

# Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
VOLUME XL, NUMBER 9



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT  
NOVEMBER 2017

Editor – Linda Alderman (ewalderman@comcast.net)

## November 2017 Calendar

- Nov 14**, Tues. at 10 a.m.      **Day Meeting** is open to guests and members at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004). **Hosted by Joan Jordan and Beth Murphy.** The program, “Herbal Vinegars-Make and Take Workshop” is presented by **Linda Alderman.** **Please RSVP to Linda at [ewalderman@comcast.net](mailto:ewalderman@comcast.net).** **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**
- Nov 15**, Wed. at 6:30 p.m.      **Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004). **Hosted by Donna and Dena Yanowski.** The program is “*Milkweed, Medicine and Menus: A Co-Evolution of the Monarch Butterfly and the Human Species*”, presented by Barbara Keller-Willy, Founder and Director, Monarch Gateway, and President, Native Prairies Association of Texas. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**

## December 2017 Calendar

- Dec 5**, Tues. at 7 p.m.      **Board Meeting** at the home of Sally Luna
- TBD**      **Winter Herbal Celebration** This party is for ALL members; herbal gift exchange is optional; limit is \$20. **Member + Guest Only.**

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

**Happy Birthday!**



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- 4 – Jacqui Highton
- 8 – Pam Harris
- 9 – Elayne Kouzounis
- 17 – Chris Ankney
- 19 – Lois Sutton
- 20 – Shirley Mills



Members – If you would like to have your birthdays remembered and haven't seen it announced, send me an email.  
[ewalderman@comcast.net](mailto:ewalderman@comcast.net)



**Chairman's Corner**



**STU member herbal arrangement in teapot on reception table**

Greetings!

We are entering the "closing-down" season of the year. Now is the time to reap and gather what we have sown, to clear and prepare the soil to plant again for our second, and often best, growing months. I hope you

are able to purchase herb plants from our Herb Fair and get them in the ground quickly. May we all receive the blessing of rain.

I want to express my thanks and that of the St. Anne Guild ladies for the extraordinary outpouring of cookies, brownies, rosemary-cashews and floral/herb arrangements that were prepared by many of the Unit's members for Lucia Bettler's funeral reception.

There were many small bouquets, overflowing in teapots and an enormous one that graced the center table. Susan Wood delivered beautiful, heartfelt words on behalf of HSA-STU at the wake and rosary the night before. Many, many loved her in many ways. It was truly a very personal way to honor one of our beloved members. Lucia's friends and family were so very appreciative and thanked many of us. They know who the South Texas Unit is!

Our board met in late October (thank you again Sally Luna for hosting). We are gathering ideas for the Christmas Party and the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. Mary Sacilowski attended a "data gathering" meeting of the Houston Botanical Gardens – still in the planning stages. Many of the garden clubs invited did not attend and I am glad that Mary was able to represent our unit.

Give thanks this month; for the rosemary that DIDN'T die after Harvey, for the fellowship and hard work this past month hath wrought, for friends, family and life.

*"In all things of nature, there is something of the marvelous."* -Aristotle

**Donna Yanowski  
Unit Chair**



**Going Sailing!**

**Newsletter Editor Needed**

Your newsletter editor is going to sail into the sunset! **Is your newsletter going sailing with her?** The unit is looking for someone to assume the role of editor of this newsletter while Linda Alderman cruises on her sailboat beginning in February. Just a few hours each month is needed to format the unit information. No writing is necessary!

Contact: Linda Alderman  
[ewalderman@comcast.net](mailto:ewalderman@comcast.net) or 832-465-3620



## About Our Meetings . . .

Albert Ramos

When we end our meetings with a door prize, at least one member or guest takes home something special thanks to the generosity of a donor. At the October evening meeting, however, we didn't have to wait until the end of the program for that special "something extra". It started at the beginning with **Susan Wood** and her presentation, *10 Easy-to-Grow Herbs for Fall*.

If you live in the Houston area and have not attended one of Susan's talks about herbs and gardening, you've really missed out on something special. Susan's presentations are interesting, informative, entertaining and are illustrated with photos from her beautiful and prolific home garden. Twenty-eight (28) members and seventeen (17) guests who attended tonight's meeting were all "prize winners" for having heard Susan.

One of the fascinating things we learned was the beneficial effect of digging in the soil with our bare hands and breathing in its rich aroma. Scientifically, the soil contains a harmless (and beneficial) bacterium which decreases anxiety and depression by elevating serotonin levels.

Susan also let us in on one of her innovative gardening techniques: to "green up" her lawn as it starts to go dormant, she broadcasts cilantro seeds and walks back and forth on them to press the seeds into the soil. With enough water, the thinning grass is soon camouflaged by a lovely green crop of cilantro that gives her a ready source of material for a year's supply of her special *pesto*.

Another particularly memorable lesson Susan taught us was how to pronounce the herb **basil**. Susan said that Madalene Hill, the "Grand Dame of Herbs in the South", once told her it rhymes with *razzle-dazzle*. Whatever you do, **do not** pronounce those last two words "*ray-zul-day-zul*", or Susan will have something to say to you!

In a sign of how well-received Susan's talk was, members and guests crowded around her after the presentation like she was a movie star. Member **Haley Bowen** also presented Susan a watercolor of an *Echinacea* flower she painted as a "thank you" gift from our unit. In the language of flowers, *Echinacea* means "skill, capability, strength, and health". We appreciate all your skills and strengths, Susan, and we thank you for sharing them with us. Susan not only

shared her knowledge with us in this fun program, but she also brought hundreds of seed packets and generously gave them to us to plant now in our own gardens. As we were cleaning up the room, people were telling each other that this was one of the best presentations they had been to in ages.

The evening's hostesses were **Mary Sacilowski** and **Haley Bowen**. They decorated the tables with autumnal gourds and Halloween decorations and prepared special herb beverages that paired well with our potluck meal. Thank you, Mary and Haley, for helping to make the evening so pleasant for us all.

In addition to all the seed packets that Susan Wood gave us, we also had a special door prize. It was a set of Fall-themed tile coasters that our beloved and recently-deceased member **Lucia Bettler** donated shortly before she died. Member **Bobby Jucker** was delighted to have won them.

As a final note, two of the evening's guests have now attended three or more meetings in the last 12 months and became eligible for membership in the HSA-STU. They completed their applications before they left the meeting, so we hope to welcome them soon as HSA-STU Members!

Please make plans now to attend our next meeting on November 15. **Barbara Keller-Willy**, founder and director of Monarch Gate, has prepared a special presentation specifically for us entitled *MILKWEED, MEDICINE AND MENUS: A CO-EVOLUTION OF THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY AND THE HUMAN SPECIES*.



### Day Group Meeting

Linda Alderman

The day group met on October 10th to kick off the learning year of **Crafting with Herbs**. How appropriate we chose to do a workshop to prepare items to sell at our upcoming herb fair! We made bay balls (see more about Bay Laurel in the December newsletter) and stripped leaves from herb cuttings for herbal tea. Lots of laughter and lots of fun! We enjoyed a wonderful potluck lunch at the end of our morning of work. Thanks so much, **Janice Stuff**, for hosting this lively bunch!



What's Coming Up Next?



November 14<sup>th</sup> – Day Meeting is open to members and Guests!

Herbal Vinegars: A Make and Take Workshop

Members and guests are welcome to join us at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park for this meeting. Linda Alderman will be leading a workshop on making herbal vinegars. In addition to learning about herbal vinegars, come and make a bottle of herbal vinegar to take home with you! What a wonderful gift for the holidays!

RSVP Required
ewalderman@comcast.net

The following people have already responded!

- Linda Alderman
Martha Burg
Jeannie Dunnihoo
Janice Freeman
Tamara Gruber
Pam Harris
Lois Jean Howard
Cathy Livingston
Shirley Mills
Beth Murphy
Thelma Rowe
Janice Stuff

To add your name to this list, shoot Linda an email at the address above.

MILKWEED: FOOD FOR BUTTERFLIES, FOOD FOR YOUR TABLE, FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Karen Cottingham

They're back! Look outside, and you'll see an orange flurry of monarch butterflies flitting from flower to flower. They're busy refueling on the nectar plants in your back yard so they can make the rest of the arduous journey to their wintering grounds in Mexico. How these tiny, fragile creatures can fly up to 3000 miles to a place they've never been to before is surely one of the most astounding navigational triumphs of nature.

Migrating Monarchs



The Aztecs believed, as did earlier Meso-Americans, that the monarch butterflies returning to the same place at the same time each year were the departed spirits of

deceased warriors and relatives that had come back to visit loved ones.

As native pre-Hispanic beliefs were merged with Catholic traditions, indigenous ways of honoring the dead were combined with All Souls' Day and All Saints' Day observances. The ancient customs of offering ceremonial food and drink on decorated altars and "visiting" with spirits in burial grounds thus came to be celebrated on November 1 and 2 as The Day of the Dead. Coincidentally, early November also happened to be the precise time of year that monarchs reliably reappeared in great orange shimmering clouds. The returning butterflies were welcomed and revered as symbolic embodiments of departed loved ones arriving for their annual visit. Monarch imagery and symbolism continue to be important features of contemporary Day of the Dead festivities, which are being celebrated by hundreds of thousands as you read this newsletter!

Butterfly Lady on the Day of the Dead



Every Autumn, monarchs funnel en masse through the "Texas Flyways" on their way to remote groves of fir trees in the highlands of central Mexico. And every Spring, their offspring make the return trip to destinations as far north as Canada.



Suitable habitats in Texas are obviously vital for the survival of the migrating butterflies. Adequate nectar sources are needed to fuel the long journey south, and appropriate milkweed plants are critical for the multiple reproductive cycles that occur *en route* as the new generations travel north. In recent years, many organizations and concerned citizens have joined forces to protect the monarch by re-establishing the butterfly habitat that has suffered in recent years from population growth and damaging agricultural practices.

Our November Evening Program speaker, **Barbara Keller-Willy**, has combined her fascination with monarch butterflies with her commitment to conservation and habitat protection as the founder and director of MONARCH GATEWAY. This Fort Bend County non-profit organization partners with The Field Museum in Chicago and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to evaluate practices that can help increase monarch populations by creating or protecting “monarch-friendly” habitats.

Naturally, Willy is an expert in the genus *Asclepias*, the one and only larval host plant of the monarch butterfly. There are 73 species of native milkweeds in the United States; and about half of these, each with its unique characteristics and habitats, are found in Texas. These plants are not only challenging to propagate and transplant, but must be well-suited to soil, climate, and other conditions in order to survive and ultimately benefit the monarchs. Among their many programs, Monarch Gateway provides native milkweed plants to support the monarch populations in urban and rural areas throughout Texas. In 2016, Willy donated 7000 native milkweed plants to projects creating contiguous monarch-friendly habitat along the central and coastal flyways of Texas (see [www.monarchgateway.org](http://www.monarchgateway.org)).

Most of us are already very familiar with the unique relationship between monarchs and milkweed. Milkweed is widely known as the only food source for the larvae of monarch butterflies. Students in beginning biology classes learn how *Asclepias* species have evolved over millions of years to produce several toxic substances, known as cardiac glycosides, which protect them from herbivores. At the same time, monarch butterflies have developed protective biochemical mechanisms that allow them to ingest, and even concentrate, these toxic substances in their tissues. While not poisonous to the monarchs, the toxin in one bite of a monarch wing causes sufficient distress and vomiting in their avian predators that the birds quickly learn to leave the monarchs alone. The avian learning curve is reinforced by the easily identifiable high-

contrast warning coloration brazenly displayed by monarch larvae and adults. As Charles Darwin said, “Evolution is written on the wings of butterflies.”

But how many of you are aware of *Asclepias* species as culinary delicacies, as medicinals, and as life-saving, practical materials? Barbara Keller-Willy has created a new program to bring attention to these less-well-known but equally fascinating attributes of *Asclepias*.

MILKWEED, MEDICINE AND MENUS: A CO-EVOLUTION OF THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY AND THE HUMAN SPECIES will be presented for the first time at our Evening HSA-STU Meeting on November 15, 2017. You will not want to miss it.

Learn how the shoots, stems, buds, flowers, pods, seeds, and “silk” of a toxic plant were converted to nutritious and delicious food by Native American peoples, and how milkweed cuisine today is undergoing a revival led by foragers and inventive chefs. My favorite milkweed “recipe” comes from the Chippewa, who stewed milkweed flowers into a type of jam. Not only does this floral jam sound delicious, but, when consumed before a large meal, it was thought to allow one to eat more food than usual!

### Milkweed buds for dinner



Unlike many of the foods eaten by Native Americans, the European settlers did not adopt milkweed generally into their kitchens. A

French Canadian communication written in 1760 describes the technique of making a brown sugary sweetener from milkweed flowers: “These are shaken early in the morning before the dew is off of them when there falls from them with the dew a kind of honey which is reduced to sugar by boiling.” I don’t think I will be trying this tedious process anytime soon, but I have certainly been tempted by several less labor-intensive milkweed recipes found on the internet.

What about milkweed as a medicine? The genus *Asclepias* was, after all, named by Carl Linnaeus (1707 - 1778) after the Greek god of healing, *Asklepios*, to acknowledge its widespread use in treating illness. *Asclepias tuberosa* is known by the common name “pleurisy root”, referring to its



historical use in treating respiratory disorders. Even Nicholas Culpeper, the great 17<sup>th</sup> century English botanist, herbalist, physician and astrologer, extolled the medicinal virtues of this herb. "The root," he wrote, "which is the only part used, is a counter-poison, both against the bad effects of poisonous herbs and the bites and stings of venomous creatures." Did you notice how *Asclepius* serves as a textbook example of a plant that can be both toxic and beneficial, depending on dose and preparation?

While we don't use milkweed medicinally any more, there is provocative evidence that monarch butterflies "self-medicate" by choosing milkweed plants with varying levels of cardiac glycosides depending on their health status! You must come to Willy's lecture to learn about this recently discovered evidence of insect "intelligence".

Other *Asclepias* research is currently focusing on chemicals produced by certain milkweed species that may have potential as anti-cancer drugs or as nematocides.

And that's not all - we will learn much more about the historical uses of this valuable plant, ranging from life-saving wartime applications to its utility as fibers for paper, textiles, cordage, and fishing lines. It's even been used as a poison applied to arrow tips and as soft stuffing for pillows in baby cradles. And if you're lost in the woods, you can always use milkweed floss to kindle a fire.

This introduction to the many fascinating aspects of the herb *Asclepias* is only the very tip of the milkweed iceberg. Don't miss this unique program that Barbara Keller-Willy is creating especially for Herb Society members and guests interested in expanding their understanding and appreciation of herbs. Mark your calendar now for Wednesday, November 15, 2017. And don't forget to bring a friend! We hope to have pickled milkweed pods for the brave to sample!

**Yummy milkweed pod!**



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

### South Texas Unit Membership Directories

Thanks to the 2017-18 Membership Directory Team of Benée Curtis (lead), Janice Stuff, Donna Yanowski and Karen Cottingham who compiled and published our unit's 2017-18 Directory.

Janice Stuff is distributing new directories to members at Unit meetings and events. All directories not distributed by Nov. 15 will be mailed to each member.

### Directory Corrections and Additions:

HSA, South Central District – Membership Delegate

Mary Doebbling

PO Box 83 Cleburne TX 76033

817-475-6069

[ourthymegarden@yahoo.com](mailto:ourthymegarden@yahoo.com)

Joan Jordan

Cell phone: 713-542-6688

**Please submit all expenses by Nov.28!**

### **Herb Fair Expenses**

**Please retain all sales slips and packing slips in order to be reimbursed for your expenses.**

Submit these slips and the STU Reimbursement Form to Treasurer. If you need a form or have questions, contact:

[jestuff@pdq.net](mailto:jestuff@pdq.net)

Mail to Janice Stuff, Treasurer

P.O. Box 6515

Houston, TX 77265-6515



### New House, New USDA Zone & New Herb Garden!

Lois Sutton

Before we moved to Asheville, a North Carolina friend warned me I would have to give up rosemary in the garden. I dutifully planted my *Rosmarinun officinalis* 'Gorizia' and 'Foresteri' in pots so that I could bring them into the garage over the winter. Since then I have spotted several yards with rosemary in the front garden beds. The pots will move in for this winter but next spring these guys will hit the dirt, letting their roots push through the clay and rock soil we have.

Our new gardening zone is 7a to 6b; here zones range by the "up and down" as well as the "north and south"! We are at an elevation of just under 2,500 feet but protected on the north side by a rising foothill. Asheville sits on the dry-side of the Blue Ridge Mountains with an average rain fall of 40 – 46 inches. In sharp contrast, Highlands, on the other side of the mountains, receives closer to 100 inches of rain making that area a temperate rain forest!

The basic soil for us is, as noted above, clay (reddish) and stone (metamorphic types with some mica and occasionally granite). {There is no garden stake or tomato cage in the world that will easily slip to the right depth without several tries and the removal of small-medium-and good-sized stone!} At the back of the house there is a walled garden, aka the patio surrounded by retaining walls. When we arrived, hugely overgrown pyrocanthus and nonproductive rose bushes filled the planting beds. We removed all of the existing shrubbery, cleaned roots from the soil and topped all the beds with organically-enriched garden soil getting ready for new plantings.

Were we ready for this geographic/gardening change? Not really! I had already wandered through the annual Western North Carolina Herb Festival and knew that the plant selection was not as broad as we have at the Herb Fair or that the Pioneer Unit has at Herbal Forum. On our "before-you-move" list was plant shopping. I brought some common plants including:

- Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*)
- Mints: red-stem applemint (*Mentha x gracilis* 'Madalene Hill')
- Kentucky Colonel (*M. spicata* 'Kentucky Colonel')
- orange (*M. x piperata* f. *citrate* 'Orange')
- Oregano (*Origanum xmajoricum* 'Hilltop'-??)

Sages: Berggarten (*Salvia officinalis* 'Berggarten')

- purple (*S. officinalis* 'Purpurascens')
- golden (*S. officinalis* 'Icterina')
- 'Newe Ya'ar'

I added several herbs that grew with varying success – or not – in my Houston garden. Among these were a variegated *S. officinalis* 'Berggarten', *Thymus officinalis* 'Lemon Mist', French tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculus*), winter savory (*Satureja montana*), creeping savory (*Satureja spicigera*) AND four lavender cultivars. Did I mention the monarda (bee balm) plants we balanced on the backseat of the car?

All plants except the lavenders and monardas went into the walled garden with the newly replenished soil. Spring's arrival did not seem to register with the plants and I thought nothing was going to really settle in. And then there was an explosion. The sages and thymes looked like they grew bigger every day! While they sometimes did the same in Houston, they are still thriving here.



L to R: Onion chives, golden sage, purple sage



L to R: "Lemon Mist" thyme and the thyme in residence when we arrived. Peeking over the thyme are the oxblood lilies



I've had to stake the 'Newe Ya'ar'! I've had to trim the creeping savory as it was growing over the 'Lemon Mist' thyme. The lemon balm is gigantic and the mints are, indeed, creeping their way through the entire garden as books warn. Sadly, the tarragon liked it in Asheville no more than it liked it in Houston!

Now that fall has arrived and colder weather will be here soon, the next phase of the garden will reveal itself. There is an off-chance that the pineapple sage (*Salvia elegans*) that erupted into bloom just in time to feed the last hummingbirds migrating through will winter over, i.e., be root hardy. The lemon verbena (*Aloysia triphylla*) and Rober's lemon rose (*Pelargonium 'Rober's Lemon Rose'*) assumed their winter spots in the sunny garage. I did not get the lavenders pruned this year (in fact, I couldn't even figure out when to harvest the buds/flower stalks). I'm counting on such authors as Tucker & DeBaggio and Bown to be true in their zonal references. And I'm waiting to come back to Texas to bring more transplants to Asheville!



### Herb Day 2018 Planning is Underway!

Dena Yanowski

A big thanks to all who responded to the Herb Day 2018 "theme" email that went out a few weeks ago. Karen Cottingham, our program chair, and I are still bouncing around ideas and will let you know when a final theme is decided upon. Besides the fact that Herb Fair is taking up much of our Herb Society energy, we are also waiting to hear back from St. Paul's Methodist Church. We will know in a few weeks if the venue/date is secured for our Herb Day Spring of 2018 event and from there will have an easier time conversing with possible speakers.



Pineapple sage



Walled garden before we we took out the overgrown shrubbery and filled the beds with herbs and perennials

### South Texas Unit Celebrates 50 years 1968 - 2018





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

**Set-up: Friday, November 3**  
**Sales: Saturday November 4**

**Herb Fair Chair: Julie Fordes**  
**832-969-8349**

We are looking forward to all members and guests helping in the preparation for our Herb Fair and on the **sale day**. Participation in fair preparations is an expected commitment for all members. It is a great learning and enjoyable experience for **everyone!**

The **Pre-order form** has been posted on the website: [www.herbsociety-stu.org](http://www.herbsociety-stu.org)

Please pre-order a **generic voucher**, the Unit does not have to pay 10% to the Judson Robinson Center, thus saving money!!!

## Timeline:

**Friday** (members work at least 2 hours)\*

**8 - 9 AM** Preliminary setup

**9 - 11 AM** Plants arriving and setup Members working!

**11 AM – 5 PM** Finish setup on plants, blends, crafts, jellies etc.

**Saturday** (members work at least 4 hours)\*

**7:30 AM** Members arrive and work--

**8 - 9 AM** Pre-sale; customers pickup vouchers and shop

**9 - 2 PM** Public sales

**2 - 4 PM** Sales close, tear down, clean up

**NOTE:** Coffee, snacks, and food provided for workers by hospitality team

**NOTE:** **Save and bring shopping bags** and **plant trays** for our customers to use

**Inventories: Important!!!!**

Please be sure to prepare **an inventory of the products** we are selling and give this to **Janice Stuff** on Friday or Saturday.

Things are running pretty smoothly in our preparations for Herb Fair. The proceeds from the fair support our Scholarship Program and other outreach. Jelly is being made, signs are being painted, plants are being ordered, and programs are being planned. There are a lot of moving pieces. I really hope that this year will be a true blend of our favorite traditions and of new ideas and energy.

There are many old favorites on hand, like our jellies, bay balls and catnip bags. There are new items like local honey infusions, porcini mushroom salt and aromatherapy. There are even old traditions revived, like selling food. Be on the lookout for the Spiced Cranberry Nut Bread; the recipe is from our Unit's 1995 cookbook.

As part of our educational mission, we are using the day of the Fair to reach out to families at the Judson Robinson Center and invite them to a container gardening program at 11 am. The kids will be able to plant herbs in containers that will stay at the center. Thanks to Beth Murphy and Jeanie Duniho for lending their expertise to this.

Last minute publicity is essential to ensure a good turn out. Email your friends, like the event I put up on Facebook. Print some flyers and take them to places you love to go. Getting a good turn out will help us earn the money we need for our programs.

If you haven't been assigned a job for Herb Fair yet, I will be calling you. If you have already volunteered, thank you! See you there!

**Julie**



### Honoring Lucia

Lucia's funeral reception, hosted by her loving and devoted friends in the St. Anne Guild, St. Anne Choir, and The Herb Society, was an affectionate tribute for a special lady. Lucia was an energetic and passionate member of these groups and always participated generously in their endeavors. It was heartwarming to experience the love and delight that these spirited groups expressed as they prepared and served refreshments at her reception.

The Guild members knew Lucia well and understood her passion for all things English, most especially the English country house Downton Abbey television series, which they used as the theme for the reception. The Guild had prepared food under Lucia's direction many times over the years. They chose her favorite recipes and took great care to prepare them as perfectly as possible.

The kitchen was full of eager members by 7:30 on Saturday morning, hard at work assembling the sandwiches using fillings made by twenty women on Friday. They made thousands of cucumber and chicken salad tea sandwiches, being careful that the slices of bread were perfectly matched for each sandwich, because that was the way Lucia would have done it!

Her devoted friends from the choir provided a beautiful selection of cheese, crackers, and glorious red Holiday grapes.

The Herb Society made hundreds of exquisite herbal cookies, which I might add were the hit of the day. These cookies, we know so well, were labor intensive; and that fact was not without notice. The guests recognized how special these cookies were and commented about "the culinary skills of that herb group."

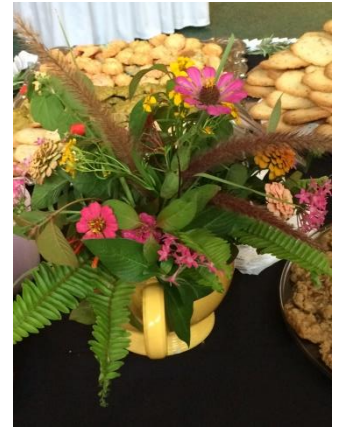
Seven members made lovely herbal arrangements in tea pots for the tables, and Karen Cottingham made the exquisite arrangement of a wide variety of herbs for the center food table. Her arrangement was surrounded by a circle of weeping willow that extended along the lengths of the adjoining tables and cascaded over the edges. Weeping willow is not only a lovely herb, but is symbolic of the mourning and grief we all feel with Lucia's passing. The Herb Society's beautiful herbal theme for the reception brought considerable recognition for our group. We should all take pride and find comfort knowing that we did this for our generous and untiring member, Lucia. I know that she would have liked our contributions to the reception.

May her beautiful spirit continue to inspire us as we carry out our mission - teaching about herbs!

### Sally Luna



**Large herbal arrangement by Karen Cottingham for sandwich, cheese & fruit table**



**Teapot arrangement by Susan Wood on table of cookies provided by STU members**

### Teapot centerpieces for the reception tables provided by HSA-STU members.

*All photos courtesy of Susan Wood*





## Herbally Speaking...

...from the desk of Linda Alderman

Ahhhhh! November brings a break in the humid weather and cooler days. It's a real joy to be outside! While I'm in my garden, my thoughts often wander. This month they'll surely drift to planning our Thanksgiving meal. Of course, that means having plenty of fresh sage for the turkey and stuffing. If you've only experienced the dried, flavorless leaves that come in a jar, you might have a false impression of this wonderful herb. Get out there and use some fresh sage, for Thanksgiving, or as suggested, on a grilled cheese sandwich. Go on! You'll be glad you did!

### Sage

*Salvia officinalis*

Lamiaceae



**Description:** Sage, or more properly, common or garden sage, is a hardy perennial shrub with woody stems that are square and covered in down. Its flowers grow in whorls of four to eight. Depending on the plant, the flowers are pink, purple, blue or white.

The flowers are 1/2 - 3/4 in. long with two lips and a ring of hairs inside. The leaves are opposite and up to two in. long. They are grayish green in color, look pebbly and softly hairy. The fruit is an oval nutlet. The plant grows from 12-30 in. in height.

**A little History:** Ancient stories and myths associated sage with immortality, or at the very least longevity, as well as increased mental capacity. The Chinese so prized sage for tea that they were willing to trade their own fine green tea for sage in a ratio of four to one. Over many centuries and even to this day, Yugoslavian farmers plant and harvest fields of sage like wheat or hay, three crops a year. (Lots of sage in their cuisine!) In the New World Native Americans used local sage species medicinally rather than in their cuisine. Mixed with bear grease, they claimed it would cure skin sores. Americans of the 1800s said the herb cured warts.

**Cultivation:** Growing sage here can be risky as it dislikes the climate we have—high humidity coupled with high temperatures. Although it is

technically a perennial, I treat it like it's an annual, so I'm not too disappointed when it perishes. I feel lucky if it makes it through the hot summer. I've had the best luck planting it in late summer or early fall when we start getting a break in the weather. Try planting it high and dry in full sun and hope for the best.

### Using Sage:

- Sage is most associated with sausage and poultry stuffing.
- Widely used in flavoring condiments, meats, beans and stews, cheeses, grain and pasta dishes, root vegetables, sauces, liqueurs, and bitters
- Fresh leaves are attractive when pressed onto turkey, chicken or ravioli
- The flowers can be used as a savory garnish on grain dishes, pasta, or pizza.
- Use sage in SMALL quantities at first, since it has a strong flavor.

### Grilled Cheese Sandwiches with Sage

- 8 slices firm bread, crusts removed
- 2 Tablespoons (1/4 stick) butter, room temperature
- 2 Tablespoons mustard of your choice
- 4 slices of sharp cheddar cheese, to fit bread
- 4 thin red onion slices
- 8 sage leaves
- 2 eggs, beaten with 2 tablespoons milk
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil

Spread 4 slices of bread with butter and the remaining 4 with mustard. On the mustard-topped bread slice arrange in order: a slice of cheese, onion slice, and 2 sage leaves. Top with remaining bread slices, butter-side down. Pour egg mixture into a shallow bowl and dip sandwiches on all sides. In a large skillet, heat oil. Brown sandwiches on each side—about 3 minutes. Serve immediately or keep warm in 250-degree oven.

### Resources:

- Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs
- The Culinary Herbal by Susan Belsinger & Arthur O. Tucker
- Southern Herb Growing by Madalene Hill & Gwen Barclay
- Season to Taste (Herbs and Spices in American Cooking) by Jeanette Ferrary & Louise Fiszer

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](http://www.herbsociety-stu.org)

***Herbs Make Scents – November 2017***