The term “Preservation” is such a multifaceted word. In the fields of natural and cultural resources, preservation has many different meanings depending upon the discipline. There is the preservation of works of art, or the historic preservation of a Trost building; yet there is also environmental preservation of lands, such as the Rio Bosque, or the preservation of data, whether it be digital born or public records in an archive. Since May is Preservation Month, this newsletter will focus on some facet of how we, as humans, preserve things.

Part of the mission of the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens is the preservation of biological specimens. In the Gardens, we preserve species of plants from throughout the northern Chihuahuan Desert and thus help preserve the migratory birds and butterflies, in addition to local insects and other animals who use the gardens for food. Now is the time to visit the Gardens. They are bursting with life!

I would like to end by praising the efforts of all the health practitioners who are keeping our community safe and putting their own lives at risk. I think it is human nature to want to preserve life, and I applaud them for their work.

Stay safe and be well,

Daniel Carey-Whalen
I have been lucky enough to be able to work at home, and after staring so long at the same place in my living room, I have gone through a declutter and organization like no other. I know I’m not alone. Tons of articles on my social media feed have been giving me advice on how to best “quaranclean” and many of us are tackling tasks we have been putting off, such as organizing old family photos.

One of the reasons this task might seem daunting is the fear of handling and damaging old photographs. With some of the provided tips below, you can be on your way to easing that fear.

1. Never handle photographs with bare hands; use nitrite or cotton gloves. Your hands have residues on them that can cause permanent damage to your photographs. Grasp the photo gently from the sides.

2. Store the photographs in a cool and dark place. Light damage is irreversible and cool temperatures pause the chemical delay and reduce the chances of an insect infestation. So don’t store photos next to the heater or a water pipe!

3. When storing photographs in albums it is important to use the proper material. Certain plastics are not chemically stable, meaning they can cause damage to your photos. Keep an eye out for albums that are acid free and have sleeves made of stable plastics such as polyester, polypropylene or polyethylene.

4. When you display photographs it is always best to use copies.

5. To digitize photos, be sure to check the object fits properly on the scanner. Never use the automatic feeder section as it can cause damage to your photographs if it gets caught. If the photograph is old or unstable, use a high resolution photograph.
6. After your photos have digitized, don’t forget to save all the information that is known about the photo. This is called metadata, the data about the photo, such as who the photo is of, when it was taken, etc.

7. Save the information in various formats as technology goes obsolete after a few years. Save a copy on a jump drive, the cloud, and your hard drive. Don’t forget to check on it periodically.

8. DON’T attempt to fix a photograph with tape, glue or other adhesives. For damaged photographs visit [http://www.conservation-us.org/about-conservation/find-a-conservator#](http://www.conservation-us.org/about-conservation/find-a-conservator#) to find a photo conservator near you who can help.

With these tips you should be on your way to organizing your family photos in no time! For more information on preserving family photographs visit [https://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives](https://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives)

Lhakhang

Claudia Ley, Education Curator

In this border town city known for its historic Henry C. Trost buildings and Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired homes stands the University of Texas at El Paso with its unique architecture inspired by a small country up high in the Himalayan Mountains, the Kingdom of Bhutan. As a former student and alumna, I have always been an admirer of the university’s architecture, location and desert landscape. When the opportunity presented itself, I would make it a point to bring out of town visitors to see the campus and its unique location right across from our sister city of Ciudad Juarez. During my ten months as the Education Curator at the Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens I have met people from all over the world who also visit our campus for these unique reasons. For many who only had a few minutes or a couple of hours to spare while in town, there is one place on campus in particular that they wanted to see, the Lhakhang.

In the summer of 2008, the Kingdom of Bhutan was showcased in the 42nd Annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C., Known as the “Land of the Thunder Dragon”, Bhutan remains one of the least known countries in the world, and among the smallest with a population of approximately 800,000 people. However, this invitation to be a part of the largest living exhibition suddenly put Bhutan on the map for at least a million individuals who visited the festival that summer.

With approximately 150 Bhutanese participants of artistic and cultural backgrounds, for many this would be the first time they would travel outside their provinces. This would also be an opportunity for them to showcase - with much pride - their highly preserved rich cultural and artistic heritage known as the “Zorig Chusum” or Bhutan’s “Thirteen Traditional Arts”. At the center of it all in the National Mall was the lhakhang, or “temple”, reflecting some of the oldest architectural styles introduced to Bhutan from Tibet, dating back to the 7th century. With no architectural drawings, the Bhutanese builders, artists, artisans, and craftspeople were determined to build this structure that would showcase high-quality examples of traditional arts and crafts practiced by the Bhutanese peoples. The Lhakhang would include large scale mural paintings, sculptures, and carpentry. At the opening ceremonies of the Festival His Royal Highness Jigyel Ugyen Wangechuck designated a
permanent home for the lhakhang on the UTEP campus. Bhutan’s long-standing relationship to this university dates back to the late 1960s, and the influence Bhutanese architecture has had on the campus since 1917.

In 2015 the lhakhang was re-erected in the heart of Centennial Plaza as part of the university’s Centennial Celebration, becoming part of the Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens’ family. Having recently celebrated the 5th year anniversary of Centennial Plaza and Lhakhang on April 18th, the Centennial Museum is committed to continuing to showcase the beauty and uniqueness of the Lhakhang while preserving it as a one of a kind cultural exhibition in our desert landscape. While the museum and Lhakhang remain closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, we look forward to being able to bring a digital experience of the Lhakhang within the next few months as we are working on an exciting project with the Humanities Department and Augment El Paso. Please continue to check in with us via the web and social media for updates.

2020 City Nature Challenge

The City Nature Challenge 2020 took place the last weekend in April. Even with the difficulties associated with our stay at home orders, we saw an increase in the number of observations, species, and observers this year! We had almost 1500 observations and 72 observers, and last year we had 1200 observations by 53 observers. This year white-winged doves, house finches, Gambel’s quail, convergent lady beetles, and creosote bush were the top five species reported. Last year the top five were all plants: creosote bush, lechuguilla, spiny hedgehog cactus, purple prickly pear, and desert willow. Perhaps the differences were caused by the observers having to stay around home, and not being able to get into the Franklin Mountains? It will be interesting to see what next year brings! And remember that you can use iNaturalist year-round to learn about the nature around us, as mentioned in our last issue.
Chihuahuan Desert Gardens
Notes for May 2020 by Kevin Floyd, Botanical Curator

The recent week of temperatures in the 90s has it feeling more like summer than spring in the Chihuahuan Desert Gardens. Barb Bailey and I are going in a couple times a week to check irrigation, fix leaks, and make sure that all the plants are receiving enough water. Even with many of our native plants adapted to low rainfall, our plant collection includes species from higher elevations and wetter microclimates that require more than our average rainfall provides. This month also brings us National Wildflower Week, May 4-10. Even though you might not receive this newsletter during that time, the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center has a lot of resources related to wildflowers, and is always a great resource to learn more about native plants.

As I’ve been learning more about native plants in the Chihuahuan Desert, I’ve run into challenges with identifying the various species of wildflowers, particularly those with yellow flowers. Plants that look alike at a quick glance can become easier to identify with more careful examination. In general, we need to look at more than just the flower when identifying plants. Taking a holistic approach, we also need to look at the leaves, size, and any fruits or seeds that might be present. Here are some tips for identifying some of the common yellow wildflowers I’ve seen both in the gardens and growing as weeds in my neighborhood. Next time you are out for a walk, take a look at the flowers that you see and try to identify them. And remember that the iNaturalist app makes a great tool to help you learn the flowers.

Golden dogweed (*Thymophylla pentachaeta*), pictured to the left, is the smallest of the plants covered here, reaching only 6-12” tall. It has a single flower per stalk. The leaves are crowded along the stems, dark green, and pointed. The plant has a bit of an aroma similar to thyme.

Spiny goldenweed (*Xanthisma spinulosum*), pictured to the right, is usually a bit taller than the dogweed, reaching up to 18” tall. It has branched stems with widely separated toothed leaves. The stems and leaves are a grayish-green color. The seed heads look somewhat like dandelions, but not so feathery.
Adonis blazingstar (*Mentzelia multiflora*) has the best common name of the group, and is also the tallest, with some plants reaching 30” tall. The flowers are also larger, and usually have 10 petals and long stamens, giving them a different appearance than the other plants here. There are many branches, and the leaves are spiny and covered in little barbs that can stick to pets or gardeners.

Hairyseed bahia (*Bahia absinthifolia*) is another short plant, reaching just over a foot tall. It has gray-green fuzzy leaves, and the older leaves often have three or five lobes, with the middle one larger than the others.

Desert marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*), pictured on the left, is about the same height as the goldenweed, about 18”. There are usually a couple layers of petals on the flowers, which are held on nearly leafless stalks. The leaves are gray-green and fuzzy like the bahia, but have deeper lobes and are mostly on the bottom half of the plant. The leaves are more curled than those of bahia, which are pretty flat.

All these plants can be started from seeds, so if you notice any dried seed heads on plants in your neighborhood that you can legally access (think medians, vacant lots, edges of parks), consider grabbing a few to spread at your house. I’ve seen native bees and butterflies on all these species, so you would be helping to create more food for these beneficial insects while making your yard a bit more cheerful!

Kevin Floyd, Ph.D., Botanical Curator
Website Revamp

New look!
Our website is going through a face lift. Be sure to check it out by visiting us at Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens or click on the picture to the right. Enjoy!

Museum Studies Class Exhibition
Beginning May 14, 2020 the Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens will present, “Their Permanent Collection: Personal Objects and the Stories They Tell,” a virtual exhibition created by UTEP’s Museum Studies Class. The virtual exhibition features thirty personal objects chosen by the faculty, students, friends, and family of the UTEP’s Museum Studies Class. The exhibit will be displayed here.

Tiny Tunnels, Big Connections
Zombie Ants are alive; on our website that is! “Tiny Tunnels, Big Connections: Ant Relationships Shape the World” a collaboration with UTEP Biodiversity Collections, is available to view on our website! Check out this online exhibit to learn more about ants. Download the Augment El Paso app to learn more about these amazing creatures.