



Habitat Gardening in the Southern Rocky Mountains

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Describing home... *a talking circle!*

- ▶ **Our natural setting:**
 - ▶ Climate, elevation, seasons
 - ▶ Soils and geology
 - ▶ Watershed features



Who lives here? We do! (the RURAL we: about 5,555)

And, according to Precious Heritage, 2000, New Mexico has:

147 mammals 448 birds 95 reptiles

762 vertebrates 25 amphibians and... 3,266 PLANTS

(= 4,037 species, of which 86 are endemic; & about 468 (10%) are at risk)

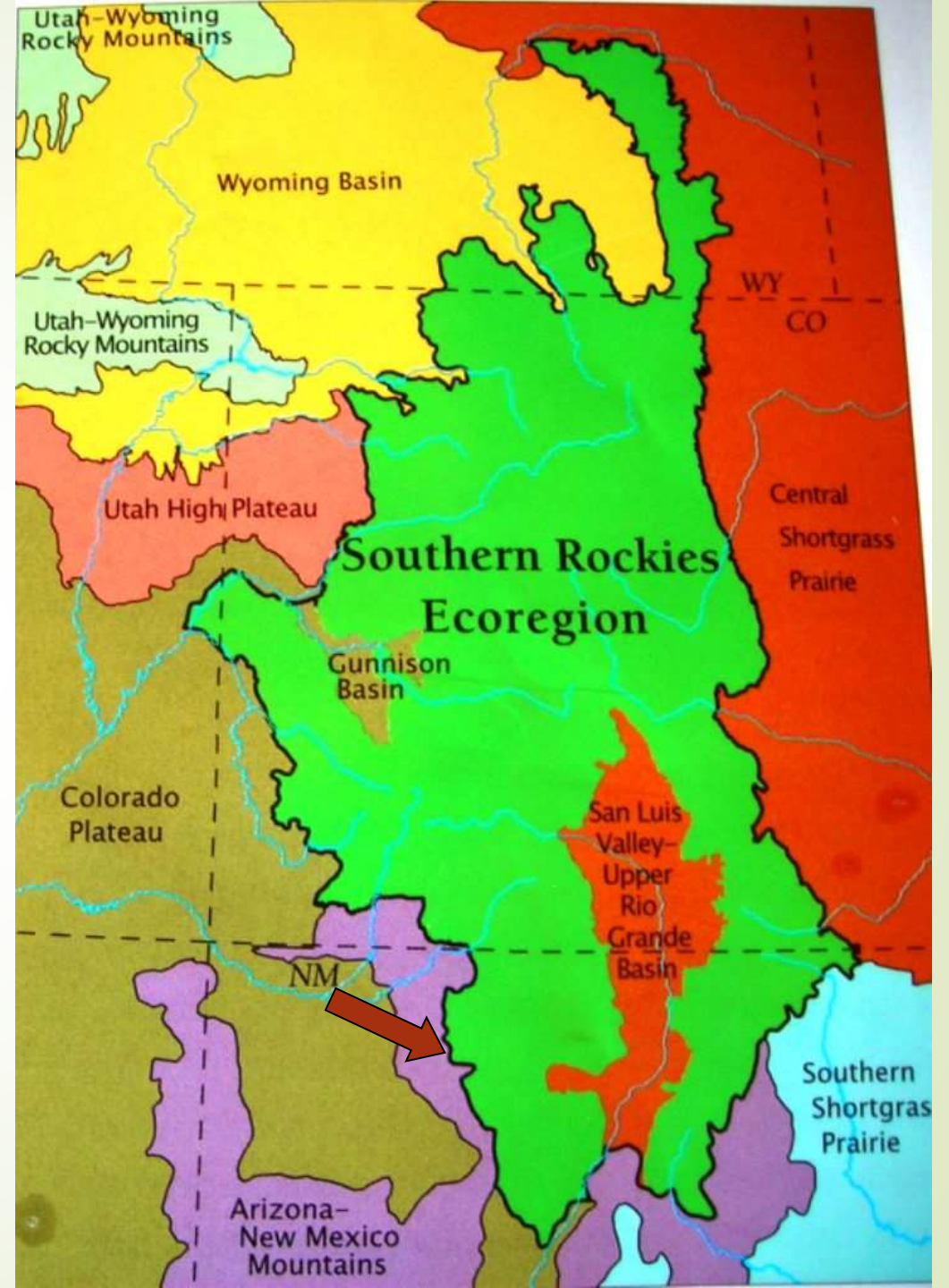
HABITAT = dwelling place, or “where we live”
(from Latin, *habitare*, to dwell)



Our Ecoregional Overlap

- Southern Rockies
- Colorado Plateau
- Upper Rio Grande Basin/ San Luis Valley
- Great Plains
- Upper Sonoran (AZ-NM mtns here)

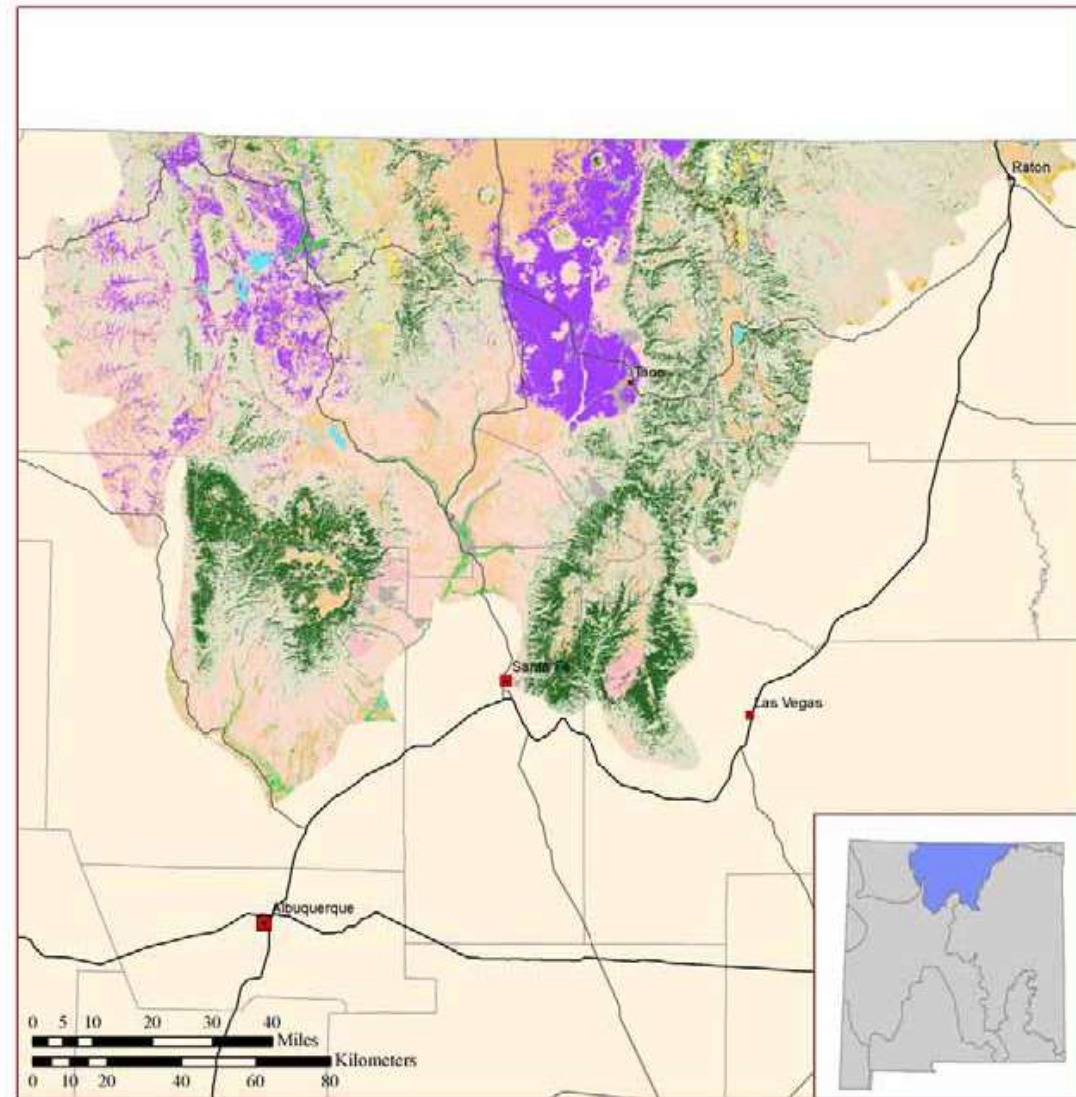
Source: *Southern Rockies Ecosystem Project (updates available)*



New Mexico Vegetation



Photo by Mary Pickett



Key Terrestrial Habitats

- Chihuahuan Semi-Desert Grassland
- Inter-Mountain Basins Big Sagebrush Shrubland
- Madrean Encinal
- Madrean Pine-Oak Conifer-Oak Forest and Woodland
- Riparian
- Rocky Mountain Alpine-Montane Wet Meadow
- Rocky Mountain Montane Mixed Conifer Forest and Woodland
- Western Great Plains Sandhill Shrubland
- Western Great Plains Shortgrass Prairie



Adjacent Landcover

- Active and Stabilized Dunes
- Agriculture and Developed
- Open water
- Pinyon-Juniper/Juniper Savanna
- Recently Disturbed
- Rocky Mountain Forest and Woodland
- Scrub and Shrubland
- Steppe and Grassland

The source of data is the Southwest Regional Gap Analysis Project (SWReGAP). For information regarding methods, results, and data accuracy, refer to <http://fws-nmcfwrn.msu.edu/swregap/>.

Habitat Diversity & Sustainable Gardens

- **Natural garden settings as a basis for habitat gardening:**
 - Forests
 - Woodlands
 - Meadows
 - Stream, springs, wetlands
 - Mesa habitats:
 - Basalt and plateau areas
 - Shrub-steppe
 - Grasslands or prairie remnant



Mountain Life Zones



Gardening . . and restoring!

- **Site considerations & sustainability**
- **Pollinators, Plants, what they need & *how they move***
- **Wildlife and natural habitat**
 - Open space/connectivity?
 - Birds, migrating species, regular visitors
 - Interaction with pets or domestic animals

Some design elements to consider:

Garden rooms (may maximize microsites; wind protection, water availability, shade, etc.)

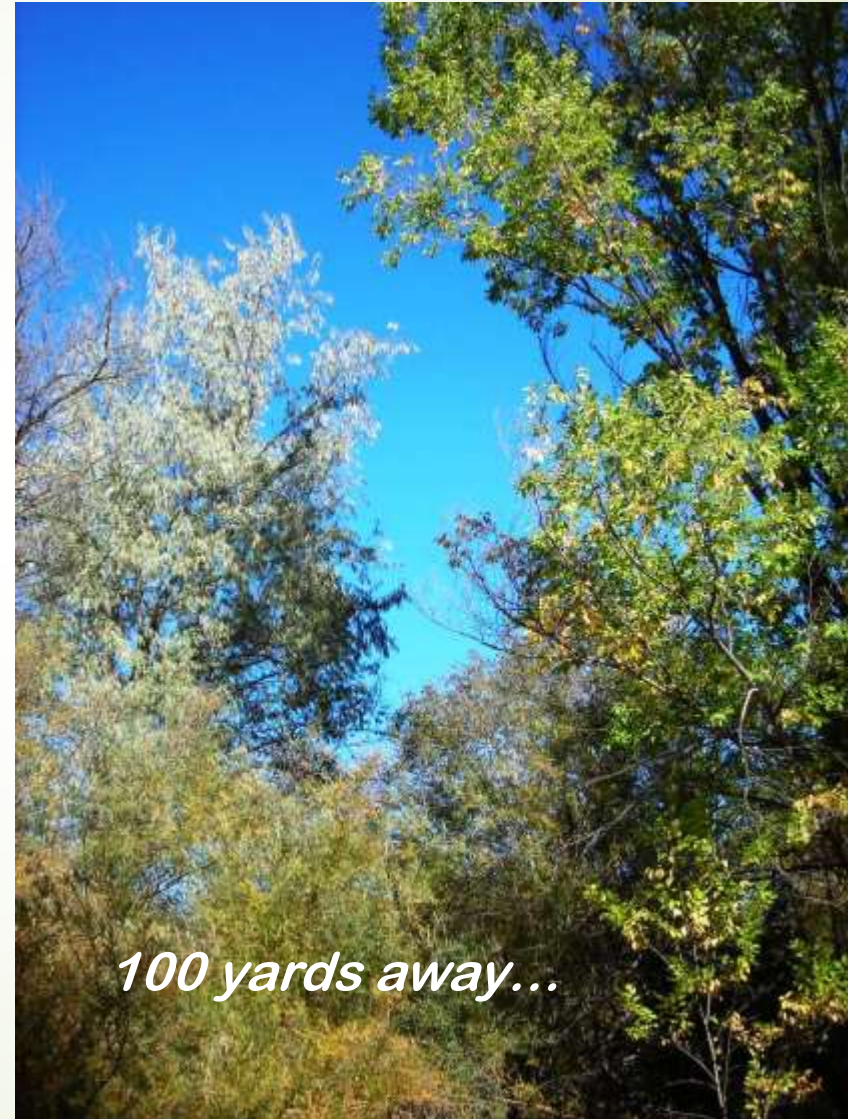
Landscapes as part of the natural “horizontal” biodiversity

Refugia concept, linking garden and natural habitats, providing a safe haven, pollinator connectivity, and more...



Native Riparian

Uh oh...



What to keep, what to remove, how to manage amendments and life stages for your natural garden

Open discussion!

- ❖ Organic inputs, harvest & creative planting
- ❖ Native plants and cultivation zones
- ❖ Soil improvement and erosion control
- ❖ Watering (quality, source, sheetflow, catchment)
- ❖ Weed control, seed collection, plant sources



**LOVE YOUR
HABITAT!**

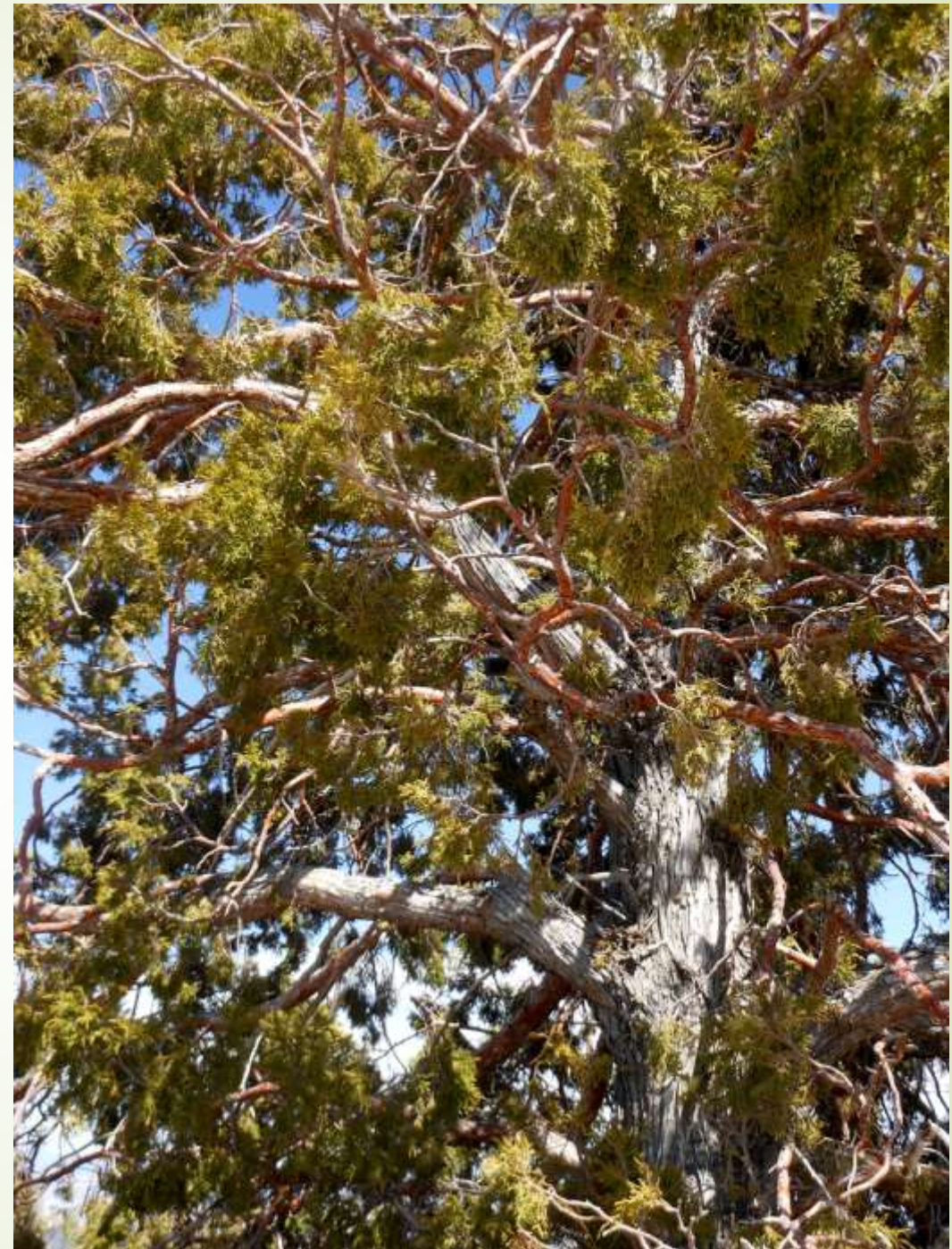


Native trees & some things to keep in mind





Juniper textural
diversity from a
key habitat tree



And yes, SHRUB diversity in a range of natural habitats:





Whatever your garden habitat,
enjoy a **WILDFLOWER FESTIVAL**



Where there's a niche, there's a way...





Just for fun, some
habitat gardening
examples . .

Including local examples, natural habitats, working
landscapes, and the Rocky Mountain Botanical Habitats
Demonstration Gardens, a Xeriscape Colorado Tour Garden

The joy of native plants



Populus & Alamo & Cottonwood



Photos by Sylvia & Mary

Botanical Diversity & High Desert Conditions

- Upper Sonoran
- Chihuahuan Relicts
- Colorado Plateau Plant Communities



Photo by Sylvia Rains Dennis



Photos by Mary Pickett

Upper Río Grande Habitats



Photos by Mary Pickett



Piñón-Juniper & Grassland Mosaic

above the Río Pueblo Gorge

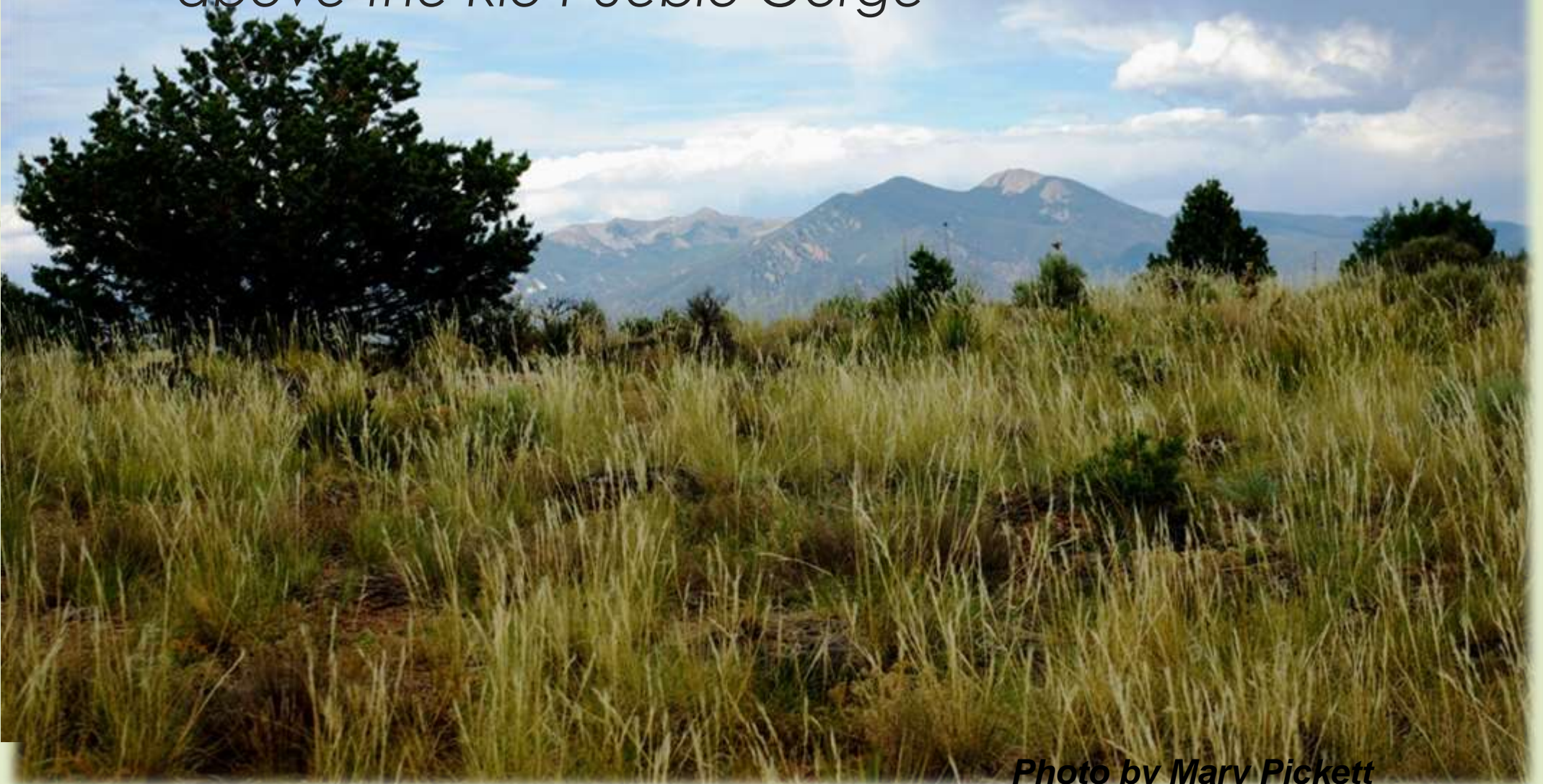


Photo by Mary Pickett

Riparian shrub layers in
the Sangres

Photos by Mary Pickett



**Canyon
Diversity in
the RM
Subalpine
Life Zone**



Photos by Sylvia Rains Dennis



Photo by Mary Pickett



Subalpine Rocky Mountain Flora

managing habitats



Habitat gardens & mutual sustainability



Inside, tomatoes



Outside: garden habitats





Remembering our Resilience

Whether a cyclical drought, changing temperature patterns, pine beetles, fire, dust-storm . .

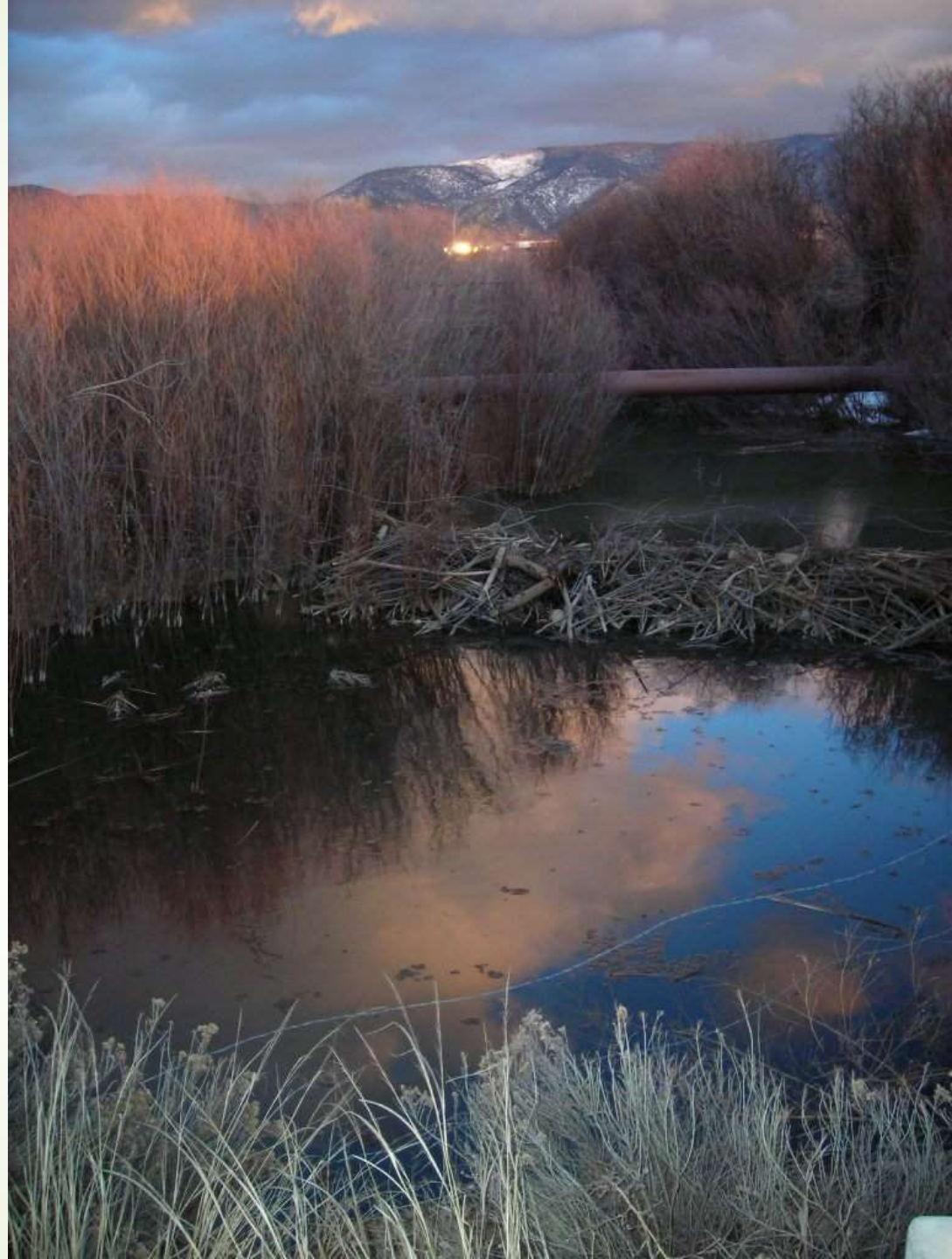


➤ Fremont cottonwood





In-town
Botanical
Diversity,
El Río
Fernando



Post-fire Diversity: The Hondo Burn



Photos by Mary Pickett

When in drought ..



¡Qué Viva el Chamiso!

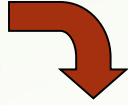
***Native to ALL 5 Ecoregions...
a superhero of plant adaptability***



Photos by Mary Pickett

El Río Grande near Embudo

¿la Chamisita?
(horsebrush: *Tetradymia canescens*)



¡la Chamisa!
(rabbitbrush: *Chrysothamnus nauseosus*)



Photos by Mary Pickett



in botanical gratitude



More questions for Sylvia? See the WILDLANDANCE website or call 575-770-9040

p.s.: this slide show will be available online, www.wildlandance.net