

# Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
VOLUME XLV, NUMBER 2



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT  
FEBRUARY 2022

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## Feb. 2022 Calendar

- Feb 6, Sun. 3:00 pm**                      **Zoom Board Meeting**
- Feb 8, Tues. 10:00 am**                      **Day Meeting for Members Only**, the program is still under construction, but will be at the home of Janice Stuff. **Bring a sack lunch and drink.**
- Feb 16, Wed. 7:00 pm**                      **Evening Meeting** "Mushrooms The Third Life-form; Identification and Usage," will be presented by **Mark "Merriwether" Vorderbruggen, Ph.D.** Depending on Covid 19 guidelines at the time, the program will either be in-person at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004) or will be presented virtually. Whether in-person or virtual the program is open to the public. Watch your email and our Facebook page for updates. **Face masks required!**
- Feb 18 & 19, Fri. & Sat. 10:00 am**                      **Westbury Garden Workdays** at 12581 Dunlap Street 77035
- Feb. 27, Sun. 1:00- 3:00pm**                      **Special Field Trip to Lone Star Mushrooms**, 17225 Huffsmith-Kohrville Rd Tomball, TX. Guests are welcome - see article on p. 5 for further information, and watch your email and our Facebook page for updates. **Face masks required!**

## Mar. 2022 Calendar

- Mar. 8, Tues. 10:00 am**                      Save the date for the **Day Meeting**
- Mar. 16, Wed. 7:00 pm**                      **Evening Meeting:** The speaker is pending at this time. The in-person gathering is at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004) and is open to the public. **Face masks required!**
- Mar 11 & 12, Fri. & Sat. 10:00 am**                      **Westbury Garden Workdays** at 12581 Dunlap Street 77035
- Mar. 18, Fri. 7:00 pm ?????**                      **Full Moon Ramble** (Zoom gathering for Members Only)
- Newsletter deadline: the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month is strictly enforced**  
**(March editor is Janice Freeman)**



## Happy Birthday Aquarians!

January 21—February 19

2/08 - *Terry Snook*  
2/13 - *Maria Trevino*  
2/14 - *Elizabeth Grandich*

**Herbs for Aquarius**  
Comfrey  
Rosemary  
Fennel  
Violet  
Valerian

[Horoscope Signs and Corresponding Herbs \(thespruce.com\)](http://thespruce.com)



## Chairman's Corner

Recently we have been blessed with many new members, so I would like to take a minute to let people know about our traditional spring event, Herb Day. Typically, Herb Day is a day-long themed event with several speakers, educational displays and luncheon held in April. Recent themes have included Herbs from South of the Border and Herbs, Hives, and Honey. We also have an Herbal Marketplace similar to Herb Fair. All of the money raised by the Herbal Marketplace goes to our Scholarship Fund.

At our next Board Meeting we will wrap up Herb Fair and begin discussing/planning for Herb Day. We have not had Herb Day since 2019 due to Covid. There may need to be changes to what we have traditionally done, as Covid is still with us. Input from members will be an important part of our discussion. There have been suggestions of more workshops and hands on learning as well as other ideas. Right now, we probably have a location, but are in need of a chair/co-chair to really get things together. PLEASE let me know what ideas you may have. We had a very successful fall event, and I hope to keep the streak going, so think about what you personally can do to make this something to be proud of and live up to our organization's charge to promote herbal knowledge.



I know it's surely spring time in Texas if I get the chance to ride up to Round Top and go to the Pioneer Unit's Herbal Forum at Festival Hill. Nothing lightens my heart as much as riding through the wildflowers and ending up at an incredible plant sale with fellow herbies! Of course, you'll have to wait until March 18 to go, so put it on your calendar right now, no excuses. The Pioneer Unit put on an incredible event, and you might even see a few bluebonnets on the way!

Here's another traveling opportunity: The Herb Society of America Annual Meeting of Members will be in Charleston, SC April 28 and 29. I have never been to this meeting before, but many of our members have. There will be people in attendance from all over the country and I look forward to a chance to meet them in person.

We are working on a plan to deliver the rest of our 2022 Directories to those who haven't been able to pick them up. Stay tuned for details.

Stay Safe!

**Julie Fordes**  
**Unit Chair**



Announcing our February 16, 2022  
HSA-STU Evening Program

## Mushrooms - The Third Life-form Identification and Usage



Our Special Guest Speaker:

**“Merriwether”**

**Mark Vorderbruggen, Ph.D.**

*Know What Your Ancestors Knew*



## ***What's Going On?????***



*This spring flower look-alike is - believe it or not - a yellow oyster mushroom!*



*And here's another beauty - frilly, curvaceous, and yummy!*

*To learn more about these fascinating edibles,  
Join us for a **Special Field Trip Sunday February 27**  
to **Lone Star Mushrooms in Tomball, TX.***

***“Ingredient of the Year for 2022” - MUSHROOMS!  
See next page for details.***



*Lion's Mane, Shitake, and Oyster – Oh, No! Oh, Yes!*

Join Us for a Fungal Field Trip to  
Lone Star Mushrooms in Tomball, TX

February 27, 2022, 1:00 - 3:00 pm

*Get on board with the “Ingredient of the Year for 2022” - MUSHROOMS!*

Whether you're interested in plant-based eating, plain-old delicious eating, improving your immune system or cognitive health, or learning about the fascinating interconnectedness of life, join us for a specially arranged guided tour through **Lone Star Mushrooms** in Tomball, Tx.

Owner **Michael Frederick** and one of his colleagues will demonstrate their sophisticated mushroom-growing operation to two groups of fifteen lucky HSA-STU members. You'll see the entire process of inoculation, growth, harvesting, and processing a warehouse-full of spectacular fungi. See this recent abc13 newscast for an excellent introduction to Michael and his mushroom-growing facility.

<https://abc13.com/lone-star-mushrooms-farmers-market-where-to-get-exotic-rare/10588187/>

Michael will cover the biology of mushrooms, indoor growing techniques, and how mushrooms are used in medicinal and culinary applications. There will be something interesting for everyone! And at the end of the tour, you can purchase fresh mushrooms, extracts, coffee blends, mushroom jerky, and DIY Grow Kits.

**Please be aware that the employees of Lone Star Mushrooms are not required to wear face masks while working. We do request, however, that HSA-STU members and guests on this tour follow current CDC and Harris County guidelines and wear masks. The protection of our guests and members is our highest priority.**

Contact **Karen Cottingham** at [karen.redbrick@gmail.com](mailto:karen.redbrick@gmail.com) if you wish to attend. Priority will be given to HSA-STU members, but, if space is available, members may bring guests.

Any spaces remaining open after February 20 will be released to guests.

Further information will be forthcoming on our Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/HerbSociety.SouthTexasUnit/posts/> and via MailChimp. You may wish to combine your trip to Tomball with a visit to the incomparable Arbor Gate nursery <https://arborgate.com/> or stop for lunch in Old Town Tomball.

For more information visit Michael at one of the numerous Farmers Markets he attends or check out his website <https://lonestarmushrooms.com/>

*If you've been thinking about joining HSA-STU,  
this would be a good time to take the plunge!*



# BACK TO OUR ROOTS

Julie Fordes

At this moment, the Westbury garden plot is weed-free and ready to be planted with spring/summer herbs. Many thanks to the group that came out Friday, January 14 and did such fabulous work, **Janice Stuff, Joan Jordan, Janice Freeman, Mary Sacilowski, and Raoul!!!**

We are a little late with this, but seeds for calendula, chamomile and monarda were planted on January 16, thank you Beth and Jim Murphy and Westbury Gardener Alisa for your help with the seeds! I hope that they are ready to bring to you at the February meeting.

We grew chamomile for the first time last spring and got about 8 ounces of dried flower to use in tea. I hope that we can grow more this year. The Westbury bed had about 10 plants in it, which made up the bulk of the harvest. In order to have more chamomile, we will need to rely on members to grow some in their home gardens. I know that we will rise to the challenge!



## **WESTBURY COMMUNITY GARDEN WORK DAYS** **TWO DAYS TO VOLUNTEER**

**Friday and Saturday**  
**February 18 & 19 @ 10 AM**

**12581 Dunlap Street 77035**

**Fertilizing, aerating, planting seeds and transplants for the  
spring. Whatever needs to be done.  
Come on out and join us!!!**

**Bring a mug, I will bring hot water and we can take a break with  
some fresh herb tea.**

**Julie**

[Location of Westbury Garden](#)



## BOOK C O R N E R

If you have suggestions for books or other media members might like, submit your suggestions to Linda Alderman at [ewalderman@comcast.net](mailto:ewalderman@comcast.net)



### The HERB SOCIETY of AMERICA

#### Booklist Recommendation



**A Violet Season** by Kathy Leonarn Czepiel - A mother's choices in a time of crisis threaten the one person she means to protect—her only daughter—and force her to make the boldest move of her life.

### Herb Day Chair

If you have been wondering what Herb Day is all about, there is no better way to find out than to work on organizing the event. Julie Fordes, Catherine O'Brien and Karen Cottingham are ready, willing and able to assist the chair in determining the program, place and all the other details. Call Julie Fordes if you would like to get more information.



### Herb Fair Chair

The South Texas Herb Society is looking for an Herb Fair Chair for the 2022 Fair. If you enjoy working with hard-working, creative fellow members interested in sharing their time, knowledge and talents, you'll enjoy this position. Notebooks and a USB drive, with detailed information regarding the position and responsibilities, are available to assist you.

If interested, contact Julie Fordes at [fordesjulie@gmail.com](mailto:fordesjulie@gmail.com)

### Calling All Speakers

Periodically, the South Texas Unit receives requests for a speaker to present at other organizations. If you have a plant that you are passionate about and want to share with others, please let Catherine O'Brien know. Contact her at [Vibrio13@gmail.com](mailto:Vibrio13@gmail.com) or 281-467-1139.

We can help you set up a PowerPoint presentation and teach you how to do voiceovers if you are not comfortable presenting in person. You could join their online meetings or you can present in person. If there is one thing that we've learned from this pandemic, it's that there are multiple ways communicate with other plant lovers other than in person.



**Janis Teas explaining citrus pests and diseases**



**Tote bags for Save Texas Citrus!**

## *Scenes from the January Day Meeting*

Janis Teas, an Herb Society member since 1989, presented a power point on citrus pests and diseases at the Day Meeting at the home of Pam Harris on January 10<sup>th</sup>. Janis is uniquely qualified to present this topic as a Citrus Inspector for the Texas Department of Agriculture. Her presentation was very informative. Attendees viewed slides that showed symptoms of disease and insects that spread disease, followed by a discussion on treatment options. Thank you, Janis for sharing your knowledge and helping us have a better understanding of citrus pests and tree disease and how we can help to Save Texas Citrus Trees! We also want to give a shout-out to Janis who graciously volunteers every year to order the herbs and plants we sell at our Herb Fair and Herb Day.





### The Herb Society of America and South Texas Unit honor *Beth Murphy* for 40 years of Membership and Service!

Janice Stuff

During her 40 years as a member of the South Texas Unit, Beth Murphy, has made numerous and amazing contributions to herb gardening and herbal education for our members and community.

The formative experience for Beth's love of gardening and plants came from her grandmother. Working with her in the garden, Beth began soaking up her stories and learning about pass along plants. Thus, Beth was launched into her love of gardening of flowers, plants, and herbs.

Beth taught school for 23 years, beginning this career after college graduation, first teaching in middle school and later teaching in high school. As a personal project she volunteered with a social studies teacher friend to create a living history project. In the living history project, the teaching team visited elementary schools with their "trunk". For example, the team dressed as Pilgrims and demonstrated how grains were grown. Next, a Discovery Box from the trunk was shown to the children and when opened the box revealed a grinder. The teaching team demonstrated how grains were ground and encouraged the children to do the grinding. The team used the same procedure with herbs using a mortar and pestle. For both grains and herbs, the teaching team explained how they were grown, dried, and then demonstrated how they were



**Beth at Herb Day preparation in the Hermann Park Garden Center, 2012. In the background, l to r, Denny Graves and Albert Ramos**

used. In all instances the children were engaged in the activity. Using the calendar as their guide they would tell stories about history, and each special event had its own Discovery Box. Being from Texas, rodeo also was a big event.

While teaching Spanish at Bellaire High School, Beth along with other foreign language teachers, started the Foreign Language International Club. Over the years, Beth has volunteered at the Nature Discovery Center, Bellaire TX, where she led the development of a children's garden, as well as an herb garden and classes on herbs. The South Texas Unit has periodically given donations to the Nature Discovery Center's children's educational programs and gardens. Beth and husband, Jim Murphy, are both active members of the Bellaire Garden Club where they have started and grown "hundreds" of seed flats for the Bellaire Garden Club's annual plant sale. Beth and Jim maintain an impressive and unique collection of herbs and plants at their property on a corner lot in southwest Houston. Plant lovers always "hit the brakes" for a slow drive-by to view their beautiful plantings.

Beth also contributed greatly to education of Herb Society members. Beth has presented numerous programs to the South Texas Unit including Pilgrim's Discovery Box, Common and New Salvias, New



and Unusual Plants in the Hermann Park Fragrant Garden, Mexican Salvias, and Vintage Plants from Grandmother's Garden.

The highpoint of Beth's herbal educational contributions for our Unit may have been her leadership as Garden Chair from 2008-2012. Each month for the South Texas Unit newsletter Beth wrote a column entitled "Garden Tips" where she outlined gardening activities to complete, recommended herbs and related plants to plant or harvest, all tailored to our current weather and Gulf Coast Climate. In her columns, Beth "raised the bar" with nomenclature, science, and discovery; her writing style always made members feel the suggestions were within their reach. Collectively, these 22 articles are worthy of publication. (Please see page 14, for a copy of Beth's Garden Tips column). During this Garden Chair tenure, and urged by the Unit Chair, she led efforts to redesign the herb beds of the Hermann Park Fragrant Garden, maintained by South Texas Unit members, into theme gardens. This redesign project involved extensive research to find new and unusual plants to include in each themed bed that would coincide with traditionally recognized herbs. Beth planned and coordinated the garden hours volunteered by South Texas Unit members for two monthly workdays. Beth has always openly shared her herbal knowledge, garden techniques and botanical nomenclature with members and others in a warm, reachable style.

Beth joined The Herb Society of America, South Texas Unit in 1981. She was honored by The Society with their Certificate of Appreciation Award in 2012.



**Beth and Lois Jean Howard working at Fragrant Garden, Hermann Park 2014**



**Beth and Jacquie Highton at STU Herb Fair, 2010**



THE 27<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL  
PIONEER UNIT HSA HERB AND PLANT SALE  
**Voilà! Violets!**  
AT ROUND TOP FESTIVAL INSTITUTE  
Viola—Our Herb of the Year 2022

Plant Sale March 18 & 19, 2022  
Presentations ~Saturday, March 19, 2022

Featured Presentations by:

**Henry Flowers~**  
*Loving Thoughts: The Genus Viola*  
*Herb of the Year 2022*

**Bee Halloran~**  
*Spring Flowers on the Menu*

**Billi Parus~**  
*For the Thyme Being:*  
*Madalene Hill's Sage Wisdom for the*  
*Garden and Kitchen*

For registration information, please  
contact [www.herbsocietypioneer.org](http://www.herbsocietypioneer.org)



Registration Cost \$45  
Shopping Available at the plant sale  
& Thyme Well Spent Gift Shoppe

To reserve a room overnight at Festival Institute, call 979-249-3129.

Registration is now Open!

[Herb Society of America: Pioneer Unit | furthering the knowledge and use of herbs \(herbsocietypioneer.org\)](http://Herb Society of America: Pioneer Unit | furthering the knowledge and use of herbs (herbsocietypioneer.org))



## The HERB SOCIETY of AMERICA

Annual Meeting Registration is NOW Open!  
Join us in Charleston, South Carolina April 28-29, 2022



[2022 HSA Annual Meeting \(herbsociety.org\)](http://herbsociety.org)



**Grind, crush, and bruise "fixatives" for potpourri in a mortar and pestle**

**Save the date: Saturday,  
March 26<sup>th</sup> 10 – 11:30 a.m.**

Potpourri workshop at Houston Botanic Garden by STU member **Susan Wood**

Discover olfactory mysteries and the fascinating world of fragrance with a hands-on workshop to create your very own potpourri blend. Learn how to harvest and dry herbs & flowers to mix with fixatives and essential oils. You'll be the "nose" that knows. Limited to 16 participants; tickets & info: [www.hbg.org](http://www.hbg.org)

Ed. note: Don't wait to register! Spaces will fill quickly; her potpourri is the best! -Linda Alderman



## *More Educational Opportunities*

**Organic Horticulture Day February 11, 2022**

[OHBA | Organic Educators \(ohbaonline.org\)](http://ohbaonline.org)

**"Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts In Your Yard" - February 16<sup>th</sup>**

Entertaining and nationally-renowned speaker, Dr. Douglas Tallamy will be in Houston to speak about "Nature's Best Hope" at the 2022 Thomas Horticulture Lecture sponsored by the Garden Club of Houston.

[Lectures : The Garden Club of Houston \(gchouston.org\)](http://gchouston.org)

**Houston Botanic Gardens - Saturday February 26, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

"Indigo, The Magical Blue" - Participants will learn the basics of indigo dyeing, including how to set up and maintain a basic hydrogen hydrosulfite/lye dye pot, which relies on complex chemical reactions involving air, rather than heat or a mordant.

[Houston Botanic Garden | Houston Botanic Garden | Life Grows Here \(hbg.org\)](http://hbg.org)

**Houston Arboretum and Nature Center**

- 1) **Backyard Wildlife Habitat Certification Series - March 5** from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- 2) **Spring Plant Sale - April 1** from 9:00am - **April 2**, 4:00pm
- 3) **Native Plant Propagation April 9**, 10:30-12:30

[Houston Arboretum & Nature Center - Houston Arboretum & Nature Center](http://HoustonArboretum.org)

[www.houstonurbangardeners.org](http://www.houstonurbangardeners.org) HUG

View website for meetings dates and topics

<https://www.urbanharvest.org/education/classes/>

View website for class information and topics

### **Membership Tips: Recording Your Hours**

Carolyn Kosclskey, Membership Chair

Reminder to members actual hours from July 1, 2021 should be recorded on page 28 of the recently published 2021-2022 Directory (violet). Please record your hours in whole and half hour increments (1½ hour = 1.5 hour). If you volunteered at the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Herb Fair please mark November (Friday) hours with an asterisk (\*) to show you assisted in preparation, and mark November 6 (Saturday) hours with two asterisk (\*\*) to show you participated on-site. Guidelines (Directory, p. 21) require active members to attend a minimum of 3 meetings per year (on site and Zoom) so pay attention to recording those. If more space is needed please use a straight edge to insert extra lines between the printed one, or include a sheet of your choice with columns marked. Next summer members will be asked to total and submit annual hours earned.



## Garden Tips for February\*

The warmer temperatures that we have experienced after the frigid cold earlier in the month have certainly been welcome hints of spring. Though temperatures have not seemed that warm, winds and lower humidity tend to dry out the soil. We have had to water wilting potted plants and put the sprinkler on the beds.

This month it is important to plant herbs like chives, cilantro, dill, fennel, garlic, horseradish, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage thyme, lemon balm, and mint. You can set plants of broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, kohlrabi, leaf lettuces and onions. You can still plant seeds like arugula, beets, carrots, leaf lettuces, Swiss chard, chicory (escarole), dill, endive, fennel, Chinese broccoli (gallant), garlic chives, mache, mibuna and mizuna. Warm season annuals such as basil, anise hyssop, cockscomb, gomphrena, cosmos, marigold, portulaca, purslane, salvia, and verbena can be planted in flats or containers that can be moved and protected from temperatures below 50 degrees.

If you purchase small tomato or pepper plants, it is a good idea to move them into gallon-sized containers so that they can grow out in the sun during warm days and be moved in if colder temperatures arrive. Other warm weather annuals could also benefit from being grown into larger sizes before going into the garden when the danger of frost is past.

Be sure to complete planting of fall-blooming perennials this month. It is also helpful to mark the locations of perennials and bulbs that disappear for part of the year such as lycoris, oxblood lillies, leucojum (snowflakes), daffodils, and narcissus so that you will not destroy them by digging into the area or put a large potted plant over them.

Give yourself a Valentine by planting an antique rose. You can prune your antique roses to shape the plant; severe pruning is not necessary. Prune spring-blooming climbers in May after they have bloomed by removing dead or damaged canes and one or two of the oldest canes to promote new growth. When pruning it is a good idea to use alcohol or Lysol on your pruning shears to keep from spreading infections.

Remember that your cool season annuals need fertilizer every few weeks to keep blooming well. Add organic matter every time you plant and add 1-2 inches of mulch to retain moisture and deter weeds. Another old timer's advice to remember is to watch for the budding of pecan trees as this is most likely a sign that spring has arrived. Happy Valentine's Day, and here's hoping that spring lingers for many weeks and that we don't jump from winter to summer.

**Beth Murphy**, Garden Coordination Chair



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\*Reprinted from Feb. 2010 *Herbs Make Scents*

***Herbs Make Scents February 2022***



## AT-HOME RECIPES



### AT-HOME RECIPES

February 2022

Carolyn Kosclskey

"Away in a meadow all covered with snow  
The little old groundhog looks for his shadow  
The clouds in the sky determine our fate  
If winter will leave us all early or late."

--Don Hallev

The winter season is nearing an end in the northern hemisphere and just below the surface of the earth life forms are beginning to awake from their winter slumber, awaiting the slow warming of the earth when they can emerge. In our homes January was a restorative month following the holidays, a time to nourish the body and the mind, and a time to look forward past the pandemic to longer days with warmer temps. With weather that has varied from chilly and cold to almost spring like within a short span, many young and old alike have experienced feeling uncomfortable with complaints ranging from itchy eyes, sneezing, hoarseness and laryngitis, inability to rest and fall asleep and general just not feeling well. Consider this recipe for adding comfort.

### HERBAL GELATIN CUBES

2 cups of 100% fruit juice  
2 one-ounce envelopes (2 tablespoons) of unflavored gelatin  
Herbs of your choice (see list below)  
Honey for added sweetness (optional)

#### Directions

1. Set aside ½ cup of chilled juice in a heat proof mixing bowl.
2. Place the herbs you want to use in a jar. For dried herbs, use about 1 teaspoon (if finely powdered or strongly flavored) to 3 teaspoons for bulkier pieces like elderberries. If using fresh herbs chop and fill the jar as much as you can.
3. Heat 1 ½ cups of juice to almost boiling, pour over the herbs and cover with a saucer.
4. Allow to steep for about 15 or 20 minutes, strain, then return to heat and bring to a boil. This will happen quickly, since the mixture is still fairly warm. Note: *If using powdered herbs such as olive leaf, make sure to strain through something such as a coffee filter or other fine medium. Otherwise, the herbal residue might settle to the bottom of the gelatin and become detectable.*
5. While the juice is reheating, sprinkle the unflavored gelatin over the reserved chilled juice and let sit for 1 minute.
6. Carefully, pour the boiling juice over the gelatin/chilled juice mixture and stir for about 5 minutes until dissolved. If using honey or other sweetener add at this step.



7. Pour into desired mold or heat proof glass dish.
8. Cool in frig for about three hours, then cut into squares with a thin-blade knife dipped in warm water. Cover container and store in frig.

Suggested herbs:

Elderberry: extremely useful antiviral, helps give gelatin a pretty red color

Lemon Balm: helpful for viral infections, cold sores, tummy upsets; it's calming and conducive to a restful sleep

Peppermint: indigestion, colic

Chamomile: anti-inflammatory soothes muscle spasms in stomach, calming, induces sleep; use caution if highly allergic to ragweed

Ginger: antibacterial, anti-parasitic, helps colds and upset stomachs, very effective for nausea, indigestion and morning sickness

Adapted from <https://thenerdyfarmwife.com/healthier-herbal-jello>

## **FEBRUARY THE MONTH**

The shortest month of the year has many holidays, and like the life forms beneath the soil these can be inspirations to celebrate what we have and better things to come. February is Black History Month (1926) to recognize the achievements and accomplishments of African Americans in American history. Many foods associated with Black History would include hearty recipes we know as "comfort foods" and can be added to our monthly rotation, and beyond, in acknowledgment of Black History: homemade macaroni and cheese, fried chicken, red beans and rice, cornbread, seasoned greens, mashed potatoes and gravy, and ice-cold sweet tea. February 1 is the beginning of the Chinese or Lunar New Year, based on the lunar rather than solar calendar, this year celebrating the year of the Tiger.

The month of February sits midway between the Winter Solstice (December 21) and Spring Equinox (March 20). Early Europeans and Romans watched for animals coming out of hibernation during this time to signal the time for planting crops. Groundhog Day (1887) is based on a ritual first recorded in 1880 in the Punxsutawney region of Pennsylvania of farmer groups going into the woods searching for groundhogs coming out of their dens. A fun family celebration could be enjoying the streaming the 1993 movie Groundhog Day with Bill Murray. Other holidays in the month are the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, celebrated on President's Day (1968), always the third Monday of the month.

## **VALENTINES DAY**

Perhaps the most popular holiday in the month is Valentine's Day (AD 496!), the day of love celebrated with bouquets of flowers and balloons in red, pink and white; heart and cupid shapes, jewelry and very special foods and desserts prepared just for that day. Many thanks to our treasurer Maria Trevino for sharing one of her favorite recipes from years past.





## CHOCOLATE CHERRY CAKE

*From the files of Maria Trevino, treasurer*

I have gotten together monthly with a group of sewing friends since the late 70's. We first met while taking sewing classes at Sakowitz on Post Oak. After the store closed, we formed a little sewing group and started meeting monthly at someone's home. We took turns bringing dessert. One of the gals brought this dessert to a February meeting in the 80s. The reason I know is because she gave me the ingredients for the recipe which I wrote on the back of an envelope and, after the ingredients, I wrote where our March meeting would be. This is a dear group of ladies. We've traveled to take sewing classes out of state; we've gone fabric shopping around Texas and shared a lot of sewing hits and misses. A chocolate dessert is a must for our meetings. I've made this recipe many times.

### Ingredients

1 box chocolate cake mix (it is better if you can find double chocolate or the fudge chocolate)  
16-oz Comstock Cherry Pie Filling  
3 eggs

Preheat oven 350°. Grease a 9 x 13 pan. In a medium bowl, mix all the ingredients with a mixer or by hand. Spread in the prepared baking pan. Bake 30 minutes.

### Topping

5 Tbs. butter  
¼ cup milk  
1 cup sugar

In a saucepan, heat the above to boiling and boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat and add 1 cup chocolate chips. Stir until melted. Spread on the warm cake.

Note: These days, the pie filling usually comes in 20 oz. cans. I use all but on the last quarter of the can I try to use only the cherries and not much of the sauce.

## CHOCOLATE COVERED STRAWBERRIES

Who doesn't admire and like a chocolate covered strawberry! This is not a difficult recipe to make if you remember the three most important things: use block chocolate, not chocolate chips; do not overheat your chocolate as it will cause it to "seize," and make sure your strawberries are completely dry. The tastiest strawberries are the medium and large ones rather than the giant ones with a stem. If not using organic strawberries wash thoroughly to remove any lingering pesticides, then blot dry.

### Ingredients

-8 ounces semisweet block chocolate (not chocolate chips), finely chopped. White chocolate may also be used if making "tuxedo" strawberries.  
-1 pound medium to large strawberries (about 20), washed and blotted dry  
-½ cup finely chopped pistachios or other chopped nut, and/or sprinkles of choice

### Directions

1. Place chocolate in a bowl set over (not in) a saucepan of simmering water. Stir occasionally, until melted, 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Do not overheat as it will change the texture of the chocolate.



2. Line a baking sheet with parchment or waxed paper. One at a time, dip each strawberry in chocolate, twirling to coat; then holding over a container, sprinkle chocolate-covered portion with chopped nuts and/or sprinkles, if using, and place on paper to dry.

3. Chill chocolate-dipped strawberries at least 15 minutes to set chocolate. Note: *Strawberries should not be stored in refrigerator longer than 1 hour as condensation drops may collect on the chocolate.*

Adapted from [www.marthastewart.com/313844/chocolate-covered-strawberries](http://www.marthastewart.com/313844/chocolate-covered-strawberries)

See also: <https://houseofnasheats.com/chocolate-covered-strawberries/>; the February 2021 recipe section (available for viewing under the tab "About Us" on the website <http://www.herbsociety-stu.org>) contained Janice Dana's Strawberry Glaze Pie, Frozen Strawberry Dessert from a Mississippi teacher as well as links to Jenny Doan's Strawberry Pie Recipe and Chocolate Rosemary Sauce. Enjoy!

**New Year's Resolution: Waste Nothing.** Reminder that eggshells and clippings from vegetables and fruits prepared in our homes can be incorporated into our soil to produce compost for life forms beneath the soil soon to come forth.

**Dietary Guidelines for Americans:** <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>

**The March At-Home Recipe section will feature recipes that would be appropriate for celebrating St. Patrick's Day and other holidays within the month. Members having a March birthday will be invited to submit a recipe. As always, recipes from other members and readers are always welcome and appreciated.**

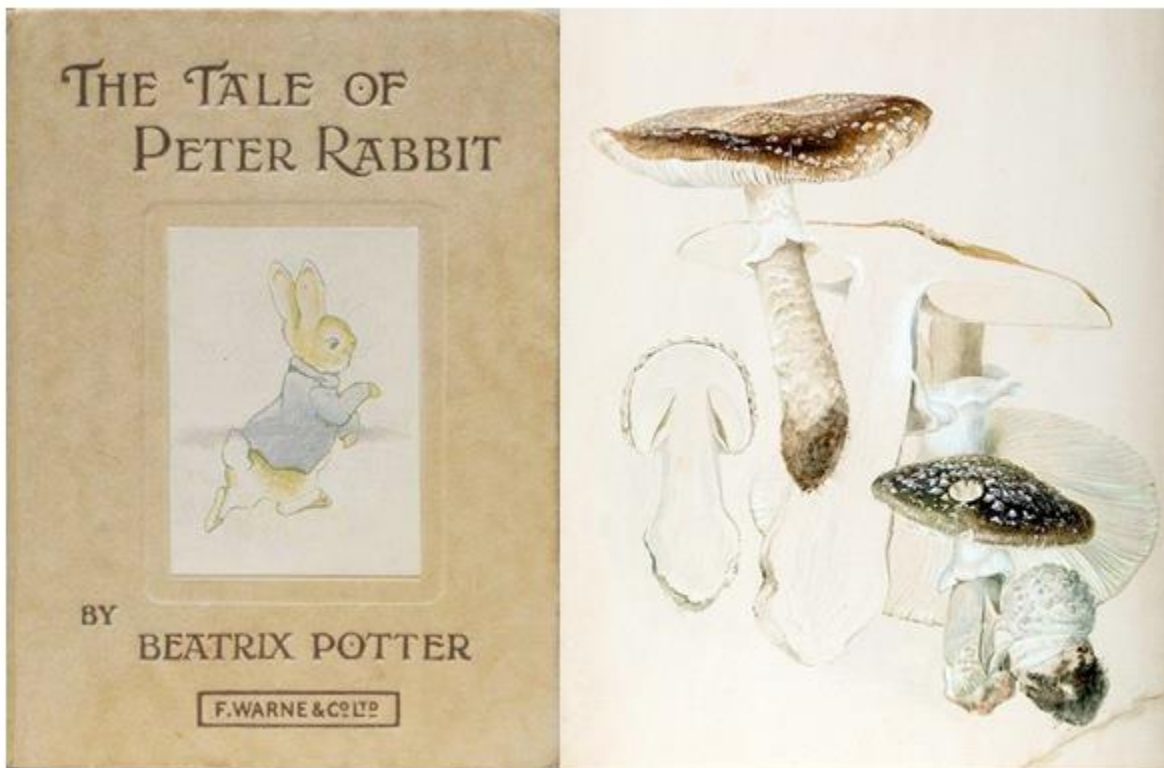




# Flopsy, Mopsy, Turkey Tail, and Peter Wait, What? Turkey Tail???

## The Tale of a Thwarted Mycologist

Karen Cottingham



**Best known for her beloved children's classics, Beatrix Potter was also drawn to the study of mushrooms. Her lovely, scientifically accurate drawing of *Amanita excels* is in the Armit Museum and Library Collection**

Once upon a time there was a shy, lonely child who lived in the third floor nursery of her wealthy parents' fashionable London home. Her parents lived a comfortable and privileged life, and with their inherited textile money, they enjoyed their life of ease. Helen, the child's mother, could embroider and paint, but she devoted most of her time to the complex social obligations of a proper Victorian lady. The father, Rupert, sat for the bar, but rather than practicing law, preferred the life of a privileged gentleman. His days were spent visiting his club, discussing art and poetry with other elites, and mastering the relatively new art form of photography.

When the child, **Helen Beatrix Potter**, known as Beatrix, was born on July 28, 1866, her parents saw no need to change their social routines. The Potters, you see, subscribed to the prevailing upperclass child-rearing practices and entrusted the care of their children to a nurse. As was common in wealthy Victorian



circles, the Potters rarely ventured up to the third floor nursery and saw their daughter only when she was dressed properly - starched, brushed, and ribboned - and brought down for inspection and dinner.

Mrs. Potter was also convinced that Beatrix had a delicate constitution, and permitted her few friends, few outside activities, and no sports. Conformity, prohibitions, and restrictions - these were the edicts imposed by the excessively strict and somber mother.

Not a promising environment, you might be thinking, to inspire a little girl to invent charming make-believe characters such as Peter Rabbit, Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle, and Jemima Puddle-Duck. But the story, as all stories are, was a little more complicated.

Isolation from the outside world can actually have some advantages. Little Beatrix was completely free to create her own fantasy world in that attic nursery. And her Scottish governess, **Ann MacKenzie**, filled her young head with vivid stories of witches, fairy folk, talking animals, and magic to fill that world.

As Beatrix later recalled, "I used to half believe and wholly play with fairies when I was a child. What heaven can be more real than to retain the spirit world of childhood, tempered and balanced by knowledge and common-sense."

There may also be some unexpected benefits to being deprived of a formal education. "Thank goodness my education was neglected," Beatrix once wrote in a letter. "I was never sent to school. It would have rubbed off some of the originality, if I had not died of shyness."

And because of being deprived of companions for conversation, Beatrix compensated by recording, without reservation, her daily activities, her thoughts, her theories, and her impressions in a complex coded language she invented. Uninhibited journal-writing could be excellent preparation for a future story teller.

A younger brother, Bertram, born when Beatrix was six, joined her in the nursery, but only until he was sent away to boarding school. Following the common practice for boys in upper- and middle-class Victorian families, Bertram only returned home for holidays and vacations. Education, such as it was, was provided to girls, including Beatrix, by governesses.

The family's vast financial resources fortunately allowed them to escape the heat and smoke of newly industrialized London every summer. From age four to fifteen, Beatrix spent long summers at Dalguise House on the River Tay in Scotland, and then later in Wray Castle, in the beautiful Lake District of England.

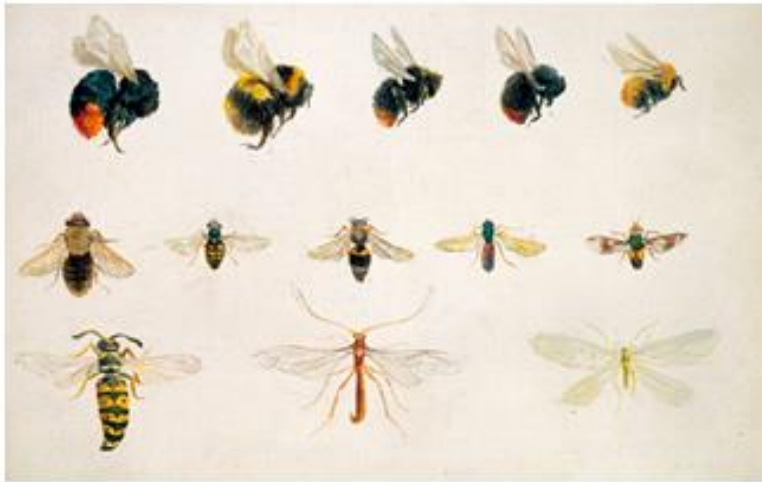


**Beatrix Potter with her cheerless and dour parents, 1877. As an adult, Beatrix still spoke of the painfully tight headbands she was forced to wear.**



For a blessed few months each year, she was reunited with her brother, and together, they enjoyed the open pastures, woods, vegetable gardens, and barnyard animals of the countryside. While their governesses vacationed and their parents either took photographs or socialized, Beatrix and Bertram collected butterflies, identified birds, and listened to “the music sweetest mortal ears can hear, the murmuring of the wind through the fir trees.” They gathered all the specimens they could - of leaves, rocks, and fossils; insects, fungi, and bones - for further examination.

By the time she was eight, Beatrix was already studying, illustrating and meticulously recording the characteristics of the butterflies, birds, and animals she observed.



Beatrix Potter's meticulous “Studies of bees and other insects” (1895), from her nature journals. For the “Studies of Small Tortoiseshell and Painted Lady butterflies, with magnified studies of the wings” (1887), she borrowed her brother's microscope to examine the wing scales. Victoria and Albert Museum.



Although Beatrix Potter had no formal schooling (a succession of governesses taught her to read, write, and speak French and German), she she did take art classes at the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria & Albert Museum). Described as a dedicated and eager student, she received grades of “excellent” in all her courses.

Her father shared her interest in art, and together they visited museums and art galleries. **John Everett Millais**, one of the founding figures of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and a friend of the family, recognized Beatrix's skill, noting that “Plenty of people can draw, but you...have observation.” Not unlike the Pre-Raphaelite artists, Beatrix worked extremely hard to capture precisely the minute details of nature. And in the unsupervised world of her nursery, which eventually became her studio, Beatrix was free to scrutinize any subject that captured her formidable intellect and curiosity.

As much for their company as for study material, Beatrix and her brother surreptitiously kept a menagerie of pets in their third floor quarters. Favorite animals had whimsical names - a frog was named Punch, Toby and Judy were the two green lizards, and a particularly favored dormouse was named Xarifa. Mrs. Tiggy-



Winkle was the hedgehog of future fame, along with a snake named Sally, and Hunca Munca and Thomas Thumb, the house mice. And of course, the famous rabbits were named Benjamin Bouncer and Peter. An unnamed tortoise roamed freely throughout the nursery along with a family of snails, a few birds and guinea-pigs, an owl, a bat, and some newts.

As she studied the animals' behavior and pondered their physiology, Beatrix made exquisitely detailed drawings of them in a homemade sketchbook.

Little did she know that these exactingly drawn observations of the natural world were excellent preparation for her wildly successful children's books. Beneath their human clothing, the rabbits in blue jackets, kittens in pinafores, and toads in dinner jackets were anatomically perfect.



**Beatrix Potter's 1898 study of 'Peter Piper' (above), the pet rabbit that inspired the beloved character "Peter Rabbit", seen here slipping under Mr. McGregor's garden fence.**

But that came later. Much later. Before she embarked on the publishing phase of her life, Potter threw herself into a passionate, decade-long study of fungi. Linda Lear, one of Potter's biographers, suggests that her initial attraction to mushrooms may have been "their ephemeral fairy qualities" and was later sustained "by the variety of their shape and color and the challenge they posed to watercolor techniques" (Beatrix Potter: A Life in Nature).

At first, the fungal world simply seemed to give Beatrix pleasure. Writing in her secret journal, where her private thoughts were hidden within coded language, she made the charming confession that she liked to imagine that fungi "laugh and clap their hands, especially the little ones that grow in troops and rings amongst dead leaves in the woods." There was something magical about these ephemeral and poorly understood in-between species that captured her imagination.

As she wandered the woods hunting mushrooms to study, she became more and more knowledgeable, discerning, and curious. She began to pay close attention to growth patterns and microscopic structures, and as usual, her drawings were exceptional in their detail and accuracy.



In the watercolor studies below, for example, Potter shows her exquisitely rendered fungi in their natural habitats next to carefully depicted grasses, ferns, ivy, mosses, and lichens.



***Hygrocybe coccinea* by Beatrix Potter, 1897, Burchfield Penney Art Center, left; and right, Fly Agaric mushroom with Polypody fern by Potter, c. 1890, National Trust**

Beatrix found an equally passionate mentor in **Charles McIntosh**, the painfully shy postman who had delivered mail to the Potter family on their Scottish summer vacations years earlier. Charles had started his working life at Inver Sawmill where, at the age of eighteen, he lost the fingers and thumb of his left hand in an accident. Serving as rural postman instead, he completed his daily circuit of sixteen miles in all seasons and weather. Over the next 32 years, this quiet but observant man developed a vast knowledge of the local plants and animals. Known as the “Perthshire naturalist”, McIntosh became a self-taught expert on mosses, ferns, and fungi, eventually discovering thirteen species of fungi new to Britain and four which were new to science.

Potter recorded in her journal that at an early age she used to “hop from puddle to puddle in the strides of Charlie’s hob-nailed boots.” Ten years later, having become aware of his expertise in mushrooms, she asked him to look at her drawings and give her advice. The meeting, which took place in the autumn of 1892, made the following impression on Potter:

Accordingly by appointment he came, with his soft hat, a walking stick, a little bundle, and very dirty boots, at five o’clock to the minute. He was quite painfully shy and uncouth at first, as though he was trying to swallow a muffin, and rolling his eyes about and mumbling...He was certainly pleased with my drawings, and his judgement speaking to their accuracy in minute botanical points, gave me infinitely more pleasure than that of critics who assume more, and know less, than poor Charlie. He is a perfect dragon of erudition, and not gardener’s Latin either. (Beatrix Potter, Scientific Illustrator)

It was the beginning of a long, mutually beneficial and meaningful friendship. Potter began to draw the specimens that McIntosh collected on his long postal route; he, in turn, advised her on microscopic techniques, scientific illustration, and taxonomy.

McIntosh, unable to draw since his sawmill accident, was grateful for Potter’s excellent and precise draftsmanship, and Potter thrived under the postman’s tutelage, encouragement, and recognition of her



talent. Eventually she completed over 250 drawings and watercolors of fungi, over 40 of different mosses, and many microscopic studies of the process of fungal germination.

Through her collaboration with Charles McIntosh, Potter's illustrations took on a scientific aspect, with cross-sectional and microscopic views and precise depictions of sequential stages of development.

Always curious, she became particularly interested in the germination of spores, and, quite remarkably, surpassed her mentor by germinating the spores of over forty fungal species. Any further advance in her foray into science would require an *entrée* into the prestigious mycology department of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew.



**Charles McIntosh, the “Perthshire naturalist”, and Beatrix Potter at the time of their collaboration**

With the help of her uncle, **Sir Henry Roscoe**, an eminent chemist and a Fellow of the Royal Society, Potter met with Kew mycologist **George Masee**. Masee was initially skeptical of her ability to germinate spores, quite possibly because he himself had been unable to accomplish this. He sent her away with the challenging recommendation that she study a voluminous scientific discourse on mycology written in German. Fluent in German, Potter not only read the complex material, but came away even more convinced that her work was valid.

A further meeting at Kew, this time with **William Thistleton-Dyer**, Director of the Kew gardens, was even more distressing. The “pompous ‘botanical pope’”, as she called him, responded to her ideas “on the outside edge of civil” and then wrote a scathing letter to Sir Henry that was so “rude and stupid” that he wouldn't let her read it.





Undaunted, and certain of her propagation techniques, Potter prepared a paper, "On the Germination of the Spores of *Agaricineae*," to be read before the wider audience of the Linnean Society of London. By this time, Massee had changed his opinion of Potter's work. When he finally succeeded in sprouting one of Potter's spores by following her technique, he conceded that her ideas and experiments were more convincing than he had previously believed. To Potter's surprise he agreed to present her paper to the Linnean Society of London, which at the time admitted only men to its meetings.

Thiselton-Dyer, with all of his animosity towards Potter, presided over the April 1, 1897 meeting. Massee read her paper, and Potter probably supplied one or more microscope slides showing germinating spores. As she had commented to McIntosh, such slides were crucial evidence of her achievements.



**Potter's illustration of *Flammulina velutipes*, the subject of the paper she submitted to the Linnean Society. Perth Museum and Art**

Potter wrote to McIntosh that Massee told her that the paper was " 'well-received' ... but they say it requires more work on it before it is printed." This was not particularly unusual. Papers read to the society were not automatically published, and many were withdrawn after presentation to allow incorporation of feedback from society members.

The society's minutes record that a week later the paper was withdrawn. And that is the last of what is known of Potter's paper. No copy has ever been found and nothing reliable is known of how it was really received at the meeting.

As for her coded secret journal, so rich and revealing with its 15 years of candid observations, Potter suddenly abandoned recording her thoughts just as the controversial reading approached.

Without her paper to critique, nothing can confidently be claimed about Potter's hypothesis. However, the evidence from her journal and drawings demonstrate that she was the first in Britain to successfully germinate spores of basidiomycetes.

It is not clear why Potter abandoned seeking scientific recognition of her work, especially as she continued working diligently and produced about 70 more microscope drawings over the next two years. In her last known letter to Charles McIntosh in September 1897, Potter wrote of continuing her work on germination and mycelial growth.

One can certainly imagine, though.

Surely the Kew-Linnaean experiences would have been traumatizing, particularly for a shy and easily frightened woman. The prospect of additional humiliating encounters may have finally outweighed the satisfaction of continued study and recognition.



Potter may have realized that her talents would be more productively applied to other pursuits. Shifting her focus to the children's books that had already been well-received offered her the real possibility of financial independence.

And after a decade of pursuing science, inventing adventures for anthropomorphized animals might have appealed to the whimsical side of her artistic nature.

It would surely have been preferable to more ridicule from her sanctimonious "male chauvinist tormentors".

In 1997 the Linnean Society issued a posthumous apology to Potter for the sexism displayed in its handling of her research. In a belated gesture of goodwill, the executive secretary of the Linnaean Society publicly acknowledged that Potter had been "treated scurvily" by members of the Society.

Potter might have said as much in an unpublished sequel to *The Fairy Caravan* entitled "A Walk Amongst the Funguses." Writer Robert McCracken Peck astutely recognized a subtle, but probably intentional "dig" aimed at foolish and dismissive botanists. With her characteristic precision, Potter has one fungus character advise another, "It is injudicious to throw nuts at things which we do not understand."

Well said, Beatrix!



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