PLANT SPECIES AND THEIR USES IN MIMBRES AND SALADO SITES IN SOUTHWEST NEW MEXICO

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Introduction
The Mimbres and Gila valleys provided oases and fertile lands in an arid region. While extensive irrigation systems were constructed to grow maize, squash, and beans, native plants were important to supplement diets and provide medicine. Native plants also provided materials for building, baskets, and clothing.

The Gila River is a tributary of the Colorado River. The fertile soils of its floodplain make the region inviting for agriculture.

The Mimbres River is a closed-basin river. Its waters are sourced from mountain run-off. The valley floor is a vast riparian floodplain of arid and semiarid land.

Research Overview
The purpose of this study was to examine evidence of interactions between humans and native plants during the Classic Mimbres (AD 1000-1150) and Cliff Phase (AD 1200-1450). Variations in floral finds between the two time periods provide insight into potential resource availability.

To achieve this goal, an examination of previously published findings was undertaken. Along with examining reports of macrobotanical, microbotanical, and pollen evidence, consideration of pottery was also included.

Finally, a review of O’odham traditional uses of native plants was incorporated, to provide an understanding of how the reported plant families might have been used by Salado and Mogollon area residents.

Conclusion
Comparison between these two locations and time periods revealed that there were differences in plant material identified. These results may suggest differences in availability or cultural usage of native plants.

PLANTS SEPARATED BY TIME
Classic Mimbres Sites only
Mentzelia-Blazing Star can provide food from its seeds and roots. It has been used medicinally by various tribes to treat stomach problems.

Vitaceae-wild grapes provide a source of food. The vines can be used in basket making.

Cliff Phase Period Sites Only
Cucurbitaceae- Wild Melon. Some varieties are very bitter, and O’odham history reports their use for deodorant and repelling fleas.

PLANTS COMMON TO ALL SITES
Solonaceae- Datura has hallucinogenic and toxic properties. Depicted in Mimbres style pottery, seeds have been found in dwellings.

Salaleae- willow is common in riparian habitats; it is used to make baskets, and as medicine or tea.

PLANTS SEPARATED BY VALLEY
Upper Gila River Valley
Asteraceae- Cocklebur- seeds of the cocklebur were ground and made into cakes.

Martyniaceae- Devil’s Claw pods were used in basket making; they provide black fiber. Secondarily, they were used as a food.

Mimbres River Valley
Laminaceae- Mint has medicinal properties. It is used especially for indigestion.

Asteraceae- Wild Sunflower provided seeds and roots as food. The pith was used like chewing gum, and the pitch could be used like a putty.

Papaveraceae- Prickly poppy has properties similar to opioid poppies, and may have been used as a sedative or analgesic.

Results
This study found data from three Gila River sites (Ormand, Woodrow, Gila Cliff Dwellings) and two Mimbres River sites (NAN, Harris) to examine recorded plant evidence. Forty families of plants were identified in at least one of the five sites reviewed.

Temporally, 16 families were exclusive to Classic Mimbres sites, and 8 were only found at Cliff Phase sites.

Acknowledgments
Special thanks to Karen Schollmeier, Archaeology Southwest, and the National Science Foundation, REU Award No. 1560465.