

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XXXIX, NUMBER 10



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
OCTOBER 2016

Editor –Linda Alderman ewalderman@comcast.net

Oct. 2016 Calendar

- Oct. 5 – Wed. 7PM** **Board Meeting** at the home of Lois Sutton
- Oct. 11 – Tues. 10 AM** **Day Meeting** at the home of Lois Sutton, Program: *“Replacing Invasives in your yard with Natives,”* **presented by Lois Sutton. Bring a dish to share.**
- Oct. 19 – Wed. 6:30 PM** **Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), hosted by Julie Fordes. Program: *“Notes from the Underground: a Down-to-Earth Presentation.”* **presented by Mary Sacilowski**, microbiologist and vermiculturalist, and **Danny Wilson**, CEO of Farm Dirt. **Bring your plate, napkin and a dish to share.**

Nov. 2016 Calendar

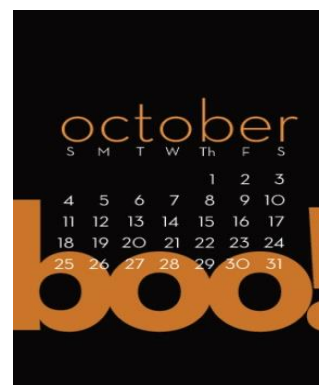
- Nov. 15 – Tues. 10 AM**
(Note: change of date!) **Day Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), Program: *“Beauty of Fall Native Herbs”* presented by Lois Jean Howard. Hosted by Pam Harris. **Bring your plate, napkin and a dish to share.**
- Nov. 16 – Wed. 6:30 PM** **Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), **host volunteers needed!** Program: *“Foraging for Survival: How Wild Plants Saved the Early Texas Settlers”;* **presented by Mark “Merriwether” Vorderbruggen, PhD.**
Bring your plate, napkin and a dish to share.
- Oct. 26-29** **South Central District Gathering**, Beaumont, TX. See details on page ?
- Newsletter deadline: 25th of every month**
Submissions should be at most 1 page in Times New Roman 12

**Happy
Birthday!**



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10/13 Benée Curtis
10/21 Janice Stuff
10/29 Martha Burg





Chairman's Corner

The heat and unusual August rainfall has been a challenge for gardeners! I have lost some of my favorite herbs. Maybe the membership should conduct a survey about species survival this past summer. Is anyone interested in conducting an informal survey? What a great topic for discussion and an article for a future newsletter.

Houstonians have complained about immoderate rainfall since the nineteenth century. The HOUSTON WEEKLY TELEGRAPH carried an article suggesting that scientists find ways of controlling rain so that Houston would be an ideal place to live. It was once thought that sending umbrellas up in the sky would alter the charges of the clouds and moderate the rainfall patterns! Alas, weather patterns have not moderated and Houston with the aid of air conditioning has become a popular place to live and gardeners are still confounded by erratic and unpredictable seasons.

While I am like most herbal enthusiasts and not obsessed with need for a perfect green lawn! I never water or fertilize grass, and usually have a healthy chemical-free sod. I was, however, curious about the spreading brown mangle in my lawn this summer. I found it throughout the inner city both in private yards and public parkways.

The folks at Wabash feed store suspected that my lawn was infected with Sod Web Worms. The adults are moths that flit around when disturbed. They live in the thatch where they spin a light webbing and feed on the underside of leaves. Damage first appears as small ragged brown spots that spread. This malady rarely occurs in shaded areas or so I have read and noticed. Wabash suggested a natural spray containing a soil dwelling bacterium, Monterey BT. One application at dusk did the trick and our yard is once again acceptable to green-turf fanatics. There is only one problem, once the spray has been opened and attached to a hose, the remainder must remain refrigerated!

Sally Luna
Unit Chair



About Our Meetings

Lois Jean Howard welcomed nearly a record number of members into her home for the September day meeting. Thank you, Lois Jean! Everyone was excited to hear the interesting program about cotton, starting with the Dutch; presented by **Nutti Doodeheefver**.

-Thelma Rowe



What Also Was Imported From India Besides Indigo? by Nutti Doodeheefver

Around 1600 the Europeans could only paint fabric (linen and cotton) with oil paint. They were familiar with pigments. These fabrics were not washable and also could only be rolled up because of paint cracking. When the Dutch and British each established their own East India Companies the crews of the first ships brought back hand painted cotton fabric. The first pieces were large and suitable for bedding, drapes and wallcoverings. The patterns were plants and flowers. This created a sensation in Europe since these fabrics were washable.

The fabrics were called sits. How were they hand painted? The fabrics first went through several chemical treatments. One was with buffalo milk and the myrobalan fruit that contained tannin which created a chemical reaction for the paint to adhere. The pattern was drawn on stiff paper with little holes which would be dusted with charcoal. The lines would then be painted with black ink. Each color would be painted on separately with a final indigo bath. They could create the colors: red, purple, lilac, blue, black, green and yellow. Each process was complicated and done by a different group. The final bath was rice water and now it was called chintz. The colors had to be adjusted for the Western taste; and after 1664, cotton fabric was imported for clothing with a yard as a standard measurement.



More About Our Meetings

DOWN AND DIRTY IN YOUR GARDEN
by Karen Cottingham

What does the phrase “going underground” suggest to you? Joining a covert operation? Or perhaps hiding from the law? How about riding the London subway? I’d be amazed if your first thought was delving into the biological drama unfolding under our feet. Yet, this covert, living part of soil is exactly what nourishes the herbs we grow and enjoy. And that’s why our October 19, 2016 evening meeting program will be *Notes from the Underground: A Down-to-Earth Presentation*, by member **Mary Sacilowski** and guest speaker **Danny Wilson**.

Mary, also known as “**The Worm Lady**”, will introduce us to the fascinating underground world of earthworms. Yes - earthworms are indeed fascinating. Believe it or not, worms are so important to the creation of healthy soil that Charles Darwin himself devoted the final decade of his life to the study of these creatures. And Amy Stewart, well-known to herb lovers for *The Drunken Botanist* and many other entertaining books, describes her own long-term relationship with worms in *The Earth Moved*. Mary will show you how to nurture your own worm community - and your plants will thrive!

Our second “underground” speaker is Danny Wilson. Danny is the creative genius behind the local business **Farm Dirt**. *Farm Dirt* collects fruit and vegetable waste from produce wholesalers, Whole Foods grocery stores, local overstocked food pantries, and even HISD cafeterias. They convert this otherwise wasted food into microbial-rich, super-fertile compost. This means less methane is produced in the landfills and we get more fertile soil for our gardens - it’s a “win-win” for everybody!

Danny will also discuss how you can maintain the essential microbial life in your soil by avoiding chemical fertilizers and excessive tilling and how you can enhance the effectiveness of soil microbes by encouraging the development of mycorrhizal fungi.

Donna Fay Hilliard, an HSA-STU member and owner of **Sweet Organic Solutions**, will have her own educational display of microbial and mycorrhizal fungi-based soil amendments that are safe, effective, environmentally responsible, and commercially available.

And of course there will also be door prizes!

This program is scheduled for October so your gardens can be optimally prepared for planting the herbs you purchase at the Saturday, **November 5, 2016 Herb Fair**. The program is designed to be as informative to the “hands-on” gardener as to the garden lover whose idea of “hands-on” gardening is to hand the gardener a check! So invite your friends to “go underground” with you for this meeting and then spread the word about **Herb Fair 2016**.

The meeting will be held in the beautiful new **CHERIE FLORES GARDEN PAVILION** at 1500 Hermann Dr. The entrance to the Pavilion’s parking lot is where Crawford Street T-intersects with Hermann Drive. The spacious meeting room is reserved for us from 6:00 pm - 9:30 pm to allow us plenty of time to set up, socialize, eat, meet, and clean up!



Herb Fair

South Texas Unit

Setup Friday Nov. 4 - - Sales Sat. Nov. 5

Welcome and Updates

The South Texas Herb Society will host the **44th Annual Herb Fair** on Nov. 4 and Nov. 5 at the **Judson Robinson Center, 2020 Hermann Drive** Houston, TX 77004

We are looking forward to all members and guests helping in the preparation for our Herb Fair and on the sale **day**. **Participation in fair preparations is an expected commitment for all members. It is a great learning and enjoyable experience for everyone!**

The **Pre-order form** has been posted on the website <http://www.herbsociety-stu.org/annual-herb-fair.html> and emailed to you. If you pre-order your items (including a generic voucher) the Unit does not have to pay 10% to the Judson Robinson Center, thus saving money!!!

Timeline

When do you want to work on Friday, on Saturday? Every member is needed to work on Friday (if possible) and Saturday. Janice Stuff and Donna Yanowski will contact each member to determine your time and task preferences on Friday and Saturday.

Friday (members work at least 2 hours)*

8 - 9 AM Preliminary setup
9 - 11 AM Plants arriving and setup
11 AM – 5 PM Members working!
Finish setup on plants, blends, crafts, jelly etc.

Saturday (members work at least 4 hours)*

7:30 AM Members arrive and work - -
8 - 9 AM Pre-sale customers pickup items and shop
9 - 2 PM Public sales
2 PM Close sales
2 - 4 PM Tear down, clean up

NOTE: Coffee, snacks, and food provided for workers by hospitality team

NOTE: Save and bring shopping bags for our customers to use

Herb Fair Co-Chairs:

Janice Stuff jestuff@pdq.net 713-516-5748
Donna Yanowski
donnayanowski@gmail.com 713-524-3542

From the Treasurer's Desk



Herb Fair Preorders for Members, Too!

Ordering ahead rather than shopping on site gives you great advantages:

- 1) You reserve the products you want and ...
- 2) At a reduced cost, relative to on site charges
- 3) You can use your vouchers like cash on site (lighter wallet to carry!)

Ordering ahead also provides a financial edge to the unit. Our use fee for the site is based on our gross income during the event, i.e. the fee calculation does not include presale dollars. An easy way to save yourself and the unit money!

Requests for Reimbursement

If you don't have a copy of the reimbursement request form, please let Lois know. You will need to attach your receipts for any unit / Herb Fair related expenses. Requests for reimbursement may be submitted before the Fair and then within one month after the Fair – not later than Dec. 5th. If you incur expenses you would like to donate to the unit, we have an in-kind donation acknowledgment letter we will supply for tax purposes. Questions? Send them along to Lois: doctorlo@comcast.net

Herb Fair Vendors

Lucia Bettler, books from *Lucia's Garden*
Donna Faye Hilliard, products from *Sweet Organic Solutions*.



Herb Society of America South Central District Gathering



Hilton Hotel, Beaumont,
TX
October 26-29 2016

 TEXAS GARDENING,

GUMBO, GATORS & GOOD FUN!

PROGRAM

Henry Flowers: Herb of the year

Micah Leigh: Witch's Gardens

Opening reception on Friday evening and Cajun buffet on Saturday evening with unit chairs sharing ideas about their units.

This is a great opportunity to meet others who share our love of Herbs, Gardening and Nature. It is so close to Houston! This is an amazing chance to learn, explore and socialize. Do not miss it!

Go early and explore the fascinating history of the early oil-boom town! Gatherings are one of the special advantages of membership.

\$120 for full program: all events, lunch, buffet and reception. (A reduced rate is available for partial attendance.)

Even More About Our Meetings

MEMBERSHIP REPORT by Albert Ramos

It's late September, and the heat hasn't broken; but it was even hotter at the September 21, 2016 evening meeting. **Henry Flowers**, Director of Gardens & Grounds for the International Festival-Institute at Round Top, spoke about Capsicums in a program entitled, "Some Like It Hot - *Really Hot!*" Our 22 members and 11 guests enjoyed learning about the history of Capsicums, how they travelled from their point of origin to other parts of the world, and how to evaluate their relative "heat". Henry also created a beautiful, comprehensive display of chili peppers from his garden and from local grocery stores. He generously allowed members and guests to take home as many peppers as they wished. Thank you, Henry.

Our guests tonight were just as wonderful and interesting as the speaker. For instance, one guest,

Mark Vorderbruggen, is a PhD chemist and a well-known "professional" forager for wild foods. Mark will be our guest speaker in the November evening meeting. Don't miss that meeting. You'll be fascinated as Mark tells us how early American's foraged for their food. Other guests included two who have attended at least three meetings, and we've encouraged them to join the HSA-STU.

Tonight's hostesses were **Benee Curtis** and **Jacqui Highton**. They did a lovely job of decorating the dinner board with pepper colors of green and red. They even scattered a variety of chili peppers around the serving dishes. The majority of tonight's dishes were flavored by or related to chili peppers, and they looked great with the decor. We also enjoyed the Hibiscus tea and lemon-herb water that **Pam Harris** made.

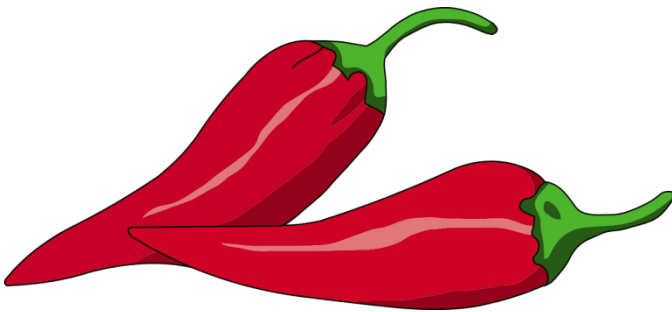
One other lovey aspect of the decor came to us courtesy of **Susan Wood**. She placed chili pepper seed packets on the dinner tables and also brought hundreds of packets of seeds of all sorts. At the end of the meeting, Susan generously announced that members and guests alike were welcome to take all of the seeds home with them. Thank you, Susan! You're always so good to us.

The meeting would not have been as fun as it was if we did not have door prizes. Tonight's door prizes were available to those who brought chili-pepper dishes. **Jacqui Highton** won a chili-infused gourmet olive oil from **Vom Fass Oils, Vinegars, and Spices** in the Village. Jacqui won because she brought healthy, black bean brownies with a "kick" - her recipe included chili peppers. Guest **Mark Vorderbruggen** won a fig-chili vinegar, also from **Vom Fass**, for his delicious (but hot) chili-pequin wraps. **Susan Wood** brought a chili-pepper related recipe, a fruit-yoghurt dish for those who needed immediate relief from "the burn". Susan won a hot chocolate mix flavored with chili pepper from **The Savory Spice Shop** in the Village. **Mary Sacilowski** brought a delicious red-pepper pasta and meat ball dish. She won a book on chili peppers for her efforts. **Joan Jordan** kindly donated this book. Thank you, Joan! **Sara Diaz** brought a Mexican dish of beef flavored with Serrano peppers and happily went home with a recipe book for Tabasco sauce. The book also discussed the interesting history of the pepper sauce. **Karen Cottingham** donated this book. **Jenna Wallis** also brought a chili-pepper "antidote" kefir drink. It was delicious and flavored with tart



cherries. Karen was glad she brought it after she tasted Mark's chili-pequin wraps. Jenna won a sack of beautiful eggplants generously donated by **Jeanie Dunnihoo**. That was very thoughtful of you, Jeanie. Congratulations to all the winners, and "Thank you" to all the local businesses and members who donated the door prizes.

Even though not everyone could win a door prize, we all had another opportunity to leave with something more than we walked in with. **Lois Sutton** brought crinum lily bulbs from her yard, and **Jeanie Dunnihoo** brought several pots of tomato plants ready to pop into the garden. Lois and Jeanie are always so generous with us, and she made sure that everyone went home with something that made them smile.



THE PURLOINED PEPPERS
by Karen Cottingham

In 1813, a tongue-twister for each letter of the alphabet was published in England as Peter Piper's Practical Principles of Plain and Perfect Pronunciation. Peter Piper represented the letter "P", and even today, virtually everyone knows that Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Pickled Peppers.

Tongue-twisters were immensely popular in 19th century England and were even sometimes risqué. Generally they were composed as amusements and aids to proper pronunciation. Most tongue-twisters featured completely fabricated characters and situations chosen for their alliterative word-play and difficulty of pronunciation. The Peter Piper tongue-twister, however, arose from a backstory of international intrigue and horticultural piracy. And Peter was actually modeled after an adventurous 18th century French horticulturist who was a key figure in the history of tropical herbs and spices, particularly nutmeg.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Dutch East India Company controlled their immensely profitable nutmeg monopoly in the Spice Islands with an iron

fist. They destroyed all nutmeg trees in areas that were too difficult to guard and imposed the death penalty on anyone caught growing, stealing, or possessing nutmeg without the Company's authorization. To try to prevent any fertile seed from leaving the island, they even drenched the harvested nutmegs with lime before exporting them.

So who was Peter Piper, and how does he fit into the nutmeg story? His real name was Pierre Poivre; and believe it or not, he was a one-armed missionary-turned-botanist-turned administrator-turned-pirate-and-tropical-spice-smuggler! While serving as a French Colonial administrator on the island of Mauritius in the 1760s, Poivre travelled extensively throughout Indonesia and the Far East collecting tropical plants for the French government and for his personal gardens. Resorting to subterfuge, assuming false identities, and conducting secret raids and forays when necessary, he created a lush, tropical arboretum consisting of over six hundred specimens from throughout the tropical world.

But Poivre's greatest challenge and accomplishment was to "liberate" fertile nutmegs from the heavily guarded Dutch spice stores. In a daring, clandestine raid, he managed to obtain enough nutmegs to complete his dream garden and to start a nutmeg plantation in the French island colony of Seychelles to compete with the Dutch.

And what does this have to do with the Peter Piper tongue-twister? Note that the Anglicized version of "Pierre Poivre" is "Peter Pepper." Close, but not quite "Peter Piper". However, the Latin for "poivre", or "pepper", is the word we are looking for - "piper". Pierre Poivre has now assumed another identity - Peter Piper!

And what about the pickled peppers? When I was a child, I imagined Peter out in a field picking peppers, but I couldn't figure out how the peppers were already pickled if he was picking them while they were still on the bush. This unsettled mystery from my childhood returned when, while preparing for our program on fermentation, I read that green peppercorns must undergo fermentation before consumption. Since fermented foods are "pickled", maybe the pickled peppers Peter Piper picked were fermented peppercorns. This theory was a marginal improvement over the pickled peppers on the bush, but it still wasn't correct.



But the clues finally started dropping into place when I read how Christopher Columbus created endless botanical confusion by identifying the New World Capsicums with the already taken name of “peppers”. It’s important to remember, though, that in those days, the term “pepper” was generically applied to many spices, not just to *Piper nigrum*. Any plants having hot, spicy fruits or leaves, or the seeds or nuts of certain spices - including nutmeg, were called “pepper”. So nutmegs are also peppers! Since we also know that Pierre Poivre - aka Peter Piper - stole nutmegs, one more layer of the mystery was unveiled.

The next piece of the puzzle to solve was why the nutmegs Peter Piper picked were pickled. Remember that the Dutch applied lime (as in the calcium-based soil amendment) to the nutmegs before they left the islands. This interfered with their germination and thus helped protect the Dutch monopoly. Another word for “limed” in this context is - you guessed it - *pickled!* It’s similar to the pine furniture rubbed with a lime (calcium carbonate) solution and being called “pickled pine”.

The only remaining mystery is how Poivre managed to get fertile nutmegs along with the “pickled” ones! Perhaps the liming was not always effective, or perhaps Poivre also obtained nutmegs that were not limed, or even nutmeg saplings.

But encrypted for posterity into “Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Pickled Peppers” is the historical fact that “Pierre Poivre stole limed nutmegs”. The author of this tongue-twister was very clever indeed!



The South Texas Unit is a non-profit educational organization incorporated under the State of Texas. The South Texas Unit has no paid employees. Our activities are accomplished through the efforts of our volunteers.

The Herb Society of America
South Texas Unit
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The Herb Society of America is dedicated to promoting the knowledge, use and delight of herbs through educational programs, research and sharing the knowledge of its members with the community.



Find our Unit on the web at:
www.herbsociety-stu.org

Herbs Make Scents – October 2016