

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XXXVIII, NUMBER 3



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
MARCH 2015

Editor –Linda Alderman ewalderman@comcast.net

March 2015 Calendar

Mar. 10 - Tues. – 10 a.m.

Day Meeting at the home of Pam Harris. Program: "*English Hedgerow Herbology*", presented by Jacqui Highton; Vignette by Elaine Kouzounis. Bring a dish to share.

Mar. 18 - Wed. - 7 p.m.

Evening Meeting at the West Gray Multi-Service Center (1475 West Gray) hosted by Anita Rowe and Jeannie Dunnihoo. Program: "*Seed Catalogues*", presented by Beth Murphy. Bring your plate and napkin and finger food to share. Meeting open to the public.

From our Unit Chair



I hope everyone's 2015 is going well and your gardens are as well. As I write this, it's 35 degrees outside with a freezing rain forecast. I don't know about you, but I am ready for some warmer weather and to get my yard back in order.

At our last meeting, Susan Wood spoke about her trip to the Amazon. Thank you Susan for that it was entertaining and educational as well.

Next month Beth Murphy will be our guest speaker and she will be talking about Seed Catalogues. Our hosts will be Anita Rowe and Jeanie Dunnihoo.

I hope to see all of you there.

Martha Burg

Herb Day - Sat. April 25

This year's theme: "*Where the Wild Herbs Grow*" will feature speaker **Susan Wittig Albert**, Herbal Author. The event will take place at St. Paul's Methodist Church, 5501 Main St @ Binz/Bissonet across from the Museum of Fine Arts, in Fondren Hall.

Registration:

- \$45 for non-members or members attending the event only
- \$25 Registration for members involved in committee work or set-up/breakdown

The old saying, many hands make light work, applies to Herb Day. The more of us working the better, please be generous with your time and talent and volunteer, I promise you, something new will be learned, a new friend will be made or you will discover something about someone you already know that you didn't know before. Join a committee by sending an email to prharris014@gmail.com or call me at 713-661-1109. Committees are forming for kitchen, decorating, registration, ways & means, plants favors (formerly gift bags) and publicity.

Pam Harris - Herb Day Chair



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Herb Day - Workshops



Workshops to prepare for herb day will be hosted in the homes of the following:

March 3 – Lois Jean Howard – bring scissors
7623 Troulon, Houston, TX 77074
713-771-0172

March 19 – Pam Harris
2624 University Houston, TX 77005
713-661-1109

April 2 – Lois Sutton
703 E. 8½ St. Houston
713-862-8857

April 16 – Lois Jean Howard
See above

All workshops begin at 10:00 am

About our Members

Recent Illness:

Sally Luna

Interesting News!

Linda Alderman - completed the seamanship training for The Tall Ship of Texas – Elissa She will be sailing as crew in April!

Happy Birthday!



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Susan Wood
Vivan Scalan
Joan Jordan
Mercedes Hitchcock
Beth Murphy
Linda Alderman

February Programs

**Herbal Poisons, Antidotes, and Anecdotes –
Susan Wood
Feb 18, 2015**

I enjoyed presenting “*Poisons, Antidotes & Anecdotes a la Flavia de Luce*” at our 2-18-15 night meeting. It was great to see affiliate members Henry Flowers, Kay & Tony Scanipico from the Pioneer Unit and Gloria & John Hunter from the Texas Thyme Unit in attendance. If you missed the program and would like to receive attachments for the eight page handout, email me at: susanwoodtx@prodigy.net.

Our newsletter is currently accepting one page summaries of member presented programs, so you can get much more information in an emailed attachment. The program included excerpts about poisons from Alan Bradley’s mysteries series, information on arsenic, cyanide & strychnine and interesting facts about curare from my own adventures in the Amazon rain forests of Peru. I bartered with natives along the Maranon, Ucayali, Tigre and Chambira tributaries of the Amazon River to obtain blowguns, quivers full of curare tipped darts and other artifacts which were displayed and discussed at our meeting.



**DANGER
POISON**

Newsletter deadline: 25th of the month



Herbal Liqueurs – Lois Sutton Excerpts from the Day Group presentation, Feb 10, 2015

In her book *The Drunken Botanist*, Amy Stewart says of a visit to a liquor store:

There wasn't a bottle in the store that we couldn't assign a genus and species to. ... Suddenly we weren't in a liquor store anymore. We were in a fantastical greenhouse, the world's most exotic botanical garden, the sort of strange and overgrown conservatory we encounter in our dreams.

Important crops in liqueurs' base alcohols include grains such as barley, wheat & oats; fruits as grapes and apples; others including agave (a distant relative of asparagus & not a cactus at all), corn & potatoes.

Herbs Providing Flavors

***Aloe** (*Aloe vera*) – *Aloin*, a bitter component found just under the skin of aloe, has been used in French and Italian bitters. Stewart notes that some people can detect this bitterness while others are blithely unaware of it.

***Artemisia** (*Artemisia absinthium*) – leaves and flowers used with green anise, sweet fennel & a variety of other herbs for licorice flavored liqueurs such as Pernod and Absinthe. Absinthe was considered hallucinogenic and toxic due to thujone, a primary chemical constituent in wormwood. This reputation may have been from the high alcohol content (60 to 80% alcohol) & subsequent drunkenness OR from other chemicals added or leached into the liqueur during production.

***Bay laurel** (*Laurus nobilis*) is a common flavoring in gin as well as vermouth.

***Cloves** (*Syzygium aromaticum*) Who does not include cloves in spiced cider or other winter holiday nogs, grogs and punches. It also appears in nutty & spicy liqueurs, amaretto, some vermouths and *amaros* (Italian bitters).

***Ginger** (*Zingiber officinale*) – Stewart has an interesting paragraph about the flavors of ginger root and how they change relative to time of harvest and use. Art Tucker lists the leading economic variety as *Z. officinale* Roscoe.

***Lemon balm** (*Melissa officinalis*) - Stewart notes that lemon balm "may be one of the secret ingredients in both Chartreuse and Benedictine."

***Vanilla** (*Vanilla planifolia*) – Look for vanillin flavor notes in Kahlua, Galliano & Benedictine

***Cinnamon** (*Cinnamomum verum*) - world sources now are Sri Lanka, India & Brazil. Cassia is *C. aromaticum*, native to India and China. Cassia sticks are thick-bark rolls, generally double, while true cinnamon is thin, tight roll. Because cassia cinnamon contains coumarin, look for true cinnamon for your liqueurs.

*A **eucalyptus** species in Tasmania, *E gunnii* or the cider gum eucalyptus, excretes a sweet sticky sap that ferments right on the tree. Look for Eucalyptus Gum Leaf Vodka or Australian Herbal Liqueur.

Making herbal liqueurs is relatively easy as most recipes follow the same general format:

- a base alcohol such as vodka, rum or grain alcohol
- a simple syrup (liqueurs are defined as a sweetened alcoholic beverages)
- herb, flower or fruits to provide the flavor
- a waiting period for the herbal volatile oils to infuse into the liqueur

Several recipes may give you an approximation of a commercial liqueur but their secret recipes are indeed secret. So have fun & experiment!



Limoncello

The Drunken Botanist, Amy Stewart

Twelve fresh lemons
One 750 ml bottle vodka
3 cups sugar
3 cups water

Peel lemons, being careful tooo get only the yellow rind. Place the lemon rinds and vodka in a large glass jar. Cover and let sit for one week.

After one week, heat the sugar and water until sugar is fully dissolved. Let it cool and add it to the vodka lemon peel mixture. Let it sit for 24-hours [note: I let it rest longer]. Strain. Refrigerate overnight before drinking.

Stewart notes that this base recipe can be used for other liqueurs, substituting other citrus, coffee beans or cocoa nibs.

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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