

The mission of Native Seeds/SEARCH (Southwestern Endangered Aridland Resources Clearing House) is to conserve, distribute, and document the adapted and diverse varieties of agricultural seeds, their wild relatives, and the roles these seeds play in the cultures of the American Southwest and northwest Mexico.

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# Seedhead News

# Annual Report

# NS/S Conservation Farm Explores Ways of Sustainable Agriculture

by Lynda Prim, Conservation Farm Manager

In Spring 2015, the Native Seeds/SEARCH Conservation Farm will be in its 17th year. While we are working to improve our management of the land and to build new infrastructure to help take the mission of NS/S to a new level, we also want to acknowledge and honor the path that was prepared for us. In 1998, when NS/S acquired the property in Patagonia for the Farm, Angelo Joaquin, Jr., the Executive Director at the time, stated, "The farm will allow us to — on a much greater basis — honor the effort of those who have gone before. We will be able to ensure that the unique varieties that they developed will not disappear in our lifetimes." Barney Burns, one of the NS/S founders, held this vision in his heart and it is still at the heart of our mission.

When the Conservation Farm was founded in 1998, the vision was for the Farm to support and expand the mission of NS/S in ways that would not be possible without it:

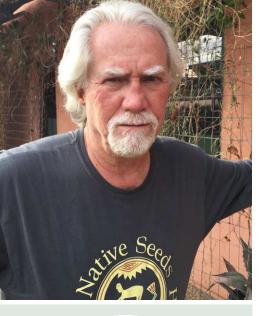
- Provide improved control over seed quality and purity.
- Experiment with and share new farming and gardening practices.
- Establish both cultivated and wild heirloom perennials such as chiltepines, prickly pear, and agave.

- Demonstrate the economic potential for ecologically sound, sustainable agriculture in our region.
- Grow out the seeds for regeneration and for distribution back into the world to be grown by gardeners and farmers, both Native and non-Native.

This vision for the NS/S Conservation Farm is as relevant today as it was in 1998. In 2015 and beyond, the NS/S Conservation Farm endeavors to be a resource for exploring and developing ways to feed people that maintains both cultural and biological diversity while contributing to the restoration and regeneration of the ecological health of the Earth. This vision is becoming the context in which the Farm contributes to the seed conservation work of NS/S.

There are many ways that the Farm is working to realize this vision:

- Refining and learning more about cover cropping systems for arid land agriculture and soil conservation.
- Employing water conservation practices and technologies in our production systems to replace the flood irrigation system that was in





Founders Barney Burns Mahina Drees Gary Nabhan Karen Reichhardt

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# From Our Executive Director

After almost thirty years doing development work in Asia and Africa, I am thrilled to take up the position of Executive Director of Native Seeds/SEARCH in Tucson. As an Arizona native, being involved in the Greater Southwest is something I am excited about. Since my arrival last November, I have spent a lot of time meeting with our members and supporters to learn about their concerns with our fragile environment. I have also met with collaborators within Tucson and other areas in Arizona who share a dedication to tackling the struggles to nourish the changing world. I visited three different farms and community gardens in the Phoenix area that work intently to prove that farming locally is a solution to our food security concerns. My encounters with them only strengthen my belief that the Greater Southwest is full of people who care deeply about the world we will leave behind for the next generation.

Native Seeds/SEARCH is now in its fourth decade of working in the region to preserve the ancient crop diversity that sustained Native Americans for thousands of years. Our work gains importance every year as climate change threatens more and more life on our entire earth. We are part of a global movement seeking sustainable solutions to improve our quality of life. In 2015, our conservation agriculture and education programs will engage a wider range of communities in their efforts to sustain themselves through locally adapted food systems. One of the new initiatives we're launching this year is a seed saving workshop done entirely in Spanish. This is a pilot course that aims to make seed-saving skills accessible to all residents in Southern Arizona and the borderlands.

People everywhere are increasingly aware of the importance of living with local solutions. Regulars come into our retail store in Tucson to seek advice on how to grow healthy food in their backyard or neighborhood gardens. Others order seeds online after consulting staff about choosing adaptable seeds for their planned garden efforts. If they aren't growing food themselves, they want to know how and where to source local healthy food.

We are joining hands with other organizations like the Mission Garden Project-Friends of Tucson's Birthplace, Borderlands Restoration, Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, and Iskashitaa Refugee Network in our common concerns about regional food security. These collaborative efforts are an essential component in our programs to realize our vision of a Southwest with greater food security.

We will continue to strive for a community where farms, gardens, restaurants, and kitchens come together to keep our aridland agricultural heritage thriving.

But we need your help. Partner with us to create a healthy and secure future for the seeds that produce the food we eat. Become a member, donate to support our cause, or volunteer your time to our programs. Your participation is critical. Native Seeds/SEARCH deeply appreciates your continued support in our quest for a food secure world.

Larrie Warren



# Your Support

Essential partners of Native Seeds/SEARCH are our funders — generous foundations and individuals who share this vision. We offer donors the following options for

**Direct Donation** Gifts can be made for unrestricted support or for a specific purpose.

**Memorial Giving** Celebrate the lives and achievements of special individuals by making gifts in their honor.

**Workplace Giving** Help sustain NS/S through the Combined Federal Campaign, your local United Way,

# Native Seeds/SEARCH Receives New Grants

Native Seeds/SEARCH's core programs in crop conservation, seed distribution, research, and education all depend on generous financial support from a diversity of sources. Individual memberships, private donations, and product purchases all help fund our non-profit work. Another major pillar of support for NS/S is institutional grants, which variously fund either specific projects or the organization's general operations. In recent months NS/S has received several new grants, some from long-time funders of our work and some from newcomers to our family of supporters. We are immensely grateful for their trust and partnership in our innovative efforts! Among our most consistent and generous supporters is the **Leuthold Foundation**, who once again is supporting the general operations of NS/S with a grant of support for \$19,000.

One of the major efforts for NS/S in 2014 and continuing this year, has been to build on the success of Seed School and to shape our education programming to serve the needs of our many different stakeholders in the Southwest. We are excited to be offering in March our first Spanish-language seed saving course, the first step in a long-term campaign to improve outreach to Spanish speakers. We are also developing a community seed banking course designed to support Native communities working on local seed security. Similarly, we are developing new seed literacy content for K–12 students and educators. Several of our new grants are supporting the development of these programs:

- \* A generous \$25,000 award from an anonymous grantor is providing critical underwriting of general staff support, curriculum development and publishing materials.
- \* The Punch Woods Endowment, administered by the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona, recently awarded NS/S a grant for \$2,900 in support of our collaborative Spanish-language course and accompanying seed saving manual.
- A \$5,000 grant from the Left Tilt Fund will also go toward Spanish-language efforts, as well as community seed banking

education and the pairing of our Native American Free Seed and Community Seed Grants with educational opportunities.

- The International Association for Eating Disorder Professionals awarded \$1,000 to help digitize, update and translate the diabetes education materials that were a cornerstone of our long-running and successful Desert Foods for Diabetes program.
- We are also thankful for the ongoing support of the Christensen Fund and Gila River Indian Community, both of which enable us to provide free or affordable workshop participation for Native American or low-income individuals.

Our conservation program has also recently received new grant funding:

- The Dr. Scholl Foundation awarded a \$5,000 grant in support of the regeneration of our seed bank collection, our new Native American Bulk Seed Exchange program (launched in fall 2014), and evaluation of crop characteristics.
- The Amaterra Foundation awarded a \$1,000 grant to help with infrastructure and equipment improvements at the NS/S Conservation Farm, specifically for a new seed cleaner and irrigation system.
- In a continuation of a long and rewarding relationship, the Southwestern Foundation for Education and Historic Preservation awarded \$12,775 to support the development of a new program aimed at enlisting regional farmers and gardeners in evaluating and reporting on the performance and characteristics of varieties in the NS/S seed bank collection.

To each of these new funders as well as innumerable earlier grantors not mentioned by name here, we are deeply grateful. Your support makes our work possible. Look online and in future newsletters for additional details about our new programs and how you can participate.

# Makes a Difference

helping to further our important work. To use our convenient and secure website to make a gift, log on to nativeseeds.org/support or call 520.622.0830 ext. 100.

and other workplace campaigns. Many companies offer an Employee Matching Gift Program where they will match your contributions even after you're retired. Check with your employer for more information.

**Legacy Giving** Bequests and life income gifts help ensure food security for future generations. Legal Counsel should be consulted prior to creating or amending any Will. If you have questions, please call or email us at donate@nativeseeds.org.





Seed School graduates

Community food projects received seed grants





# You Made All This Possible

Your gifts to Native Seeds/SEARCH made an extraordinary impact. Here's a snapshot of the heights you helped us achieve last year.

# PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS (October 1, 2013 — September 30, 2014)

### Conservation

In 2014 we completed the assembly and shipment of a renewed black box collection for our seed bank to the USDA facility in Ft. Collins, Colorado. The box contains samples of nearly every one of the 1,900 accessions in our seed collection, minus those that have not yet had a successful regeneration.

Generous grants from the Gila River Indian Community and the Christensen Fund helped us launch several new initiatives. We now have a new black boxing program at our facility for community seed banks and individual seedsavers in the Southwest. They can store backup samples of their seed collections in our -18°C freezer and retrieve them when needed, thereby enhancing the security of their collection. The Native American conservation internship program hosted two young Native individuals last year. Through the six-month paid positions, they learned first-hand about botany, genetics, and community seed banking at our seed bank and farm. The experience they gained will help their work in improving seed security in their community. Another new initiative is the Native American Grower's Network to support Native farmers in seed production for traditional varieties. We collaborated with three farmers at Tesuque Pueblo in New Mexico to produce maize and bean seeds. They received planting stock when needed and a small startup stipend for seed saving supplies, and we committed to purchase seeds from them for distribution through our Free Seed Program and storage in their local communities. We are now distributing the approximately 200 lbs of traditional seed produced in the first season. We are developing educational opportunities to pair with this program and plan to continue the successful program in 2015 and beyond.

### Farm

As production was not a major goal of the 2014 farm season, we focused our efforts on strengthening farm infrastructure, soil, water and weed management, and planning. The new farm manager, Lynda Prim, developed a plan for more water-, energy-, and labor-efficient irrigation practices. This season, the crew began the practice of planting cover crops using only residual soil moisture, rainfall, and no supplemental irrigation. We also began using minimal tillage practices that will become part of our management goals. The farm acquired a brand new seed cleaner and other critical equipment such as a mower, a weather station, and two vehicles. We also received a donation of a BCS walk-behind tractor with appropriate attachments for smaller scale farming. Not only do these improvements benefit our own activities; they also serve as examples to other farmers of sustainable dry land agriculture and seed production. The farm increasingly represents an excellent site for farmer education, and Lynda is leading the effort to transform the farm as a major showpiece of our operations.



### Distribution

We expanded our existing distribution programs and launched several new ones. The Community Seed Grant program supported over 104 projects and provided access to over 2,400 free seed packets, more than twice of what we accomplished the previous year. *Read highlights of this program on pages 6–7.* 

A new Bulk Free Seed program provides free farm-scale seed quantities to Native American farmers. Recipients will return 1.5 times the supplied seed upon a successful harvest to be distributed to other Native growers. We are seeing great interest in the program and have worked with several farmers who are growing varieties not seen in their communities for years. We launched a similar program for non-Native farmers who are required to return at least twice the supplied seed. In previous years we had great success using a similar model with wheat farmers in Arizona.

The wholesale program continues to gain interest and traction. We have maintained accounts with Whole Foods in the Tucson and Phoenix areas, and expanded our reach in 2014 to include Aztec Ruins in New Mexico, Arbico Organics in Oro Valley, and the Deer Valley Rock Art Center in Phoenix.

Finally, we implemented a new policy in mid-2014 that restricted access to seeds of those varieties in the collection that are in very low supply. As membership support is critical in enabling us to make this diversity available, these seeds are now only available to NS/S members and Free Seed recipients. This is extending the lifespan of our limited seed stocks and giving us more time to match our seed production with the demand.

### Education/Outreach

2014 was an important transitional year for our educational program. In the spring we conducted the last of our National Seed Schools — partnering with the Seed Library of Los Angeles and Hampshire College in Massachusetts — as well as our last week-long Seed School, which we held at the center in Tucson. We are proud that this pioneering program has trained over 300 people since 2011. Recognizing that our own Southwest region — and in particular underserved communities — needs to be a priority, we began offering a more accessible, lower-cost, weekend intensive, *Introduction to Seed Saving*, this past Fall and will continue to offer this workshop twice a year. We also began to develop both community partnerships and curriculum to work with both Spanish-speakers and K-12 students (*see page 9*).

In May of 2014 we also conducted our most ambitious Seed Keepers to date, together with the Shakopee Mdwakanton Sioux community in southern Minnesota and with support from the First Nations Development Institute and the Intertribal Agriculture Council. We are humbled to have played a role in this landmark event, which was attended by 30 Native gardeners and farmers from tribes throughout the Great Lakes region. Our mission remains to serve the Native communities in their efforts in food and seed sovereignty, and our Seed Keepers program will be ongoing — in fact, we have just learned that a major national funder will be providing support to expand the program through 2018.





# Returning the Seeds to the Community

### by Melissa Kruse-Peeples, Conservation Program Manager

In 2014, NS/S awarded 104 Community Seed Grants, distributing over 2,400 packets of seeds! Thanks to your support from our members we were able to double the amount of grants supported in the previous year. Seeds were distributed to several different types of projects that serve to educate, nourish, and empower communities in our region. This year's funded projects included school gardens, gardens to support food donation programs, gardens as part of therapy or rehabilitation for substance abuse and mental illness, women's economic empowerment programs, seed libraries and exchanges, and demonstration gardens at historical sites. The Seed Grant program serves as an integral part of our conservation work by encouraging local seed saving and use of the seeds we steward. We are excited to share some of their stores with you.

Applications for the Community Seed Grant Program are accepted each year in January, May, and September. Details and applications can be found at our website at: **nativeseeds.org**/ **resources/ communityseedgrants** 

### Southwest Conservation Corps Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico

Seeds have immense power to teach children and a majority of our 2014 Community Seed Grants supported garden projects at K-12 schools or youth oriented programs. Realizing the aging farmers of their Pueblo, the **Southwest Conservation Corp** is working to reinvigorate Acoma farming practices by teaching 12 Acoma youth (ages 14-25) to plant and maintain traditional fields and gardens with traditional seeds. Many participants at first were lukewarm to the prospect of spending a whole summer outside farming. However, once they saw their first corn peek out of the ground their excitement grew just as the seeds they gave life began to grow.





### **Coronado State Park** Bernalillo, New Mexico

You helped us support several demonstration gardens throughout the Southwest Region. **Coronado Historic Site** is the location of Kuaua Pueblo, an ancestral Tiwa village, that was visited during the explorer's 16th century quest for the Seven Cities of Gold. The gardens help interpret the long history of agriculture in the Rio Grande region. In addition to highlighting the heritage crops, the gardens demonstrate rockmulch grids and three-sisters gardening techniques. Follow the progress of the garden at http://kuaua.com/gardens/.



### Life Link Clubhouse Santa Fe, New Mexico

Community garden projects supported this year include numerous residential and outpatient centers for people in recovery from mental illness or substance addiction. One example is **Life Link Clubhouse** where the garden is a place for healing and confidence building. Participants learned to grow, cook and eat healthy foods. Another example is the **New Moon Lodge** at Ohkay Owingeh in New Mexico. This treatment center for Native American males recovering from substance abuse integrates the gardens into their therapy strategy. The participants are literally and figuratively planting a seed to bring new beginnings.



### Native American Connections and Tonatierra Nahuacalli Phoenix, Arizona

In 2014, we witnessed a rise in community garden projects working to revitalize urban settings by empowering local residents to grow healthy food and connect with nature. **Native American Connections** is partnering with the **International Rescue Committee** to plant community gardens within Steele Indian School Park in downtown Phoenix. The project also seeks to reconnect urban Native communities with their roots – working the land, planting the seeds, and nurturing the plants. Also reconnecting with their ceremonial relationship with seeds is **Tonatierra**, an indigenous Nahautl



community in Phoenix. The *milpa*, or garden, is not only allowing community members a place for traditional songs, dances, and ceremonies but provides nourishing food.

### Sam Hughes Elementary Tucson, Arizona

Numerous elementary schools are also incorporating gardening into their curriculum, including **Sam Hughes Elementary School**. Students planted seeds of native wildflowers to provide habitat for their resident desert tortoise and ecology lessons. Students are also using the garden to understand the cultural and



historical significance of these seeds, how these seeds are the result of generations of seed collectors, and the seeds' importance in our climate.

# Future Foundations Family Center and New Mexico State University Grants, New Mexico



Numerous projects supported this year included a strong seed saving component to community garden efforts to support local seed libraries or seed exchange events. For example, elementary and middle school students worked along with college student volunteers to restore neglected greenhouses and garden beds through a collaboration between **Future Foundations and NMSU**. Saved seeds contributed to an annual community seed exchange program.



# Reviving Jack Beans by Melissa Kruse-Peeples, Conservation Program Manager

Imagine if you could take a time machine and visit an ancient Hohokam agricultural field 1,000 years ago. The crops in that field would contain corn, green-striped cushaw squash, and tepary beans – varieties familiar to contemporary Pima and Tohono O'odham farmers. But you might also find an unusual, yet majestic, bean known today as jack bean (*Canavalia ensiformis*). Jack beans have been recovered from numerous archaeological sites throughout Central and Southern Arizona, including the Hodges Ruin located just a few miles from the Native Seeds/SEARCH Seed Bank in Tucson. Jack beans, an introduction from tropical environments of the Central and South America, appear as part of the Southwestern agricultural history around A.D. 700. This bean has just about disappeared from traditional agriculture and was last documented among Pima fields in Sacaton, Arizona in 1938.

Native Seeds/SEARCH conserves two accessions of *C. ensiformis*. One was collected from a mestizo dooryard garden outside of Navajoa, Sonora, and the other from Willcox, Arizona, that likely derived from a commercial source rather than a historical lineage of the area. In 2014 we were able to successfully regenerate one of these

aging accessions to provide fresh seed samples. Through future growout efforts we hope to increase the seed supply and once again see these beans growing along the banks of the Santa Cruz and Salt Rivers.

Jack beans, also called wonder beans, generally require more water than desert-adapted tepary beans. However, once established the incredibly deep tap-root allows them to be drought resistant, an important characteristic since they require a long growing season of 150 days or more. They are also day-length sensitive with flowering triggered late in the summer. The flowers of this species are gorgeous and resemble their distant cousins in the *Phaseolus* genus. The plants produce large vines and easily produce upwards of 50 pods per plant.

The enormous pods reach over a foot in length and can be eaten like a green bean when young. Dried beans are mildly toxic and should not be eaten in large quantities. Unfortunately our 2014 harvest was modest and we sacrificed culinary experimentation in order to have more seed available to increase.

### NS/S Conservation Farm Explores Ways of Sustainable Agriculture

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use on the Farm. These include a new aluminum overhead irrigation system, monsoon planting, rain water harvesting, and drip irrigation.

- Experimenting with appropriate technology for small to medium scale farms. Selecting and building implements for the Conservation Farm that can be replicated on small farms anywhere. For example, in 2014 the Farm acquired a BCS walk behind tractor with tiller and flail mower/mulcher attachments for smaller scale, energy efficient soil cultivation and management of cover crops.
- Developing farming practices that reduce the need for tractor tillage while conserving soil.
- Building traditional garden structures such as rock terraces and waffle gardens for growing seeds and food. Building new structures such as hoop houses for year round production.
- Introducing perennial crops such as chiltepines, prickly pear, agave and native pollinator habitat plants into the farm landscape.

As we go into the future, the Conservation Farm is expanding our seed conservation focus to look at sustainable food production in arid lands. Beginning in 2015 the Farm will begin to experiment with growing food in the context of traditional farming and arid land systems. We believe there are keys to sustainability in such systems that can help to maintain community food security while conserving the biodiversity we will need for resiliency and adaptation in a world that is constantly changing. The NS/S Conservation Farm in Patagonia has a very special quality for meeting this vision — a sense of place. This place provides a framework for looking at natural ecosystems, at the ways in which people have fed themselves from the land over time, and the roles of cultural and biological diversity. In a world that needs pragmatic responses to global challenges like climate change and feeding growing populations sustainably, the NS/S Conservation Farm provides a place to take action and to work toward a more sustainable and equitable way of farming and feeding people.

# NS/S Offers First Seed Saving Workshop in Spanish: March 7, 2015

NS/S is excited to offer our first introductory seed saving workshop entirely in Spanish, on March 7, 2015. Development of this course is in partnership with the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona and the Western Institute for Leadership Development (WILD), with the goal of making seed saving skills accessible to all residents of Southern Arizona and the borderlands.

This is a pilot course that will help us develop future educational programming for Spanish-speakers. The workshop is being offered at greatly reduced cost, and the fee will be waived for those in need. In the process, staff at the Food Bank and WILD will be trained as teachers to help build capacity for seed conservation and food security in communities they serve. Alongside these efforts we are developing a seed saving guide for the Southwest which will be translated into Spanish, along with many of our outreach materials.

# News and Notes

### Welcomes and Farewells

In our last edition of *Seedhead News*, **The Special Tribute to Barney Burns**, we said good-bye to a founder and a very special friend. In this most recent period we have had no staff departures, and the only addition was the arrival of the new Executive Director, **Larrie Warren** in November.

We also bid farewell to two Board members. **David Tiers** is leaving the Board after serving for over seven years, the past three years as the Board Chairman. David has worked long and hard for this organization and we wish him well as he slowly moves into retirement from his law practice. We also bid a farewell to Board member **Felipe Molina**, a local farmer, teacher, and former staff member who has been on the Board since March of 2014.





## **In Memoriam:** *Volunteer Annemarie Bussmann*

It is with sadness that we announce the recent passing of Annemarie Bussmann.

She began helping Native Seeds/SEARCH in 2007 and quickly became one of our most dedicated and supportive volunteers. Every Wednesday, you could find her busily sorting through the odds and ends of mail and web orders alongside Distribution Coordinator, Betsy Armstrong. "From sorting mail orders to taking inventory, there wasn't any job that she'd refuse," Betsy says, "As long as there was coffee and chocolate, she would keep going and always did a great job."

Annemarie had a similar love story with the Sonoran Desert, as do many Tucson transplants. Born in Switzerland, she always had a fascination with plants. "I used to have a book about cactuses, with saguaros and chollas, and I wondered if I would ever get to see them." Twenty-seven years ago, she left Europe and eventually came to call Tucson, with its wild landscape, her home.

For Annemarie, the appeal of volunteering at Native Seeds/SEARCH was in the name itself. "It was the word 'native' that drew me here. I am very interested in Native American history, plants, and nature." She appreciated how all of these things came together in the mission and work of NS/S. "It's all a circle," she said.

We miss Annemarie. And we are grateful that she chose Tucson as her home, and Native Seeds/SEARCH as part of her circle.

# Thank You For Your Support!

David & Nita Maren

Whether this was your first time giving or your twentieth, your generosity helped Native Seeds/SEARCH achieve remarkable progress this past year. All donations and memberships listed were received between October 1, 2013 and September 30, 2014. Over 1,860 supporters made gifts under \$100. We wish we had the space to acknowledge each one of you, and we are equally grateful for the support from all our donors, members, and partners. Thank you for your dedication and continued loyalty to our organization.

Wendy Gamble

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March 6-7 Free 2-day Native American Seed Growers Workshop for farmers interested in growing, saving, and storing seed. The workshop includes a field day to the NS/S Conservation Farm in Patagonia, Arizona.

March 17, 6-9 pm La Cocina's Tuesday for Tucson benefits Native Seeds/SEARCH! Have dinner and drinks with us at La Cocina and 10% of your bill will benefit Native Seeds/SEARCH. Enjoy foot-stomping music by the 4th Street String Band, gift-basket raffles, and more! Celebrate the work of this great non-profit organization and take part in our campaign to preserve the Southwestern heritage to nourish the changing world. Join us! 201 N Court Avenue in downtown Tucson.

March 27-29 Annual Spring Plant Sale at our Retail Store, 3061 N. Campbell Ave, Tucson 85719.

**April 7** Arizona Gives Day! You can support NS/S in this state and nationwide 24-hour online giving campaign. Learn more at azgives.org.

May 3-6 The 2015 International Seed Library Forum is coming to Tucson, co-sponsored by the University of Arizona Southwest Center, Pima County Public Library, Native Seeds/SEARCH, *Edible Baja Arizona*, and Mercado San Agustin. We'll post updates on our website and Facebook page.