

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XXXIX, NUMBER 9



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
SEPTEMBER 2016

Editor –Linda Alderman ewalderman@comcast.net

Sept. 2016 Calendar

- Sept. 13** – Tues. 10 AM **Day Meeting** at the home of Lois Jean Howard. Program: “*A Few More Stories About Cotton,*” **presented by Nutti Doodeheefver. Bring a dish to share.**
- Sept. 21** – Wed. 6:30 PM **Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), hosted by Benée Curtis & Jacqui Highton. Program: “*Some Like It Hot - Really Hot!*” **presented by Henry Flowers,** Director of Gardens & Grounds for the International Festival-Institute in Round Top. **Bring your plate, napkin and a dish to share.**
- Sept. 22** – Thurs. 7 PM **Herb Fair Craft Workshop** at Judson Robinson Center, 2020 Hermann Dr. See details on Herb Fair page 4. Guests welcome!

Oct. 2016 Calendar

- Oct. 11** – Tues. 10 AM **Day Meeting** at the home of Lois Sutton. Program: “*Replacing Invasives in your yard with Natives,*” **presented by Lois Sutton. Bring a dish to share.**
- Oct. 19** – Wed. 6:30 PM **Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), hosted by Julie Fordes. Program: “*Notes from the Underground,*” **presented Mary Sacilowski. Bring your plate, napkin and a dish to share.**
- Oct. 29-29** **South Central District Gathering,** Beaumont, TX. See details on page 5
Newsletter deadline: 25th of every month
Submissions should be at most 1 page in Times New Roman 12

Happy Birthday!



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9/17 Lucia Bettler



Directories will be
available in October!





Chairman's Corner

The South Texas Unit of Herb Society of America is kicking off its new year with a celebration of the chili pepper, the herb of the year. While it is still summer, before long we will begin making our favorite cool weather comfort food, chili. Do you take the chili pepper for granted? I do. I always think it is just part of Tex-Mex cuisine and hurry on with my cooking? I never think about its pre-historic origins! Enjoy this trivia as you stir up your favorite chili recipe!

As a general rule, the larger the chili the milder it is.

Small chilies are much hotter because, proportionally, they contain more seeds and veins than larger specimens. The seeds and membranes can contain up to 80 percent of a chili's capsaicin, the potent compound that gives chiles their fiery nature.

Neither cooking nor freezing diminishes capsaicin's intensity; removing chiles' seeds and veins are the only way to remove its heat.

Chili peppers have been a part of the human diet in the Americas since at least 7500 BC. Chilies were domesticated more than 6000 years ago in the regions of Puebla and Oaxaca, Mexico.

Christopher Columbus was one of the first Europeans to encounter the chili (in the **Caribbean**), and called them "peppers" because they, like black and white **pepper** of the **Piper** genus known in Europe, have a spicy hot taste unlike other foodstuffs.

Chilies were grown as botanical curiosities in the gardens of Spanish and Portuguese monasteries. Monks experimented with the chili culinary potential and discovered that their pungency offered a substitute for black peppercorns, which at the time were so costly that they were used as legal currency in some countries.

Diego Álvarez Chanca, a physician on Columbus' second voyage to the West Indies in 1493, brought the first chili peppers to Spain and first wrote about their medicinal effects in 1494.

Both the Spanish and the Portuguese claim to be the first to introduce the chili pepper to Asia.

The Portuguese traders established spice trade routes with ASIA AND INDIA.

Chili peppers journeyed from India through Central Asia and Turkey to Hungary, where they became the national spice in the form of paprika.

Sally Luna
Unit Chair



HELPING HANDS
by Karen Cottingham

Do you know of an HSA-STU member who is having a difficult time with illness, injury, or other stressful circumstances? There are several members right now who would appreciate a telephone call or a helping hand from you.

Elayne Kouzounis, our wonderful, long-term member, has volunteered to coordinate a Sunshine Circle to encourage and assist members facing challenges. Support might consist of lending a sympathetic ear, sending a cheerful "Get Well" card, or even providing a meal or help in the garden.

Please contact Elayne if you are aware of a member in need of TLC. And if Elayne calls *you* and asks *you* to help a member, please do your best to spread the sunshine and lend a helping hand!



About Our Meetings

CAPSICUMS - SOME LIKE IT *HOT!*
by Karen Cottingham

More than one quarter of the world's population consumes chili peppers every single day. If you don't, maybe you should! Chili peppers keep you healthy, add sparks of flavor to your meals, and even fire up your endorphins (and some say your passions). No wonder *Capsicum ssp* have been designated the International Herb Association's 2016 Herb of the Year. And we are so fortunate that Henry Flowers, HSA member and Director of Gardens & Grounds for the International Festival-Institute at Round Top, will deliver his program, "SOME LIKE IT HOT - *REALLY* HOT!" at our September 21, 2016 evening meeting.

During the Age of Exploration, capsicums - the fiery herb native to Bolivia and Brazil - became highly valued by Portuguese sailors. Chili peppers not only prevented scurvy, but were excellent food preservatives and livened up what must have been demoralizingly dull rations. Through their extensive trading activities, the Portuguese introduced several species of capsicums to Asia, India, Africa, and Eastern Europe. The pungent flavors were rapidly embraced; and soon, capsicums were essential and defining elements of their cuisines. There are now 2,000 to 3,000 chili pepper varieties grown world-wide.

Today, we take for granted the international array of chili pepper-based ethnic dishes: Indian curries and chutneys, Korean kimchi, Chinese hot-and-sour soup, Hungarian goulash, Moroccan couscous with harissa paste, and Cajun jambalaya. Even the Russians cleverly devised their own national specialty, chili peppers steeped in Vodka, which is drunk as a "tonic". And not to be outdone, Texas is the home of the infamous Deep Fried Jalapeños.

The South Texas Unit of The Herb Society of America is planning a special evening to celebrate the end of summer and the beginning of "The Season of Sharing". We'll gladly share our knowledge of and enthusiasm for herbs and all the ways we use them in our daily lives. Please bring your spouse or another guest so the evening is a truly festive beginning for our new herbal season.

Please, also, bring a potluck dish that features chili peppers. We would all enjoy savoring a chili pepper-based meal from "soup to nuts". It will be fun to try to identify and appreciate the different flavor profiles of, say, Aleppo pepper compared to Spanish smoked paprika, or chipotles in adobo compared to authentic Thai sriracha.

Please label your potluck dish so we know which pepper we are tasting. And don't forget to bring your recipe because we will publish them in future newsletters. There will also be some very nice door prizes for those who bring recipes to share.

So come on all you Red-Hot Mamas! Come to the September HSA-STU evening meeting and "*feel the burn!*"

The September 21, 2016 meeting will be held in the beautiful **CHERIE FLORES GARDEN PAVILION** at 1500 Hermann Drive. 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 6:00PM - 9:30PM to allow us plenty of time to socialize before and after the program.



Herb Fair

South Texas Unit

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

Herb Fair Co-chairs:

Janice Stuff jestuff@pdq.net 713-516-5748

Donna Yanowski
donnayanowski@gmail.com 713-524-3542.

Janice and Donna will be contacting or calling each of you to seek your help with an activity so you may contribute and support the Herb Fair.

Website and Flyer

Lead contact: Benée Curtis

bccurtis5@comcast.net

Plants

Lead contact: Janis Teas jteas@sbcglobal.net

Preorder Form

Lead contact: Lois Sutton

doctorlo@comcast.net 713-862-8857

Participation in fair preparations is an expected commitment for all members

Blends

Lead contact: Nutti Doodeheefver

baggetx@yahoo.com; 713-667-7939.

Crafts

Lead contacts: Pam Harris

prharris014@gmail.com; Lois Jean Howard 713-771-0172.

Fragrance /Soap

Lead contact: Karen Cottingham; 713-524-0414.

Jelly

Lead contact: Lois Sutton

doctorlo@comcast.net 713-862-8857.

Kitchen/Break Room

Lead contact: Donna Yanowski

donnayanowski@gmail.com 713-524-3542.

Members are needed to work in the break room area during Herb Fair.

Publicity

Lead contact: TBA --Hopefully, Susan Wood will agree to coordinate publicity. **All members are needed to help with publicity.**

We want to contact all the major Apartment projects, Townhomes, and Lofts that are in the immediate area of Judson Robinson and the Hermann Park Area.



Jelly Days ... Jelly Days!

What could be more fun than working with a fellow member or two and being the first to taste this year's batch of sell-out herbal jellies!

Did I mention beverages and snacks available, too?! If you can't come exactly at the times listed, let me know; I'll still hold a space for you.

Sept. 22, 9 – 1

Sept 24, 9 – 1

Oct 6, 8:30 – 1:30

Oct 7, 9 – 1

Contact Lois Sutton to confirm your workshop slot.

There will be a **Craft Workshop Thursday evening, September 22 from 7 to 8:30-8:45 PM** at the Judson Robinson Community Center, 2020 Hermann Dr. We would love to have a large turnout, please come and help us prepare products for Ways and Means as part of preparation for a successful Herb Fair 2016.

If possible bring with you basic craft supplies, scissors, needles/pins, etc. **RSVP Pam Harris at 713-661-1109** or email at prharris014@gmail.com to let her know if you are able to attend so we can plan accordingly.



Herb Society of America South Central District Gathering



Hilton Hotel, Beaumont, TX

October 26-29 2016

TEXAS GARDENING,

GUMBO, GATORS & GOOD FUN!

PROGRAM

Henry Flowers: Herb of the year

Micah Leigh: Witch's Gardens

Opening reception on Friday evening and Cajun buffet on Saturday evening with unit chairs sharing ideas about their units.

This is a great opportunity to meet others who share our love of Herbs, Gardening and Nature. It is so close to Houston! This is an amazing chance to learn, explore and socialize. Do not miss it!

Go early and explore the fascinating history of the early oil-boom town! Gatherings are one of the special advantages of membership.

\$120 for full program, all events, lunch, buffet and reception. (Reduced rate available for partial attendance.)

OREGANO: A CARMINATIVE FOR COWS
*An Idea Worth Chewing On?
Or Just More Hot Air?*
by Karen Cottingham

Cows and other ruminants are notorious for producing prodigious amounts of intestinal gas. A single cow relieves itself every day of between 500 and 1,000 liters of methane gas, a pollutant known to cause significant environmental damage. Collectively, the methane gas arising from livestock and dairy farming accounts for about 18% of our total global greenhouse gas emissions.

Believe it or not, researchers in Denmark believe they can reduce the steady flow of bovine-produced methane gas into the atmosphere by feeding oregano to cows! And it's not because cows love the flavor of oregano and contented cows produce less gas. It's because previous

studies have shown that the antibacterial properties of oregano interfere with the production of methane gas in ruminants.

Oregano, like other plants, produces phytochemicals, which are substances that protect plants from infection, herbivory, and environmental stresses. The phytochemical of most interest to the Danish scientists is carvacrol, an antimicrobial produced in greatest abundance in oregano, but also present in many other herbs.

And what does carvacrol in bovine diets have to do with the amount of methane gas produced by cows? Ruminant digestion requires the fermentation of food by billions of gastro-intestinal bacteria living in specialized stomachs, or rumens. Some, but not all, of these bacteria produce methane gas as a by-product of fermentation. The methane-producing bacteria seem to be more susceptible to the antibacterial effect of carvacrol than the other members of the ruminant microbiome. So, by adding oregano to cattle feed, researchers are hoping to reduce the population of the methane-producing bacteria, while still allowing digestion to proceed normally.

Scientists chose to study Greek oregano (*Origanum vulgare ssp hirtum*) because of its high content of essential oils. They will test the effects of adding differing amounts of Greek oregano to cattle feed. Hopefully, the cows will remain healthy and well-nourished despite the shift in their digestive bacteria populations and this simple modification of their feed will significantly reduce bovine greenhouse gas emissions.

We will know the answer in four years when the study is completed. The very real possibility of reducing methane gas production by feeding cows oregano is a great example of what can be accomplished when modern scientists take traditional herbal wisdom seriously. Oregano has been valued for millennia as an effective carminative. And if the results of this study turn out to be disappointing, scientists can always investigate the dozens of other herbs and spices known throughout "pre-scientific" history to have carminative and anti-bacterial properties.



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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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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