ABSTRACT

TITLE:	Experimental Gardening for Insight to Ancestral Puebloan Life
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ABSTRACT: In the prehistoric Southwest, subsistence practices connect the exploitation of natural resources with the production of food and commodities. To recognize the importance of Zea mays, Phaseolus, and Cucurbita (corn, beans and squash) to subsistence, this paper explores wild and domesticated plants used during the 12th and 13th century occupations of Aztec Ruins. Research carried out on experimental plots starting in September 2013 was designed to determine 1) which resources were being exploited, 2) for what purposes they were used, and 3) analogies, using experimental archaeology, for the productivity of prehistoric subsistence resources. It was found that domesticated plants were integrated into the agricultural complex and subsistence was augmented by wild foods like beeweed and pricklypear fruit, and additionally that some wild resources (e.g. yucca) were cultivated for fiber. A diverse mix of plants were necessary to satisfy the demands for fiber, food, and shelter as well as art and aesthetics among the Ancestral Puebloans who occupied Aztec Ruins.