

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
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SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
MAY 2016

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May 2016 Calendar

- May 10** - Tues. - 10 a.m. **Day Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), hosted by Cathy Livingston and Ann Schrock. Program: *"The Herbs of China Bales: Blood Root,"* presented by **Lois Sutton**. **Bring a dish to share.**
- May 11** - Wed. – 7 p.m. **Board Meeting** at TBD
- May 18** - Wed. - 6:30 p.m. **Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), hosted by **Lois Jean Howard and Beth Murphy**. Program: *"In a Pickle! Herbal Fermentation,"* presented by **Benée Curtis and Jacqui Highton**. **Bring your plate, napkin and a dish to share.**

June 2016 Calendar

- June 12** – Sun. **Unit Annual Meeting** – Site and time to be determined
- June 14** – Tues. 10 a.m. **Day Meeting** at the home of Emily Delaune. Program: *"The Herbs of China Bales: TBD,"* presented by **Emily Delaune**. **Bring a dish to share.**
- Newsletter deadline: 25th of every month**
Submissions should be at most 1 page in Times New Roman 12

Happy Birthday!



5/13 Jane Littell
5/15 Carol Cobb
5/25 Nutti Doodeheefver
5/28 Cathy Livingston

Members Concerns



Melba Moses-illness



Chairman's Corner

Herb Day 2016 was an escape to late Victorian England and the world of Beatrix Potter, a story teller, a gardener, an artistic entrepreneur and philanthropist. The 116 registrants including guests from three Texas Units of the Herb Society were transported to the English Lake District by wonderful speakers and Lake District fare. Guests began the day with coffee, tea, scones, pound cake and Grasmere gingerbread-regional delicacy of the Lake District- made by members from authentic regional recipes provided by British member, Jacqui Highton. Lunch was a traditional Lake District plowman's lunch served in a clever cloth bag reminiscent of a knap sack. New member Andi Leger, proprietor of the French Fig, catered lunch.

Our first speaker, Helen Mann, is known for her regular appearances as a panel member of Houston Public Media's *Manor of Speaking* – a discussion that follows each episode of *Downton Abbey*. Ms. Mann, in her charming British accent, transported us to the Lake District, an area in North West England known for its mountains and natural beauty. It was this area that was the setting for Beatrix Potter's stories and gardening pursuits. Potter would ultimately save much of the area from commercial development by purchasing 4,000 thousand acres that were ultimately bequest to the National Trust. Mann described the topography of the area and gave wonderful insights about the regional cuisine. She generously gave each guest eight recipe cards.

The second speaker, Linda Lain, is a former chair of both the Herb Society of America and the South Texas Unit. This was a wonderful experience for the unit to be able to welcome back to Houston our long-time friend and have her share her passion for Beatrix Potter. Linda, along with her husband, has retired to Fort Worth, where she continues her research on Beatrix Potter, while still remaining a sustaining member of the South Texas Unit. Linda eloquently and humorously told the story of Beatrix Potter's life. She had a miserable childhood in a stuffy, upper middle class, London family who were Unitarians. They were shunned by English society because of their religion. She was schooled at home as was the fashion for girls in the Victorian period. Her friends were the animals that she snuck into her school room that was tucked away from the rest of the family. The bright spot in her childhood was

the summers spent in the country. Her famous Peter Rabbit story was written for a five-year-old child, son of Potter's former governess, Annie Carter Moore, in 1893. It was revised and [privately printed](#) by Potter in 1901 after several publishers' rejections. It was again printed by [Frederick Warne & Co.](#) in [1902](#). Linda deftly walked us though 77 years of Potter's life and like all good speakers left the audience hungry for more stories **about the incredible Beatrix Potter.**

The third speaker, Henry Flowers, director of gardens at International Festival Institute at Round Top Texas, gave a clever and witty presentation on cottage gardening using only the drawings and sketches of Beatrix Potter for illustrations. His comments about adapting an English plant material to Texas were insightful and entertaining.

According to Flowers, "Beatrix Potter didn't get much of a chance while young to truly get her hands in the dirt, she developed a great appreciation for plants and gardens and when she purchased Hilltop Farm in 1905 at the age of 39, an adventure on her own away from her parents' sway, she set about gardening with much gusto and never stopped doing so until she passed away. For her gardening was as much a passion as was creating the stories and artwork for her little children's books.

Most of the plants that she grew in her gardens at Hilltop Farm, and later at Castle Cottage, were mentioned in her stories. There are some that were not – especially the more exotic species. Chances are that you may grow many of the plants that she mentioned or you could easily add them to your garden. Since the climate of England's Lake District is distinctly different from our own, not all the plants that she grew will thrive here.

Beatrix's gardens at Hilltop are often called "old-fashioned" and she greatly appreciated this description. She used stone walls, hedges, fruit trees and trellising to create a sense of enclosure and some privacy. Even though she appreciated the antics of young bunnies in her stories, she did not wholeheartedly appreciate them wreaking havoc in her own gardens and walled off her vegetable garden in particular in an effort to keep them out (most gardeners do have a bit of Mr. McGregor inside.)"

Sally Luna
Unit Chair



About Our Meetings . . .

“When it rains, it pours” - or so goes the old idiom. This phrase usually means that when something goes wrong, it all goes wrong. But not tonight as we once again had an extraordinarily successful evening meeting.

You might have thought that all the recent rain and flooding would have kept our members and guests from venturing out to our April meeting, but we must be water-resistant. Our intrepid members and guests poured forth from their abodes, flowed down the moist highways and byways, and attended another fascinating evening meeting of the HSA-STU. And they attended in near record-setting numbers with 21 members and 16 guests. Eight of the 21 members who slogged through the rain are relatively new members. How new? Well, tonight I gave our newest 4 members their name tags and their member directories before the meeting began. So the next time you attend a meeting, be sure to greet and warmly welcome our newest members: **Julie Fordes**, **Cheryl Israel**, **Andi Leger**, and **Kerry Madole**. Each of these ladies has something special to offer our STU. **Julie Fordes** is a talented cook, gardener, and artist who has been friends with Karen Cottingham and me for several years. She is also a retired teacher. **Cheryl Israel** is a gardener, an artist, and a realtor who is also a member of the Hermann Park Conservancy and Urban Harvest. She helped grow our attendance tonight by bringing two guests with her. Thank you, Cheryl. We all need to invite more guests! **Andi Leger** is already a favorite of many members for her sunny disposition and her enthusiastic support of the STU. For the past 17 years, Andi has combined her love of herb gardening and cooking with her own business, *French Fig Catering*. You may already know that Andi and *French Fig Catering* provided the delicious and beautifully-packaged lunches for our recent Herb Day. Finally we are also fortunate to have **Kerry Madole** as one of our newest members. Kerry is working on her Masters of Library Science, but she is also a gifted writer and member of the Texas State Historical Association. We're glad they've all joined!

And what about our guests? Sixteen is a lot of guests, especially considering the heavy weather. Yet, our interesting program, *Fifty Shades of Blue (Part II): Blue Jeans, Blue Men, and Blue Hands*, must have enticed them to attend. And these guests were not disappointed. HSA member **Nutti Doodeheefver** opened the program with the surprising history of blue jeans, the most enduring fashion trend in history.

Nutti's captivating presentation demonstrated how the styles and advertising changed throughout the decades.

Following Nutti was **Lucia Bettler**, a fellow HSA member and owner of *Lucia's Garden* on W. Alabama. Lucia discussed the spiritual aspects of indigo and the color blue. In addition to presenting a lovely slide show program, Lucia brought several samples of indigo fabrics and garments that her husband acquired in Niger when he worked there in the 1970s.

The final part of the evening's program, “Botanical Colors in the the Spirit of an Ancient Craft” was presented by indigo scholar and textile artist **Scharine Kirchoff**. Ms. Kirchoff's art, research, and teaching preserve traditional indigo dyeing and weaving knowledge from the tropical islands of Okinawa, Japan as well as from Jordan and Turkey. We enjoyed her engaging discussion of her personal history with indigo and her artwork, including the fact that she maintains her own natural dye garden.

After the presentations, members and guests crowded around the evening's presenters to continue the discussion.

In addition, our display tables looked so vivid and rich thanks to the generosity of guest **Maryvone Shaw**, owner of *The Blue Hand* at 2323 University in the Rice Village. As she did for the March Maryvone generously provided several dozen examples of vintage, handwoven indigo-dyed fabrics, clothing, and accessories from all over the world.

Finally, our hostess for the evening, Benée Curtis, whimsically decorated the tables with toy stuffed bunnies and colorful bouquets in watering cans in anticipatory celebration of the Herb Day symposium, *Beatrix Potter: Her Life & Gardens*. Three other members also read their meeting announcements and knew to bring a rabbit decoration in order to be eligible for a door prize. The lucky winner of an artisan-crafted bar of “Carrot Cake” soap made by Karen Cottingham was **Pam Harris**. Of special note, **Elizabeth Grandich** helped Benée by bringing delicious lemongrass tea for us to enjoy with the potluck supper, and **Janice Stuff** prepared herbal-infused water. Thank you, Elizabeth and Janice. And thank you everyone for another wonderful evening meeting.

Since April showers bring May flowers, bring yourself to next month's meeting, *In a Pickle! Herbal Fermentation*, presented by Benée Curtis and Jacqui Highton.



More About Our Meetings

April 12 Day Meeting

The meeting was graciously hosted by Tamara Gruber at her lovely home. We had 8 members present. During the business part of our meeting Martha Burg, Herb Day Luncheon chair reported there were 76 reservations at that time. Pam Harris said a craft workshop was to be held at Lois Jean's home on April 14. Thelma Rowe reminded everyone it was time to update their hours on their individual sign-in page of the membership book. Those hours will be totaled for our annual report which is sent to our National Office in Kirtland, Ohio.

The following is a brief synopsis of the program on Rue, presented by **Lois Jean Howard**.

Rue - *ruta graveolens* - Rue Family - *chalapensis* - similar - with finely divided foliage & grows in warmer climates. Named from the Greek word reus - to set free.

Rue is a perennial, bushy plant that grows 2-3' high with blue green foliage. It blooms the second year-with yellow "citrus like" flowers. It can be propagated by cuttings, roots or seeds. It is a pleasant plant in the garden landscape, but for little use. Caution: Oil from this plant can cause serious dermatitis. It can cause a "poison ivy" like rash lasting for weeks & leaving scars. This is due to the oil & photosynthesis of the sun. Use gloves and long sleeves when working with this plant!

"Tis an undemanding plant that grows well in poor soil & little water." It's indigenous to the Mediterranean, but grows well in our area.

The most popular known use which gives it the name, Herb of Grace, comes from the practice, from very early times, of dipping a sprig of rue in holy water & then sprinkling it over the congregation. Thus, it became the Herb of Grace & Repentance.

Cooking: Due to the bitter taste it has been used little for food. Although it remains a seasoning in North Africa in the preparation of Merguez (lamb and beef sausage), it has been used in spice mixes & in some soups and stews in the Middle East.

Medicinal: Rue contains alkaloids, volatile oils & flavonoids including rutin. An antispasmodic used to reduce blood pressure and a diaphoretic. It has also been used to induce abortion. It is a very dangerous medicinal herb which can cause convulsions, hemorrhage & death. It is no longer used in herbal medicine!



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Herb Day was very special this year because it was held on the **90th birthday** of member

Thelma Rowe

Our two best flower arrangers, Vivian Scallan and Shirley Mills added to the fun by making an herbal nosegay for her and presenting her with a birthday cake. Thelma has been a member for 23 years. She has served as secretary, treasurer, education chair, scholarship chair, nominating chair and archivist. She received the prestigious White Glove award from Herb Society of America for her archival endeavors. She is currently co-membership chair.

Thelma hails from Buffalo, New York and came to Houston because of her late husband's corporate transfer. She went to college in Wisconsin, worked as an occupational therapist and her last job was manager of the gift department of Sakowitz downtown store. She is the consummate herb gardener and strongly committed to the daily workings of the South Texas Unit. Vive la Thelma!



The 33rd Herb Day Symposium was such a great success this year. Thanks to our members for their outstanding ideas and hard work. Visitors were saying this was the best symposium they had ever attended.

Thank You!

Each of the 3 speakers made you feel as if you had known Beatrix Potter for a very long time.

Each speaker said something about the animals she loved to write about. All transcripts or handouts from each speaker will be uploaded to our website.

Thanks again to everyone that helped make this event such a success!

Martha Burg
Herb Day Chair

From the Treasurer's Desk



The 2016 – 2017 unit budget will be presented at the annual business meeting in June. As you may know, we often provide modest donations to local gardens and arboreta. In the past these have included such groups as the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center, the Hana & Arthur Ginzburg Nature Discovery Center (Bellaire), the gardens at Festival Institute (Round Top TX), the fiber garden at Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, etc. At the national level we donate to our parent organization, The Herb Society of America. These donations have been in support of the gardening intern at the National Herb Garden (in the National Arboretum, Washington DC), the annual journal *The Herbairst* and for general operational needs. At the May 11 board meeting, we will consider the donations to be part of the budget. If you have ideas you would like us to consider, please let me know by **May 10th**.

-Lois Sutton

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Coming UP!!!

May 18, 2016, 6:30 PM to 9:30 PM

In a Pickle! Herbal Fermentation, presented by **Benée Curtis and Jacqui Highton**

Hermann Park: Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Drive

Our always effervescent kitchen scientists, Benée Curtis and Jacqui Highton, are in a *ferment* of culinary creativity! Imagine their kitchen counters lined with bubbling crocks emitting pungent and complex aromas. Imagine having artisanal condiments and tangy vegetables to make every meal special. Then imagine yourself confidently chopping fresh herbs and vegetables to create tasty and incredibly nutritious krauts, chutneys, kimchees, and kvass.

Everyone is encouraged to do a little research in advance and to bring a potluck dish containing fermented ingredients. For the less adventurous chef, consider familiar and readily available fermented ingredients such as yogurt, kefir, miso, soy sauce, sourdough bread, and vinegar. It's even easier than you might think, as other common ingredients that are fermented include coffee, tea, chocolate, vanilla, and black pepper!

We'll see you at the May 18 evening meeting!

-Karen Cottingham



Fun Facts About The Color Blue by Karen Cottingham
(Inspired by the March and April programs, *Fifty Shades of Blue*)

Did you ever wonder why “true blue” means “loyal and unwavering in one’s opinions or support for a person or cause”? This expression comes from the excellent reputation of the woad-dyed blue cloth made in Coventry, England in the late Middle Ages. Coventry’s dyers had a reputation for producing material that didn’t fade with washing, but remained “fast” and “true”. A reliable color that didn’t fade was “as true as Coventry blue”.

The association between the color blue and fidelity also gave rise to the wedding charm of “something borrowed, something blue”. Blue items, particularly blue flowers, symbolize purity, love, and fidelity in marriage.

On the other hand, if you are “blue” in Germany, you are “schnockered”! Urine was traditionally used in Europe to alkalize indigo vats. Since “beer drinkers don’t buy beer - they rent it”, resourceful dyers placed urine collection pots at local taverns and gratefully collected the by-product of beer consumption. The heavy drinkers came to be linked with the color blue for their unwitting contribution to the production of the valuable blue cloth.

On “Blue Mondays”, craftsmen in the Middle Ages hung out their blue-dyed fabric for air drying, so the dyers had the day off. Eventually, the phrase “taking a blue Monday” came to mean skipping work, playing hooky, or faking an illness to avoid work or school. It also refers to those Mondays with high absenteeism due to overindulgence in alcohol the weekend before!

“Blue Stockings” is a term that used to refer to “literary” ladies. In 1750, a group of women in England began meeting at the house of Elizabeth Montague to discuss literature and politics in an informal setting. Since common, blue worsted stockings were acceptable attire at her gatherings in contrast to the more formal black silk stockings expected in more elegant social settings, the women became known as the “Blue Stockings Society”. Disparaging or sneering remarks by some men about the “blue-stockings” ladies were commonplace.

In the Colonial United States, however, the sobriquet “blue stocking” was far more complimentary. “Blue stocking” was used interchangeably with “blue blood” and referred to a person of aristocratic birth or superior social standing. At the same time, the color blue also became connected with indecency. Early Colonial lawmakers established rigid controls over morals and conduct - the so-called “blue laws”. These were designed to encourage people to go to church and to prohibit people from engaging in secular activities on Sundays.

Blue laws, for instance, prohibited the Sunday sale of alcohol as well as participation in certain sports such as hunting or horse racing. In some states, it was even illegal to play a fiddle on a Sunday! Did you know that blue laws regulating the sale of alcohol and automobiles are still on the books in Texas?

But why are blue laws blue? One of the colonies, New Haven, printed their restrictive laws on blue paper.

Blue paper is also behind what is known as “blue humor”, which refers to vaudeville jokes considered indecent or off-color. Vaudeville performers frequently received notes written on blue stationary after their first show in a new theater - management’s warning that certain material in the act was offensive. Blue came to be identified with any kind of humor that was off-color, a little too adult, risqué, or downright dirty.

Hard-working laborers have always needed durable, cheap work clothes of a color dark enough to mask the grease and grime of a dirty working environment. Shirts of indigo-dyed Chambray cloth, first mentioned in histories of 14th century France, were the prototype for centuries of blue workwear, and live on in modern renditions as the uniforms of mechanics and other skilled laborers. The familiar expression, “blue collar jobs”, became popular only after appearing in a 1924 newspaper editorial.

These are the “*true blue*” facts!



ANDI LEGER'S SOUP FOR HERB DAY!

This is the recipe Andi used edited slightly on a much larger scale. The original source was from an old book I purchased on Amazon titled: Beatrix Potter's Country Cooking by Sara Paston Williams published in date 1991.

Chilled Pea and Peppermint Soup

- 1 pound frozen peas, petite
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 10 sprigs fresh peppermint leaves, or spearmint leaves
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 1 1/4 cups cream, or plain yogurt for garnish
- 2 1/2 cups chicken stock, or vegetable stock
- chives, chopped for garnish

1. Put the peas in a saucepan with the sugar, crushed garlic and peppermint leaves. Toss over low heat without adding any water until the peas are tender. Leave to cool, then add the lemon juice. Liquidate the soup in a blender or food processor until smooth.
2. Stir in the cream, then add enough stock to make the soup the consistency desired. Chill well in fridge, preferable overnight.
3. Serve in individualized chilled bowls or glasses, garnish with a swirl or sour cream or yogurt and a sprinkling of chopped chives, or serve with a crusty bread.

THANK YOU ANDI!



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.

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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

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