



Curry County Ag Updates

Cooperative Extension Service • Curry County • April - May 2026

Upcoming Events:

- **Livestock Biosecurity Program** – Tuesday April 7th, 2026 @ 5:30 – 8:30 pm in Curry County (advertisement attached)
 - *600 Woods St., Clovis, NM 88101*
- **Community Seed Swap** – Monday April 20th, 2026 @ 5:30 – 8:30 pm at Curry-Carver Public library (Advertisement attached)
 - *701 N Main St, Clovis, NM 88101*
- **Pruning Workshop** – Tuesday May 5th, 2026, in Curry County (Advertisement attached)
 - *600 Woods St., Clovis, NM 88101*
 - *Time coming soon*



Notes from Extension:

Happy Spring! As we move into the heart of the season, we can all look forward to warmer weather and a more active time ahead!

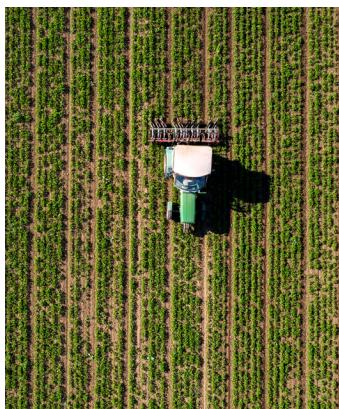
For April and May, we have some wonderful programs coming up! We'd love for you to join us to learn about updated biosecurity measures that can help keep your livestock healthy and thriving—plus, enjoy a warm meal while you're there.

We're also excited for our annual community seed swap, where our Extension office partners with the local library to create a space for sharing seeds and ideas for your gardens and flower beds.

In addition, I'm beginning to plan a pruning program for the community. This will be a great opportunity to learn about the best times and techniques for pruning your ornamental trees and shrubs, with guidance from our NMSU specialist, Marisa Thompson. She also enjoys doing house calls for those who have specific concerns about their trees. If you're interested in scheduling a visit with her, please reach out to me—I'd be happy to help find a time that works for everyone!

If you have any questions about the upcoming events or would like to request more information, you can reach me through our phone: (575)763-6505 and ask for Morgan.

600 Woods St., Clovis, NM 88101 • Tel: 575-763-6505 • curry@nmsu.edu



If you are interested in having the articles from these summaries, call our office at (575)763-6505 or email us at curry@nmsu.edu.



Modified Biochar in Sustainable Arid Land Agriculture: Overview of Agronomic and Environmental Benefits

With the challenges that Curry County and other arid/ semi-arid areas face from drought and strong winds, there is an increase in crop stress, soil erosion, reduced yields, and exacerbating economic instability. This leads to the acknowledgement for a need to adopt sustainable practices to mitigate the soil and weather-related challenges. In sustainable agriculture, there are four principles that help to build soil health: “(1) no-till to minimize mechanical soil disturbance, (2) crop rotation or diversification, (3) keeping the soil covered more than 30% throughout the year, and (4) optimal nutrient management.”

What is Biochar? Biochar is a carbon-rich material that is produced by burning organic biomass under low – or no – oxygen conditions. Adding biochar to your soil can help increase organic matter concentrations while also increasing the availability of nutrients to crops, promoting soil microbial growth and activity, and aiding in good air and water movement throughout the soil.

The overall effectiveness of biochar depends on the selections of feedstock to meet the needs of your soil:

Biochar Categories	Benefits
Animal waste	Enhancing nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus.
Woody-type	Has more surface area and porosity than biochar from animal waste.
Soft Wood type (crop biomass)	Increasing available phosphorus

It is recommended that a biochar made of hardwoods, softwoods, and wheat is ideal for increasing the soil potassium availability.

In Clovis, NM, there was a study that revealed if biochar is produced at different temperatures, there will be different effects produced for the soil. For instance, if higher production temperatures are used to make biochar, more soil carbon is retained due to slower decomposition. If lower production temperatures are used, the biochar can help support higher sorghum yields within the same year of application. It is recommended for this area to prepare a low to medium temperature biochar to aid crop yield and environmental benefits.

Biochar can be modified to add minerals and reduce environmental pollution in the soil as well increase the availability of phosphorus, nitrogen, and potassium:

Modified Biochar Categories	Benefits
Magnesium-modified biochar	Adsorbed high levels of phosphate. Increased sorghum by 15%.
Aluminum-modified biochar	Adsorbed both nitrate and phosphate. Increased sorghum by 15%
Iron-modified biochar	Decreased plant uptake of heavy metals such as cadmium and lead.

Iron-modified biochar helps remove phosphorus from contaminated water 18 times more effectively than unmodified biochar does. Using the modified biochar can help soils where nutrient loss and heavy metal contamination is a problem.

Why is biochar important? Biochar is important because over fertilizing can increase the risk of nutrient loss through surface water or leaching, which can lead to contamination to available drinking water sources and financial losses to farmers. Biochar helps with increasing nutrient retention and increasing the soil's natural ability to retain essential nutrients such as nitrogen which helps reduce the need for synthetic fertilizers.

Cont. Modified Biochar in sustainable Arid Land Agriculture

Biochar also aids in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The study in Clovis, NM calculated a reduction of 70% in nitrous oxide emissions in sorghum production in both supplemental irrigation and drought stress conditions.

Overall, modified biochar offers a promising solution to increase crop production in areas with low nutrient levels that can help conserve water, promote sustainable agriculture in our arid / semi-arid climate, and improve nutrient efficiency.

Rajan Ghimire, Juan P. Frene, and John Idowu. (2026). Modified Biochar in Sustainable Arid Land Agriculture: Overview of Agronomic and Environmental Benefits. New Mexico State University.

https://pubs.nmsu.edu/_a/A155/index.html



Sorghum: An Opportunistic Crop That Pays

For many growers, grain sorghum fits best as an opportunistic crop—one that can take advantage of timely rainfall, keep input costs in check and improve the performance of other crops in the rotation. With relatively low production costs and strong agronomic benefits, sorghum remains a practical option for farmers looking to manage risk while maintaining yield potential.

One of sorghum's biggest advantages is its affordability. Seed costs typically range from \$6 to \$19 per acre, depending on seeding rate and seed treatments. That's significantly lower than many competing row crops, helping reduce upfront investment and financial risk.

Sorghum also tends to have few insect and disease issues. Concerns about sorghum aphid have been greatly reduced in the last few years, with many high performing hybrids having good sorghum aphid tolerance. If aphid populations are present, they can be effectively controlled with insecticides such as Sivanto Prime®, Transform® or Sefina®.

The dry climate across much of the Great Plains helps keep disease pressure low. In more humid regions like the Southeast, anthracnose is the primary concern, but selecting hybrids with good tolerance can greatly reduce the risk.

While known as a drought tolerant crop, sorghum will take advantage of timely rainfall, making it a good fit in areas where precipitation can be unpredictable. This flexibility allows farmers to plant sorghum knowing it can respond when conditions turn favorable while still tolerating short periods of stress.

Sorghum's value extends beyond the current growing season, providing measurable benefits when used in crop rotations. When rotated with cotton, disease cycles are broken, which can plague continuous cotton systems. Residue from sorghum also helps conserve soil moisture and protect emerging cotton seedlings from wind damage. A 2017 Texas A&M University study found cotton yields increased 26% when rotated with sorghum compared to continuous cotton.

Research near Mead, Nebraska, showed that soybeans planted after sorghum produced a 16% yield increase compared to continuous soybeans. Improvements were linked to better soil fertility, improved soil structure, stronger weed control and fewer pest problems. Even corn can benefit from following sorghum. A five-year Kansas State University trial found corn yields increased over 8% when planted after sorghum compared to continuous corn.

These gains highlight how sorghum contributes to better soil health, rainfall retention and improved nutrient cycling in crop rotations.

Sorghum is most often grown as a dryland crop, but it also performs well under limited irrigation. Its ability to tolerate short periods without water gives growers flexibility when managing irrigation systems. When splitting a circle with corn or cotton, irrigation can be prioritized for the more water-sensitive crops while sorghum waits a few extra days without significant yield loss. That flexibility helps maximize water efficiency, especially in regions where irrigation capacity is limited.

For growers looking to manage costs and reduce risk, sorghum remains a practical choice. Its low seed cost, ability to capitalize on timely rainfall and benefits to crops that follow make it a valuable tool in many cropping systems.

Brent Bean. (2026). Sorghum: An Opportunistic Crop That Pays. United Sorghum Checkoff Program. <https://www.sorghumcheckoff.com/agronomy-insights/sorghum-an-opportunistic-crop-that-pays/>

Natural Defenders: What to Plant in Your Vegetable Garden to keep Bugs Away

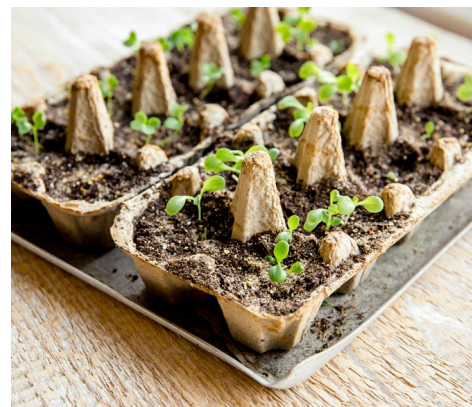
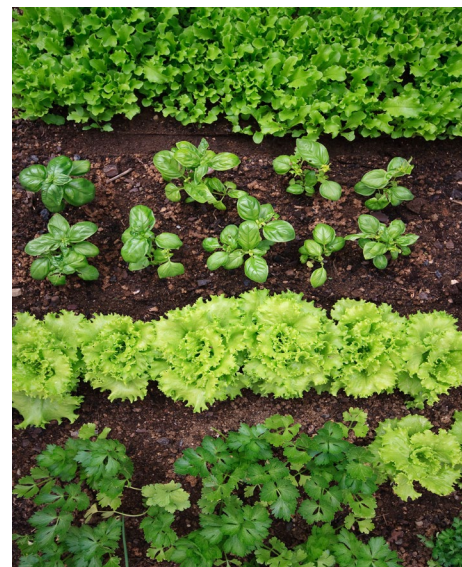
Gardening season is around the corner and the largest threat to our gardens is bugs! Pests such as aphids, spider mites, and beetles can disrupt the growth of plants and ruin the overall experience of gardening. To help with reducing the number of bugs in the gardens, there are certain plants that can be planted to help. There are also some plants that will help attract the beneficial insects for gardens that will help plants pollinate and grow efficiently.

Marigolds	Repel pests such as aphids, nematodes, & whiteflies. Attract beneficial insects such as Hoverflies.
Basil	Repels mosquitoes, flies, aphids, spider mites, and beetles. Beneficial as companions for tomatoes and peppers.
Nasturtiums	Act as a trap crop, they lure the aphids away from the vegetables. Have a peppery flavor that can be added to salads and other dishes.
Garlic	Repels mites, beetles, and aphids.
Mint	Repels ants, aphids, and mice. Be cautious since it is a fast spreader where it is planted. Plant in pots or designated areas to control growth.
Rosemary	Repels beetles, flies, mosquitoes, spider mites, and aphids.
Dill	Attract ladybugs and lacewings – are voracious predators of aphids. Can repel spider mites and aphids.
Fennel	Attracts ladybugs – However, if over planted can also attract aphids if overplanted.
Sunflowers	Attract pollinators and beneficial insects and provides shelter for predatory insects to aid in reducing the overall pest population in the garden.

Besides understanding which plants can help reduce pests, the strategy of how the garden is planted is a key method for these plants to be useful. Instead of planting a large patch of one vegetable, consider planting crops at varying times can ensure there is no abundant food source available for pests to help keep the populations in check. Another way to maintain a healthy garden ecosystem is to avoid chemical treatments which disrupt the balance of the garden's ecosystem and help keep a nutrient-rich soil ecosystem. Maintaining a nutrient-rich soil ecosystem helps with resisting pests. Maintaining a healthy nutrient-rich soil can be accomplished by incorporating organic matter such as compost, which will improve soil fertility and structure.

Overall, having natural defenders, containing a continuous variation of timings for planting, and incorporating organic matter will help keep your gardens healthy and fertile! It is important to make sure to refresh your natural defenders by rotating different plants. It could also be beneficial to grow some natural defenders in containers to make them versatile for various gardening situations. Natural defenders such as marigolds and nasturtiums thrive in pots and can be easily integrated into different gardening setups. This way all gardens can have what is needed to keep vegetables and fruits thriving in the various styles of gardens.

Raymond Patterson. (2026). Natural Defenders: What to Plant in Your Vegetable Garden to Keep Bugs Away. GREATGARDENPLANS.
https://greatgardenplans.com/what-to-plant-in-vegetable-garden-to-keep-bugs-away/#google_vignette.



Freeze Injury Potential & Texas Heat on Wheat

Normally this time of year (March) AgriLife Extension watches the weather forecast for possible spring freezes in relation to stage of wheat growth and development across Texas. Yet here it is in late March 2026 with many days 90 to 100°F. These hot temperatures are **never** favorable for wheat before grain maturity. I remind farmers and colleagues ‘*wheat is a cool-season grass.*’

Spring Freezes in Winter Wheat

Wheat freeze injury is a Texas issue about one in 3-4 years. Often it is limited, but extremes like 2013 (five freezes over six weeks starting late February) wreaked havoc on most of the Texas wheat crop. In general, however, wheat workers have learned that wheat freeze injury is usually never quite as bad as it looks. Grain wheat usually compensates by directing resources to undamaged tillers, etc.

Monday, March 16th, saw temperatures in the northern Rolling Plains and South Plains drop into the 20s (e.g., 24°F around Lubbock) with Panhandle temps as low as 10°F to the low teens. Some northern Panhandle wheat was borderline still in the tillering stage or just at growing point differentiation. This wheat can handle temps to the low teens with low to moderate injury potential, however, I learned March 30 there is damage in some fields. South Plains and Rolling Plains wheat was mostly in the early to late tillering stage with relative safety at ~24°F if less than two hours before the onset of concern. I have received no reports nor seen any damage in these two regions. For this March freeze, close inspection might find some growing points (Fig. 1) on larger stems with damage. Otherwise, cosmetic foliar injury is expected with burned leaves. In the Texas Blacklands, wheat was already heading and early varieties possibly flowering when temperatures dropped to ~27°F. Freeze damage on wheat heads has been found as far south as Temple.

AgriLife Extension’s “**Wheat Freeze Injury in Texas**” (ESC-026, 2014) notes flowering stage is the most vulnerable stage of growth at just 32°F (~2 hours). The pollen is damaged. Floral sterility is often more difficult and takes longer to diagnose than freezes at other growth stages. Growers should continue monitoring for blank heads over the coming weeks. Wheat begins flowering in the middle of the head and moves up and down from there. Growers must feel the entire wheat head to ensure grain fill is occurring throughout. It is possible for the middle to be filling but not the top and bottom or vice-versa, depending on the timing of the freeze. The guide is available at <https://varietytesting.tamu.edu/texas-small-grains-production-practices/> An additional resource for *how* to assess wheat for freeze injury is AgriLife’s “Tips and Tools for Assessing Freeze Injury in Wheat,” posting this week at the above URL.

Winter Wheat in the Heat

I reiterate, ‘*wheat is a cool-season grass.*’ When heat units are calculated for estimating wheat growth and development, 86°F is the max temperature. This suggests advantageous growth and development generally ceases at temps above ~86°F. In fact, excessive heat may be detrimental to wheat growth and development. Furthermore, temperatures like much of March in Texas 2026, are draining soil moisture hence water use efficiency declines. This reduces grain yield.

The following table documents general favorable growing temperatures for wheat†. Wheat breeding for high temperature stress tolerance and planting earlier wheat maturities may reduce heat impact. Many genes, including leaf rust and Hessian fly resistance, are temperature sensitive. As temperatures exceed thresholds, plants that normally convey resistance may become susceptible. Possible instances are currently reported in the Blacklands. Conversely, early maturity wheat is somewhat more susceptible to a late freeze.

Dr. Calvin Trostle & Dr. Brandon Gerrish. (2026). Freese Injury Potential & Texas Heat on Wheat. Texas A&M University Soil & Crop Sciences. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.



Fig. 1. A split wheat stem (hollow stem on the right) reveals a brownish, dead growing point (the tiny head at corner of the blade) due to freeze injury. No further head development will occur. This individual stem (not undamaged tillers or the whole plant) will remain in the vegetative stage. (Calvin Trostle).

Wheat Growth Stage	Temperature (°F)		
	Optimum	Minimum	Maximum
Seed germination	68-77 ± 2	38-40 ± 1	95 ± 2
Root growth	63 ± 2	38 ± 1	75 ± 2
Shoot growth	65 ± 2	40 ± 1	68 ± 1
Leaf initiation	69 ± 3	35 ± 1	74 ± 2
Terminal spikelet	61 ± 4	37 ± 1	68 ± 3
Flowering	73 ± 3	50 ± 2	79 ± 2
Grain filling duration	79 ± 3	55 ± 3	86 ± 4

†The original source of this published table has been lost. AgriLife is looking for it.

Curry County Extension Services

LIVESTOCK BIOSECURITY

When:

April 7th, 2026 @ 5:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Where:

Curry County Extension Office
600 Woods St., Clovis, NM 88101

Presented by Specialists:

Marcy Ward (Cattle)
Jovani Armendariz (Small Ruminants)
(Horse)



Meal will be provided
Please RSVP for meal count

Call or Scan QR Code to RSVP



Please RSVP by March 24th, 2026

Contact:

Morgan Latimore, Extension
Ag Agent,
Tel: 575-763-6505
Email: latimor5@nmsu.edu



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and Environmental Sciences

Emergency Response Strategies
Disease Prevention Strategies
Quarantine Practices
Screw Worm Updates

If you are an individual with a disability who is in need of an auxiliary aid or service to participate, please contact Morgan Latimore in advance at (575) 763-6505 or latimor5@nmsu.edu.

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Walk-ins welcome! Come join us!

16 Drought-Tolerant Perennials For New Mexico Yards

1. Lavender
2. Russian Sage
3. Agave
4. Yucca
5. Penstemon
6. Autumn Joy Sedum
7. Yarrow
8. Gaillardia
9. Desert Marigold
10. Red Hot Poker
11. Gaura
12. Globe Mallow
13. Mexican Feather Grass
14. Butterfly Weed
15. Santolina
16. Chocolate Flower



<https://positivebloom.com/drought-tolerant-perennials-for-new-mexico-yards/>

How Can Curry County Extension Office help you throughout the year?

- ☐ **Economic development** – business training, tourism promotion, and market development
- Energy & Water** – conservation, efficiency, and sustainable use.
- Farm & Ranch** – production techniques, market access, and sustainability.
- Food & Nutrition** – cooking, nutrition education, and food safety.
- Health & Family** – wellness, chronic disease prevention, and family finance.
- Natural Resources** – land, water, and environmental stewardship.
- Yard & Garden** – landscaping, pest management, and plant care.
- 4-H Youth Development** – leadership, science, and community service for youth

Seed Swap with Clovis-Carver Library



Contact: Morgan Latimore | curry@nmsu.edu | 575-763-6505

April 20th, 2026

Clovis-Carver Public Library
701 N Main St, Clovis, NM 88101
5:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Join us for a fun and community-centered Seed Swap on April 20th at the Clovis-Carver Public Library! Gardeners of all experience levels are invited to bring seeds to share, trade, and discover new varieties for the growing season. Whether you have extra seeds from last year or are just getting started, this is a great opportunity to connect with others, learn, and grow your garden. No seeds? No problem—come anyway and join the fun!



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and Environmental Sciences

If you are an individual with a disability who is in need of an auxiliary aid or service to participate, please contact Morgan Latimore in advance at (575) 763-6505 or latimor5@nmsu.edu.

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SAVE THE DATE: Pruning Workshop



May 5th, 2026

**Curry County Extension Office
600 Woods Street, Clovis, NM 88101**

This upcoming workshop will discuss pruning techniques and the accurate times to prune different bushes and trees.

If you are an individual with a disability who is in need of an auxiliary aid or service to participate, please contact Morgan Latimore in advance at (575) 763-6505 or latimor5@nmsu.edu.

Contact: Morgan Latimore | curry@nmsu.edu | 575-763-6505



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Garden Crops for Low-Watering Gardening in New Mexico : Best Crops for low watering and high yield

- Chile Peppers (*Capsicum annuum*): relatively water efficient once established.
- Tomatoes (specified drought-tolerant varieties): deep watering early and heavy mulching help.
- Beans and legumes: use drip irrigation and consider pole beans to reduce soil evaporation
- Squashes and melons require more water but can be grown in low-water systems when mulched and irrigated at the root zone

Water conservation strategies

- Drip irrigation buried or at soil surface with mulch to minimize evaporation
- Time watering early morning and water deeply to promote deeper roots
- Plant in basins or sunken beds to capture any run off or rare rain events



<https://cultivatingflora.com/what-to-plant-in-new-mexico-garden-design-for-low-water-use/>

Ornamental and Native Grasses best for New Mexico

- Blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*): a classic shortgrass prairie grass, great for low-maintenance lawns or massed plantings.
- Sidecoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*): attractive seed heads and excellent drought tolerance.
- Feather grass and other drought-tolerant fountain grasses: choose cold-hardy cultivars for high-desert sites.
- Groundcovers and low-growing options:
- Sedum and other succulents: excellent near rock gardens or gravel areas.
- Creeping thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*): fragrant, low, and good between steppingstones where some foot traffic occurs.
- Mat-forming penstemons and native phlox in cooler sites.



<https://cultivatingflora.com/what-to-plant-in-new-mexico-garden-design-for-low-water-use/>

On behalf of Tomorrow's Water :



Are you and your community looking for ways to provide water for future generations?

Tomorrow's Water
could be part of the solution.

Tomorrow's Water connects people, playas, and the Ogallala Aquifer to help towns and communities secure their water future.

Healthy playas recharge groundwater and naturally improve water quality. Communities can proactively address a declining water supply by restoring playas and adopting irrigation practices that reduce the impacts from aquifer overuse.

With the right management, your playa can work for you – improving water quality, supporting your land, and protecting resources for the next generation.

Take the first step.
Contact the Tomorrow's Water team today.

Alina Vulcan

Playa & Water Conservation Outreach Specialist
Eastern New Mexico

575-201-3139

alina.vulcan@pljv.org



Scan the QR code or visit
TomorrowWater.org



On Behalf of the Central Curry Soil and Water Conservation District:

Central Curry SWCD

Land Improvement Funding Opportunities Available

BRUSH, VEGETATION & NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL

CONVENTIONAL FENCING

VIRTUAL FENCING

PRESCRIBED BURNING

RANGELAND IMPROVEMENTS

SUB-SOILING & SEEDING

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

WATER FACILITIES

Scan the QR code and input your information to receive messages about upcoming meetings and other opportunities

Email: centralcurry@gmail.com
 Website: centralcurryswcd.org

Practical Planting and Maintenance Calendar

1. Spring (ideal for many perennials and trees in lower elevations):
2. Plant after last hard freeze in your microclimate.
3. Begin mulching and set up drip zones for new plantings.
4. Late summer to early fall (best for many shrubs and trees in high desert):
5. Planting in late summer/early fall allows roots to develop during cooler weather and winter moisture; reduce water needs in the second year.
6. Winter:
7. Protect young succulents and sensitive shrubs from extreme freezes with temporary covers.
8. Prune only as needed; avoid heavy pruning that stimulates late-season growth.
9. Summer:
10. Adjust irrigation to reflect monsoon patterns; take advantage of monsoon rains to reduce supplemental watering.
11. Deadhead spent blooms to encourage rebloom in some perennials and reduce seed set for invasive species.

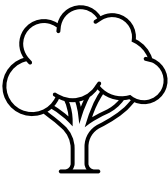
<https://cultivatingflora.com/what-to-plant-in-new-mexico-garden-design-for-low-water-use/>



Shrub and Small Trees: Structure without high water use

Excellent native shrubs and shrubs adapted to the region:

- Apache plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*): white flowers and feathery seed plumes, thrives on poor soils and low water.
- Four-wing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*): tolerant of saline soils and drought, useful for erosion control.
- Mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifolius*): drought hardy, long-lived, and attractive.
- Sage species (*Artemisia* spp.): aromatic foliage, low water requirement, good for informal screens.
- Flowering shrubs with moderate water needs (used sparingly in hydrozones):
- Rockrose (*Cistus x hybridus*) and other Mediterranean shrubs that perform well in dry summers.
- Currants and gooseberries (*Ribes* spp.) in higher, cooler sites if drip irrigated.



<https://cultivatingflora.com/what-to-plant-in-new-mexico-garden-design-for-low-water-use/>

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