

## Join the New Community Compost Project

Story and photo by Amber Anastasion

### Lead Community Compost Volunteer | County Fairgrounds Composting Site

Did you know that 50 percent of what is thrown away is compostable? Food scraps, paper, cardboard and yard trimmings are not garbage and don't belong in landfills where they create greenhouse gases. Instead, they should be treated as valuable resources that can be turned into "black gold" through the simple and natural process of composting. When added to a garden, compost provides organic matter and nutrients that feed and support plants and are essential to the microorganisms living in healthy soil. Composting is a win-win for the environment and people.

So, do you want to help fight climate change, improve your soil and build community? Join the Community Compost Project at the Santa Fe County Fairgrounds, 3229 Rodeo Road, where a new three-bin composting system has been located adjacent to the [Santa Fe Compost Action Team's](#) demonstration site west of the County Extension Office.

The [New Mexico Compost Coalition](#) made the three-bin system available to the Extension Office as part of a statewide pilot program that aims to raise awareness about the importance of composting, eliminating food waste from landfills and improving soil health in communities. The Coalition is a network of businesses, municipalities, nonprofit organizations, researchers and agency representatives seeking to turn food waste into a beneficial resource through partnerships and cooperative approaches. The Santa Fe Botanical Garden also received one of the new composting systems.

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**The three-bin composting system is a method of managing compost in an enclosed area (as opposed to an open pile or windrow). Keeping the active compost enclosed deters pests and retains moisture. This type of bin also looks nice in an urban environment. The first bin is filled with "green" and "brown" material, which is added until the bin is full. When it's time to turn the contents, they are transferred into the second and then the third bin, leaving the first bin free to receive fresh material. When the compost leaves the third bin, it will be screened and placed in a pile outside the bin to finish the maturation phase before being used for planting.**



## Our Mission

Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners (the SFEMG) is a nonprofit, volunteer organization dedicated to learning, teaching and promoting locally sustainable gardening through practical, research-based knowledge and programs.

[sfemg.org](http://sfemg.org)



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Extension Master Gardener

The SFEMG is one of more than a dozen county-based master gardener programs run under the auspices of New Mexico State University's Cooperative Extension Service in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences. It is overseen locally by a volunteer board of directors under the direction of the county extension agent.

[mastergardeners.nmsu.edu](http://mastergardeners.nmsu.edu)

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## Save the Date!

### Santa Fe Cactus & Succulent Club's [Spring Plant Show & Sale](#)

10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Saturday, April 20  
Santa Fe Woman's Club  
1616 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe

Explore many varieties of cactus and succulents and learn from local experts!

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The County Fairgrounds composting site is actively seeking members to participate and it's free to join! Everyone is welcome. After completing an orientation, members will contribute food scraps and yard residue, help source materials and volunteer for one to two hours every month. Members will meet on specific weekend days to turn piles, screen the finished compost and learn how to support healthy soil. You can even view the compost under the microscope and learn about soil life.

Want to learn more and get involved? The local group is planning its first community meeting soon, but don't wait to reach out! Check out Community Compost Santa Fe on [Facebook](#) or send an email to [communitycompostsf@gmail.com](mailto:communitycompostsf@gmail.com) to find out how you can become a member.



Extension Master Gardener state coordinators, county agents and Extension professionals will visit Santa Fe later this year for the National Extension Master Gardener Coordinator Conference. The meeting represents a professional development opportunity for attendees from across the country. The conference is held every even-numbered year, alternating with the National Conference on Volunteerism. The 2022 Coordinators' Conference was held in Savannah, Ga., with 160 participants.

The Drury Plaza Hotel is the venue for the conference. It will begin with tours of the Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary, the Santa Fe Botanical Garden and the Tesuque Pueblo Farm and Seed Bank on Monday afternoon, Aug. 26. Tuesday and Wednesday are full days of programming and volunteer-management presentations, discussions and breakout groups. The conference ends at noon on Thursday, Aug. 29.

New Mexico was asked to host the conference, and people are excited about exploring Santa Fe and environs.

For more information contact: Lynda Garvin, Statewide NMSU Master Gardener Program Manager, at [lgarvin@nmsu.edu](mailto:lgarvin@nmsu.edu)



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

NMSU defines our mission as follows:

**“Through their trained volunteers, the EMG Program seeks to preserve and beautify the environment while improving the quality of life in the community. Toward that goal, the EMG Program provides current research-based horticultural information to the public through education and outreach. The EMG Program promotes horticultural best management practices, sustainability, and environmental initiatives as developed by NMSU’s Cooperative Extension Service (CES) and the agricultural research programs of NMSU.”**

I am struck by these words in the first sentence: “to preserve and beautify the environment while improving the quality of life in the community.” The SFEMG has a lot to offer in this respect. Much has been written about the relationship between public garden spaces and quality of life, and our project gardens help preserve and beautify the local environment. We touch the lives of hundreds of people every year through our project gardens and Ask a Master Gardener outreach program. Because of space limitations, I can mention only some of these here. To learn more about all our projects, visit the [project portfolio](#) pages on our website.

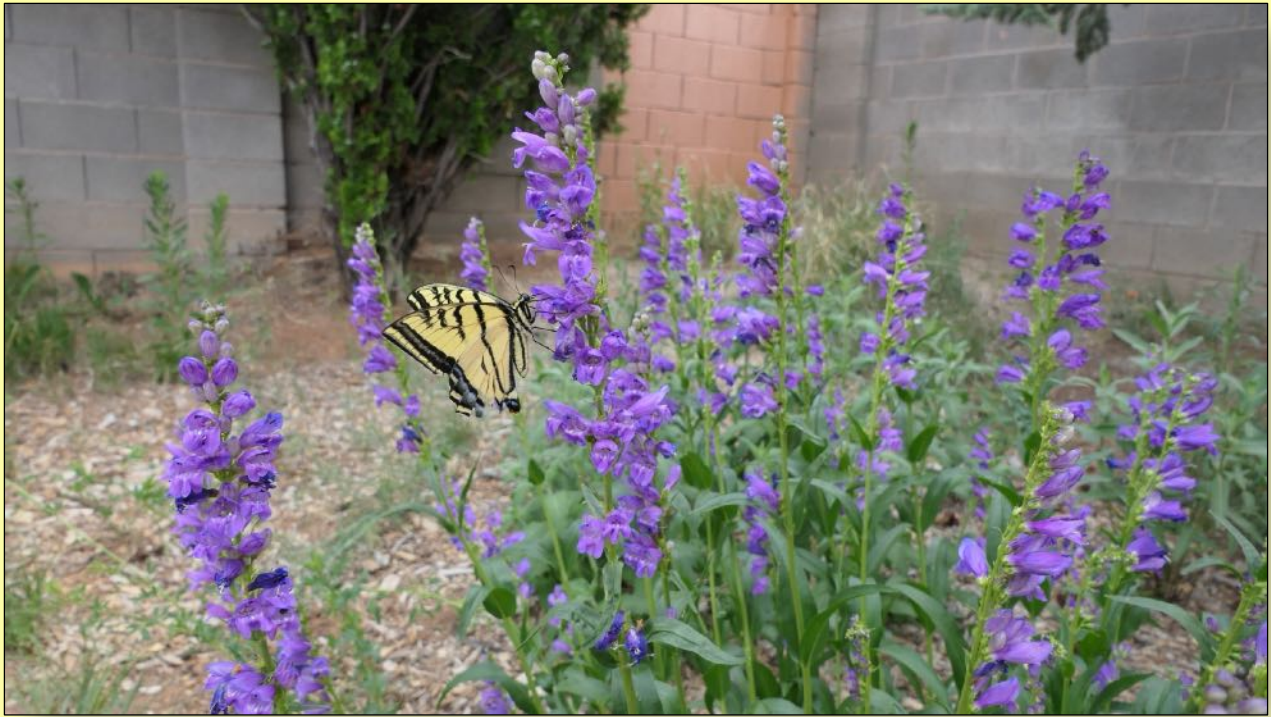
We have partnered with the [Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary](#), 1800 Upper Canyon Road, since 2003 to develop and maintain demonstration gardens that include a wildlife attracting garden, native perennial and shrub beds, a small cactus bed and a meadow of native grasses and wildflowers. Master Gardeners work in the garden and answer questions on Friday mornings during the gardening season. Audubon staff and volunteers lead a guided bird walk on Saturday mornings.

[The Garden at El Zaguán](#) was originally designed in the 1850s as a Victorian-style flower garden. Master Gardeners entered a partnership with the Historic Santa Fe Foundation, 545 Canyon Road, in 2012 to restore, maintain and enhance the beautiful 19th century flower garden combining exotic, native and waterwise plants using sustainable gardening practices.

Master Gardeners began assisting the Santa Fe Rose Society with maintenance of the long-established [Harvey H. Cornell Sr. Rose Garden Park](#) at Cordova Road and Galisteo Parkway in 2010. Our members assist the city of Santa Fe with rose pruning, deadheading, mulching and various garden tasks during the growing season.

These gardens have pleasant, shaded places to sit where you can take in the scents and sounds around you while you observe insect and other wildlife activity. These are great places to get ideas for your home garden.





Two-tailed swallowtail on Rocky Mountain penstemon (*Penstemon strictus*) | Photo courtesy Kaitlin Haase

## **Proposals Open in April for the 4th Year of Santa Fe Pollinator Habitat Kits**

**By Kaitlin Haase, Xerces Pollinator Conservation Specialist, Southwest**

The Xerces Society is offering 100 Santa Fe Pollinator Habitat Kits for residential and open spaces this year with proposals to open on Earth Day, April 22. Since 2021, Xerces has distributed 26,400 pesticide-free native plants to pollinator habitat kit partners in Santa Fe, creating over 400 pollinator gardens across the city. This effort is in support of the Santa Fe Pollinator Trail, an initiative to create connected, climate-resilient habitat in the city with the help of dedicated partners growing pollinator plants in developed areas throughout Santa Fe.

The Santa Fe Pollinator Habitat Kits contain 33 plants total, with four individuals of eight perennial species and one shrub in a 5-gallon pot. These kits provide a source of food for a diversity of native pollinators with blooms from spring to fall, milkweed host plants for monarchs, and woody shrubs for nesting and overwintering structure. Xerces provides the plants at no cost to selected kit partners who commit to planting, watering and maintaining the habitat kit on their property.

To learn more and submit a proposal to become a kit program partner, please visit the [Santa Fe Pollinator Habitat Kit webpage](#). Proposal forms are open April 22 to June 30. The kits are available to residents in the city of Santa Fe and to organizations that maintain publicly accessible gardens or open spaces, such as schools, churches, parks and museums.



Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners

## GARDEN FAIR

May 11, 2024 | Santa Fe County Fairgrounds

### Plant Sale at the Garden Fair

*When: 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, May 11*

*Where: Santa Fe County Fairgrounds, 3229 Rodeo Road*

**By Lucinda Surber**

We will have a wide array of plants appropriate for our local climate available for purchase at the Santa Fe Extension Master Gardeners Plant Sale on May 11th at our Garden Fair. Meanwhile, here are two of our favorite native plants to whet your interest:

**Little bluestem** (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) is a native, perennial, warm-season bunch grass with beautiful stages throughout the year. It thrives in full sun in all types of soil, attracts birds, is drought tolerant and low maintenance. Little bluestem forms a 2- to 3-foot roundish mound of blue-green blades in the spring. The summer flower stalks are upright and can reach 4 to 5 feet. Fall color ranges from orange to a reddish-purple. See [Master Gardener Newsletter Vol. 9 No. 12](#) for more detail on this showstopper!

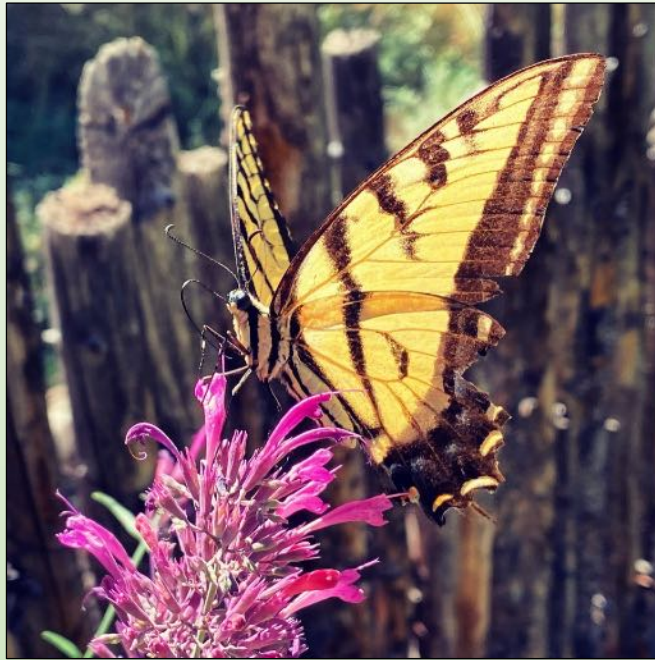


**Little bluestem in summer (left) and in bloom (right)**  
Photos courtesy Pam Wolfe

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**Hummingbird mint** (*Agastache* spp.), is a native perennial plant that thrives both in the garden and in patio containers. This pollinator-friendly plant attracts bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. Many species and cultivars bloom profusely from summer through fall with aromatic and colorful flower spikes in bright shades of pink, orange, red, lavender, and blue. Plants grow 4 to 5 feet tall and thrive in full sun with little water.



Swallowtail on hummingbird mint (*Agastache* sp.)  
Photo courtesy Lucinda Surber

### Find the perfect plants with help from the SFEMG

Knowledgeable master gardeners from the Santa Fe Native Plant Project as well as our Ask a Master Gardener volunteers will be available at the Plant Sale to help you select the best plants for your yard and patio.

### Donations Sought for the Garden Shed at the Garden Fair

Help the SFEMG gear up for a fabulous Garden Shed sale at this year's Garden Fair. We are seeking donations of gently used gardening tools, equipment and gardening books. Your shovels, pruners, trowels, pots, hoses and even decorative garden accents can find a new life in gardens throughout Santa Fe County. The funds we raise will help support all the SFEMG's education-based projects. Donations can be dropped off at the SFEMG office at the Santa Fe County Extension Office, 3229 Rodeo Road, from 10 a.m. – noon any Saturday through May 4, or email Deborah James at [djames1224@icloud.com](mailto:djames1224@icloud.com) to schedule a pickup.



For disability assistance or special accommodations, please contact the Santa Fe County Cooperative Extension Office, at (505) 471-4711 or via email at [santafe@nmsu.edu](mailto:santafe@nmsu.edu)





## **2024 Yard Habitat Reviews Begin in June *Schedule Yours Now!* By Catherine Wygant**

The SFEMG's Yard Habitat Certification project will begin conducting in-person yard assessments in June and continue scheduling through September.

To request a free review, email [yhc.sfemg@gmail.com](mailto:yhc.sfemg@gmail.com). Please be sure to include your name, address, telephone number and preferred day for a visit: Thursday, Friday or Saturday. Other days are possible on request. The assessments last between 1½ to 2 hours.

Master gardeners will assess your yard and help you create a garden habitat using research-based maintenance practices with plants that thrive in Santa Fe, providing food, shelter, nesting sites and water to dwindling pollinator populations.



Celebrate  
**Earth Day**  
Saturday, April 20

**Visit the New Water Catchment Feature at Arroyo Hondo Fire Station #1  
21 Seton Village Road, Santa Fe, NM 87508  
9 a.m.-Noon**

[Santa Fe County](#) has collaborated with [Seeds of Wisdom, LLC](#) to install a new water catchment feature at the Arroyo Hondo Fire Station. County staff invite you to join them on Earth Day to see the new installation and enjoy a morning of learning, gardening and more. [Check here for more information](#). Master Gardeners will be there to answer your gardening questions.

**Celebrate 'Healthy Soils' at the Railyard Park  
740 Cerrillos Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505  
10 a.m.-2 p.m.**

Join the Railyard Park Conservancy and more than a dozen community partners for a [free Earth Day event](#) celebrating Healthy Soils in the Railyard Park. Featuring Graze Days, live music, nature play, arts and crafts activities, public art installations, face painting, seed ball making, dog photo booth, worm fun and more. Located in the open field next to the Park's Performance Lawn.





## **Western Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium* var. *occidentalis*)**

**By Terri Smith**

*Achillea* (pronounced ah-KILL- ee-ah) is a flowering perennial in the Aster family (Asteraceae). Named after the great mythological Greek warrior Achilles, the plant was purported to be used as a remedy for bleeding wounds during the Trojan War. *Millefolium* is Latin for “thousand-leaved” and refers to the fern-like, highly dissected foliage. The variety name *occidentalis* means “western.”



Photo courtesy John Hixton, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Western yarrow is a highly adaptable wildflower ranging from Canada to California and into the Great Plains. It is often confused with common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium* var. *millefolium*) which was originally found in Eurasia, Europe and Scandinavia. More than 85 varieties of common yarrow were introduced in North America during early colonial times. Western and common yarrow readily hybridize.

Western yarrow grows erect to a height of 1 to 2 feet in contrast to most common varieties which normally have a taller stature. The leaves of the western plant are densely hairy, an

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adaptation to drought and heat. The leaves of common yarrow are sparsely hairy. The umbels (flat flower heads) of western yarrow are white to pale pink and bloom all summer. Common yarrow cultivars are available commercially in a wide range of warm colors with a shorter and later blooming period than western yarrow. Judith Phillips states that the "western native is the toughest". The plant grows wild at the Leonora Curtain Wetland Preserve where it mingles with the cattails and watercress near the stream bed.

Many beneficial insects such as butterflies, native bees, lady beetles, minute pirate bugs and hoverflies are frequent visitors to the flat landing pads of western yarrow flowers. Finley and Nieland list the plant as a larval host for Chalcedon checkerspot and painted lady butterflies.

**Landscape Use:** Western yarrow can be seeded to create a flowering "lawn" in sunny naturalized areas (mow occasionally with the mower set on high). To increase species diversity, the seeds can be added to native wildflower or grass seed mixtures in naturalized and low maintenance areas. Seeding or planting along the inner raised edges of a rain garden, where periods of flooding are usually short and intermittent, would invite more pollinators to the garden.

**Planting and care:** Seeds germinate readily in spring when planted shallowly. Water lightly until established. New plants produce few flowers in the first year. Drought tolerant by second or third year. Survives with little maintenance. Deadheading spent flowers is advised for longer bloom time.

**Propagation:** Easy from seed. Lightly cover seed with soil. Sow anytime. Established plants spread by rhizomes so digging up divisions of plants also works well.

**Plant type:** Herbaceous perennial

**Bloom time:** May through September

**Size:** 1- to 2-feet tall and wide

**Sun:** Full sun

**Soil:** Disturbed soils, gravelly loam, thin sandy soils, alkaline caliche

**Water:** Very drought tolerant once established. Can become invasive with too much water.

**USDA Zones:** 3-9

**Elevation:** 5,500 to 11,000 feet

### References:

- Phillips, Judith. "Growing the Southwest Garden." Timber Press. 2015.
- Willa F. Finley and Lashara J. Nieland. "Land of Enchantment Wildflowers." Texas Tech University Press. 2013.
- Tucker, Janice. [Santa Fe Botanical Gardens Plant of the Month](#). March 2011.
- Winslow, Susan J. [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Plant Fact Sheet](#), Bridger, Montana. September 2005.

## Backyard Bugs

### Locust Borer (*Megacyllene robiniae*) Narrative and photo by Pam Wolfe

Unless you have an inordinate fondness for beetles you might not appreciate this handsome longhorn (family Cerambycidae) that came west with its host, the [black locust](#) (*Robinia pseudoacacia*). Once native only to eastern North America, black locust gained popularity in reclamation projects to prevent erosion and improve soil quality due to its [nitrogen fixing capacity](#).

Adult locust borers are active August through October, mating and feeding on pollen, apparently preferring goldenrod. Eggs are laid on the host tree in bark crevices and wound sites, especially young or stressed trees. Larvae hibernate in small cells in the inner bark and bore into the wood to resume feeding in the spring. These borers are not known to infest honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*).

The [Colorado State University Extension Service](#) describes symptoms that vary with the season. Wet spots may appear on the bark in spring; later, frass and sawdust will appear as the larvae enlarge their feeding tunnels. Branches and slender trunks may sustain wind damage. [Cultural controls](#) include thinning a stand of trees and increasing mulch to add nutrients to the soil. [NMSU Guide H-174](#) describes both biological controls and chemical controls for this animal.



Locust borer (25mm) on a garden wall at El Rancho de las Golondrinas, September 2023





## Calendar of Educational Events

All classes shown here are open to the public. A \$ indicates there is a cost to attend.

Master Gardeners are required to complete 10 hours of Continuing Education between Jan. 1 and Nov. 30 to maintain their Extension Master Gardener status. Be sure to post your hours in [Track It Forward](#) as soon as possible after completing an event so you don't forget as the year progresses. The CE credit requirement does not apply to interns. Check the SFEMG website for [current listings](#).

### [Native Plant Society of New Mexico, Santa Fe Chapter](#)

6:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 9

["What the Heck is a Herbarium"](#) with Botanist Renee Galeano-Popp  
Free / 1 CE

Save the date!

Thursday, July 25 - Sunday, July 28 in Taos

[New Mexico Native Plant Society 2024 Annual Conference](#)

\$ / registration required / 1 CE per hour in attendance



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### [NMSU Ready, Set, GROW! Webinar Series](#)

NMSU's Cooperative Extension Service offers this free gardening series online at 3 p.m. the third Wednesday of each month. Past presentations are recorded and available on demand. (1 CE per class)

3 p.m. Wednesday, April 17

["Growing Chile Peppers in New Mexico"](#)

With NMSU Extension Vegetable Specialist Dr. Stephanie Walker  
Free / registration required / 1 CE

### [Santa Fe Botanical Garden](#)

10 a.m.-Noon Friday, April 5

Udall Building, 725 Camino Lejo, Santa Fe

["Invasive Species Workshop"](#) with Dr. Sylvan Kaufman  
\$ / registration required / 2 CE

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### **Santa Fe Botanical Garden**

1-3 p.m. Thursday, April 11  
Botanical Garden at Museum Hill, 715 Camino Lejo, Santa Fe  
“[Rose Pruning Workshop](#)” with Director of Horticulture Linda Churchill  
\$ / registration required / 2 CE

1-2:30 p.m. Saturday, April 27  
Pavilion at the Botanical Garden at Museum Hill, 715 Camino Lejo, Santa Fe  
“[Plant ID Workshop](#)” with Dr. Sylvan Kaufman  
\$ / registration required / 1.5 CE

### **Santa Fe Cactus & Succulent Club**

6:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 16  
Christ Lutheran Church, 1701 Arroyo Chamiso, Santa Fe  
Free / 1 CE

Save the date!  
Friday, July 26 - Sunday, July 28  
Santa Fe Woman’s Club, 1616 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe  
“[18<sup>th</sup> Biennial Mid-States Conference](#)”  
\$ / pre-registration now open / 1 CE per hour in attendance

### **Santa Fe Rose Society**

6 p.m. Tuesday, April 2  
Santa Fe Public Library, Southside Branch, 6599 Jaguar Drive, Santa Fe  
“Rose Garden Companion Plants”  
Free / 1 CE

### **Santa Fe Watershed Association**

10 a.m.-Noon Saturday, April 16  
General Franklin Miles Park, 1027 Camino Carlos Rey, Santa Fe  
“[Rain Garden Workshop](#)”  
Free / registration required / 2 CE

### **Smithsonian “Let’s Talk Gardens!” Series**

To watch past webinars, visit the [Let’s Talk Gardens! Video Library](#)  
(1 CE per hour of video watched)

## New & Noteworthy

*Have you recently read a gardening-related article or book, visited a horticultural website or blog, listened to a podcast, or seen a nature show or documentary you think other gardeners would enjoy or find useful? Send a link to the newsletter (news.sfemg@gmail.com) and we'll try to include the information in the next issue. Note that some of these sources may have paywalls or advertisements.*

["Wait, does America suddenly have a record number of bees?"](#) by Andrew Van Dam, *The Washington Post* (March 29)

["Smelly, invasive 'stinknet plant' closes part of Arizona national monument"](#) by Phil Helsel, *NBC News* (March 27)

["Can plant science save the world?"](#) by Sanna Sevanto for the *Santa Fe New Mexican* (March 24)

["Climate change is shifting the zones where plants grow – here's what that could mean for your garden"](#) by Matt Kasson, *The Conversation* (March 22)

["A plant that's everywhere is fueling a growing risk of wildfire disaster"](#) by Eric Zerkel, *CNN* (March 21)

["The Feds Are Trying to Get Plants to Mine Metal Through Their Roots"](#) by Matt Simon, *Wired* (March 21)

["The Best Botanical Gardens in the US"](#) by Nicole Kliest, *Vogue* (March 21)

["NMSU Extension to host Biochar and Soil Health Field Day April 24"](#) by Tiffany Acosta, NMSU news release (March 21)

["Witch Hazel Spells Trouble for Harmful Microbes"](#) by Georgia Jiang, USDA Agricultural Research Service AgLab article (March 20)

["USDA Researchers Use an Edible Blue-Green Algae to Protect Honey Bees Against Viruses"](#) by Jessica Ryan, USDA Agricultural Research Service news release (March 19)

["NMSU, Nebraska Extension to host virtual food manufacturers workshop in April"](#) by Tiffany Acosta, NMSU news release (March 19)

["Extreme weather can kill Arizona's saguaro cactuses and desert plants. Here are tips"](#) by Caralin Nunes, *Arizona Republic* (March 18)

["Water Risks to Agriculture: Too Little and Too Much"](#) by Patty Guerra, UC Merced news release (March 18)

["Fasciation in Plants: What You Need to Know"](#) by Emily Hannemann, *Birds & Blooms* (updated March 15)

["NMSU Extension to host AgriVenture Symposium April 10 in Taos"](#) by Tiffany Acosta, NMSU news release (Feb. 29)

["Duke Shuts Down Huge Plant Collection, Causing Scientific Uproar"](#) by Carl Zimmer, *The New York Times* (Feb. 21)





10 to 10:30 a.m. Saturdays on KSFR 101.1 FM | Streaming live at [ksfr.org](http://ksfr.org)

### **APRIL 6: Slow Food Santa Fe Outloud Edition**

Slow Food Santa Fe's Lissa Johnson and Nina Rosenberg talk with The Food Depot's Meredith Lorencz and Bonnie Murphy about the new federally funded Regional Farm to Food Bank program that enables farmers to sell directly to food banks.

### **APRIL 13: The SFEMG Edition**

Join host Alexa Bradford in conversation with three senior Santa Fe Botanical Garden staff members: Linda Churchill, Horticulture Director; Christie Collins, Director of Education and Interpretation; and Carole Aigne Langrall, Director of Development.

### **APRIL 20: New Edition Under Development**

Tune in for a rebroadcast of a favorite show while we finalize our new edition of *The Garden Journal*.

### **APRIL 27: The Giant Veggie Gardener Edition**

Host Alexa Bradford talks with Jannine Cabossel, "The Tomato Lady", about what to do in your vegetable garden in May. Also, Master Gardener Avra Leodas will tell us what to expect May 11 at the SFEMG's annual [Garden Fair](#).

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

Email: [gardenjournal@ksfr.org](mailto:gardenjournal@ksfr.org)



### **Ask a Master Gardener**

If you have gardening questions, the SFEMG can help.

Pose your questions online [here](#).

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