

# Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
VOLUME XXXIX, NUMBER 1



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT  
JANUARY 2016

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## January 2016 Calendar

Jan 12 - Tues. - 10 a.m.

**Day Meeting** at the home of Linda Alderman. Program “*The Herbs of China Bales: Spanish Dagger*”, presented by Janice Dana. **Bring a dish to share.** Carpooling is recommended, the driver will need to contact Linda for the gate code.

Jan 20 - Wed. - 6:30 p.m.

**Note change of time & location!**

**Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1700 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), hosted by Lucia Bettler and Vivian Scallan, Program: “*Plants and Herbs of North Africa*,” presented by Lois Sutton. **Bring your plate, napkin and a dish to share.**

## February 2016 Calendar

Feb 9 - Tues. - 10 a.m.

**Day Meeting** at the home of Shirley Mills. Program “*The Herbs of China Bales: Bleeding Heart*”, presented by Janice Stuff. **Bring a dish to share.**

Feb 17 - Wed. - 6:30 p.m.

**Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1700 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), Hosted by Nutti Doodeheffer and Martha Burg, Program: “*Become a Culinary Alchemist with Old World Vinegars*,” presented by David Eisner-Kleytle, Director of VOM FASS Oils, Vinegars and Spices. **Bring your plate, napkin and a dish to share.**

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

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

## Board Meeting - December 3, 2015

- **Herb Fair Report**
  - **Janice Stuff:** presented a summary of the Herb Fair Evaluation forms; There were many suggestions which will help with planning Herb Fair 2016.
  - **Lois Sutton:** presented a draft of the Herb Fair financials, “While there are a few expenses still outstanding, the net from the 2015 Herb Fair will be approximately \$5000. This income supports our operational activities and for the 2015 – 2016 budget year also the local donations approved by the membership.”
- **Possible Meeting Location in Hermann Park**
- **Herb Day**
  - April 23, a Chairperson is needed for the event
  - Theme: Beatrix Potter’s Herb Garden
- **Discuss revision of procedures for new members**





## Chairman's Corner

Happy New Year to you and your families!  
May we all have a healthful and joyous New Year!

### **Important note well!!!! Night meeting location & time changes for January 2016**

At 6:30, we will meet at a new time in the new Cheri Flores Pavilion in the Garden Center of Hermann Park (enter off Hermann Drive). This venue and time is a one-time trial.

The parking lot, with many reserved handicapped parking places, is lighted with barrier free walks and easy access to the pavilion. At the end of the meeting members will decide by majority vote about having future meetings in this new venue. The director of the facility is holding future dates pending vote of members.

Among other amenities the Pavilion has a well-appointed stainless kitchen with vast counter space and an ice maker. There are additionally a coffee pot and punch bowl available. SEE SUSAN WOOD'S article about the facility and usage details below.

I have decided we should experiment with meeting thirty minutes later, as members and guests rarely arrive before 6:30 PM. We will gather at **6:30**, dinner at 7:00, announcements will begin during dinner around 7:20, followed by guest introductions. At 7:45, a 35-minute presentation will begin followed by questions and discussion. At 8:30, we will conduct business and give out door prizes. All will be finished by 8:50, which will give us time to visit and clean up before the magic hour of 9:30.

If the weather is nice you should come early, there is a wonderful gathering place in the garden with tables and chairs overlooking the mount and lighted pergolas.

By mid-January day light will be longer and we could find this enjoyable. From this area there are doors leading directly into the pavilion which entails no additional walking.



HERB DAY PLANS...Start thinking creatively. The Board decided that our theme and focus this year will be "**A Day in the Garden of Beatrix Potter**" We will have many short and small talks about this highly versatile subject. Do you have ideas, special interests, whims and suggestions?

Would you like to speak or know of good speaker on this subject? Please call or email. I would love to hear your thoughts. Remember this is each member's herb day. It is a public outreach educational program. We want every member's ideas and participation as we reach out to old and new audiences. We do not have a chairman. Please answer the invitation to be our event leader. You will have enormous help from all of us, most especially past Herb-Day chairs. The date is April 23<sup>rd</sup> mark your calendars!

Sally Luna, Unit Chair



## Cherie Flores Pavilion

STU members Sally Luna, Janice Stuff, Pam Harris, Beth Murphy, Jim Murphy and Susan Wood met with Linda Black of the Hermann Park Conservancy on December 18, 2015.

Linda explained the use of the Cherie Flores Pavilion for South Texas Unit Night Meetings as follows:

\$45 fee for use 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. includes up to 20 round tables and 200 chairs. Extra fee if more tables or chairs are needed. Confirm set-up configuration in advance – details for submission with contract. At least 1 event coordinator will be on site. Members hosting the meeting can park up to 6 cars in catering lot with side entrance from Hermann Drive. Rest of members and guests enter from door immediately inside right side of garden entrance from public parking lot. STU may want membership committee to monitor this entrance in case other people enter that are not involved with the Unit.

Cart in room available for use when bringing own power point and/or audio equipment. Slide screen in place; Pavilion audio equipment not available at this time. STU is responsible for wiping down countertops, sweeping floor of debris and wet mopping any spots on floor due to spills. One large trash bag is provided to be left outside catering door after meeting. Bring any additional trash bags if needed.

Garden hours are: 9a.m. – 5p.m. November through March; 9a.m. – 7 p.m. March to Memorial Day; 9 a.m. – 8 p.m. Memorial Day through Labor Day. Labor Day – November hours were not specified. Members encouraged to arrive before our meeting time to tour Gardens. The pergolas surrounding the great lawn and the Pavilion are the only areas illuminated at night. All other areas of Garden off limits once closed to the public.

It is suggested that no meetings be held at the Pavilion during Spring Break: March 13 – 19. Jane Curtis is the Garden Coordinator. The Pavilion Library accepts gardening books – they have empty shelves now. STU members might enjoy donating to this Library to benefit gardeners for years to come.

Our January night meeting will be held at the Pavilion for all members to see the facility before voting whether to sign a contract for our meetings there in the future.

Submitted by Susan Wood





**About Our Meetings . . .**

**Christmas Party and the Story of St Basil**

Our members gathered at the exquisitely decorated home of **Demo and Elayne Kouzounis** for an annual Christmas Party on December 20<sup>th</sup>. Being plant enthusiasts, members and their spouses headed to the garden that is lush with all manner of herbs, tropical plants and Christmas garden art.

Before going in to dinner, Elayne welcomed us warmly commenting that there was never a question about hosting the party because “She loved our group”. She had arranged for a seated dinner at tables beautifully set with Christmas themed dishes and festive ornament centerpieces. We feasted on the herbal roasted chicken that the Kouzounis family had prepared and mouthwatering recipes including creative combinations of herbs, vegetables and winter roots made by members. It was truly a feast fit for publication.

As we gathered for coffee, Elayne told the story of St. Basil and the Vasilopita, the sweet bread she had made and then served. She explained that we have Vasilopita for a particular reason. The emperor of Asia Minor had tried to excessively tax Basil's diocese (area) so that he would not be able to pay and be subject to punishments. Many faithful followers gave Basil money and jewels to help pay the taxes. The tax collector was so amazed that he refused the money. Basil had no way of knowing to whom he should return the money and jewels. So, he had many cakes baked and in them placed the coins and jewels. He then distributed these cakes to the poor. Traditionally, Vasilopita (Basil's cakes or sweet bread) is made in Orthodox households and they are also brought to the church. There, the Vasilopita is blessed and cut by the priest. Pieces are cut to honor Jesus Christ, the Mother of God, St. Basil, the priest, the poor and others. Today a coin is placed in

Vasilopitas to remember how St Basil gave to the poor. Elayne followed that tradition when she baked the beautiful bread. Member, **Jeanie Dunnihoo** found the coin in the piece of Vasilopita that she was served.

**Susan Wood** generously treated both members and guests with wonderful surprise Christmas presents of our choice, large packets of Botanical Interest seeds. Thank you, Susan for such a lovely surprise. The traditional member gift exchange followed.

On behalf of all the members of HSASTU and their guests, we extend a heartfelt thankyou to Demo, Elayne, their children and grandchildren for the lavish Christmas party which was the perfect start to Christmas week.

-Sally Luna



Tuesday, December 8, 2015  
Christmas Party and Herbal Luncheon  
Vignette on Christmas Decorations  
presented by our host Sally Luna

There were 17 of our STU members who enjoyed Sally's beautiful home for our annual party for the day group.

Sally presented an interesting program tracing the history of Christmas from the 14th century to current time. She had ornaments and a collection of Santa Claus' from more recent years. She also spoke about when burning candles were used on Christmas trees.

- Thelma Rowe



## Other Interests

### Indigo Dye Day - January 9, 2016

Ever since I've become intrigued by the history as well as the contemporary art of indigo dyeing, it seems that opportunities to learn more about indigo are around every corner.

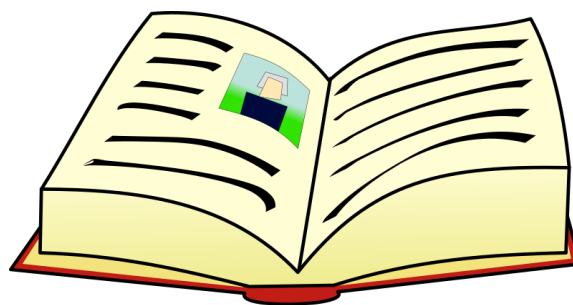
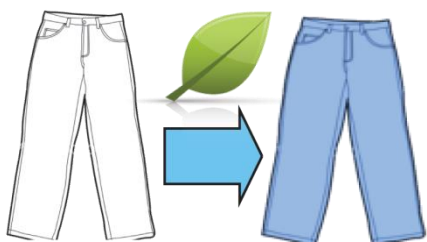
On Saturday, January 9, 2016, an "Indigo Dye Day" will be offered by the Contemporary Handweavers of Houston. This hands-on workshop will teach the basics of indigo dyeing, including how to set up and maintain an indigo dye pot. Participants will dye yarn and fabric and use the *shibori resist* technique to create their own beautifully patterned flour sack towels.

For those HSA-STU members looking forward to our programs on indigo this spring, this workshop is an excellent opportunity to experience the mysterious alchemy of indigo dyeing first-hand.

Albert and I had the pleasure of meeting several of the Handweavers at their Annual Textile Art Sale this fall. They are a very friendly and talented group, and their handwoven garments and objects are simply wonderful to behold and use.

The 5-hour workshop will take place at their classroom / meeting space at 2327 Commerce. The \$75 fee includes materials and lots of fun and instruction. For more information, see the Handweavers' website, [weavehouston.org](http://weavehouston.org).

Karen Cottingham, Program Chair



### Herbs between the Covers - Book Reviews for Herb Lovers

by Karen L. Cottingham

While randomly browsing the Biography section at my neighborhood public library, my eye caught the title of a potentially interesting book, The Unlikely Lavender Queen, by Jeannie Ralston. The cover featured a woman in white trailing her hands through rows of vibrant lavender in full bloom, and the subtitle promised "A Memoir of Unexpected Blossoming". How could I resist?

Half-expecting another rendition of the "American ex-pat in France" theme, I was delighted to discover that this colorful memoir is a true Texas original. Jeannie Ralston's story is the wildly improbable transformation of an inauspicious rural Texas town into the epicenter of the now world-famous Hill Country lavender industry.

It all starts when Ralston, a glamorous and well-connected journalist on the fast-track to success, falls in love with a photographer from Spur, Texas. So in love, in fact, that she agrees to move to *his* dream home, a dilapidated barn in Blanco, Texas. Pronounced "Blank-O" by the locals. Population less than 2,000. Social life: hunting and high school football. A "challenging" adjustment for a sophisticated intellectual from New York City.



To make matters worse, as her world shrinks, her husband's world expands with choice photographic assignments all over the world. Feeling more and more estranged and alienated, Ralston earnestly searches for a way to re-calibrate without losing herself in the process.

She joins her husband, Robb Kendrick, on an assignment in the South of France where he is shooting photos for a lavish National Geographic book detailing the creation of perfumes. Striding through the intoxicating lavender fields of Provence, he begins to think: Hmm... similar climate, similar soil, a ranch in need of a crop, and a wife in urgent need of a connection to her bleak, new surroundings.

Back in Blanco, they enlist their friends to help plant lavender on a few acres of "Bad Dog Ranch", and the Texas Hill Country Lavender enterprise is born!

As I was reading along, the photographic assignment in France seemed strangely more and more familiar. I suddenly realized that Robb Kendrick was the photographer for the superb National Geographic book Perfume: The Art and Science of Scent (by Cathy Newman) that I had read years ago. Both Lucia and I brought our copies and strongly recommended this book for further study at her recent HSA-STU program, "Fascination With Fragrance". We still do!

I also heartily recommend this captivating memoir. The Unlikely Lavender Queen is a genuine chronicle of the joys and challenges of life in a small town, of finding a new way to live, of starting a family, and then moving on to other adventures. As it turns out, all is not paradise in lavender country; and our author is not shy about expressing her opinion about their various devious, short-sighted or knuckle-headed neighbors. I'm curious to know if anyone died of embarrassment when the book was released!

I thought I was done with this story when I decided to check the internet to see what the Kendrick-Ralston family has been up to after Blanco. Besides home-schooling her sons "with the world as a classroom" through her husband's photography assignments, Ralston has resumed her original career as a journalist.

A quick scan of her publications led me to her recent essay, "*Happiness Can't Be As Simple As a Walk in the Park...Can It?*" (Prevention Magazine, July 7, 2014). Intrigued by the intense euphoria both she and her son experienced while climbing to Machu Picchu, she looked for an explanation in the scientific literature. You might guess where I'm going with this: to Amy Sullivan's recent HSA-STU program on the emotional and physical benefits of being in nature! Ralston's essay is another excellent introduction to the potent volatile oils produced and released by plants and their beneficial "pharmacologic" effects on humans.

And this is not all. It seems that Ralston has been going down the same path as our STU group. In the "*Happiness*" essay, she also remarks upon provocative research showing the psychological benefits of human exposure to a soil bacterium, *Mycobacterium vaccae*. As Susan Wood brought to our attention at a recent evening meeting, there is a surprisingly strong relationship between soil organisms and human brain function.

The Unlikely Lavender Queen is an always-engaging, uncensored memoir of the smart and vibrant force behind the Texas lavender phenomenon. Jeannie Ralston's story will resonate with all Texas Herb Society members. But the lavender farm is only one chapter in her life. I hope you will also read her insightful essay on "Happiness" as well as her travel memoirs. This is an author whose work I will follow with great interest.

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

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The Herb Society of America is dedicated to promoting the knowledge, use and delight of herbs through educational programs, research and sharing the knowledge of its members with the community.



Find our Unit on the web at:  
[www.herbsociety-stu.org](http://www.herbsociety-stu.org)