Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's "Third Thursday Food for Thought" Series

Ecological Knowledge and Practices of Traditional Indigenous and Spanish Agriculturists

Free Online Presentation by Agricultural Ecologist and Ethnobotanist

Gary Paul Nabhan, PhD

Online via Zoom (See link below)

Thursday July 21, 2022 7 to 8:30 p.m. Arizona Time

(Same as Pacific Daylight Time)

This month's guest presenter Gary Paul Nabhan, PhD is an agricultural ecologist, ethnobotanist, Ecumenical Franciscan Brother, and author whose work has focused primarily on the plants and cultures of the Desert Southwest. He is considered a pioneer in the local food movement and the heirloom seed-saving movement. A first-generation Lebanese American, he earned his BA in environmental biology from Prescott College (Arizona), and his plant sciences MS and arid lands resource sciences PhD from the University of Arizona.

While at the U of A, he began working with and learning from members of the Tohono O'odham Nation, and cofounded Native Seeds/SEARCH, a nonprofit conservation organization that works to preserve Indigenous southwestern agricultural plants as well as knowledge of their uses. He was the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum's director of science and the founding director of Northern Arizona University's Center for Sustainable Environments before becoming a research social scientist at the U of A Southwest Center and eventually its Kellogg Endowed Chair in Southwestern Borderlands Food and Water Security.

Dr. Nabhan's work has focused on how to avert impoverishment and endangerment of ecological and cultural relationships while celebrating the traditional ecological knowledge of agrarian communities. He has authored numerous books and has received many awards, among them two honorary PhDs, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for Conservation Biology, the John Burroughs Medal for distinguished natural history writing, and a prestigious MacArthur Fellowship.

More on next page.

To register for the Zoom program go to

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_OFjMuDjuQaCBQHm8hRV1bA

For more information contact Old Pueblo at 520-798-1201 or info@oldpueblo.org.

This month's Third Thursday Food for Thought presentation:

Ecological Knowledge and Practices . . .

For decades, we have been told that southwestern US agriculture evolved from a blending of precontact Indigenous crops and technologies diffused from Mesoamerica, blended in historic times with Spanish-derived crops and practices brought in by Jesuit missionaries like Kino and Franciscans like Garces. The truth is much more complex, interesting and fun! There were many food crops domesticated by Indigenous cultures in the region we now call Arid America in addition to those diffused from Mesoamerica.

Crassulacean acid metabolism (*"CAM") succulent plants contributed more to precontact desert diets than grasses or shrubs.*

Corn, some beans, and squash did come north into Arizona from Mesoamerica beginning around 5,000 years ago. However, other crops, like six agaves, one amaranth, one potato, tepary beans, Sonoran panicgrass, devil's claw, little barley, and others underwent much of their domestication in our Arid American region, not elsewhere. Historically, most of the crop varieties and livestock breeds brought into Mexico came from the Canary Islands, and ultimately from North Africa and the Middle East, not Europe.

. . . of Traditional Indigenous and Spanish Agriculturists

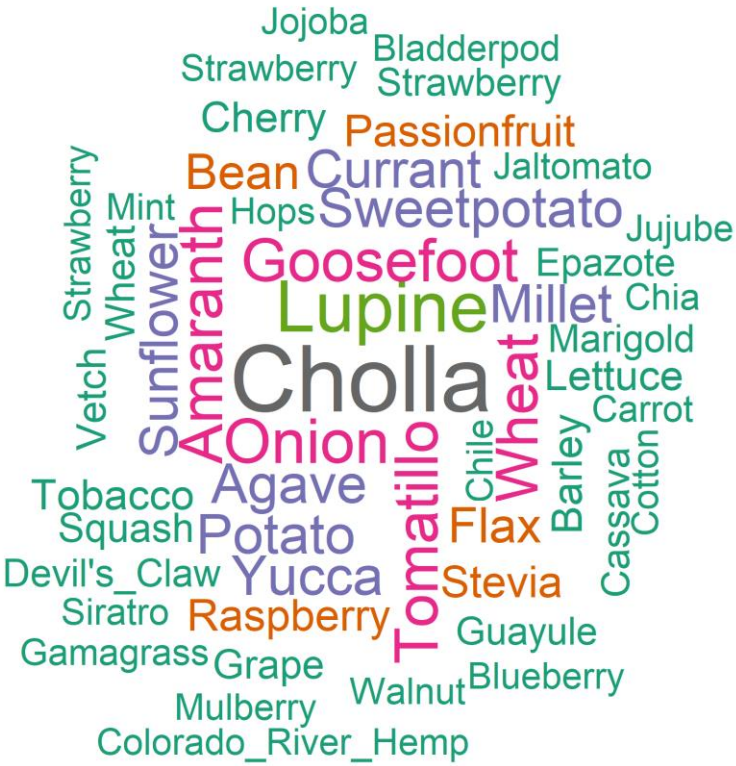
Padre Kino was not the founder of Spanish agriculture in southern Arizona and northern Sonora, for crops like Sonoran bread wheat and watermelons had arrived prior to his entry, as did Churro sheep and Criollo cattle. Water harvesting and other desert-adapted agricultural techniques still used today are a blend of Indigenous, Canarian, and Arab/Phoenician influences.

Several native grasses, amaranths, huazontle, chia, and tansy mustard seed served as "grains" prior to maize introduction to Sonoran Desert over 4,000 years ago.

Comcaac (Seri) women regularly forage 15-20 food species from desert and sea to this day.

Please join us as Gary Nabhan shares his insights about Arid American agriculture during Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's Third Thursday Food for Thought presentation this month.

Ecological Knowledge and Practices of Traditional Indigenous and Spanish Agriculturists



Above: Wild foraged plants harvested by Indigenous people of the Arid Southwest

Right: Agave researcher Howard Scott Gentry with giant agave in Oaxaca, Mexico, 1963

All photos are courtesy of Gary Nabhan except page 1 background image, which is from www.amazon.com.

For more information

about this program, contact

Old Pueblo Archaeology Center at

info@oldpueblo.org or 520-798-1201.