

# Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
VOLUME XL, NUMBER 12



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT  
DECEMBER 2017

Editor – Linda Alderman (ewalderman@comcast.net)

## December 2017 Calendar



There are no meetings scheduled this month. Season's Greetings!

## January 2018 Calendar

Jan 9, Tues. at 10 a.m.

**Day meeting** is at the home of Lois Jean Howard. The program, "Crafting with Rosemary," is presented by **Lois Jean Howard**. **Bring a dish to share.** Guests should RSVP by calling Lois Jean at 713-771-0172.

Jan 17, Wed. at 6:30 p.m.

**Evening Meeting** is at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004). **Hosts are Jenna Wallis and Mike Jensvold.** The program is "Hops – The Fruit of the Bine", presented by member, **Jacqui Highton**. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**

**Newsletter deadline: the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month**

Happy Birthday!



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26 – Donna Fay Hilliard



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




**Chairman's Corner**

Season's Greetings,

This year is coming to a close, calendar wise, but herb gardeners know that this is not the time for rest. Our fall gardens are often a pleasure to prepare and it's not too late if you have started your seeds or purchased herbs at our Herb Fair. With the holiday season upon us I so enjoy finding ways to incorporate herbs into our shared meals and certainly those I prepare for home. I prepared a horseradish and apple/cabbage slaw recipe I found on the Herb Society of America's website for our Thanksgiving dinner. It was quite a hit, but I still had some leftovers to take home. I hope you find time during this busy season to reflect on the past year, whether it's while brushing against some rosemary or mint in your garden or with a hot cup of tea and curled up on the sofa.

I thank you again for the exhausting, yet enjoyable, work during the Herb Fair and monthly meetings. I'm looking forward to the new year in anticipation of the celebrations, events and programs to come.


**Donna Yanowski**  
Unit Chair



**New Members!**

Janice Freeman (Spouse Ralph)

Sandra McElroy



**Janice Freeman** has volunteered to serve as the interim newsletter editor while Linda Alderman is away sailing! Janice is currently undergoing training, and will begin the transition to this job with the February 2018 newsletter, while Linda is still here to assist her.

**Thank you for volunteering!**



## About Our Meetings . . .

Albert Ramos

The November 15, 2017 evening meeting was our most highly-attended meeting of the year. Twenty-nine members and twenty-six guests gathered to hear **Barbara Keller-Willy** speak about *Milkweed, Medicine, and Menus: A Co-Evolution of the Monarch Butterfly and the Human Species*. At the conclusion of the presentation, member **Haley Bowen** presented Barbara with a beautiful watercolor of two monarch butterfly larvae chewing on a milkweed plant. Thank you, Haley.

The theme to the potluck supper was Thanksgiving, and we had a great variety of foods and desserts. My favorite Thanksgiving meal item was **Donna Yanowski's** Swedish meatballs! And since the tables were all full with members and guests, I kept faithful watch over the desserts.



**Donna and Dena Yanowski** were our hostesses. They did a lovely job of decorating the space and providing beverages.

Our next regular monthly meeting will be in January 2018; so if we don't see you at the Christmas party at **Elayne Kouzounis's** house on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, we'll see you next year!

JaniceStuff

A large group of 29 members and guests who attended the Day Meeting on November 14, 2017 enjoyed an outstanding program presented by member, **Linda Alderman**. Linda's program, "Herbal Vinegars: The Easy Way", certainly captured The Herb Society of America's mission...to promote the knowledge, use and delight of herbs. Although making herbal vinegars is easy, an informative background is essential in order to have a quality end product. Linda's presentation, handout, and demonstration covered the topics of culinary uses of vinegar, detailed information about the ingredients and equipment needed, selection of bottles, and bottle closures. Some of the most important points that Linda emphasized included:

- Sterilize and completely dry bottles
- Cut, trim, clean and remove all moisture from fresh cut herbs; recommended herbs to try
- Use a proportion of one part wine to two parts vinegar
- Bottle closures (cork or plastic closures, Linda provided recommended sources) – No metal surfaces should come in contact with the vinegar mixture.

The ultimate method to reinforce and to retain new information is by "hands on application!" At the end of the program each attendee assembled and created a small bottle of vinegar. Linda prepared a table sequentially arranged in order with bottles, pushing sticks, dried herbs, garlic cloves, vinegar-wine mixture, funnels and lipped cups, and bottle closures. Each attendee walked along the table, assembled her bottle, and at the end she had her own "graduation gift" of a beautiful bottle of Italian Red Wine Vinegar. Thank you for the clear and effective program and for the extra effort in assembling materials for the herbal wine vinegar gift bottle.



### Making A List...Checking It Twice

Karen Cottingham



Whether they've been naughty or nice, everyone hopes for something special this time of year. And every gift-giver hopes to see that huge smile of delight when their offering is opened. I'll never forget how thrilled I was one Christmas to receive an antique galvanized metal watering can all decked out with glittery stars. Unconventional, unexpected, and perfect – the gift-givers understood and appreciated my quirky garden aesthetics. Another of my favorite Christmas



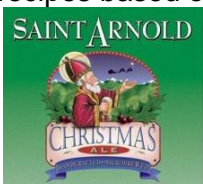
memories is the annual delivery of a cookie tin filled with traditional German Christmas cookies baked by **Bette Gerhold** (soon to become an

HSA-STU member!) in honor of her husband's German heritage. We really appreciate being included in the Gerhold family's delicious annual tradition. It's a real challenge to limit our daily cookie consumption to make these special treats last longer!

I also love to give homemade gifts and have come to rely on the skills and ideas I've acquired through Herb Society activities for my holiday creations. This year I'll make my usual herbal salves and soaps, but also plan to make beeswax food wraps that I learned about from **Jacqui Highton** and some herbal vinegars à la **Linda Alderman**.

Another good winter gift idea, especially for someone who "has everything", is a pine needle syrup inspired by Mark "Merriwether" Vorderbruggen's program, *Foraging for Survival: How Wild Plants Saved the Early Texas Settlers*. The syrup is amazing in coffee; and now that I think about it, I will have to give it a try over ice cream! See my article "Pine Dining" if you are interested in creating this truly unique herbal product.

I'm also experimenting with beer as a culinary ingredient in preparation for our January and February 2018 programs on hops. Right now I'm working on creating some savory beer bread recipes based on our own herb blends. How does a



basket of herbal beer bread, a hearty cheese, and perhaps a pint of St. Arnold's Christmas Spirit sound? Truly, I think these simple gifts will be much more

appreciated than something purchased at a shopping mall or from a catalog.

Since HSA-STU programs have been the inspiration for many of my gift ideas, I thought I'd share some more of them with you:

Do you remember the program *Herbal Beverages from Traditional Cultures*? **Kim McHugh**, Certified Tea Specialist, Tea Blending Master, and owner of **McHugh Tea Room & Gifts** (5305 Bissonnet, Suite D, in Bellaire, Texas) skillfully guided us through tasting three herbal teas derived from hollies - Yerba Mate, Yaupon holly, and Guayusa. If you haven't yet visited her tea shop, it's a charming British-style tea-room where you can relax, have lunch, or just drop in for a cup of tea and a cookie. I guess the British would call a "cookie" a "biscuit" - but whatever you call it, call it delicious! Kim's mother, Billie, presides over the kitchen and produces amazing desserts, especially pies and cakes. This is a perfect place to purchase the highest-quality organic tea for your discriminating tea-loving friends, or to bring your mother-in-law or best friend for a delightfully indulgent afternoon "High Tea". Kim has generously donated teas to us for Herb Fair, Herb Day, and for numerous door prizes, so let's support her in return. Be sure to identify yourself as an Herb Society member when you stop by.

Here's another suggestion - **Vom Fass Oils, Vinegars and Spices**, at 2424 Times Blvd. in the Rice Village, has also been a loyal supporter of our HSA-STU group. Not only did the Vom Fass team present the fascinating program *Become a Culinary Alchemist with Old World Vinegars*, but owner **Brian Moorhead** has provided his exceptional products for door prizes on many occasions. Drop by and sample exquisite oils and vinegars straight out of the casks and then select beautiful bottles to fill with your favorites. But be warned - you will never be satisfied with supermarket oils and vinegars again!



Products at Vom Fass Oils, Vinegars and Spices



Another of my favorite programs was *Notes from the Underground: A Down to Earth Presentation*, co-presented by member **Mary Sakilowski** and **Danny Wilson**, owner of **Farm Dirt Compost**. *Farm Dirt* converts produce and tree waste otherwise destined for the landfill into beautiful, fertile soil with excellent structure and full of beneficial soil microbes. His “living” soil is used all over Houston by gardeners “in the know”. Danny generously donated several bags of his “Black Gold” for door prizes, and lucky member **Bobby Jucker** reported back his amazement at how abundantly his garden responded. You must know someone else who would be thrilled to find a sack or two of Farm Dirt soil under the Christmas tree. And remember, there’s nothing more encouraging for a beginning gardener than their first successful crop. Find where to purchase Farm Dirt Compost at [farmdirtcompost.com](http://farmdirtcompost.com).

Danny Wilson is incredibly generous and compassionate. I will always be grateful to him for donating 20 forty-pound bags of *Farm Dirt* soil to help us rebuild **Lucia's** herb garden so she could enjoy it during her last year.

Here’s another suggestion for the nature lover on your gift list - a copy of *Idiot’s Guide: Foraging*, by **Mark Vorderbruggen**. Mark, appearing as his entertaining alter-ego “Merriwether”, humorously demonstrated his broad botanical expertise in his HSA-STU program, *Foraging for Survival: How Wild Plants Saved the Early Texas Settlers*. Mark’s comprehensive guide to local foraging would be a great gift for a budding naturalist. See his website, [foragingtexas.com](http://foragingtexas.com), for further information, and while you’re there, check out Merriwether’s many ongoing activities. Perhaps you know someone who would enjoy one of Mark’s guided foraging outings at the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center. Now that would be a unique gift!

Back to our educational programs: I never thought I would appreciate henna design - in fact you could have called me a henna-phobe - until I attended the enlightening panel discussion on *Henna Artistry* as practiced by various world cultures. Speakers from North African, Hindu, and Jewish heritages described the traditional henna designs and customs that have played a part in their own lives. **Macy Ulbricht**, a Houston henna artist and owner of **Henna Love**, also spoke on the artistic application of henna and created designs for the

many curious members of the audience. I really enjoyed my own henna design for the three weeks that it lasted. Macy provides henna designs for individuals or groups celebrating a baby shower, birthday, or *bat mitzvah*. She also says that many pregnant women or women undergoing chemotherapy find henna designs to be very empowering. A gift of a session with Macy for a henna application would be an incredibly thoughtful gift for the right person on your list.



**Jacob Martin**, owner of **Old School Produce**, introduced us to the culinary possibilities of herbal micro-greens in his program, *Herbal Micro-Greens for Macro-Taste and Macro-Nutrition*. You can find Jacob and his micro-greens at

[facebook.com/oldschoolproduce](https://www.facebook.com/oldschoolproduce). At Jacob’s newly expanded micro-farm at 5731 Cornish St. you will find organically grown micro-greens, shoots, and other unusual herbs and vegetables. You can also shop for plants for your own garden as well as produce for your kitchen. For a truly lasting holiday gift idea for someone special, Jacob accepts commissions to design, construct, and install the perfect raised garden or other garden structure. In his design, Jacob will consider the lucky recipient’s unique gardening needs, site, and environment to create the perfect garden.

The holiday season is also a great excuse to become acquainted with **Pat Greer’s Kitchen** products (remember her inspiring presentation about her plant-based kitchen at the 2017 Herb Day?) Visit Pat at her storefront, **Kracker House**, at 412 W. Clay. You can enjoy a delicious vegan lunch and then scoop up a selection of healthy food items for a lucky someone on your list. How about a basket of *Texas Organic Pecans* topped off with *Kombucha*, *Kookies*, or *Krackers*? Surprise your kids with *Go Take a Hike* trail mix in their Christmas stockings, and then send them out to forage with Merriwether or bring home some pine needles for the kitchen! Pat’s innovative and tasty foods can also be purchased at **Urban Harvest Farmers Market** at Richmond and Eastside. Let your gift say, “I care about your health” while you help support Pat’s ongoing generosity to the local-food/healthy-food community and her commitment to education and improving health.



And last but not least, beekeeper **Nicole Buergers**, our recent guide for *A Taste of Texas Honeys*, offers her delicious hyper-local honey for sale. Who can resist the rich, full flavor of real honey extracted from a local hive? I hope you were able to lay in some serious supplies of the herbal-infused honey she donated to us for Herb Fair. If not, you can visit Nicole at **Houston Dairymaids**, where she can also help you select a luscious herbal cheese to complement her honey. After being introduced to these delicacies at our recent meeting potlucks, I know it won't be long before I make the trip to the Heights to visit the *Dairymaids* myself. Meeting Nicole has inspired my final, "way-way-out-of-the-box" gift suggestion for this year. If you have a super-special guy or gal on your holiday gift list, think about engaging Nicole to set up a backyard hive. She will populate it with healthy bees, maintain the hive as needed, and even help with the honey harvest. While the bees are busy making honey, they will also pollinate the garden. The gift of a beehive will also help support the struggling bee population. And just think - honey from your special someone's own back yard might return to you as a sweet gift next year! Wow! And who says re-gifting is for unwanted gifts? Find Nicole at [bee2beehoney.com](http://bee2beehoney.com) for more details of her beekeeping services. A backyard beehive might even be the perfect gift for yourself!

I've been writing a lot about gift-giving and receiving, but what I really want to emphasize is the need for more conscious acknowledgement and expression of gratitude. If gift-giving has become a stressful obligation or a tedious chore for you, it's time to re-focus: make gift-giving an expression of gratitude from you to others. Even simple holiday gifts, if selected or produced thoughtfully, can beautifully express our appreciation and regard for special friends and family. Our gift-giving customs provide an opportunity for both the giver and the receiver to contemplate their gratitude for the relationship which is being celebrated.

And please remember to express your gratitude to all of these fine people who have given so generously to the HSA-STU and the community over the past few years.

A sincere Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah to all!



**From the  
Treasurer's  
Desk:** Janice Stuff

**Directory Additions:**

**Thomas Wessel**  
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**South Texas Unit Celebrates 50 years  
1968 - 2018**





## 45<sup>th</sup> Annual HERB FAIR 2017

### Julie Fordes – Herb Fair Chairman

Thanks to all the people who took on major responsibilities: Janice Stuff, Janis Teas, Benee Curtis, Donna and Dena Yanowski, Lois Jean Howard, Pam Harris, Jacqui Highton, Susan Wood, and Karen Cottingham.

A special shout out to Jeanie Dunnihoo and Beth Murphy who went above and beyond.

By my rough calculations, 82% of our members participated in Herb Fair either directly or behind the scenes. I think this is awesome!!!!

I am grateful that we made a profit and that we carried out our mission of education and community outreach. I loved that we tried some new things, revived some old things and carried on many traditions. Thank you all!

### Educational program targets planting herbs with youths.



Members Chris Ankney and Pam Harris prepare for sales; Andi Leger selling food in the background.



A wonderful selection of plants for sale!



Sampling the Jelly products. Yum!



Blends and Jellies Display



### Janice Stuff – Treasurer

Herb Fair is one of our Unit's major fund raising efforts that help support our herbal education, outreach and service. The income from the Herb Fair (2017) surpassed that of last year and our budget projection. Increasing plant inventory and adding new areas such as food sales, a quilt raffle, herbal honeys & herbal vinegars benefited our sales. At the same time, expenses increased from last year, but were in line with budget projection. Our net income was slightly higher than last year. The net income helps to meet our Unit's operating expenses and donations to other gardens. **Thanks to the Herb Fair team!**



## "Living the Life in Houston"

Sarah Ballanfant

The 45th Annual Herb Fair was in the family mix of activities last month. Held in the Museum District area at the Judson Robinson Community Center, the Fair was the day after the Astros' glorious Victory Parade (on Friday) when HISD let the students off to attend with their families and the City was alive with Astros gear and joy.

Two of us South Texas Unit members were manning the herbal essences table, demonstrating how to concoct your own Aromatherapy Blend. A young customer, Quinn, appeared in a dark blue Target t-shirt reading "Strong Like Mom," tested all the samples on the table, and at his sister Keira's suggestion, decided he would mix up the "Calming Blend." He entertained us for a few minutes with the eyedropper, mixing lavender essence with 2 others into coconut oil in a little blue bottle, then applied the blend label to the bottle, and made his purchase. He was so intent on his project that he caught the eye of **Bobby Jucker, owner of Three Brothers Bakery** and Herb Society member. Quinn made a "Calming Blend" for Bobby as well.

It turns out that this young boy and his family are recent "refugees" from Kingwood and the floods following "Harvey." Just that morning, they had been moving into their newly leased apartment across the street from the Judson Robinson Community Center. Mom Jennifer Battle noticed the Herb Fair signs on the street and jumped at an opportunity to do something fun with the kids. She was dressed in an Astros Champs red t-shirt and explained the whole family rode the Metro train into downtown Houston the day before for the triumphant Astros Victory Parade at City Hall.

This family is truly "Living the Life of Houston," surviving the crazy ups and downs of 2017. And a little boy discovered a "Calming Blend" of lovely oils at this year's wonderful Herb Fair.



## Herb Day 2018

Dena Yanowski, Chairman

**Save the date: April 28, 2018!**

**The Herb Day Symposium** will, again, be at St. Paul's United Methodist Church on Main Street. More information will be in upcoming future newsletters. Stay tuned!







## Herbally Speaking...

...from the desk of Linda Alderman

The holidays are quickly approaching! Oh, my! Winter celebrations with herbs have taken place for centuries. Most of those herbs I've already written about, so what to do...? I pondered, I asked friends for advice and waited for a lightning bolt to strike! It finally hit me when we were making balls of bay leaves to sell at the Herb Fair, this would be the perfect herb for December!

### Bay Laurel      *Laurus nobilis*      Lauraceae



**Description:** Bay is an aromatic, evergreen tree with shiny gray bark. Its flowers are dioecious and greenish yellow, making them inconspicuous. The alternate leaves are shiny, dark green, thick and leathery with waxy edges.

They are elliptical in shape, 1 1/2 - 3 1/2 inches long and 1/2 - 1 1/2 inches wide on short stalks. The fruit is dark purple or black one-seeded berries about the size of a small grape. Bay commonly grows to 10 feet and about half that size in containers. In Mediterranean regions bay may reach more than 60 feet; some unit members have had bay trees reaching as high as their second floors! Tucker and DeBaggio list 28 cultivars of bay.

**A little History:** Apollo, the Greek god of the sun, fell madly in love with Daphne and relentlessly pursued her. She didn't want anything to do with him! To help her fend him off, Peneus, her father, changed her into a Grecian bay. Apollo fell on his knees before this tree and declared it eternally sacred. From that moment on he wore a wreath of laurel leaves upon his head in remembrance of Daphne. Thus, the tree became a sign of glory, honor and greatness. Both Greek and Roman people wore wreaths to crown kings, priests, poets, and victors of battles. At the first Olympics in 776 B.C.E., laurel garlands were presented to the champions. Great powers of protection were attributed to it. The British herbalist, Culpepper said a man standing near a bay tree could not be hurt by witches, the devil, thunder, or lightning.

**Cultivation:** I had a spectacular bay tree in my garden in Bellaire. I bought a little plant in a 2" pot

at Herb Fair. It reached higher than the eaves of my ranch house, so it became the centerpiece of my culinary garden! It was in a well-drained, slightly raised bed. I've read it takes 6 to 10 months for cuttings to develop roots from snapping tips off branches, rather than using clippers. I don't have the patience for that! A little \$2 pot was my biggest herb garden success. Folklore tells us it is a bad omen when a bay tree dies, warning you of impending evil. Perhaps, as in my case, maybe just a little frost. For that reason, it can be grown in a pot and taken in for protection during cold months. To harvest bay leaves, snip off the stem tip or an entire branch when the plant needs pruning. Picking single leaves weakens the plant.

**Some Uses:** culinary, crafts such as wreaths and bay balls, often included in potpourri

- Important seasoning in soups, stews, vegetables and sauces
- *Bouquet garni* would be incomplete without it
- Marinades
- The sharp leaf edges can cut the tongue; be sure to remove them from food before serving

### Hot Chocolate with Bay

(adapted from Susan Belsinger lectures by Lois Sutton)

- 2 1/2 cups milk
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup half-and-half or whole milk
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 fresh bay leaves
- 4 packets of your favorite (dark) hot chocolate mix

Heat the liquids and bay leaf over medium heat until the liquid bubbles around the edge of the pan. Turn off the heat and let steep for 30 minutes. Remove the bay leaves & any milk 'scum'. Rewarm the liquid and stir in the powdered mixes. Whisk to blend thoroughly.

Yield: 4 cups of hot chocolate

Not a hot chocolate person? Infuse your holiday wine with bay – Gerard (1633) suggests bay will keep away "drunkenneese."

-Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs  
 -The Culinary Herbal by Susan Belsinger & Arthur O. Tucker  
 -The Encyclopedia of Herbs by Arthur O. Tucker & Thomas DeBaggio

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

The Herb Society of America  
South Texas Unit  
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