

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XXXVIII, NUMBER 7



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
NOVEMBER 2015

Editor –Linda Alderman ewalderman@comcast.net

November 2015 Calendar

- Nov 13** - Fri. - 1:00 p.m. **Herb Fair Set-up** at West Gray Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray, Houston, TX
- Nov 14** -Sat. - 7:15 a.m.- 3 p.m. **Herb Fair!** at West Gray Multi-Service Center, 1475 West Gray, Houston, TX
- Nov 17** - Tues. - 10 a.m.
(Change of Date!) **Day Meeting** at the home of Pam Harris (email southtexasunit@gmail.com for address). Program “*The Herbs of China Bales: Mistletoe*”, presented by Linda Alderman. **Bring a dish to share. This meeting is open to guests.**
- Nov 18** - Wed. - 7 p.m. **Evening Meeting** at Judson Robinson Center (2020 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), hosted by Joan Jordan and Nita Rowe, Program: “*Designing a Therapeutic Herb Garden: A Garden to Appeal to All of the Senses*,” presented by Amy E. Sullivan, Landscape Architect and Designer. **Bring your plate, napkin and a dish to share.**

December 2015 Calendar – No open meetings this month

- Dec 8** - Tues. - 10 a.m. **Day Meeting/Holiday Party** at the home of Sally Luna. Program “*Christmas Trees, Decorations, and Santas*,” presented by Sally Luna. **Bring a dish to share and an Herbal Gift to exchange. Open to members only.**
- Dec 20** – Sun. - 4 p.m. **Evening Group Holiday Party** at the home of Elayne Kouzounis
Bring a dish to share and an Herbal Gift to exchange. Open to members only.
- Newsletter deadline: 25th of every month**
Submissions should be at most 1 page in Times New Roman 12

Happy Birthday!



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

Lost and Found

Lost **Green Composition Notebook**

Lost in the rush to clean up after the October evening meeting

This notebook belongs to Albert Ramos. Please contact him if you find his notebook. 1alr@sbcglobal.net



Chairman's Corner

The Herb Fair is a coming! Wear a smile, be outgoing, be friendly and greet each and every person who walks through the door! Smile until your face hurts! We all love to visit with each other but not at the Fair. Saturday, November 14th, is for visiting with our customers. Make a new friend. Ask each guest to come to our next meeting. See how many customers you can engage in conversation about plants and products. Speak to everyone.

Our focus this year is hospitality. We need to share our knowledge and enthusiasm for herbs. We must help our customers purchase plants and products. Remember the philosophy of Madeline Hill ' always purchase at least three plants of each variety, one for the garden, one for the weather and one for the devil'. Never purchase just a single plant. Help our customers purchase a full flat of plants.

A special thanks to everyone who made the October night meeting so successful. Lucia's talk on fragrance was a winner. Pam Harris's and Lois Sutton's table decorations were really great. Our members prepared scrumptious gourmet cuisine. We all send kudos to Karen Cottingham for writing the enticing article in the Village News and the door prizes.

Please print some Fair flyers and take them to meetings this month. We all have to spread the word and the good news about the Fair.

Sally Luna
Unit Chair



New Member Moment!



When **Melba Moses** moved from Beaumont, TX she wanted to continue her connection

with The Herb Society of America. She was familiar with The South Texas Unit because she and two of her friends in the Beaumont Unit, "Thyme For Herbs", came to our annual Herb Day spring educational luncheon. Melba joined our South Texas Unit in February 2014.

While in Beaumont Melba was on the Board for the Beaumont Council of Garden Clubs. Two other garden related clubs she enjoyed were "My Lady Garden Club" and "The Gourmet Dining Club".

Melba maintains a small herb garden in her new location. Her other interests are painting, crafts and floral arranging. We are so pleased she has joined our Unit.



We also welcome **Darcia Williams** to the STU. Darcia has been a guest for

the past couple of years, and we're happy she recently made the jump to becoming a member. We're really fortunate to have Darcia as a fellow member. She enjoys reading about herbs and learning how to use them for health and culinary purposes, and she also studies fine art. Perhaps one day we'll see Darcia's paintings at an STU event! Welcome to the HSA-STU, Darcia!



**Herbal Celebration
for the Winter Season
Setup Friday Nov. 13
Sales Sat. Nov. 14**

Friday Setup

Members should arrive about 1 PM

We expect to have access to the West Gray Center, and preliminary setup and plant delivery completed by 1 PM

Watch for email updates!

Needed – Please Bring

- Cleaned **plant flats**, large size if available
- **Shopping bags** (paper, plastic)
- **Green Apron** (extra available for new members and guests, if you do not have one)
- **Ice chests** for food and drinks (members)
- **Garage Sale items** – donations for the sale need not be herb or garden related, **everything welcome!**

Class Schedule

10:00AM "How to Grow and Harvest Cool Weather Herbs" by **Susan Wood**

11:30 AM "America's First Holiday- Thanksgiving", given by **Annette Mullendore**, independent scholar, from the Bayou Bend.

1:00PM "Pure and Simple: Natural Skin Care Products You Can Make", **Karen Cottingham**

Guidelines for Members:

Friday 1:00 p. m.

- After set ups are complete, members may shop for plants using a special Friday member price sheet
- Member shopping only for plants, must take home
- When members are done setting up one display, please assist someone else needing help

Saturday 7:15 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

- Complimentary member food and drink will be provided, if you plan to bring something contact Lynda Mills who is coordinating food support
- Each section will hold back what they want for the public or set limits; after that members can purchase
- Depending on traffic and sales, discounting may start at 12:30, more likely 1 PM
- If members pull plants or any item before we "turn on" the discount, they pay full price for the privilege of selecting early.
- Members should talk to visitors.
- Members should actively sell, not simply sit on the sidelines. Members should be helpful to one another.
- Members should not depart at 2 pm, whether they helped set up Friday or not. We need to support one another.
- Please assist with clean up afterwards, and helping members get cars packed



Herbal Celebration for the Winter Season (Continued)

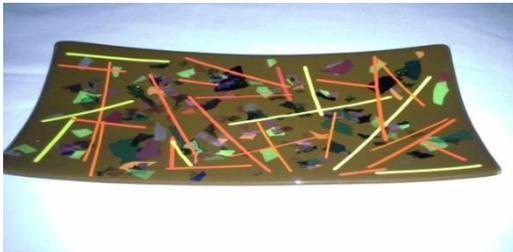
Herb Fair Expense Reimbursement

If you incurred expenses for Herb Fair (item production, operations and support, etc.) and you **wish to be reimbursed**, please complete a unit reimbursement form. Attach your expense receipts to the form and mail it to me directly (address in the directory) or the unit address: South Texas Unit, O Box 6515, Houston TX 77265-6515. If you need a form, let me know and I will email one to you. Requests for reimbursement must be submitted by **Dec. 15th**.

If you would like to receive a letter recognizing your in-kind donations, let me know as the Unit has a form for that as well!

Lois Sutton, Treasurer

Herb Fair Raffle



As well as being interested in herbs, our unit member, **Chris Ankney**, is a very talented glass artist. What a privilege to own a piece of her work! She has generously donated this beautiful glass plate as an auction item for the fair. This picture doesn't really capture its beauty; you just have to see it! I am excited about the chance of winning one of her pieces of glass. Tell guests about it! I know I'll be purchasing many tickets to win it! Proceeds from its sale benefit our programs!

Thank you, Chris!

About Our Meetings . . .

The November 18, 2015 evening meeting will feature talented Houston landscape designer and artist **Amy E. Sullivan**. Her topic will be **Designing a Therapeutic Garden: Herbs to Appeal to All of the Senses**. Don't miss this fascinating discussion of the increasingly recognized health benefits of nature and gardening.

When well-known landscape architect Topher Delaney received a diagnosis of cancer, she recognized that she needed a quiet garden sanctuary for retreat and reflection before she could heal. This pivotal experience as a patient inspired Delaney to incorporate this traditional wisdom - that peaceful and restorative gardens are essential for healing - into her professional landscape designs.

Healing gardens are now integral features of assisted living facilities, hospitals, mental health centers, hospices, and schools for children with autism and other developmental conditions.

Our speaker, **Amy E. Sullivan**, has a professional interest in designing and installing healing gardens for everyone (see www.aes-thet-ic.com). We don't need to be in a hospital or hospice to benefit from a peaceful garden sanctuary. Regular connection with nature provides a respite from the stress and overstimulation of everyday life and is now known to be essential for physical, mental and emotional health.

Come to the HSA-STU November meeting and learn how to develop and modify your own herb garden to enhance its potential as a garden sanctuary. The potluck dinners begins at 7:00PM, but please arrive early to socialize and lend a helping hand. **And don't forget to bring a guest!**

—Karen Cottingham



This year the Day Section is using Susan Wittig Albert's books as the inspiration for herb studies.

We had 15 members attend our day meeting at Carol Cobb's beautiful home. Pam Harris presented an interesting program about Night Shade, an herb written about in "The Shades of China Bales: Night Shade" by Susan Albert Wittig.

After the program we had our lunch inside. It was a beautiful autumn day so we went outside and enjoyed Carol's beautiful herb garden while we worked on crafts for the November Fair.

-Thelma Rowe



The October 21, 2015 evening meeting of The Herb Society of America South Texas Unit was as big a success. Four things made it such a success: our hostesses, our speaker, door prizes, and our guests.

Our hostesses were **Lois Sutton** and **Pam Harris**. Lois and Pam set up a rich display of autumn themes throughout the venue. Several members and guests mentioned to me how lovely it was. Thank you, Lois and Pam, for helping us usher in autumn, "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!" (John Keats, *To Autumn*, 1819).

Lucia Bettler's fascinating discussion of herbal fragrance was also a large part of the evening's success. Some of our guests came specifically to listen to and learn from Lucia. In addition to interesting historical information about herbal fragrances, Lucia told us about the use of fragrance in aromatherapy and perfume. A guest told me she was spellbound by Lucia's description of ambergris, a component of some of the finest perfumes. We learned that the sperm whale secretes a substance to heal the internal scratches from the indigestible beaks of squid and cuttlefish it consumes. Eventually ejected from the whale, the secretion oxidizes and cures in the ocean over many years to become the costly and precious ambergris. So ambergris is an intestinal byproduct of the sperm whale!

Door prizes related to Lucia's discussion and demonstration also energized the success of the evening. *Lucia's Garden* (2630 W. Alabama) and *Savory Spice Shop* (2516 Times Blvd.) generously donated several fragrant prizes. To win the prizes, members and guests had to answer correctly a fragrance-related quiz question administered by program Chair **Karen Cottingham**. Here are the questions and prizes given (the answers are at the end of this article):

1. In the Holy Book of Esther, Esther prepares herself to see the King by anointing herself with what herb? **Benee Curtis** knew the correct answer and won a container of *lemongrass curry seasoning* from *Savory Spice Shop*.
2. Which famous French emperor and military leader had a standing order with his perfumer to deliver 50 bottles of perfume each month? Guest **Ken Yanowski** knows his history and won a container of *Savory Spice Shop's cinnamon essential oil*.
3. The name of what spice is also the term used in soccer, field hockey, and basketball to kick, roll, or throw the ball between the opponent's legs?

How sweet it was for **Lucia Bettler**. She figured out the correct answer and won a package of *Savory Spice Shop's lavender- and vanilla-scented sugar!*

4. What was Marilyn Monroe's favorite perfume? **Susan Wood** knew not only the perfume, but knew that this perfume was the only thing that Marilyn Monroe wore to bed! Susan won a *package of whole nutmegs* from *Savory Spice Shop*.
5. Legend has it that four thieves who robbed the homes of those who died of the plague in the Middle Ages used a special vinegar to avoid infection. Name an ingredient of the "four thieves" vinegar. **Jacqui Highton** knew the answer and won *rose incense* and a *\$20 gift certificate* from *Lucia's Garden!*

The icing on the cake for the evening, however, was the fact that our 19 members who attended brought 14 guests with them, including **Donna Fay Hilliard's** granddaughter, **Miracle**. We hope she comes again, Donna Fay!

Our guests were an interesting and talented group. They included a microbiologist; a pre-K teacher whose mother is a repeat guest; a teacher who gardens with her own children; a professional caterer who grows many of the items she uses in her culinary creations (including the supremely delicious main course and dessert dishes she so generously brought to our meeting); a fabric weaver and natural dye artist who would be pleased to host a workshop for our STU; a psychiatrist who read the interesting and inviting article **Karen Cottingham** wrote about our meeting, and a landscape architect who specializes in therapeutic landscapes and who will be a guest speaker at our November meeting. Of particular note is that two of our repeat guests invited three other guests.

It was an honor for our STU to host so many and so talented a group of people as guests. Thank you to all those members and guests who were kind enough to bring others. Let's invite these guests to our next meeting and help them become members

Answers to the Herbal Quiz Questions:

Myrrh

Napoleon

Nutmeg

Chanel No. 5

Rosemary (other ingredients are thyme, sage, lavender, mint, garlic, and apple cider vinegar)

-Albert Ramos



PUMPKIN MUSINGS

- Did you know that upper class Europeans grew pumpkins as a garden curiosity?
- Did you know that pumpkins were considered as fare for the poor?
- Did you know that *The Gardner's Dictionary* of 1763 says that the pumpkins are "frequently cultivated by the country people in England, who plant them upon their dunghills."?
- Did you know that the most common way to prepare pumpkins in the seventeenth century was to stew them?

*Stead of pottage and puddings and custards
and pies
Our pumpkins and parsnips are common
supplies,
We have pumpkins at morning and pumpkins
at noon,
If it were not for pumpkins we should be
undoon.*

1630 Massachusetts Bay Colony.



South Central District Gathering **October 1-3, Ozark Folk Life Center**

What do sausage, chocolate and blue grass have in common? All are products brought to us by settlers from northern Europe and celebrated by peoples of the Ozarks. All were topics included in the Ozark Folk Life Center's fall herb program, appreciated by those of us attending the South Central District's gathering.

We had perfect weather for this gathering that began Thursday evening and ran through Saturday evening. The word 'food' was in the conference title so it came as no surprise that the opening night would begin with food: a 'Lavish Herbal Feast' – a reception with Swedish meatballs and glögg, locally brewed 'biers', musicians and folk dancers followed by a multi-coursed dinner overseen by noted herbal chef and author, Susan Belsinger. We continued with talks by such notable speakers as Holly Shimizu (first NHG curator, recently retired from her role as executive director of the US Botanic Garden), Gayle Engels (editor for the America Botanical Council), Susan Belsinger and Tina Marie Wilcox. Local speakers brought the imported traditions home for us – including a musical tour of the herbs of St. Hildegard von Bingen. The surprise of the weekend? A concert by a Creole fiddler/singer NOT from Louisiana! Did you know that there is a large Creole cultural group in southern Illinois-southwest Indiana-northeast Missouri? These folks can trace their lineage back to the Normandy region of France, early 1700s or so.

Sara Holland currently serves as the membership delegate for our district. She is a former member of the South Texas Unit and continues as an affiliate member. During the district's business meeting Sara reviewed the district's financial status – this report will appear in the upcoming district newsletter. Rae McKimm, the current Society vice-president, presented an excellent and comprehensive overview of HSA activities and programs. Watch your emails for the many Society newsletters and opportunities for webinars. Housing options for the April annual meeting of members are listed on the website. AND, don't miss the new products in the Garden Gallery on line at www.herbsociety.org!



October Programs

Excerpts from The Herbs of China Bayles: Nightshade Pam Harris October 13, 2015

Nightshades encompass a very large family, a large very dysfunctional family! Many of these family members are good citizens of the plant world, mostly, but a few of them are downright anti-social. The good guys help to feed the world, beautify the space around them and help relieve some of the physical pain of their human neighbors. Let's start with the good guys.

Nightshades are members of the Solanaceae family and are an economically important family of flowering plants. The family has a worldwide distribution, being present on all continents except Antarctica. The greatest diversity in species is found in South and Central America.

The most economically important genus of the family is Solanum, which includes the potato, the tomato, and the eggplant or aubergine. Another important genus is Capsicum which produces both chili peppers and sweet peppers. The genus Physalis produces the ground cherries as well as the tomatillo the Cape gooseberry and the Chinese lantern. Nicotiana contains among other species, tobacco. Some other important members of the Solanaceae include ornamentals such as Petunia, Browalia, Datura, Brugmansia., Mandragora (Mandrake) and the queen of poisons, Atropa belladonna or deadly nightshade. Many of the Solanaceae, such as Petunia and tobacco are used as model organisms in the investigation of fundamental biological questions at the cellular, molecular and genetic levels.

Potatoes are herbaceous annuals that grow about 24" tall; they bear white, pink, red or blue flowers. In general the tubers of varieties with white flowers have white skins while those varieties with colored flowers tend to have pinkish skin. Tubers form in response to the decreasing day length.

The tomato is native to South and Central America. Native versions are small, like cherry tomatoes and most likely yellow. . Because the tomato is a member of the nightshade family it was thought to be poisonous but is not, however the leaves are poisonous, not deadly but poisonous to animals that have eaten them growing in the garden.

Like most nightshades the eggplant fruit is edible but the leaves and flowers are poisonous if eaten in large quantities. Botanically the eggplant is classified as a berry, the fruit contains numerous small soft seeds, and though edible they taste bitter because they contain nicotinoid alkaloids.

Nicotiana spp. are indigenous to the Americas, Australia, southwest Africa and the South Pacific. While there are more than 70 species of tobacco the chief commercial crop is *N. tabacum* and the potent species *N. rustica*. Smoked or chewed tobacco is a risk factor for many diseases, heart, liver, lungs and several different cancers. Tobacco contains the alkaloid nicotine, a stimulant. The WHO has named tobacco as the world's single greatest cause of preventable death.

Common names for *Datura stramonium* are Jimson Weed, Devil's snare, thorn apple, moon flower and locoweed. This plant probably originated in Mexico but has naturalized in many other regions. It has been used in traditional medicine to relieve asthma symptoms and as an analgesic during surgery and bone setting. It is also a powerful hallucinogen and deliriant which is used spiritually for the intense visions it produces.

Brugmansia is a closely related relative of *Datura*. It is a larger plant with pendulous fragrant flowers and without the spiked seed pods of *Datura*. Native to South America it has naturalized into North America. Today *Brugmansia* is most often grown as a flowering ornamental. In modern medicine the alkaloids found in the plant, scopolamine, hyosyamine and atropine have proven to be of value, however, many of these alkaloids or their equivalent are now artificially synthesized.

Belladonna is a perennial herbaceous plant in the Solanaceae family, native to Europe, North Africa, Western Asia and some parts of Canada and the United States. Belladonna is one of the most toxic plants found in the Eastern Hemisphere. All parts of the plant are toxic although the root of the plant is generally the most toxic part but this can vary from plant to plant. Though today we understand the risks involved in using deadly nightshade outweigh any potential benefits, it has a long history in medicine and cosmetics, and as a weapon.

Don't miss the most exciting tidbits of Pam's research found at www.herbsociety-stu.org



The Scent Trail – Our Fascination with Fragrance (Part 1)

Lucia Ferrara Bettler

October 21, 2015

Scent, perfume, essential oils are a gift to our senses---a reminder of the lure, magic and mystery of fragrance.

The book, The Scent Trail, by Celia Littleton, was my first inspiration for this research.

She had a signature scent created just for her, and decided to go on several journeys to track down the origins, history and culture of each component. She traveled to Isparta, in Turkey, where her roses were grown, gathered and distilled. The lavender fields of Grasse called to her next, then the home of vetivert and jasmine in India. Marrakech in Morocco was the place where she wandered the souks, in search of the finest neroli -- (orange blossom).

The exotic ambergris, washed up on the shores of Socotra, an island off Yemen, was her next destination...as well as Yemen, the home to her frankincense. Her journey was personal and magical, filled with exotic places and extraordinary people.

Later I discovered a luscious book: Fragrant, by Mindy Aftel--author of Essence and Alchemy--A Natural History of perfume.

My third resource was A Natural History of the Senses, by the prolific naturalist, Diane Ackerman. She writes like a poet, and has a deep appreciation of all things natural and earthy. Ackerman suggests that smell is closely connected to memory, and connected often to the past. What IS scent and why does it hold us captive?

"The Silk Road opened the Orient to the western world, but the Scent Trail opened up the heart of nature."

We follow the seasons, smell by smell. Autumn brings wood smoke and apples, mums and pumpkin pie. Winter reveals pine and fir, spruce and snow, roasted goose or clove studded ham.

Spring graces us with jasmine and narcissus, and the incense of Easter Mass. Summer is roses and the salt sea, crabs and shrimp, tomato plants and melons, bar B Que and sweet corn.

No other sense moves us like smell. It makes us fully alive and truly human. It started when we were infants and recognized the scent of our mothers.

The first perfumes were incense and began in Egypt and other places in the Near East. Incense was offered to the gods to sweeten the smell of burnt offerings.

...to be continued.



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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