

Monthly NEWSLETTER

SECTIONS:



MUSEUM HIGHLIGHTS



MEET THE STAFF



HALLOWEEN



UPCOMING EVENTS

ABOUT US

Welcome to the second edition of our Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens newsletter! Each month we'll share museum news, upcoming events, behind-the-scenes highlights, and stories that connect you to our collections and gardens.

Founded in 1936 to celebrate Texas's Centennial, the museum opened in 1937 as El Paso's first. Built in UTEP's Bhutanese architectural style, it showcases the natural and cultural history of our region. We have permanent galleries and rotating exhibitions every 6–9 months.

Whether it's your first visit or your hundredth, there's always something new to discover.

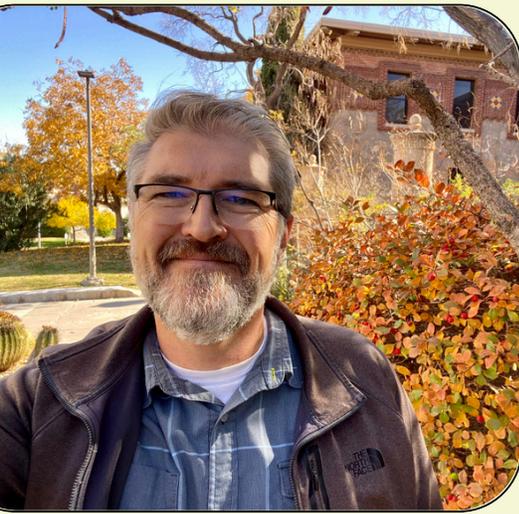
MUSEUM HIGHLIGHTS

FLORAFEST: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

Did you know that there's an event where you can buy native plants from our region? On October 11, 2025, join us for the fall edition of FloraFest, a family-friendly plant sale held twice a year. To tell us more about this event, we spoke with Dr. Kevin Floyd, Botanical Curator at the museum. Since 2021, Dr. Floyd has participated in eight editions of

FloraFest. He is in charge of selecting the plants offered for sale, some grown in the museum's garden and others specially sourced to surprise visitors. He also guides attendees by explaining the unique qualities of each plant and how to care for them. "The most exciting part is telling people about these plants and convincing them that there are much better options than what they find at Lowe's or Home Depot," Dr. Floyd says.

FloraFest serves two main purposes: to raise funds for the maintenance and operations of the garden, including staff salaries, supplies, and materials and to educate the public with the help of experts, master gardeners, and native plant enthusiasts. This makes Florafest a unique opportunity to learn, receive guidance, and take home plants that are best suited to individual spaces.



BOTANICAL CURATOR, DR. KEVIN FLOYD

With fall approaching, Kevin shares some tips for plant care. Even hardy plants can be vulnerable if they are young or recently transplanted. That's why it's important to have a plan. For example, non-native aloe vera cannot survive freezing temperatures, but it can thrive in pots that can be moved indoors. Thermal blankets are also useful to protect garden plants, and the key is to be prepared before the cold sets in.



PLANT OF THE MONTH ANNUAL SUNFLOWER

The annual sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) is a tall, robust plant known for its large, bright yellow flower heads with central discs filled with tiny florets. The sunflower's heliotropic nature means it turns to follow the sun across the sky, optimizing photosynthesis



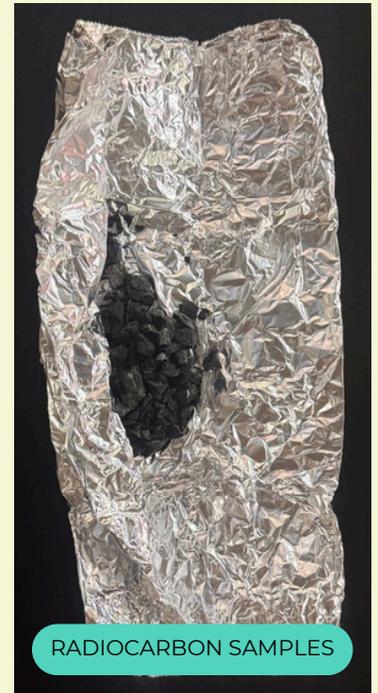
It is widely cultivated for its seeds, which are a valuable source of oil and food. Sunflowers also play a significant role in ecosystems, providing habitat and food for various wildlife species. Their striking appearance makes them popular in gardens and as ornamental plants.

TEXAS ARCHAEOLOGY MONTH

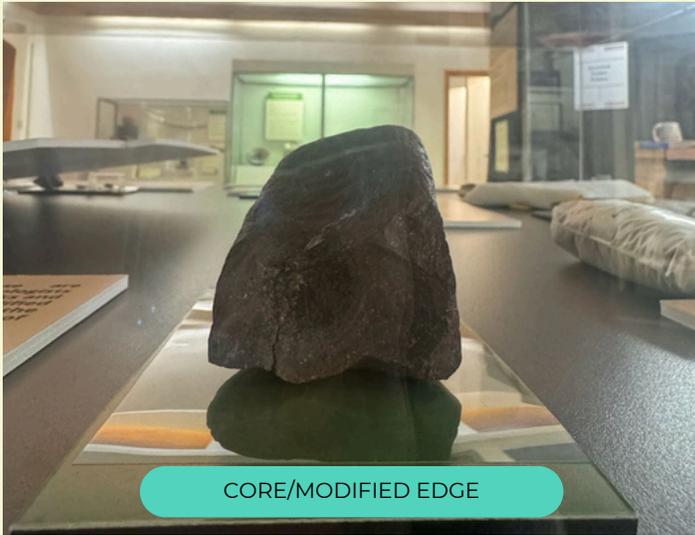
Did You Know? October is Texas Archaeology Month! The state of Texas highlights and promotes the richness of its cultural heritage revealed through archaeological research. These studies not only provide invaluable insights into Texas' past, but also inspire interest in protecting and preserving this heritage.

The Texas Historical Commission coordinates this annual event through fairs, presentations, exhibitions, and community activities designed to bring archaeology closer to the public. It is a unique opportunity to discover fascinating findings, learn about the diverse cultures that have inhabited Texas, and understand how their legacy continues to shape the present.

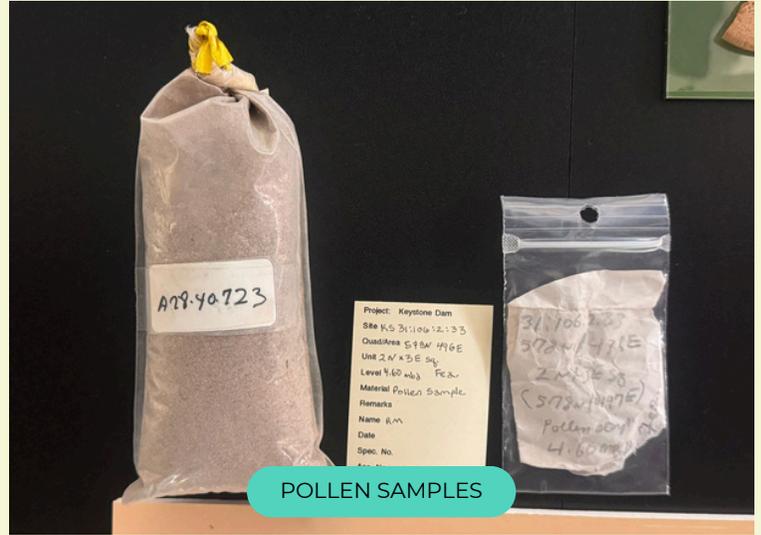
Celebrating this month is not only a way to honor those who came before us, but also a reminder of the importance of caring for and preserving the traces that connect us to our history.



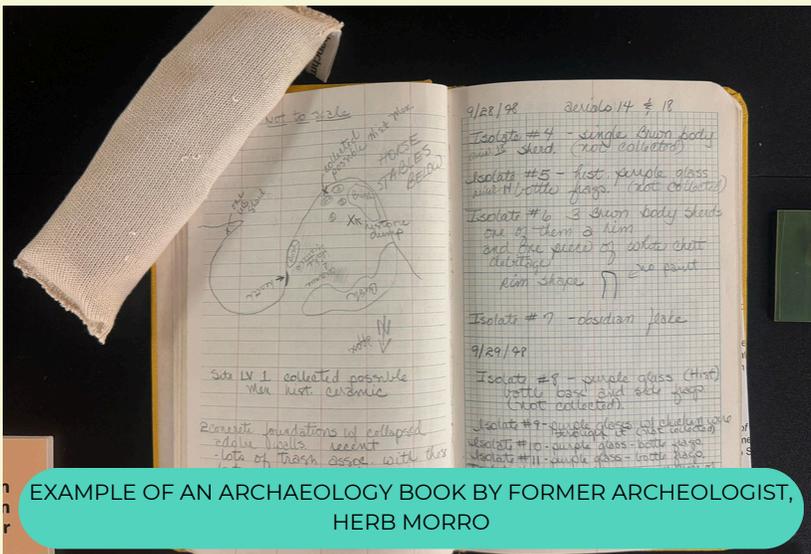
RADIOCARBON SAMPLES



CORE/MODIFIED EDGE



POLLEN SAMPLES



EXAMPLE OF AN ARCHAEOLOGY BOOK BY FORMER ARCHEOLOGIST, HERB MORRO



FAUNAL SAMPLES

MEET THE STAFF

MAXINE TRUJILLO Work-Study Student

Maxine Trujillo joined the museum nearly six months ago as a work-study student. Her main role is in collections, where she helps with organization, inventory, and record-keeping. While her work might seem behind-the-scenes, Maxine approaches it with great passion, knowing that every detail matters in preserving history and memory.

Among the museum's spaces, Maxine has clear favorites: the biodiversity hotspots exhibit and the Discovery Theater. The latter is especially meaningful since she once took a class with the professor whose research is featured there, making the experience even more personal. One of her fondest memories is the opening of the biodiversity exhibit, when she got to celebrate with the staff and see the community enjoy the museum in such a lively atmosphere.

When asked whose job she would trade with for a day, she laughs: "Kevin, Garden Curator, because I'd love to take photos and work with the plants and water." And when she sums up her experience in a single phrase, she chooses: "Take every day one step at a time."

Outside the museum, Maxine describes herself as an introvert who enjoys listening to music, spending time with friends, and relaxing in her room. She is a devoted reader of Gabriel García Márquez, with *One Hundred Years of Solitude* at the top of her list. Her favorite movie is *The Silence of the Lambs*, which she credits as one of her inspirations for becoming an archaeologist. And her all-time favorite song is *La Vuelta al Mundo* by Calle 13.

With dreams of traveling to Africa especially Kenya to see the wildlife and visit "the cradle of humanity," Maxine says the part of her work she is most passionate about is ethics: "Doing things the right way is very important to me. Even if my role is small, knowing I can help improve and correct processes for the future makes me motivated and happy."



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HALLOWEEN

This October, we bring you a chilling collection of tales that will make you think twice before walking alone at night through certain buildings on campus. For this, we interviewed Jesús Manuel “Chuy” Guillén, who has worked as a campus custodian for 34 years. He shared some of the most terrifying experiences that still keep him from entering these places alone.



THE HAUNTED FOX FINE ARTS BUILDING

One autumn evening, Chuy's phone began to ring. On the line was a coworker begging him to come help her close the Fox Fine Arts building. She claimed she could hear strange laughter echoing through the halls and was too afraid to stay alone.

Skeptical, Chuy thought she was only making excuses to finish work early, and for several days he ignored her pleas. Finally, he decided to go and prove she was lying. But as he shut one of the back auditorium doors, Chuy froze. Clear as day, he heard the laughter of a little girl playing. His stomach dropped—there was no way a child could be inside that building so late at night.

Then, as if to confirm his fears, a bright orange ball rolled out from the shadows, only to vanish into thin air before his eyes. From that day on, no one dares close Fox Fine Arts alone, especially at night. It is said the building became haunted after the ashes of a former employee who took her own life were discovered inside. Since then, unsettling noises and ghostly apparitions have plagued the place.



THE MAN WITH NO FEET – SEAMON HALL

Before its renovation into the Rubin Center, the old Seamon Hall was an unsettling building. Its basement looked more like a torture chamber, with wooden tables suspended by chains, and even human remains once used for university research.

The building had no working keys, so the custodial staff had to climb in through a broken window—nearly impossible for anyone else to access. Every time Chuy and his coworkers, nicknamed El Mota and El Topo, entered to clean, they would encounter an elderly man who silently greeted them with a wave. Over time, they got used to him, treating it almost as a ritual: enter, wave at the old man, and get to work.

But one day, as they scrubbed the dust and debris, Topo asked nervously, “Don't you think it's strange that he's always here? How does he even get inside if the only way in is through that broken window?”

At that moment, Topo suddenly shouted for Chuy to look. The man was there again, standing still as always. Chuy brushed it off, telling Topo to keep working—until Topo's face went pale. “Haven't you seen his feet?” Chuy looked down. His blood ran cold. The man had no feet. Terrified, the three of them bolted from the building, swearing never to go back. And they never did—at least, not until the building was remodeled years later.



THE RED-EYED BEAST – EDUCATION BUILDING

One ordinary night, Chuy and Topo were making their rounds in the campus truck. Everything seemed quiet, until Topo suddenly tapped Chuy's arm and whispered, “Look... right there. Do you see it?”

Near the Education building, a massive silhouette stood in the dark. Chuy flicked on the high beams, and both men froze. A huge black animal stared back at them with glowing red eyes.

“That's not from here,” Topo muttered. “It looks like a panther... but bigger.”

They inched closer, but before they could get near, the creature made an impossible leap, soaring into the night and vanishing without a trace. Alarmed, they called campus police, fearing it could attack someone. Officers searched the entire area but found nothing—no prints, no fur, no signs that any animal had been there at all.

“I swear it was a panther,” Chuy recalls. “Huge, ugly... and not from this place.” Chuy says to this day, both men insist on what they saw: a terrifying red-eyed beast lurking in the shadows of campus.

DIY

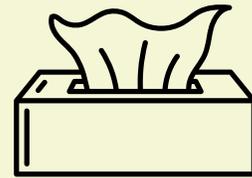
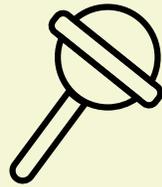
This month's Do-It-Yourself-Project is simple and easy to recreate at home! This craft can be used to give out unique candies to trick or treaters.

SPOOKY GHOST LOLLIPOPS



Materials:

1. **Lollipops**
2. **Kleenex or Napkins**
3. **Rubber Bands**
4. **Markers**



Step One

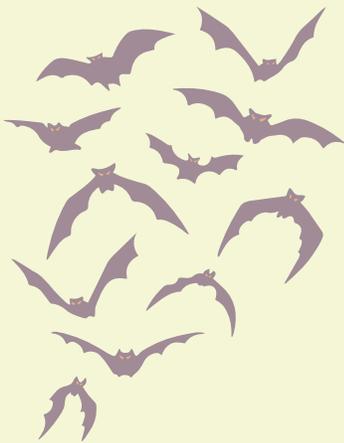
Place the Kleenex over the Lollipop

Step Two

Secure the Kleenex with the Rubber Band

Step Three

Decorate the Ghost Lollipop!



UPCOMING EVENTS

Making Resilient (Mostly) Native Gardens

Resilient landscapes begin with knowing where we live, the conditions that define the places that surround us and how they inform us how we garden. Understanding the opportunities and constraints of space is essential in making effective planting choices. This involves layered thinking—from the largest surroundings to the intimate niches, from the shade canopy to groundcovers, from winter mornings to scorching summer afternoons—building plant communities based as much as possible on ecological associations. If it works well, it will look good and comfortable. Observing local ecosystems and how they change over time is a great tool. Urban ecosystems are even hotter than the surrounding desert, but all the hard surfaces have the potential for harvesting rainwater and planting it in the soil where roots can benefit. Southwestern native plants are constantly adapting to shifting conditions and offer the best options for keeping landscapes soft, green, and abundant habitat for wildlife, including humans.

Monday, October 6 • 6:00 PM



Judith Philips

Landscape designer and author who prefers working with arid-adapted native plants because they are beautiful, conserve water, and support wildlife.

📍 Centennial Museum
Refreshments provided

MINDFULNESS AT THE MUSEUM

Thursdays @ Noon

Instructor: Leailainia Marcus



Oct
09

Expanding Your Consciousness with Art

Experience the expansive space between everything: every thought, every object, every atom.

Oct
23

Awaken Your Senses: A Garden Meditation

Enliven your 5 senses - taste, touch, smell, sound, and sight as we journey through the garden.

Nov
06

Reset and Refocus with a Walking Meditation

Invite peace in every step with a relaxing walking meditation in the garden.

Nov
20

Yoga, Meditation, & Tea

Enjoy a beginner-friendly, yoga and meditation session followed by tea in the garden.

Dec
04

Mandala Creating and Coloring

Experience the calming and therapeutic benefits of this artful meditation as we create sacred geometric symbols such as the Sri Yanta and Chakras.

Connect with the present moment at the Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens. Take a break from your busy schedule and join us for engaging, mindfulness-based activities that will leave you feeling relaxed and recharged.

📍 Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens

FREE EVENT

Centennial Museum and Chihuahuan Desert Gardens



FLORAFEST

Native Plant Sale

October 11

9 AM - 3 PM

UTEP UGLC PLAZA

utep.edu/florafest

HALLOWEEN AT THE MUSEUM



OCTOBER 30, 4-7PM

POPCORN | CREEPY ARTIFACTS | PHOTOBOOTH

FREE & OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

CENTENNIAL MUSEUM & CHIHUAHUAN DESERT GARDENS



EVENT CALENDAR

MONDAY

6

6 PM

**Cultivating Your Home Speaker Series -
Making Resilient (Mostly) Native Gardens.**

Learn more about ways to make your home garden thrive!

THURSDAY

9

12 PM

**Mindfulness at the Museum - Expanding
Your Consciousness With Art.**

Experience the expansive space between everything!

SATURDAY

11

9 AM - 3 PM

Florafest Native Plant Sale!

All proceeds support the operation of the UTEP Chihuahuan Desert Gardens.

THURSDAY

23

12 PM

**Mindfulness at the Museum - Awaken Your
Senses: A Garden Meditation.**

Enliven your 5 senses - taste, touch, smell, sound, and sight as we journey through the garden.

THURSDAY

30

4 PM - 7 PM

Halloween at the Museum

Join us for a spooky evening of movies, crafts, and artifacts. Free popcorn and candy.

