



EL PASO
NATIVE
PLANT
SOCIETY

FloraFest Speaker Unveils New Book

By Jim Hastings

Yard art as an expression, spirit and personality weaves a statewide story in Jill Nokes' new book, written with Pat Jasper.

Nokes takes the reader into communities from El Paso to Houston, intriguing us with photos of yard art ranging from fences through shrines and on to massive constructions. Her narrative takes us inside the yards to meet the artworks' creators and learn their stories about their art and that something inside themselves that sparked their creations.

It is interesting to note that Nokes found most of the yard art in older neighborhoods and communities with character that contrasts sharply with modern cookie cutter suburbs and homeowner association rules and regulations for plants and house colors. Homes with yard art are a very different animal.

El Pasoans will recognize the Casa de Azúcar (house of sugar), Rufino Loya's white concrete filigreed and finialed home visible beside the Patriot Freeway in the Northeast. He calls the house a wedding cake because of its white ornamentation. Loya's first construction was a simple shrine under a brick arch. Over time, his works became more elaborate and reminiscent of Mexican baroque architectural style. Loya says his yard is a tribute to El Paso, his adopted city.

Speeding by the Casa de Azúcar, most El Pasoans catch a fleeting glimpse and wonder what it is. Nokes helps us appreciate the yard and the man who created it, something we might otherwise not experience, even if we got off the highway and hunted the street where the house is.

A look at the people who planted massive windbreaks of trees and shrubs on the windy high plains gives us insight into the tenacity of people who build a land with a vision of the future and have lived to reap the benefits of their labors. In a landscape flat

El Paso Native Plant Society

THE GOLDEN POPPY

Only news that El Paso can grow wild with

and devoid of green that isn't an irrigated crop, a windbreak is a work of art and a haven.

The pictures in the book are fascinating in their own right and the captions tease with just enough information to draw the reader into the story looking for the answer to "what in the world" and "what were they thinking."

What we learn is that yard art is a personal expression representing spirit and dreams. That realization and understanding take the book from a highly thumbable book into a readable work that leaves a deep impression and teaches us a little something about people.

Jill Nokes is a horticulturist landscape designer in Austin and also the author of *How to Grow Native Plants of Texas and the Southwest*.

Yard Art and Handmade Places, Extraordinary Expressions of Home, Jill Nokes with Pat Jasper
University of Texas Press, Austin, 2007





CALENDAR OF EL PASO NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY EVENTS

ALL SOCIETY EVENTS ARE **FREE** UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

NON-MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

(For more information on these programs, call Henry Drake at 855-6543
or drakehm@ci.el-paso.tx.us)

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 7:00 PM, FloraFest Preview. Wynn Anderson, Botanical Curator for the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens at the UTEP Centennial Museum will present a preview of the native plants that will be offered for sale to the public on April 26-27 at FloraFest. For those of us who eagerly await this sale annually, this is a great opportunity to “plan ahead” on the purchase of plants you want to enhance your landscape. El Paso Garden Center, 3105 Grant.

THURSDAY, MAY 8, 7:00 PM, Celebrating Ten Years of Restoration: A Look at the Rio Bosque Wetlands Park. John Sproul, Program Coordinator/Manager, Rio Bosque Wetlands Park, will speak on the Park, a 372 acre City of El Paso Park that is managed by UTEP’s Center for Environmental Management. Wetlands and riverside forests once graced the banks of the Rio Grande. They were the most productive natural habitats in the region, but today they are virtually gone. At Rio Bosque, a diverse partnership is working to bring back meaningful examples of the valuable ecosystems once found in our river valley. El Paso Garden Center, 3105 Grant.

THURSDAY, June 12, 7:00 PM, Botanizing in Chihuahua's Sierra Madre Occidental: Casas Grandes to the Copper Canyon Country Wynn Anderson, Botanical Curator for the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens at the UTEP Centennial Museum, will speak on his vast experience researching and photographing the unique botanical species in this area. Wynn was able to document plant species rarely seen by taking a mule to the bottom of Copper Canyon and using other primitive modes of travel and sleeping on the bare ground to re-search the lesser traveled areas. Join Wynn, the Intrepid, for a fascinating evening of discovery of this unique botanical area. El Paso Garden Center, 3105 Grant.

THURSDAY, July 10, 7:00 PM,
Cacti of the Big Bend Region. Ad Konings will speak on his many years of photo-documenting and researching the numerous species of cacti in the Big Bend region. Ad frequently leads field trips to the Big Bend Park to facilitate amateur cacti photographers trying to capture that “perfect” photo of cacti in spectacular bloom. Ad, himself, is a professional photographer who has developed unique photographic techniques to capture the species in their best light. His photographs are spectacular. El Paso Garden Center, 3105 Grant.



Mammalaria lasiacantha, Photograph by Gertrud Konings

CALENDAR OF RELATED ACTIVITIES

April 23 to August 16. Special Exhibit on Rio Bosque Wetlands Park. The Centennial Museum is presenting an exhibit on the Rio Bosque created by Centennial curator, Scott Cutler, Maria Trunk of the Friends of the Rio Bosque and John Sproul, Program Coordinator/Manager, Rio Bosque Wetlands Park. Also being exhibited are graphic arts by Anne Gianguilio of UTEP's art faculty. The Centennial Museum is located on the UTEP campus at Wiggins Rd. and University.

April 25. Yard Art and Homemade Places: Extraordinary Expression of Home. Jill, Nokes, Horticultural Landscape Designer, Austin, TX., Jill will speak on her survey of unusual yard art found throughout Texas. Presentation at 7:00 pm in Room 116 in UTEP's Undergraduate Learning Center on Wiggins Road (next to Centennial Museum). Reception to follow. For more information, contact Centennial Museum at 747-5411.

April 26-27. FloraFest Plant Sale. UTEP Centennial Museum (Wiggins Rd. and University), UTEP Campus. For preview of plants to be sold and times for the sale, go to <http://museum.utep.edu/>.

Sept. 25 to 28 2008 Annual Meeting of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico: At the Crossroads. Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum on Dripping Springs Road in Las Cruces, NM. The featured speaker at the banquet on Saturday, September 27, will be Eric Metzler, Retired Entomologist, who will speak on "e-Harmony.com". Numerous speakers on Chihuahuan Desert ecology and 12 field trips promise an exciting time. For more information go to <http://npsnm.unm.edu> or contact Ray Bowers at 575-541-1877 or rsbowers@zianet.com.

Meeting Location Change

The El Paso Native Plant Society is now meeting regularly at the El Paso Garden Center in Memorial Park.

The recently imposed parking restrictions at UTEP made continued meetings at the Centennial Museum impractical. Special thanks are due to Marshall Carter-Tripp, interim Director of the Museum, for hosting the Native Plant Society there in the past.

There is no cost to the Society for meeting at the Garden Center.

Directions to the El Paso Garden Center; From I-10, exit at Piedras and go north. Turn right on Grant Street and go about 3-4 blocks. The El Paso Garden Center is a two story sand-colored brick building located at **3105 Grant**. Phone number at the Center is 566-1276.

2008 Officers and Committee Members

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Treasurer: Virginia Morris, 833-7637, elpasovlm@sbcglobal.net

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The Prez Says...

Many of you know me already, but for those few who don't, my name is Cheryl Garing, and I am a Horticulturist who was born in Las Cruces, New Mexico and moved to Orange County, California, in the early sixties. I have a Bachelors of Science degree in Ornamental Horticulture from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. When I graduated from college I moved to Santa Fe, New Mexico where I worked for Plants of the Southwest as the seed warehouse manager, in charge of packaging and selling mail order seed packets to home owners and wholesale seed for mining and highway reclamation projects. Later I became the farm manager of the growing division of Plants of the Southwest and was involved in propagation and container plant production.

I had always wanted to be a County Extension Agent, which was my major in College, and in 1982 I got my chance in Eddy County, New Mexico, where I became the Horticulture Agent in Carlsbad and Artesia. I did home horticulture visits, pecan orchard pest identification and control, answered plant questions at the office and participated in 4-H urban horticulture programs. At the time the Master Gardener Program was still a ways off for our part of New Mexico, so I missed out on that, however I stayed busy being on garden shows on radio and TV in Roswell, and a vegetable judge for the Lea County Fair in Hobbs every year.

In 1985 I left Eddy County and moved to El Paso, Texas which felt like a comfortable pair of

jeans compared to little Carlsbad, New Mexico. I started my greenhouse and landscaping business, which specialized in native and adapted plant material and drip irrigation and xeriscape design. In 1994 a friend told me about an opening at the El Paso Zoo for a Horticulturist, and I thought that sounded pretty interesting, so I applied and ended up there for another 10 years. I was in charge of landscaping and irrigation for animal exhibits and the zoo grounds. I also ran the zoo greenhouse where my volunteers and I would propagate many flowers and exhibit plants. I had to make sure that all plant material used on the grounds was non toxic. I have amassed quite a library on toxic plants, and once was a contact for the Poison Control Center hot line, here in El Paso.

I am excited about my new position as President of the Native Plant Society. I love the Chihuahuan Desert and find it beautiful and enigmatic. I look forward to sharing this appreciation of our desert region through our Native Plant Society's educational events, seminars, and outdoor activities. I would like to expand our membership and reach more El Pasoans as they begin to landscape and garden around their homes so they will make the choice to go native!

Please come to one of our meetings to learn more about our desert region and how to garden here.

Cheryl Garing

Featured Native Plant: Salvia greggii

John M. White, Assistant Botanical Curator for the Chihuahuan Desert Garden, UTEP Centennial Museum

One of the truly showcase plants from the Chihuahuan Desert, in my opinion, is *Salvia greggii*. This plant has several common names



such as autumn sage, cherry sage, coral sage, and red sage. It is truly one of the more popular plants sold in the nursery trade for use in xeric landscapes.

Salvia greggii has a thin distribution pattern from Southwest Texas throughout the Chihuahuan deserts into the southern Mexican province of San Luis Potosi. It is named after a Mexican trader named J. Gregg. *Salvia greggii* was introduced into cultivation in 1885.

Autumn sage has been in bloom for close to a month in the UTEP Desert Gardens and will continue to bloom throughout the summer until cold weather sets in during the winter. The edible blooms are in a variety of colors: red, pink, white, lavender, and violet. The individual flowers are on 2-4" spikes and vary in size from 1/4 to 1". The semi-evergreen shrub's mature height can be from 2' to 4'. The growth habit is upright to mounding. Many different cultivars are available to consumers
(continued on page 5)

About El Paso in the Native Plant Society of New Mexico

The El Paso Native Plant Society has been affiliated with the Native Plant Society of New Mexico (NPSNM) since 2001, reflecting the common native plants and plant communities shared by far west Texas and southern New Mexico. In addition to the events and newsletter sponsored by the El Paso chapter, members of the New Mexico state organization receive its informative quarterly newsletter; they are entitled to substantial discounts on books on botanical or native plant gardening subjects; and they may attend workshops, field trips, and the meetings and activities sponsored by the state society or the other nine local chapters. Registration fees for the state-wide meetings, which are held every year in early August, are also discounted for NPSNM members.

Membership

Native Plant Society members have a variety of interests, from amateur botany, native plant gardening, cooking and crafts, to hiking and outdoor recreation. If you share these interests, please join us! Basic annual membership, with the full El Paso and New Mexico statewide benefits is available for \$20 (individual or family), or \$12 (seniors, students, and limited income) - make checks payable to the Native Plant Society of New Mexico.

El Paso chapter-only membership is available for \$10—make check payable to the El Paso Native Plant Society. Complete the form on the reverse side, detach and mail with your check to: Membership, 6309 El Risco, El Paso TX 79912, or bring your payment to any meeting.

(Contributions beyond basic dues to support El Paso Native Plant Society activities are welcome and greatly appreciated; such gifts are deductible for federal tax purposes to the extent permitted by law.)

Featured Plant (continued)

with new ones being found and developed. “Furman’s Red” and “Sierra Linda” are durable cultivars as well as the bicolor cultivar “Lipstick”. As flower spikes bloom out later in the summer, trim off for a neater appearance. Some light pinching and pruning of ageing flowers spikes will help give continued bloom throughout the growing season. The somewhat fine and pungent foliage is dark green and stands out when placed next to plants or boulders of a gray or lighter color. The woody branches of *Salvia greggii* are somewhat brittle and can be easily broken or split when placed in areas of high foot traffic. Fortunately the plant recovers quickly. It is best to prune the plant back a little in the early spring to help give it a more compact shape. Prune out some of the older woodier stems every four to five years to keep newer growth on the plant.

Propagation is usually done with hardwood and semi-hardwood cuttings in late winter or early spring. Seed propagation is usually not done because of the extreme variability in seedlings.

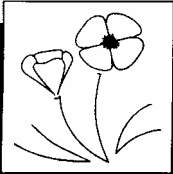
Placement in the landscape is important, as the *Salvia greggii* prefers some light shade in the afternoon. Too much shade reduces the amount of bloom, but too intense sunlight creates a plant that has lighter green foliage and the bloom colors seem faded. This plant also prefers some supplemental watering during the season. It prefers a well-drained loamy soil, but it will grow in

clay soils with drainage. *Salvia greggii* will benefit from a light application of nitrogen fertilizer during the mid-season.

When xeric landscapes were first used in the El Paso region, *Salvia greggii* was placed in street medians and other places of harsh extremes. They did not fair as well as other types of plants in these locations, but do well in better-managed, protected areas. Over watering or poor drainage will kill or severely damage the performance of these beautiful shrubs. *Salvia greggii* is very cold hardy (0-5 F.). Additional insect problems can be a result of over watering and fertilizing.

A common insect found on *Salvia greggii* is spittlebug. This insect is aphid like in that it sucks plant sap, but it covers itself in white frothy foam. This foam helps to protect the insect from predators, insecticides, and the environment. Insects can be controlled with a strong blast of water to dislodge the insect and wash the foam off. It will require patience and vigilance as the insect does reoccur. Systemic and contact insecticides can be used in extreme cases. In rare cases, thrips will bother the flowers and scale insects will be found on stems. Both of these insects can be managed with appropriate insecticides.

I hope everyone has found a home for *Salvia greggii* somewhere in their garden. If not, now is the time to add this colorful Chihuahuan Desert shrub to your landscape.



1010 Blanchard
El Paso, TX 79902

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Get the scoop on statewide activities of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico. Join at the state level to obtain a copy of the quarterly newsletter that details all the chapter activities. See member application below.

Website: <http://npsnm.unm.edu>



Native Plant Society of New Mexico

Yes, I'd like to join. Enroll me as a member of the state and the local chapter. Please, send my membership card to the address below.

El Paso Chapter

Individual or family. . . \$20

Limited income family, Students & Seniors (65+). \$12

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State__ ZIP_____

e-mail_____

*Please, make check payable to
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Mail to: **Native Plant Society**
6309 El Risco
El Paso, Texas 79912

This newsletter is published quarterly by the El Paso Chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico, a nonprofit organization, and is free to members. Manuscripts and artwork are welcome and should be submitted to the editor, Virginia Morris at:

elpasovlm@sbcglobal.net **OR:**

6309 El Risco, El Paso, TX 79912

Deadline for next edition: 15 June 2008

El Paso Native Plant Society Local chapter only membership

Your **\$10.00** will help support additional chapter activities and you will receive ***The Golden Poppy***.

Make checks payable to the **El Paso Native Plant Society**

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