fall-planted bulbs yield that magic.

Many types of bulbs are appropriate for Santa Fe. Originally from dry and cold areas, tulips were destined to be part of our spring. Tulips are native to the Greek Island of Crete, the mountains of Northern Afghanistan and Central Asia. Daffodils originated in the Iberian Peninsula, predominantly Spain and Portugal. In addition to tulips (*Tulipa* spp.) and daffodils (*Narcissus* spp.), flowering onion (*Allium* spp.), crocus (*Crocus* spp.), fritillary (*Fritillaria* spp.), hyacinth (*Hyacinthus* spp.), grape hyacinth (*Muscari* spp.) and squill (*Scillia* spp.) are excellent for fall planting. Flowering onion, daffodil, and fritillary are relatively deer resistant.

Commence planting bulbs six to eight weeks before the soil begins to freeze. Santa Fe is in USDA Hardiness Zone 6b so we should wait until November to plant. As a general rule, plant big bulbs about

8 inches deep and small bulbs about 5 inches deep or plant the bulb three times the height of the bulb. For example, if your bulb is 2 inches you would plant it 6 inches deep.

Set the bulb in the hole pointy side up with the roots down. It's easy to spot the pointy end of a tulip, tougher with a crocus. If you can't figure out the top from the bottom, plant the bulb on its side. In most cases, even if you don't get it right, the flower will still find its way topside, according to the Illinois State University Extension. There is no need to add fertilizer or other amendments to the hole. All bulbs are self-contained flower powerhouses.

There are several strategies for planting:



Photo courtesy Wendy Wilson

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**ONE HOLE-ONE BULB** This is time and energy consuming and can lead to an appearance of soldiers in a row. If you are only planting a handful of bulbs or need to place them in tight areas it might be the way to go.

**ONE HOLE-MANY BULBS** Dig a wider hole and place several bulbs in it. Generally, bulbs look good in clumps of five to nine plants. With this strategy you get more bang for your digging effort and a great display in the spring.

**ONE-HOLE, SEVERAL VARIETIES OF BULBS** Why not, while digging the wider hole, layer bulbs for the most spectacular display? After setting in the larger bulbs (tulips, daffodils, flowering onion, hyacinths), return about an inch of soil to the hole and put a layer of “minor” bulbs (crocus, squill, grape hyacinth) on top before returning all the soil to the hole.

Many local nurseries carry bulbs. Bulbs should be large and firm with no mold or soft spots. Bigger bulbs will have bigger flowers.

Here are some online sources that I've tried, and they carry a staggering selection:

- [Brent and Becky's Bulbs](#)
- [John Scheepers](#)
- [McClure & Zimmerman](#)
- [Van Engelen Inc. Wholesale Flower Bulbs](#)
- [White Flower Farm](#)

Happy fall planting and I wish you a spectacular spring display of flowers!



**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!**

Let's Grow started the 2023 season with a session at the Harvey Cornell Rose Park in April on "How to Prune Roses Properly" and ended the series in September with "Saving Seeds and Contributing to the Resiliency of Santa Fe Gardens." There were other informative sessions on native plants, erosion control, planting for pollinators and landscape design, all led by experienced Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners and local experts.

The 2023 Let's Grow series has ended, but we will be back in spring 2024 with more! Watch for the Let's Grow logo and write-ups here in our monthly newsletter. The sessions are mainly held on Saturdays to accommodate all. They are FREE, and no registration is required. Stay tuned!





## Canada Goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*)

By Diane Pratt

I first became interested in Canada goldenrod, also known as western prairie goldenrod, several years ago while reading one of my favorite books, “Braiding Sweetgrass” by Robin Wall Kimmerer. She is an ethnobotanist who writes about plants from a Native American perspective. Kimmerer was describing the amazingly dramatic floral display put on by asters and goldenrod in the fall. I already had asters, so began to look around for a goldenrod species native to Northern New Mexico. About the same time, I was visiting the aviary of a friend in Albuquerque. I saw her bees congregating around a display of bright yellow flowers in August. Goldenrods! Thus began my journey.

*Solidago* is a native perennial plant in the Asteraceae family. There are over 100 species with a wide distribution across North America. *Solidago canadensis* is native to many areas, including New Mexico. Often seen along roadsides and drainage ditches and in fields and meadows, it has a place in your garden, too. It is an “insect magnet,” visited by a wide variety of of pollinators including native bees, honeybees, butterflies, beetles, moths and wasps. Birds enjoy the dried seed heads and over 100 species of caterpillars feast on the foliage.



Photo courtesy Peggy Romfh,  
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

*Solidago canadensis* is a tall leafy plant with a finely hairy stem. It has tiny daisy-shaped yellow flowers in long or flat-topped clusters on arching panicle branches. Its green leaves are narrow, lance shaped and sharply toothed, arranged in an alternate pattern along a central stem. It provides showy displays in late summer and early fall, making it an important nectar source for bees and other insects late in the season. It continues to provide sustenance and shelter for other insects and birds long after the flowers fade.

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Although goldenrod often gets blamed for hay fever symptoms in the fall, this plant has been used as a tincture by Native Americans and herbalists for allergies and cold and flu symptoms. Hay fever is most commonly caused by a ragweed species blooming around the same time. It has also been used as a tea for urinary tract infections and is a seasonal dye plant. A fun fact is that during the American Revolution when colonists ran out of British tea they made a beverage from goldenrod and called it "Liberty Tea."

**Plant type:** Herbaceous perennial

**Landscape use:** Great for borders and in pollinator and native plant gardens. Some consider this species of *Solidago* more invasive if grown under ideal conditions; I have not found this to be the case as my *Solidago Canadensis* "clumps" have remained stable for the last four years. The clumps can be divided in early spring every two to four years if need be.

**Propagation and care:** Spreads by rhizomes and seeds that can be planted in the spring and fall. Flowers should be deadheaded to avoid unwanted spread by seed. No serious insect or disease problems, though this plant is susceptible to rust, powdery mildew and leaf spot. Potential insect pests include beetles, gall-forming insects and aphids.

**Bloom time:** Late summer to early fall

**Size:** Mature erect plants can grow 2-6 feet in height and width

**Soil:** Adapts to a wide variety of soils, sandy or loamy, even clay as long as the drainage is good

**Sun:** Full sun, but can tolerate partial shade

**Water:** Medium, but once established has good drought tolerance

**USDA Zones:** 5-9

#### References:

["A Guide to Native Plants for the Santa Fe Garden"](#) (SNaPP)

Pavek, P.L.S. 2012 [Plant Fact Sheet](#) for Canadian goldenrod. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Pullman Washington.

[Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Plant Database](#)

["How to use Goldenrod,"](#) chestnutherbs.com

**"It came to me while picking beans,  
The secret of happiness."**

– Robin Wall Kimmerer

## Backyard Bugs

### Elm Seed Bug (*Arocatus melanocephalus*)

Narrative and photos by Pam Wolfe



**Photos: (left) dorsal view showing distinctive white spots along the abdomen. This adult is 6.5mm long. (right) pinned specimen with wings partially extended**

Extension Office Hotline callers describe this animal as “small black bug (or beetle) in biblical proportions in my home!” We had only one call in 2022 but have had a half dozen in 2023. Several years ago, a good year for [false chinch bugs](#) (*Nysius raphanus*), the same description was common. Naturally, we ask callers for a specimen to confirm the identity.

A member of the seed bug family (Lygaeidae), the elm seed bug is native to Europe and the Mediterranean area and was first reported in Idaho in 2012. It commenced making its way north, east and south. The first report in Colorado was in 2018; it turned up in noticeable numbers in Santa Fe in 2022.

The animal has one generation per year, overwintering as an adult. Mating and egg laying occur in spring. Adults and nymphs feed primarily on the seeds of Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*), doing no harm to the tree. They create a nuisance by entering structures in summer and fall.

Colorado State University fact [sheet 5.619](#) gives details on management. Exclusion, that is, sealing off areas of your home where bugs are likely to enter, is suggested as a first-line defense. When that fails – and doesn't it always seem to? – get out the vacuum!

# 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](mailto:deutsch.stephanie@gmail.com)

**1-2:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 1**

["A Practical Guide to Rewilding"](#)

Smithsonian Associates / \$ / 1.5 CE

**4:30-5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 3**

["Nature Remixed: Reimagining Community and Biodiversity in Cities"](#) with Richard Roark

New York Botanical Garden / \$ / 1 CE

**6:30-7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 10**

["New Invasive Plants in the Southwest and Science Updates on Common Invaders"](#)

with Sylvan Kaufman

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

**7-9 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 10**

["Gardening Good Enough to Eat"](#) with Bob Pennington

Santa Fe Community College / \$ / 2 CE

**7-9 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 11**

["Western Bumble Bee Identification for Bumble Bee Atlas Volunteers"](#)

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation / Free / 2 CE

**9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 14**

["Growing Without Soil: Hydroponics and Aquaponics"](#)

Santa Fe Community College / \$ / 4 CE

**7-9 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 17**

["Right Plant, Right Place"](#) with Bob Pennington

Santa Fe Community College / \$ / 4 CE

**3-4 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 18**

["Composting"](#) with John Zarola, outreach coordinator for the

Bernalillo County Extension Master Composters program

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

**10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday Oct. 21**

["Regenerative Water Strategies"](#) with Amanda Bramble

Santa Fe Community College / \$ / 3 CE

**10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday Oct. 21**

["Greenhouse Design and Operation"](#) with Joe Pate

Santa Fe Community College / \$ / 3 CE

**7-9 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 24**

["Garden Superstars"](#) with Bob Pennington

Santa Fe Community College / \$ / 3 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.**

[“Garden takes root at Kearny Elementary School”](#) by Margaret O’Hara, *Santa Fe New Mexican* (Sept. 25)

[“What’s Causing Your Fall Allergies? It’s Not What You Think”](#) by Marie Viljoen, *Gardenista* (Sept. 25)

[“Earth’s stinkiest flower is threatened with extinction”](#) by Laura Baisas, *Popular Science* (Sept. 25)

[“Farmers turn to tech as bees struggle to pollinate”](#) by Natalie Lisbona, *BBC* (Sept. 24)

[“New exhibition aims to change minds about ‘weeds’ ”](#) Royal Horticultural Society news release (Sept. 20)

[“Finding beauty in the burn scar”](#) by Matt Dahlseid, *Santa Fe New Mexican* (Sept. 17)

[“A couple was sick of mowing. Now their wildflowers are a local attraction.”](#) by Cathy Free, *The Washington Post* (Sept. 15)

[“NMSU floral team wins regional, national awards”](#) by Elizabeth McCall, NMSU news release (Sept. 12)

[“In the Time of Bees”](#) by Mariko O. Thomas with photos by Douglas Merriam, *Edible New Mexico* (Sept. 12)

[“USDA Commemorates 100 Years of Contribution to the Grape Industry”](#) from the USDA Agricultural Research Service (Sept. 12)

[“The New York Botanical Garden Announces \*Wonderland: Curious Nature\*, an All-New Garden-Wide Exhibition for 2024, Featuring Horticultural and Contemporary Art Installations Inspired by \*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland\*,”](#) NYBG news release (Sept. 6)

[“Narrowleaf Milkweed Care and Growing Tips”](#) by Wendy Helfenbaum, *Birds & Blooms* (Sept. 6)

[“Pollination Niches and Agricultural Landscapes”](#) from the USDA National Agricultural Library (September 2023)

[“The 10 Best New Mexico Gardens \(Updated 2023\)”](#) *Trip Advisor*

[“Paleontologists Discover Mummified Bees Preserved in Their Cocoons for 3,000 Years”](#) by Sarah Kuta, *Smithsonian magazine* (Aug. 30)

# The Garden Journal Radio Show



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

## **October 7: Slow Food Santa Fe Outloud Edition**

Slow Food Santa Fe's Lissa Johnson and Nina Rosenberg interview chef and author Lois Ellen Frank about her latest book, "Seed to Plate, Soil to Sky: Modern Plant-Based Recipes using Native American Ingredients."

## **October 14: SFEMG Edition**

Alexa Bradford talks with Carl Beal, center manager for the Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary, and Master Gardeners Project Lead Colleen Madrid, about Santa Fe's historic bird sanctuary and the unique 20-year Audubon Center/Master Gardeners partnership that supports the Sanctuary's gardens and native plants for wildlife.

## **October 21: Food, Farms and Friends Edition**

Come join us at the table with Carrie Core and Kayleigh Warren for the Kewa Women United's Food, Farms & Friends edition, featuring discussions on food, diet, traditions, culture and equity through the lens of the Indigenous experience.

## **October 28: The Giant Veggie Gardener Edition**

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

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.