

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XL, NUMBER 9



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
SEPT 2017

Editor – Linda Alderman (ewalderman@comcast.net)

September 2017 Calendar

- Sept 7, Thurs. at 7 p.m.** **Herb Day Planning Meeting** at the home of Donna Yanowski. RSVP to Dena Yanowski, denayanowski@gmail.com
- Sept 12, Tues. at 10 a.m.** **Day Meeting** is at the home of Pam Harris. **Program** is a planning meeting for this learning year. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**
- Sept 20, Wed. at 6:30 p.m.** **Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), **Hosted by Martha Burg and Janice Stuff.** The program, “A Taste of Texas Honeys” is presented by **Nicole Buegers**, a local beekeeper and honey entrepreneur. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**

October 2017 Calendar

- Oct 10, Tues. at 10 a.m.** **Day Meeting TBD**
- Oct 18, Wed. at 6:30 p.m.** **Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), **Hosted Mary Sacilowski and Lucia Bettler.** The program, “10 Easy to Grow Herbs for Fall”, is presented by **Susan Wood.** **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**
- Oct 24, Tues. at 7:00 p.m.** **Board meeting** at the home of Sally Luna
Newsletter deadline: the 25th of every month

Happy Birthday!



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17 – Lucia Better

Herbs Needed for Teas!

Lois Jean Howard asks you to harvest the following herbs for teas for Herb Fair.

- Red Stem Apple Mint
- Mexican Mint Marigold
- Lemon Verbena
- Lemon Grass
- Lemon Balm

Members – If you want to have your birthdays remembered and haven't seen it announced, send me an email.
ewalderman@comcast.net



Chairman's Corner

Greetings,

It's challenging sitting at the kitchen table, half listening to the weatherman lay out the various paths that Harvey might take and compose this column. By the time this is read, I hope that Harvey is a faded memory – with no damage or discomfort - just beautiful rain.

The first board meeting was held August 22 at the home of Sally Luna, thanks again for hosting! Plans are being made for Herb Fair, the 50th Anniversary of our Herb Society (2018), Herb Day and the *new member* social. We will also vote on which of the three gardens, presented at the May meeting, will be the recipient of a \$700 donation: The Sensory Garden at Russ Pittman Park, the gardens at Festival Hill in Roundtop, or the Sensory Garden at Sight into Sound Radio Broadcasting Studio. You can review these entries in the June newsletter found on our website: www.herbsociety.org/

Having paid my dues for this term I thought I should look into the *National* Herb Society of America, curious where we came from and how we started. Reading the history gave me a new perspective and sense of community. Our national organization was founded in Boston in 1933 by seven women who all shared a passion for herbal education. We are currently divided into seven regional membership districts, made up by many local units and continue to function as a membership based non-profit. If you have a few minutes, I highly recommend familiarizing yourself with the national website; finding solidarity with the founding members and pride within this national group in which we all belong.

Donna Yanowski
Unit Chair



Looking for interim Newsletter Editor

Linda Alderman currently plans to begin cruising on her sailboat from February through May 2018. HSA-STU is looking for someone to assume the role of editor of this newsletter. All that's required is a just a few hours each month formatting the unit information. No writing is necessary!

Contact: Linda Alderman
ewalderman@comcast.net or 832-465-3620



Remit your membership dues *NOW* (past due) in order to be included in 2017-18 Directory and Email announcements.

\$67.50

Mail to Janice Stuff, Treasurer
P.O. Box 6515
Houston, TX 77265-6515

Questions? jestuff@pdq.net



About Our Meetings . . .

Honey Wanderlust
Karen Cottingham

We all have certain memories that we particularly cherish - the birth of a child; the once-in-a-lifetime experience of seeing a total solar eclipse; or more simply but no less powerfully, the aroma of bread baking in Grandma's oven. And then there are some memories so personal and idiosyncratic that they are viewed by others with puzzled expressions, indulgent smiles, and perhaps some head-shaking. Some of my own most cherished memories are the most quirky ones, especially those that involve travel and the search for local honey.

My recollections of traipsing through the famous museums, ruins, and palaces of Provence, for example, pale in comparison to the vivid memory of a sunny afternoon's impulsive quest for honey. Trusting that the promised apiary would eventually appear, we painstakingly negotiated a desolate, rocky hillside track that led us further and further away from the main road. Turning back from this folly was not even an option; we were on a mission to find pure lavender honey. Not honey with a few lavender buds thrown in, but honey actually made by bees foraging exclusively on the famed lavender flowers of Provence... intense honey with the true *essence* of lavender and the true *essence* of Provence. *Memorable* honey. And we found it.

Another special honey experience was completely fortuitous. We were driving along a country road in Louisiana when we saw a sign indicating that we were approaching the town of "Eros". I was mistaken when I assumed the sleepy town of 155 was named for the Greek god of love, but that's how it persists in my memory. [The name was actually inspired by the asteroid 443 Eros which was discovered in 1898 - pretty fancy for a little lumber town].

There's nothing particularly romantic about Eros or some its neighbors like Hog Hair, Jumping Vernon, Head Settlement, and Bug Tussle; but once there, we did find something to love. A rustic, handprinted sign pointed us toward local honey for sale. It was our first glimpse into the world of a backyard

backyard beekeeper and his "shop" - really just an elongated two-room shack with a homemade extractor.



What made this honey stop such a cherished memory was that the master of the honey shack agreed to sell me a gigantic wheel of

beeswax that has since been the basis for all of my herbal salves. I think of it as my Eros Beeswax, my own little piece of love. I share this love secretly with everyone who has ever used my herbal salve.

Another favorite honey adventure occurred *en-route* to an out-of-state wedding. Driving leisurely to the destination, our route took us along the Mississippi portion of the beautiful Natchez Trace. Finding ourselves so close to Tupelo, we were naturally curious to try the acclaimed Tupelo honey; and always ready to go a few extra miles in the pursuit of honey, the decision to detour was an easy one.

The small Southern town was lovely, but something was very wrong: How could it be so difficult to find Tupelo honey in Tupelo? Not inclined to give up easily, we finally tracked down the one store in town that sold Tupelo honey. My excitement was short-lived, however, when the storekeeper explained that my Tupelo honey actually came from the Florida Panhandle! Tupelo honey, it turns out, has nothing at all to do with Tupelo, Mississippi. The name comes from the honey's nectar source - the flowers of the tupelo gum trees that grow alongside the swamps of northwest Florida and southern Georgia.

The honey quest to Tupelo was not for naught, however, as the town was abuzz with visitors celebrating its favorite son, Elvis Presley. The streets were swarming with pink Cadillacs and impersonators of *The King* competing in the Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist Contest. Fans sporting pompadours and beehive hairdos gyrated to rock-'n-roll classics such as *All Shook Up* and *A Big Hunk O' Love*.



Searching for Tupelo honey in Tupelo may have been misguided, but it turns out that Tupelo did have some honey to share. It just wasn't what I was expecting or looking for. My real Tupelo honey was hidden in the lyrics of *A Big Hunk O' Love*:

*You're just a natural born beehive
Filled with honey to the top
Well I ain't greedy baby
All I want is all you got...*

What a sweet surprise! Tupelo's favorite son seemed to have been in tune with honey, at least metaphorically, even if the rest of the town was not. If I ever have the opportunity to name a honeycomb-style honey, it's going to be *A Big Hunk O' Love!*

These dulcet memories have not only been sweet to revisit, but have inspired the topic of our next Evening Program. My first thought was to create a program about herbal honeys - delicious honeys derived from rosemary, lavender, thyme, and eucalyptus blossoms. But honeys marketed as "herbal" are often just regular honey with herbs or herbal flavors added. I wanted honey with the pure essence of the nectar plant actually foraged by the bees; honey that reflected the *terroir* of its place. I was also interested in highlighting local products and learning more about my adopted state of Texas. The herbal honeys that I first considered would have had to have come from France (rosemary and lavender), Greece (thyme), and New Zealand (eucalyptus). But when I found out that Texas is the source of a growing number of intriguing honeys and even more intriguing honey entrepreneurs, our September 20, 2017 Evening Program, *A TASTE OF TEXAS HONEYS*, fell into place.



If your previous honey experience has been with grocery store honey, you are in for a real treat. Typical grocery store honey is often a characterless blend of heated and strained honeys from various sources. If asked to describe the flavor, "sweet" is

usually the only word that comes to one's mind. For our September 20 meeting, however, we will have the opportunity to taste unique and intensely flavorful pure, varietal honeys from the Great State of Texas.

Nicole Buergers, a Houston beekeeper and honey entrepreneur, will be our guide for a unique evening of native Texas honey appreciation. Nicole is way more interesting than an entire town full of Elvis impersonators. Just consider a tiny sampling of her lengthy résumé: at various times Nicole has been a Secret Shopper, a cheesemonger, a Speed Date Hostess, and a Poker Pit Boss. She has been paid to take surveys, to be a juror in mock trials, and to compile trivia. Nicole has even taught conversational English classes.

And now she "gets stung by bees while sweating in a bee suit". It's her dream job and she loves every minute of it. Her business, **Bee2Bee**, offers hive installation and management for people who want a beehive in their backyard to support the challenged bee population but don't want the sweating, smoking, bee suits, and bee stings that go along



Beekeepers at work

with it. Nicole does it all; she even helps her clients harvest their own honey. And the bees pollinate the cucumbers as part of the deal.

In *A TASTE OF TEXAS HONEYS*, Nicole will walk us through how flower nectar becomes honey through the amazing collective intelligence and organizational behavior of

bees. Then we will all sample a selection of several native Texas monofloral, or varietal, honeys.

A monofloral honey is derived from the nectar of one predominant plant and is valued for its distinctive flavor characteristics. Well-known monofloral honeys are the common Clover and Alfalfa honeys, Manuka honey from New Zealand and Australia, Fireweed honey from the Pacific Northwest, Lavender honey from Provence, and as we now know, Tupelo honey from Florida!

As you can imagine, there are hundreds of nectar plants for bees across the length and breadth of Texas. Some of the most iconic Lone Star plants



make excellent honey, and other delicious honeys come from plants you have probably never thought of as nectar sources. For instance, what could be more Texan than the fields of cotton in the fertile Blackland Prairie, scrubby mesquite trees with their devilish thorns, or fragrant orange groves of the Rio Grande Valley? All these plants are nectar sources for bees and the delicious honey they make. Honey from the cotton blossom is said to be “buttery and tangy”; mesquite honey is “smoky” with flavors of “musty grape and brown sugar”; and orange blossom honey is redolent with the aroma of citrus.

Perhaps you remember sampling yaupon holly tea at a previous HSA-STU program presented by **Kim McHugh** of *HcHugh Tea Room* in Bellaire. Native yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitorium*) has been used for ages as a fortifying caffeinated beverage. Its nectar also makes an excellent honey - “full bodied, with a balanced sweetness and an earthy, somewhat bitter note”. Yaupon holly may be a tenacious weed to some, but is a delightful tea or honey to others. Along the same lines, the tallow tree is maligned as an undesirable invasive, but perhaps it redeems itself a bit by providing a heavy flow of nectar for high-quality honey - slightly tangy and “rich with warm spices.”

In July, we learned how the berries of another invasive plant found in Texas, the Brazilian pepperberry, have great promise as a future antibiotic for drug-resistant bacterial infections. But Brazilian pepperberry is also a very efficient producer of nectar, making it an important source of the nectar needed for winter honeybee colony maintenance... *and for honey*. Pepperberry honey has been described as “not too sweet” but with a “sweet potato flavor overlaid with molasses, and then a final, subtle, pepper kick”.

And then there are the nectar plants you may never have heard of. I’m especially looking forward to tasting Guajillo (or Huajillo) honey, said to have a “rich loquat-like” flavor by some and “a hint of lavender” by others. **Deborah Madison**, well-known chef and award-winning cookbook author, calls Guajillo honey “The absolute finest honey in the world.”

Guajillo (*Acacia berlandieri*) is a thorny, multi-trunked desert bush that grows abundantly on the Edwards Plateau. When Uvalde County was settled, ranchers were thrilled to discover caves

and hollow trees full of bees and this delicious honey. For a time, Uvalde was so famous for producing and shipping Guajillo honey that it was called “The Honey Capital of the World”. That’s right; “The Honey Capital of the World” was once in South Texas! To this day, Texas Guajillo honey is considered a delicacy.



Guajillo flower

So let’s celebrate Texas honey! Plan now to join us on September 20 for the opening program of the 2017-2018 Evening Meeting Series. Come learn about the many wonderful and sometimes unexpected Texas honey producing plants, and then find out why another iconic Texas flower, the bluebonnet, is notably absent from the list. And don’t miss what is probably your only chance to meet a retired Poker Pit Boss / cheesemonger / beekeeper!

Honey-based offerings for the potluck table will enhance the educational and sensory experience for everyone and will be greatly appreciated. If you do bring a honey-based dish, please be sure to label it and indicate the type of honey used so everyone can learn and enjoy. And guests are welcome, so don’t forget to bring a friend or two.

The meeting will be held in the beautiful **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, buzz about, eat, meet, and clean up. We’ll see you on September 20!

Reminder: Herb Fair Expenses

Please retain all sales and packing slips in order to be reimbursed for Herb Fair expenses. Contact Janice Stuff for a reimbursement form. jestuff@pdq.net



VOTE VOTE

During the business meeting on Sept. 20th, we will be voting on the following items:

-If the Unit chair is unable to attend the HSA national meeting, the Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, or if no officer can attend, a person appointed by the Board could represent the Unit at the meeting.

-Garden donations

Herb Day 2018 Planning Meeting

Dena Yanowski – Chair

In preparation for next year's Herb Day, I am excited to start the planning process early this Fall!

Join me **Thursday, September 7, 2017 7-8:30pm** at the home of Donna Yanowski 2319 Bartlett St.

Please RSVP to Dena Yanowski denayanowski@gmail.com ASAP.



Highlights from the HSA-STU Board Meeting

August 22, 2017

Submitted by: Mary Sacilowski

- Mary Sacilowski will compile the complete list of suggestions by members for future meetings.
- Gardens for HAS-STU donations will be voted on at the Sept. meeting. (See June newsletter for a description of the gardens.)
- Karen Cottingham will publish the list of hostess for the meetings for the next year.
- Janice Stuff will publish the recipients of scholarships and in the newsletter.
- Last year's board member will publish copies of their job descriptions to the new board by the next meeting.

Madelene Hill Scholarship Recipients

Each of these three students has been awarded a \$1000 scholarship from the South Texas Unit, HSA:

Ethan Triplett attends West Texas A & M University in Canyon, TX. Ethan's major is in plant, soil, and environmental science.

Kaylee Ites attends Texas A & M University in College Station, TX. Kaylee's major is in horticulture.

Rohan Brown attends Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX. Rohan's major is in plant and soil science.



Scholarship

45th Annual HERB FAIR 2017

Set-up: Friday, November 3
Sales: Saturday November 4

Herb Fair Chair: **Julie Fordes**
832-969-8349

We are looking forward to all of our members and other interested parties helping with the many preparations needed for Herb Day. There are many ways you can help before, after and during the event. Participation is an expected commitment for all members. Besides being fun, it's just the right thing to do.

KUDOS to all who have volunteered so far:

Spice Blends: Donna and Dena Yanowski

Crafts: Pam Harris, Jacqui Highton, & Lois Jean Howard

Publicity: Benée Curtis

Plants: Janis Teas and Jeanie Dunnihoo

Special thanks to **Janice Stuff** for taking on just about anything to do with money.

Craft Workshops:

There are several workshops planned where members can work on making some of the items we sell. Many of the tasks do not involve skill and can be done by anyone. These sessions are always fun and a good way to meet other members in an informal setting. The dates for the workshops are:

Sept. 14	Julie Fordes' house 5531 Valkeith	7-9 pm
Sept. 28	Jacqui Highton's house 3817 Marquette	10am-2pm
Oct. 12	Pam Harris' house 2624 University	10am-2pm

Jellies:

JELLY has been a great moneymaker for us. We will need several people who know how to do this as well as lots of worker bees to make as much jelly as we can.

Muchas gracias, to our Jelly Queens, **Lois Jean Howard, Andi Leger, Jeanie Dunnihoo, Benée Curtis and Sally Luna**, for volunteering their kitchens.

Chris Akney, Donna Adair, Andi Leger and Janice Stuff have volunteered to be worker bees! There is still a lot of time to help with this task! Call me!

I have been working with **the Health Department to get a Temporary Food Dealers Permit for the day**. That means we can offer samples of what we make. The cottage food laws still apply because we make things in home kitchens. We are allowed to sell jellies, pickles, vinegars and any baked goods under these guidelines. We have lots of options; it just depends on what we have time for. I have one more meeting with the Health Department before we finalize the details here.

We would like to offer some educational classes and workshops on the day of the sale. Ideas for topics were container gardening, aromatherapy and cooking with our products. If you have an idea for a workshop and want to present it, call me.

PUBLICITY is very important. We all need to help here. I plan to have printed flyers available at the September meeting. If you go to another gardening group, advertise our event to them. I could use a seasoned person to run point for the local papers. Call me if you can help. Everyone can use Facebook, Next Door and other social media to reach out to people.

That's all for now. I will be working hard to get a good volunteer base in the next few weeks and get some of our projects off the ground. Thanks to those who have stepped up already.



Herbally Speaking...

...from the desk of Linda Alderman

Basil must be one of the most popular herbs in the garden and the kitchen. It is a tender herb with many varieties offering fragrances to enjoy from licorice to lemon, cinnamon, and spice. While I have grown several types, my favorite is the traditional sweet green basil *Ocimum basilicum*. I think it is the king of aroma and flavor!

Basil *Ocimum* species **Lamiaceae**



Description: Basil is an annual with leafy stems that gives it a bushy appearance. The leaves are very fragrant. The flowers are commonly white, 1/2 inch in length, and have the two-lipped

shape of other herbs in this family. The leaves are opposite, oval and toothed. In some varieties, such as Genovese, the leaves curl inward along the mid-rib. Leaf color ranges from yellow-green to dark green. The fruit are tiny dark brown seeds.

Basil Folklore: The French call basil *herbe royale*. In Italy it has been, and is still, considered a sign of love. According to tradition, when a woman puts a pot of basil on the balcony outside her room, it means she is ready to receive her suitor. In another tradition, if a man gives a woman a sprig of basil, she will fall in love with him and never leave him. In India, basil is a sacred herb dedicated to the gods Vishnu and Krishna.

Cultivation: Basil is easily grown from seed, and I can attest to the fact that it readily self-sows. Once I had established plants, I didn't have to worry about more plants for the next year! Keep basil watered and mulched. I use basil often; pruning encourages dense growth and prolongs the plant's life. Basil loves sun and hot weather. In my first attempt to grow basil, I had more blooms than leaves. I learned when the warm weather arrived, it would bolt into bloom. I recommend cutting the bloom stocks off as much as possible. Want to harvest your seeds? Cut the stalks when the seeds are mature and darkened. They will be black, brown or gray, depending on the variety. Let the stalks dry on paper towels and shake the seeds out onto a clean paper towel or shake them into a paper bag. Be sure the seeds are thoroughly dry and store them for planting next year in well-drained, rich soil.

Issues if saving your own seed: basil's readily cross

pollinate. Over a couple of seasons of collecting seeds the plant flavors can get a little muddy. Time to start with fresh seeds or plants! Also remember that some of the developed varieties will not come "true" from the seed you collect.

Popular Basils & Their Uses

Cinnamon basil (*O. basilicum* 'Cinnamon') – small leaves; to 12" in height.

Dark opal basil (*O. purpurem*) – can be used in cooking; has heavy scent - useful in potpourri! It grows to 18" in height.

Holy basil (*O. sanctum*) – easily cross-pollinates and self-sows; used in potpourri; grows 12-24" tall.

Lemon basil (*O. b. 'Citriodorum', 'Mrs. Burns'*) – used in beverages like lemonade and iced tea, also in libations and syrups. It makes a delicious mayonnaise or vinaigrette. It is perfect with seasonal fruits or try it in ice cream; 18-24" tall.

'Purple Ruffles' basil (*O. b. 'Purple Ruffles'*) – has ruffled leaves and excellent flavors. This is my favorite to add to homemade herbal vinegars. It imparts a lovely light purple color to the vinegar; grows 12-18" tall.

Thai basil (*O. b. 'Thai'*) – essential to Thai cooking, imparts an assertive licorice taste that stands up to spicy, flavorful dishes like stir-fries and curries; 12-18" tall.

Other Uses: Aromatic, cosmetic, ornamental, potpourri, pollinator attractors

- To preserve basil, puree with a little water and freeze in ice cube trays.
- Add a handful of basil when making beef stock
- When making tomato or pizza sauce, use basil, as a substitute for oregano
- Add several large leaves when poaching fish, shellfish, or chicken

Pesto (Everyone's favorite!)

- 1 cup fresh basil leaves
- 3 Tbls. of pine nuts or walnuts
- 3 Tbls. of grated Parmesan cheese
- 2-3 cloves of garlic
- Olive oil

Puree in a food processor, adding enough olive oil to make a smooth paste. Use with pasta, rice, fish, vegetables or in soups.

Resources:

- Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs
- The Culinary Herbal by Susan Belsinger and Arthur O. Tucker
- Southern Herb Growing by Madalene Hill & Gwen Barclay

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
P.O. Box 6515
Houston, TX 77265-6515



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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