

# STU Officers/ Committee Chair reports 2023-24

## Vice Chair (Programming) - Karen Cottingham

### EVENING PROGRAMS AND LAGNIAPPES

**July Lagniappe** (presented via Zoom) "Harriet Tubman – Nurse, Herbalist and Spy" presented by **Adrian Melissinos, PhD, RN**

**August Evening Meeting** (Members Only) "Herb Fair 2023 Kickoff" presented by **Catherine O'Brien, Herb Fair Chair**

**September Evening Meeting** "Emily Dickinson: The Poet as Gardener and Cook" presented by **Linda Rowlett, Ph.D., Pioneer Unit**

**October Evening Meeting** "An Evening with Garden Marcus: Nurture Your Garden, Nurture Yourself" presented by **Marcus Bridgewater, CEO and Founder of Choice Forward**

**November Evening Meeting** "The Culinary and Medicinal Benefits of Mushrooms" presented by **Brandi McRill, herbalist and owner of Flourishing Fern Apothecary**

**January Lagniappe** "Get Fired Up! A Fire-Cider Workshop for New Members" presented by **HSA-STU Board of Directors**

January Evening Meeting "Fabulous Figs" presented by **Destin Noak, The Texas Garden Guy**

**February Evening Meeting** "The Many Herbs of Vietnamese Cuisine" presented by **Christine Ha, the blind cook who won "MasterChef" Season 3**

**March Evening Meeting** "Herbs Behind Bars" presented by **James T. "Scooter" Langley, Jr., Lee College Horticulture Instructor and Technical Faculty Chair**

**April Lagniappe** "An Insect Appreciation Walk at the Houston Botanical Garden" with **Lauren Jansen Simpson, creator of St. Julian's Crossing Wildlife Habitat and advocate/educator for home "wild-scaping"**

**April Evening Meeting** "Insects Keep Your Garden Humming Along" will be presented by **Erin Mills, entomologist, former Director of the Cockrell Butterfly Center, Houston Museum of Natural Science, and current Education Manager at the Houston Botanic Garden**

**May Evening Meeting** "Go Texan - Help Restore Our Native Ecosystem

with a Pocket Prairie” presented by **Della Barbato, Education Director, Native Prairies Association of Texas**

**June Evening Meeting** (Members Only) “The Herb Society of America - South Texas Unit Annual Meeting”

## **Day Group - Janice Stuff**

We had a successful year of programs, sharing, learning and sustaining our Unit’s community. Meetings were well attended by members and guests. At least two new members initially visited a day meeting and later joined the Unit when their requirements were met.

**Sept. 12 2023** Program was a **review of the recent HSA Webinar** by Bevin Cohen on **Seeds**. In addition members shared their experiences with seed collecting, travels, books and gardening.

**Oct. 10**, Herb Study Program on **Lemongrass** (*Cymbopogon flexuosus*). Comprehensive research study presented by members.

**Nov. 14** A **Medley of Lucia Bettler’s slides**: Lucia’s gardens, New England Travel, Thyme varieties, and Garden Design. Slides compiled and presented by Janice Stuff.

**Jan. 9 2024** Beth Murphy presented “**Back to Our Roots ---Our Founding Mothers**” Based on her research and review of early Herbarist Journals, beginning in 1935, Beth discussed examples of the production of ‘economic’ herbs during our country’s war times, documented in older issues of the Herbarist Journals, published by The Herb Society of America.

**Feb. 13** Program. Benee Curtis, presented Program “ **Cooking Inspiration for Your Edible Petals**” Benee explained techniques and procedures for using edible flowers and prepared special recipes (tasting samples distributed). Well attended by members and guests. Extensive handout prepared and distributed on this topic.

**March 12 and April 9. Craft workshops**, members worked on various crafts for Herb Day.

In April we also prepared final list of crafts and suggested prices.

**May 14 Herbal Sorbets**: Demonstration How to Prepare and Flavor with Herbs, flavoral tasting samples and recipe handouts were distributed. Presented by Benee Curtis, well attended by members and guests.

**Crafting for Herb Day and Herb Fair**. Fourteen members made and contributed crafts for Herb Day and Herb Fair. In addition workshops were held where additional members joined in craft preparation. Julie Fordes also hosted Tea, Cosmetic, and Blend workshops at her home. We believe our crafts educate shoppers how to transform herbs into useful products “for their use and delight”.

Members are already brainstorming topics, activities and programs for Day Meetings during 2024-2025. Book reviews, field trips, member presentations are all suggested. A schedule planning meeting will be held in July 2024. Benee Curtis will lead the Day Meeting group in the coming years.

All unit members and guests are encouraged to attend Day Meetings, typically held at Cherie Flores Pavilion, on the 2nd Tuesday of the month.

# Membership - Carolyn Kosclskey

Membership during the 2023-24 year to date has gained 8 new members and our current membership enrollment is 78\*. A Google Forms membership application on the website makes the membership application process more streamlined and user friendly. There is also a Members Information section on the website with protected access to an online Membership Directory. Membership continues to submit hours by emailing totals to the membership chair at the end of June, and will be added up and submitted to National in August 2024. A new PowerPoint presentation was created to share with new members at the May 2022 New Member Orientation.

## Membership Year July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

New Members: 8 new members were added to our roster (shown in order of application):

- Ana Lorena Jaramillo
- Deborah Niskin
- Rochelle Jones
- Mary Shapiro
- Cecilie O’Gara
- Lena Herce
- Lindsey Pollock (rejoined)
- Jimmie Kiddie

## Current membership enrollment as of June 1, 2024\*

### **78 TOTAL MEMBERSHIP**

- 4 Joint memberships
- 6 Life memberships
- 2 Sustaining memberships
- 2 Affiliate memberships (may not vote)
- 1 Honorary membership (may not vote)

## Application for Membership

As of 2021 persons interested in applying for membership have been able to access and complete the online Google form through the website. The membership chair is alerted by email when an online form is submitted and has access to that form on the website. If the applicant meets the main requirement of attending three meetings in the last year a welcome email is sent outlining the process for gaining membership. A summary of the completed application is then sent by email to the unit chair for review and final approval. Once the applicant has been approved the membership chair sends an email “welcome” letter to the applicant with information on how to submit their dues online. The unit chair also sends a welcome email to the applicant. Board members and chairs are notified that a new member has been approved and a summary of their application is shared. Should an applicant not be approved an email is sent by the membership chair stating the reason(s).

\*Based on membership displayed in the online Membership Directory.

## **Education - Catherine O'Brien**

The scholarship committee—Angela Roth, Faith Strunk, and I—are pleased to announce the recipients of this year's Madalene Hill Scholarship.

The students are:

Caleb Olmstead is a junior in horticulture science at Tarleton State University in Stephenville. Caleb remembers designing and planting flower beds starting when he was in middle school. He started a lawncare service while still in high school to save money for college. He has a greenhouse at home where he grows tomatoes and peppers. He even grew 70 plants in his dorm room at college. This extracurricular experience has contributed to his education and his ultimate desire to manage greenhouses after he graduates.

Monica Villalobos is a student at Tarrant County College District in Fort Worth. She has always had a love of gardening, but only recently realized that horticulture could be a career. After completing a degree in linguistics and English, she returned to college, majoring in horticulture with a specialization in greenhouse management. Her awareness of climate change has led her to think that greenhouses and indoor gardening are going to become more important. The scholarship will allow her time to pursue internships and volunteer opportunities to gain more experience.

Jacie Guerrero is a junior at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, TX. She is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in plant, soil, and environmental science. She is looking to the future of agriculture, including hydroponics and different farming techniques. After receiving her undergraduate degree, she plans to continue her education by earning a PhD in entomology. For now, "I want to learn as much as I can about plants"...and "take into account the world of insects because they have a huge impact" on the plant kingdom.

I would like to personally acknowledge and thank Faith and Angela for their hard work.

## **Publications (Newsletter and MailChimp) - Janice Freeman**

The South Texas Unit newsletter, Herbs Make Scents is a monthly publication distributed to members and subscribers using MailChimp (See below). Two members act as editors and alternate responsibilities of composing the monthly newsletter. Our newsletter includes Unit Chair communications as well as herb related information and activities, Unit business and announcements. All content is submitted by members.

MailChimp is a computer communication platform utilized by the South Texas Unit to distribute the monthly newsletter and other communications such as, 12 newsletters/yr. and 40-45 additional announcements which include our day and evening meetings, Lagniappe events, members only communications, the Annual Herb Day and Herb Fair events, to 1258 subscribers and several postal readers. Unit members provide the content. This communication platform is used by the editor and managed by our web page developer, both of which are members. Additional messages for unit business are distributed using a personal e-mail distribution list and are not included in the total of announcements listed above.

Social media such as Facebook and Nextdoor Neighbor are additional avenues utilized to publicize monthly Unit events and herb-related information. Content is provided our Members.

## Website and Facebook - Benée Curtis

The South Texas Unit website ([www.herbsociety-stu.org](http://www.herbsociety-stu.org)) continues to be hosted by GoDaddy. The web hosting has been renewed through 4/19/2026 and the site address has been registered through 5/25/2025 and is set to automatically renew on that date.

At the present, the website was built using GoDaddy's "Business Website Builder" software. In conversations with the support desk at GoDaddy, I've been told that at some, as of now, unannounced date, the "Business Website Builder" software will no longer be supported. At the time that the software is obsoleted, the website will need to be completely rebuilt from scratch. The decision will need to be made whether to continue to host the website through GoDaddy or move to another host with a more user-friendly software available than GoDaddy's replacement software offering.

In addition to updating the event announcements on the website (meetings, Herb Fair, Herb Day, garden workdays), the monthly newsletter is posted.

Three new pages were added: Edible Petals, Fermentation and Herbal Shrub Beverages.

Unit treasurer Maria Treviño and I work together to maintain the two Square ([squareup.com](https://squareup.com)) webpages for membership payments and for event registrations. We direct users to the Square webpages from the unit website.

On 3/6/2024, we established a Microsoft 365 email account through GoDaddy ([contact@herbsociety-stu.org](mailto:contact@herbsociety-stu.org)). This email has been paid through 3/6/2026 and will need to be reevaluated for renewal at that date. This new email was necessitated by changes enacted by MailChimp to reduce spam mailings. MailChimp notified us with the following:

*Beginning February 2024, Gmail and Yahoo will require a custom authentication and a published Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting & Conformance (DMARC) record for anyone sending more than 5,000 emails to Gmail or Yahoo addresses in a 24-hour period. To prevent your emails from bouncing, we strongly recommend authenticating your email domain and configuring DMARC.*

*Also, if you use a free email service like Gmail or Yahoo for your From email address, we strongly recommend you switch to an email address from a private domain, like the one you use for work or for your website.*

*For more information about custom authentication and DMARC, check out [About Email Domain](#)*

After setting up MailChimp messages to appear as though "sent" from the new [contact@herbsociety-stu.org](mailto:contact@herbsociety-stu.org) email address with the new security configurations, instead of the free [southtexasunit@gmail.com](mailto:southtexasunit@gmail.com), failed email receipts were reduced dramatically from 100+ bounces to 3 bounces.

## Herb Fair - Catherine O'Brien

Lots of member helpers and husband/fiancé helpers made Herb Fair possible. The event was held at the Southside Place Clubhouse in November. Beginning just after Herb Day in April, a monthly article was placed in each newsletter, letting people know when to plant, when to harvest, and what was needed by the various groups. The unit provided the herbs for fragrances, teas, and culinary products.

Bakery Debbie Lancaster, Palma Sales and volunteer of bakers offered delicious goods and gluten-free selections.

Thank you also to Bobby of Three Brothers Bakery for their generous donation of baked goods.

Book sales & Garage Sale – Laura Boston and her crew sold lots of gardening books and added children's books to the mix this year.

Cashier – Maria Treviño and her helpers kept things running smoothly at the checkout tables.

Crafts Committee didn't have a chair, but that never stops the crafty ladies from making dryer bags, cards and envelopes, seed pops, and rose & lavender heating bags, and owl plaques.

Culinary Blends – Dena Yanowski with seven helpers sold out of the Ranch Style Dressing Mix and the vinegars. So much of the Rosemary Cookies sold out during Pre-sales that more had to be made.

Education experience– Karen Cottingham led the visitors in making corn dolls. Fun was had by all.

Fragrances– Faith Strunk with four helpers had plenty of soaks, scrubs, and salves to relax those achy gardening muscles.

Jelly– Benée Curtis with five helpers made and sold 239 jars of jelly.

Kitchen– Mary Sacilowski and her crew offered tea samples which assisted with tea sales.

Plant sales– Janis Teas and Jeanie Dunnihoo provided a broad assortment of herbs and plants for sale.

Pre-sales – Janice Stuff headed up this portion of the event, generating more than \$1300, including 64 jars of jelly.

Publicity– Virginia Camerlo with two helpers got the word out and made Herb Fair a resounding success.

Set up/Take down– Rose Wherry with eight helpers set up the tables and cleaned up afterwards.

New gnomes were purchased for decorations at each of the tables.

Tea Blends – Julie Fordes, with eight helpers sold out of the Balanced Blend, Holy Basil and Rose Herb blend, and the new Inspire Tea that was created for the 50 th annual Herb Day.

Bee2Bee Honey was our dependable vendor.

## Herb Day - Virginia Camerlo

- Theme: Bold and the Beautiful featuring turmeric, ginger and roselle
- Speakers: Henry Flowers (HSA, MAL), Anita Jaisinghani (Celebrity Chef/cooking demonstration), and Karen Cottingham (Program Chair, STU)
  - Anita Jaisinghani, owner of Pondichieri Café, was the clear draw for guests (non-STU members)
- 126 registrations (120 online, 2 check, 4 onsite) = 82 guests; 44 members
  - 137 people (not including no shows) includes speakers and volunteers
- Gross Income = \$11,053 (Registration \$6,755; Sales \$4,198, Vendor Fee \$100)
- Net Income = TBD
- Vendors: Bee2Bee Honey and Farm Dirt (both vendors had successful days)
- Catering: The Heights Catering
- Many, many STU Volunteers
  - Facilities: Donna Adair

- Program: Karen Cottingham
- Speakers Angels: Susan Wood, Cynthia Card, Angela Roth
- Publicity: Virginia Camerlo, Karen Cottingham
- Catering: Maria Treviño and Donna Yanowski
- Refreshments: Palma Sales, Ro Jones, Elizabeth Grandich, Donna Yanowski, Bobby Jucker and an army of bakers
- Plant sales: Jeanie Duniwoo, Virginia Camerlo, Beth Murphy, Mary Nurre, Sacilowski, Debbie Gordon, Angela Roth, Julie Fordes, Susan Wood, Catherine O'Brien, Karen Cottingham, Janice Freeman, Donna Yanowski, Janice Stuff
- Member made crafts: Janice Stuff, Donna Wheeler, Janice Dana, Joan Jordan, Debbie Gordon, Lois Jean Howard
- Door Prizes: Lucinda Kontos, Mary Nurre
- Registration, Name Tags: Maria Treviño
- Gift Bag Assembly: Janice Freeman, Jane Littell, Virginia Camerlo
- Education Tables: Karen Cottingham, Stephanie Calloway, Erik Frisk, Laura Mullen, Donna Wheeler
- Membership: Susan Wood
- Website: Benée Curtis
- Culinary Blends: Dena Gaydos, Sue Steinhart, Donna Wheeler
- Herbal Teas, Julie Fordes and Dena Gaydos
- Fragrances: Faith Strunk
- Program Print Material: Virginia Camerlo
- Table Top Arrangements: Virginia Camerlo, Mary Nurre, Lorena Jaramillo
- Speaker Timers: Steven and Linda Van Heeckeren
- Recommendation for next year:
  - Change format to two speakers and hands on activity after lunch
  - Have a rotating schedule for refreshment volunteers during the day

## **Chair - Dena Gaydos**

### Unit Chair Report:

- During my first year as STU Chair, I organized 5 Board Meetings and 3 additional meetings to discuss topics such as scholarships and garden donations.
- Our group has developed a relationship with PostHTX's Skyfarm, and added harvested herbs from their garden into our Herb Fair and Herb Day marketplace recipes.
- Our Unit hosting the South Central Gathering, September 29-30, 2023. The weekend event we hosted was an opportunity to meet other HSA Herbies from the region and showcase the local gardens and spaces such as: Centennial Gardens, Houston Botanic Gardens, The PostHTX Skyfarm. Community and education were given and received by all who attended and helped work on this event.
- Moonlight Rambles, an online means of communication and community building started during Covid under our past chair Julie Fordes, concluded at the end of 2023.
- Our Vice Chair and Publications committee, along with additional member volunteers, worked to reformat and edit the newest edition of our unit's directory. They were printed and passed out in early 2024.

- The board hosted a New Member Orientation event in January 2024 at Elizabeth Grandich's condo. There were 12 members in attendance. The group enjoyed light bites and made fire cider in addition to a HSA-STU orientation.
- We have continued to fulfill requests for speakers, thanks to the continuation of an active Speaker's Bureau.
- A Garden Giving Committee was formed to research local gardens in need of support and create proposals for our 2024 Annual meeting.
- None of this would have been accomplished without our STU members!

## **Treasurer - Maria Trevino**

STU has one operating (checking) account through Chase Bank and one investment account with Vanguard. The investment account consists of the general account and the scholarship account Combined.

### **Income**

In 2023, STU held Herb Fair with gross income of \$15,980. The net profit from Herb Fair was \$9,997.

In 2024, STU held Herb Day with gross income of \$10,359. The approximate net profit from the marketplace is \$3,500 and is allocated to the scholarship fund. Herb Day meeting approximate net income is \$1,700. There are expenses pending to be paid. Gross income was \$11,259

### **Expense**

- A donation, as previously approved, of \$1,500 was sent to Houston Botanic Gardens.
- Cherie Flores meeting reservations are in process for the 2024-25 year.
- STU renewal insurance will be due in July. In 2023, the cost was \$949. It is expected to increase a nominal amount for 2024-25.
- Membership shows two expenses this year- a PA system and aprons.
- Newsletter expenses are pending.
- Storage unit cost had a small increase in 2024. STU storage unit is paid through the end of 2024.
- The Herbarist ad has been approved and submitted for a full page add at \$350 to be paid.
- New software may be needed for the newsletter. This is being researched.

**Scholarship** – The 2023 scholarships were sent to two students for the 2023 year. \$1000 each. Namrai Jaishi from Tarleton State University and Gustavo Ledesma from West Texas A & M University were the recipients of the 2023 scholarships.

### **Garden Fund/ General Fund**

STU no longer has a Garden Fund account. Any donations to garden organizations are paid from the operating account. The 2023 donation to Houston Botanical Garden for a \$1,500 at the Cultivar level membership.

Chase Bank @ 5/31/2024 \$20,545.

Vanguard @ 3/31/2024 \$126,099

Total \$146,554