

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XXXIX, NUMBER 11



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
NOVEMBER 2016

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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). **Hosted by: Jeanie Dunnihoo and Mary Sacilowski.** 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.**

Dec. 2016 Calendar

Dec. 11 – Sun. 3:30 PM

Winter Herbal Celebration at the home of Lois Sutton, 702 E. 8 ½ St., Houston, TX, 77007, 713-862-8857. There is only one party for ALL members; gift exchange is optional; value limit \$20. Bring a dish to share. Main course & beverages will be provided.

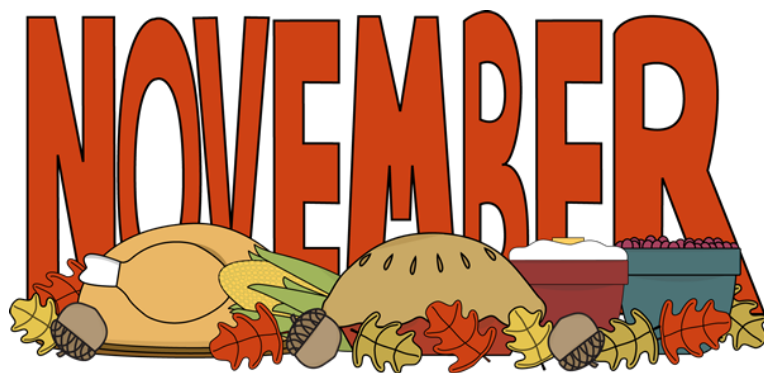
Newsletter deadline: 25th of every month

Submissions should be at most 1 page in Times New Roman 12

Happy
Birthday!



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11/4 Julie Fordes
11/14 Janis Teas
11/17 Chris Ankney
11/19 Lois Sutton
11/20 Shirley Mills



Member and Guest Email Communication Coordinator

After Dec. 1, Julie Fordes fordes.julie@gmail.com

Will coordinate email distribution of special announcements to members and guests including meeting announcements, and other important information. This position was formerly held by Janice Stuff.

Thank You Julie!



Chairman's Corner

Pumpkin Musings

The United States is experiencing a pumpkin revival with an ever increasing array of pumpkin flavored foods and beverages that appear each autumn. The Thanksgiving pumpkin pie is not as novel as it was twenty years ago. Americans can eat pumpkin morning, noon and night just like the colonials living in Mass. Bay colony.

“We have pumpkins at morning and pumpkins at noon,
If it were not for pumpkins we should be undone.”
1630 Massachusetts Bay Colony

Beginning in August grocery purveyors offer pumpkin oatmeal, butter, yogurt, coffee cake, bagels, cream cheese, spaghetti sauce, ravioli, crackers, pita, biscotti, cookies, soup, cheese cake, ice cream, coffee, beer AND DOG TREATS to mention a few items.

Pumpkins, part of a large family of closely related squashes that are indigenous throughout the Western Hemisphere, were the mainstay the American diet for centuries.. The English word “pumpkin” is a modern version of “pompion,” the term broadly applied to many sorts of similar-looking pumpkins and squash. The word’s origins are Greek: *pepon* means large melon. Though we think of pumpkins as being orange, they also come in green, yellow, red, white, blue, and tan.

Did you know that upper class Europeans grew pumpkins as a garden curiosity?
Did you know that pumpkins were considered as fare for the poor?
Did you know that The Gardner’s Dictionary of 1763 says that the pumpkins are “frequently cultivated by the country people in England, who plant them upon their dunghills.”?
Did you know that the most common way to prepare pumpkins in the seventeenth century was to stew them?

The menu theme for the November meeting will be pumpkin. Bring a dish made from the pumpkin family. Remember for centuries pumpkins were considered a savory vegetable and were not served with sugar. This was because sugar was exceptionally rare and expensive.

Would someone make a pumpkin salad or a pumpkin punch? Find historic savory recipes for pumpkin and squash online.

A Gardener’s Thanksgiving

Let us give thanks for a bounty of people:
For children who are our second planting, and though they grow like weeds and the wind too soon blows them away, may they forgive us our cultivation and fondly remember where their roots are;
For generous friends with hearts and smiles as bright as their blossoms;
For feisty friends as tart as apples;
For continuous friends, who, like scallions and cucumbers, keep reminding us that we’ve had them;
For crotchety friends, as sour as rhubarb and as indestructible;
For handsome friends, who are as gorgeous as eggplants and as elegant as a row of corn, and the other, plain as potatoes and as good for you;
For funny friends, who are as silly as Brussels Sprouts and as amusing as Jerusalem Artichokes, and serious friends, as complex as cauliflowers and as intricate as onions;
For friends as unpretentious as cabbages, as subtle as summer squash, as persistent as parsley, as delightful as dill, as endless as zucchini, and who, like parsnips, can be counted on to see you through the winter;
For old friends, nodding like sunflowers in the evening-time, and young friends coming on as fast as radishes
For loving friends, who wind around us like tendrils and hold us, despite our blights, wilts and witherings;
And finally, for those friends now gone, like gardens past that have been harvested, and who fed us in their times that we might have life thereafter;
For all these we give thanks.

Reverend Max Coots 1928-2009, Minister Emeritus of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Canton, New York

Sally Luna
Unit Chair



From the Day Meeting

Our October 12th **Day Meeting** was held at Lois Sutton's home. Eleven members and one guest attended.

Lois' talk was titled "Replace the Invasives in Your Garden." It was a timely topic for Lois as she plans her new garden in another part of the U.S. Several other members of our Day group will be moving to other regions of our country so this topic resulted in interesting discussions about plants being invasive in one area of the country and not in another.

Our guest, Lori Jorgensen, learned about our herb society through her interest and work with Master Gardeners. Lori said she has an herb garden and likes to use them in her cooking. Because of family responsibilities she isn't able to attend evening meetings now, but is looking forward to attending our Herb Fair on November 4th and 5th at Judson Robinson Building.



Susan's Healthy Gluten-Free Scones

1 cup gluten free flour blend*
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt, or less
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla

3/4 cup almond flour
2 teaspoons baking powder**
1/2 cup coconut oil, chilled***
1/3 cup cold milk
3/4 cup dried Montmorency cherries

In a large bowl, mix together flours, sugar, salt & baking powder. Use a pastry blender to cut in the cold coconut oil (hardened) as finely as possible. Stir in the dried cherries. Whisk together eggs, milk & vanilla in a separate bowl until frothy. Add to dry ingredients and blend well.

Grease a large baking sheet (I use grapeseed oil) or line it with parchment. Turn the dough out on a gluten free flour sprinkled large wooden cutting board. The dough will be very sticky but holding together. Pat into a circle or square shape about 1" thick. Use either your lightly floured fingers or spatula to do this but don't add more flour to the dough. Cut with floured knife into 8 wedges from a circle or any number of triangles from a square. Place on greased baking sheet. You can gently firm up the edges of the scones once on baking sheet if desired.

Put the baking sheet full of scones in the freezer for 15 minutes. Turn on the oven to 400 degrees – it will be preheated by the time you take the scones out of the freezer. Bake for 15 – 20 minutes until the edges are lightly browned. Remove from oven and let cool briefly before serving. Store extra scones in refrigerator and reheat in the microwave for about 25 seconds before serving. **Makes 8 large or 24 small scones.**

*Bob's Red Mill gluten free flour blend is a combination of "sweet whole rice flour, whole grain brown rice flour, potato starch, whole grain sweet white sorghum flour, tapioca flour and xanthan gum". Bob makes almond flour too.

**I use Trader Joe's brand baking powder because it is aluminum free. I don't like the metallic taste of regular baking powders.

***Go ahead and buy that huge jar or tub of organic coconut oil. Use it for a healthy and great tasting alternative to butter in all your recipes as well as on your skin as a wonderful moisturizer! Another new trend is to use a tablespoon of coconut oil in black coffee instead of cream.

-Susan Wood



In the Garden – Invasive / Exotic Plants

Lois Sutton

October Day Group Meeting

Every plant is a teacher. But as in every crowd, there are always a few loudmouths.

Dale Pendell, *Living with the Barbarians*

At the simplest level, invasive plants are non-indigenous plants (*i.e.*, brought here from somewhere else) that have so successfully established themselves they are replacing indigenous plants. Another term you may read is exotic plant.

The issues are that these exotic plants can disrupt local ecosystems, limiting or eliminating food and host sources for pollinators and fauna, changing the flora pool through hybridization (decreasing genetic diversity) and altering soil chemistry.

We all know about the Chinese tallow tree that was brought to the U.S. for its potential economic uses. That economic value was not realized and now we see the tree in every hedgerow, galloping across open prairies and woodlands. Another regional example is the Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), stands of which have appeared to our south in the Galveston and Dickinson areas. This is NOT the native sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*) that you may have read about. Brought to Florida in the 1840s as an ornamental plant, its bright red berries and brilliant green foliage are frequently gathered as Christmas decorations. But ... this plant is in the same family as poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac. It has the potential to cause dermatitis to those with sensitive skin. Some people have also expressed respiratory problems associated with the bloom period of pepper tree.

The paradox of invasive plants is that not all people think that the introduction of an exotic to a new region is all bad. One author in particular notes that, "All plants have been on the move for hundreds of millions of years with numerous [weather, birds, animals including mankind] factors helping them along into areas in which they did not previously inhabit." He further argues that many have beneficial characteristics and we might better spend eradication dollars on habitat preservation and decreased use of pesticides. Of the plants he cites as useful and not just invasive are common reed and kudzu. He notes that the common reed cleans sewage waste and some heavy metals from the water in which it grows while kudzu roots can be used to make biofuels and herbal medicines.

These are good examples of the challenge of labeling and managing plants that may be invasive

in some areas and not so in others. Perhaps examples to the extreme if you've ever seen an entire countryside covered in kudzu and even clean-water ditches filled with common reed.

Perhaps to a lesser extreme and for plants more familiar to us, there are herbs in our gardens that seem to be quite well-behaved. Put them in other growing climates and they're not such good botanical neighbors. In the New England fields late summer brings fields covered in tansy's golden blooms. It is thick stemmed and rooted and not easy to clean from the fields if you want to use them for a more useful crop. Here, tansy generally doesn't survive the summers so is less likely to be found crowding out indigenous plants along our waterways (Houston's bayou system).

Some aggressive herbs in other growing zones include lemon balm, mint, St. John's wort and horseradish. These may appear in areas of the garden we didn't plant them but our heat and humidity challenge them enough that they don't *seem* to have spread into natural habitats.

Following our discussions at the day meeting the takeaway suggestions we would offer are:

- Learn about any plants you are considering for your garden. Not only do you have a responsibility to your yard but also to your neighborhood & the entire bird flight path!
- Plan your containment strategies- plant in containers, harvest before seeds are produced
- Accept that some aggressive herbs may move into areas you had reserved for different plants!



Schinus terebinthifolius



From the Night Meeting

MEMBERSHIP REPORT by Albert Ramos

If you thought this year's political season was dirty, you should have been at the October 2016 evening meeting. Member **Mary Sacilowski**, assisted by guests **Jenna Wallis & Mike Jensvold**, demonstrated how to use worms to get *Down & Dirty in Your Garden*. Mary is a microbiologist and a "vermiculturist". Basically, Mary's mission is to farm worms to improve the soil. And it's no longer a dirty secret that the always down-to-earth couple, Jenna and Mike, share the same grubby hobby!

The mud-slinging continued with **Danny Wilson**, founder of *Farm Dirt*, a local company that composts fruit and vegetable waste that otherwise would go to the landfill. We learned a wheelbarrow-full from Danny about the science and process of composting. Danny has employed many innovations to speed up the composting process while substantially increasing the beneficial living components of the soil. It is remarkable that a thimble-full of rich, fertile soil can contain up to a billion beneficial bacteria, miles of mycorrhizal fungi, several hundred thousand protozoa, and hundreds of nematodes.

Supplementing the excellent information presented tonight, member **Donna Fay Hilliard**, owner of *Sweet Organic Solutions*, set up a display of some of the organic products she offers that also improve the health of your soil. Be sure to visit Donna Fay's booth at **Herb Fair on November 5th** to stock up on these safe, effective, and natural products.

Tonight's 17 members and 16 guests thoroughly enjoyed the presentations. They asked thoughtful, interesting questions; and Mary, Jenna, Mike, and Danny dug deeply to provide all the answers. I heard one guest say that tonight's program about worms and dirt was ground-breaking. I hope you don't feel soiled by that pun! At the end of the program, we all dug in our heels, surrounded the speakers, and continued to ask more questions and seek advice. The speakers looked like movie stars surrounded by constellations of adoring fans!

Pumpkins and gorgeous fall leaves graced the buffet and dining tables thanks to the combined talents of tonight's hostesses, **Julie Fordes** and **Andi Leger**. Andi also brought herb water and herb tea that were as lovely to see as they were to sip.

Thank you, Andi and Julie. We appreciate you both for sharing your hospitality with us. We're just as grateful for our guests. One in particular, **Thomas**, arrived early enough to pitch in and help decorate the tables.

The evening's potluck dinner also fit tonight's presentation theme, *Notes from the Underground*. From sweet potato chips and potato salad to "dirt cake" and carrot cake, members and guests alike kept us deliciously well fed and nourished. Those who brought dishes incorporating foods harvested from underground **all won one of more than a dozen generous door prizes**. Winners took home large bags of *Farm Dirt* compost thanks to the generosity of speaker **Danny Wilson**, loaves of bread from *Three Brothers Bakery* (thank you, **Robert Jucker**), a gift wrapped, handmade herbal soap (thank you, **Karen Cottingham**), a vintage gardening book (thank you, **Susan Wood**), and a gift pack of herbal soap, body scrub, and bath soak for sore muscles, all courtesy of *Connie's Bath Shack* in Old Town Spring. Even if you didn't bring an underground food, you didn't have to go home empty handed. **Mary Sacilowski** gave away a dozen or so bags of healthy, active earthworms that all went to new homes to enrich garden soil throughout the greater Houston area. If you came, you won!

And don't forget that the November evening meeting will be another "must see-and-learn" event. **Mark Vorderbruggen**, PhD chemist, author, and well-known "professional" forager for wild foods, will be our guest speaker. We'll have fun learning how the early Texas settlers survived by foraging for their food and medicine.



Herb Fair

South Texas Unit

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

Herb Fair Countdown

Bring Friday: We need

- Large Grocery Bags and shopping bags
- Large Flat Plant trays

Saturday:

- Wear Green Herb Society **Apron & Nametag** (we have some extra aprons if you don't have one)
- **Smile and Greet Guests**, answer questions or find someone who can
- Food and Snacks provided for working members
- Donna and Janice will assign you a working post, based on need and customer traffic

Friday - (all members needed sometime during the day)

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 (all members working, if possible)

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

Saturday tasks and work assignments:

- Greeters/Door Monitors
- Parking outside Coordinator and monitors
- Membership signup table
- Sales and herb informational personnel at Plants, Crafts, Jellies, Blends sections
- Cashiers
- Breakroom monitors



From the Treasurer's Desk

Requests for Reimbursement

Requests for reimbursement for Herb Fair related expenses must be received by **DECEMBER 3rd**. While there is a reimbursement request form, Lois will accept a simple note. Receipts must be included with the request (actual receipt or an electronic copy included with your email). Your options include: email to southtexasunit@gmail.com; mail to the unit at South Texas Unit, PO Box 6515, Houston TX 77265-6515; mail to Lois directly at home; give the form & receipts to Lois in person at either November meeting.



Coming Up Next!

HOW WILD PLANTS SAVED THE EARLY TEXAS SETTLERS by Karen Cottingham

November is the perfect time to reflect on the courage and perseverance of the early settlers of this wonderful country. Sometimes we forget that we feast on traditional New England foods at Thanksgiving to commemorate the Pilgrims who survived their first arduous year in Plymouth Colony. With this in mind, our November 15, 2016 Evening Meeting, *“Foraging for Survival - How Wild Plants Saved the Early Texas Settlers”* is another opportunity to honor the ingenuity and self-sufficiency of our own Texas forebears.

Life was incredibly difficult in the harsh environment of early Texas. All its inhabitants - the indigenous peoples, the Spanish ranchers and missionaries coming in through Mexico, and the frontiersmen and women with European heritage - were in constant danger of starvation, malnutrition, illness, and injury.

Imagine solving the daily challenges faced by the early Texas settlers. Water too muddy to drink? Find a prickly pear cactus, remove the thorns, cut a few slits in the pads, and add them to a bucket of water. In a few hours, your water will be clear. Hungry, but unlucky in the hunt? Cattail rhizomes are edible and filling either boiled or eaten raw. Or, if you are desperate, a protein-rich, gluten-free flour-like material can be made from acorns and mesquite pods. Are your gums bleeding and you’ve never heard of Vitamin C? Including fresh dandelion greens or wild onions in your diet will rapidly restore your health. What if a severe wound won’t stop bleeding? Yarrow leaves - aptly called “squirrel tail” by the Cherokee - work surprisingly well due to their blood-clotting constituents.

Our speaker, **Mark Vorderbruggen, PhD**, will explain how the survival of early Texas inhabitants depended on plant-based traditional wisdom. Learn how the plant knowledge of the Native American medicine men, the curanderos from Mexico, and the settlers familiar with European herbal traditions became intertwined and then adapted to apply to the native plants of Texas. Mark will also show us how to locate and identify many of these wild plants so important to human survival. Some of these plants may even be found in your own backyards. Feel welcome to bring in your “weeds” for Mark to identify - everyone will enjoy this interaction.

If you know children or teenagers interested in the outdoors or who are studying Early American or Texas history, please invite them. This engaging program will reinforce their studies and encourage their interests in a unique way.

As the Boy Scouts say, it’s a good idea for all of us to “Be Prepared”. Don’t miss this unique opportunity to learn how our ancestors relied on common, native Texas plants for health and sustenance. Your own survival may some day depend on this knowledge.



When You Give, You Get by Karen Cottingham

Every year we are grateful to the many creative hostess volunteers who brighten our buffet table with seasonal decorations and provide delicious beverages. Hostesses create a festive and welcoming environment that members and guests alike truly appreciate. This fall we have enjoyed a cheerful profusion of chili peppers arranged by Jacqui and Benée, followed by autumn leaves and fall acorns scattered throughout a pumpkin patch courtesy of Andi and Julie.

Do you hesitate to volunteer because being a hostess seems like a chore? Consider this: scientific studies have shown that people who volunteer experience a “helper’s high” due to the release of endorphins. Volunteering reduces stress, improves health, and elevates mood. Volunteers have lower rates of depression and live longer, happier lives! Hostess opportunities are still available for February, March, June and July. Please come to the November meeting prepared to volunteer, especially if you have never been a hostess, haven’t been one for over a year, or need to reduce your stress level. Your family - and your friends - will thank you!

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
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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 – November 2016