

Herbs Make Scents



THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XLIX, NUMBER 3

SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
MARCH 2026

Co-Editors Linda Alderman (ewalderman@comcast.net) & Janice Freeman (janicefreeman@comcast.net)

March 2026 Calendar

Mar 10, Tues. 10:00 am
Free and Open to the Public

Day Meeting "The Herbs and Foods of Nowruz, the Persian New Year" presented by guest speaker **Asal Shokati**. Location: McGovern-Stella Link Library (7405 Stella Link Rd, Houston, TX 77025). **Note location change**

Mar 13-14, Fri & Sat. 9 am – 4pm

Herb and Plant sale – Round Top Festival Institute, 248 Jaster Rd, Round Top, TX 78594. See information on p. 3

Mar 14, Sat. 9 am – 4pm

2026 Herbal Forum "Dishing the Dirt on Herbs," 248 Jaster Rd, Round Top, TX 78594. See information on p. 3

Mar 14, Sat. 9:00 am

Westbury Garden Workday 12581 Dunlap St., Houston, TX 77035

Mar 18, Wed. 6:15 pm
Free and Open to the Public

Evening Meeting "Agave Plants and the Spirits Obtained from Them" presented by **Liliana Cracraft**, Member Houston Cactus and Succulents Society. Location: Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Houston, TX 77004. Doors open at 6:15 pm, with potluck meal and program at 7:00 pm

Mar 21, Sat. 10:00 am
Free and Open to the Public

Westbury Garden Special Event "Healthy Eating with Spring Herbs" presented by HSA/STU Members. Location: 12581 Dunlap St., Houston, TX 77035

Mar 28, Sat. 9:00 am

Westbury Garden Workday 12581 Dunlap St., Houston, TX 77035

April 2026 Calendar

Apr 7, Tues. 10:00am

Day Meeting Potluck Picnic and Plant Swap at Memorial Park Land Bridge

Apr 11, Sat. 9:00 am – Noon

Kolter Garden Workday 9710 Runnymede Dr., Houston, TX 77096

Apr 11, Sat. 9:00 am

Westbury Garden Workday 12581 Dunlap St., Houston, TX 77035

Westbury Garden Workday 12581 Dunlap St., Houston, TX 77035

Apr 25, Sat. 9:00 am

Evening Meeting "Patterns in Nature" presented by **Diana Wilson**, Director of Planning Burditt Consultants, Bachelor of Landscape Architecture and BS in Urban and Regional Planning, Texas A&M University, and member of the Texas Native Plant Society of Texas. Location: Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Houston, TX 77004. Doors open at 6:15 pm, with potluck meal and program at 7:00 pm.

April 29, Wed. 6:15 pm
Free and Open to the Public

Westbury Garden Workday 12581 Dunlap St., Houston, TX 77035

Sat. 9:00 am

Newsletter deadline is the 25th of the month, and is strictly enforced (April co-editor is Linda Alderman)



Happy Birthday!

3/01 Elizabeth Abraham
Susan Wood
Debbie Lancaster
3/11 Joan Jordan

3/21 Stephanie Calloway
Dena Gaydos
3/28 Linda Alderman
3/30 Ro Jones



Chairman's Corner

We are seeing signs of Spring all around us!

I enjoyed giving a Culinary Wreaths Workshop to Houston Federation of Garden Clubs with **Benée Curtis** on February 13th. We had about 10 attendees and everyone had fun!

Benée and I had to make a quick trip to Enchanted Forest Nursery to replenish our herbs. If you have never been to Enchanted Forest or Enchanted Gardens, give yourself that treat! Huge variety of herbs and all kinds of other plants, from cacti to native plants, bedding plants to fruit trees and everything in between! They also have very helpful and knowledgeable staff.

Since we are NOT having Herb Day this year, please head to San Antonio for our Education Conference. Many of our awesome members will be working to ensure the success of this conference. **Catherine O'Brien** will be collecting raffle items. I will be giving her my gift basket at the March meeting.

We just had our February meeting on Frida Kahlo and it was fabulous! **Karen Cottingham** shared fascinating insight into Frida's life and inspiration. Chris Smith shared how in awe he was of Frida's authenticity. I learned quite a bit and have even more respect and admiration for Frida Kahlo, her art and her entertaining.

We appreciate the beautiful items that **Lorena Jaramillo** brought to showcase. The clothing was amazing and the dishware, beautiful!

Angela Roth



Benée and Angela making herbal wreaths



Jane Littell and Angela enjoy the display at the Frida Kahlo presentation



Where is the best selection of herbs for my spring garden?

Susan Wood

The absolute best place to buy traditional or unusual herbs and companion plants this spring is at the Pioneer Unit plant sale in Round Top held at Festival Institute. www.festivalhill.org You will have a pleasant drive to see bluebonnets along the way and come home with a carload of new herbs to plant now. This is a huge, well-attended plant sale, so go early for best selection . . . do not go on Saturday for leftovers.

Breaking news: STU has been supporting the beautiful herb gardens at Festival Hill created by our founder, Madalene Hill, for many years. Recently our \$1,000 yearly donation has been earmarked for greenhouse renovation. This started 2-21-26, so be sure to visit the site next to Pharmacy Garden behind the Menke house if you go! See details about plant sale at our sister unit website:

www.herbsocietypioneer.org

2026 Herbal Forum and Plant and Gift Sale

The Pioneer Unit is proud to present its 31st Herbal Forum, *Dishing the Dirt on Herbs*, and to invite you to attend, Saturday, March 14, 2026. This year we are offering Friday afternoon workshop add-ons for Forum participants. **Our plant and gift sale will be held Friday, March 13 and Saturday, March 14.** Both events will be at the Festival Hill Institute in Round Top, Texas. Click [here](#) for information on the Forum, with a link to registration. The plant and gift sale is free and open to the public, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with more information available soon, including a plant list and a list of items in our gift shop.

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2026 • 9 AM - 4 PM

2026 HERBAL FORUM
Hosted by The Pioneer Unit of the Herb Society of America

DISHING THE DIRT ON HERBS

ANDIE MARSH
Soil Stewardship:
Microbes and
Soil Regeneration

CYNTHIA MEREDITH
Native Herbs
in Early Texas
Homestead Gardens

LINDA FRANZO
Herbserendipity:
The Unexpected
Pleasures of Herbs
& Edible Flowers

RAMIN BARANPOURIAN
The Golden Wonder:
Exploring Turmeric

ROUND TOP FESTIVAL INSTITUTE
248 JASTER ROAD, ROUND TOP, TEXAS 78954
(979) 249-3129 • FestivalHill.org

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2026 • 9 AM - 4 PM
SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2026 • 9 AM - 4 PM

HERB & PLANT SALE
Hosted by The Pioneer Unit of the Herb Society of America
Featuring the **THYME WELL SPENT** GIFT SHOP

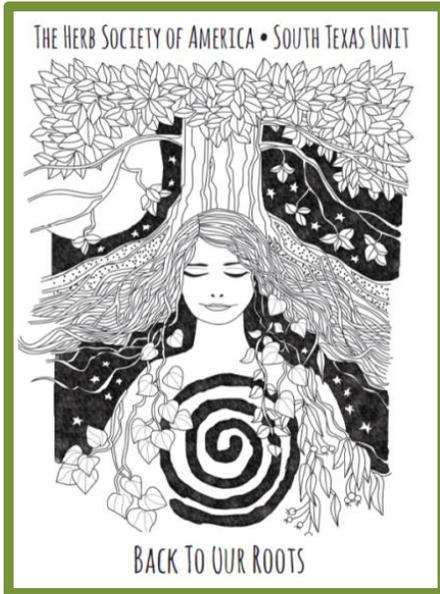


Hundreds of Varieties for our Region!

ROUND TOP FESTIVAL INSTITUTE
248 JASTER ROAD, ROUND TOP, TEXAS 78954
(979) 249-3129 • FestivalHill.org



Back to Our Roots at the Westbury Garden



Westbury Workdays
Saturday, March 14 and 28 at 9:00 am
Saturday, April 11 and 25 at 9:00 am

Special Event: Saturday, March 21 at 10:00 am
Herbal Education Class

HSA-STU presents "Healthy Eating with Spring Herbs" @
Westbury Community Garden 12581 Dunlap 77035

10 am Free and Open to the Public

The garden looks wonderful! Thank you, Debbie Gordon, for bringing us lavender, chives, culantro and bronze fennel from Urban Harvest.

Saturday, March 21 at 10 am we will offer a class for the WCG gardeners and the surrounding neighborhood. *Healthy Eating with Spring Herbs* will focus on practical uses of the herbs in the garden at

WCG. Thank you, **Karen Cottingham** and **Elizabeth Abraham**, for volunteering to help teach. We will have lots of fun showing others all the different herbs growing in our gardens. You are all invited to come to the class, the more the merrier.

Our unit has also volunteered to add some blue butterfly pea seeds to the gift bags for EdCon. On the **March 14 workday**, I plan to bring our huge stash of butterfly pea seeds to put in the seed packets. No heavy lifting here!

See you at the
garden,
Julie

A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT YOUR HSA-STU MEMBERSHIP

IF YOU NEED TO CONTACT ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE SOUTH TEXAS UNIT BUT DON'T HAVE YOUR DIRECTORY HANDY, DID YOU KNOW THAT ALL OF THE MEMBER INFORMATION IS ON OUR WEBSITE?

JUST CLICK ON "ABOUT US" THEN "MEMBER INFORMATION" ON THE DROP-DOWN MENU. MEMBERS' CONTACT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS ONLY AND IS UPDATED REGULARLY!

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Are you interested in helping with Evening Meeting Hospitality?

Put your hands up high, put your hands down low, Put your hands in the middle and wiggle just so.

Or maybe just email here: karen.herbsociety@gmail.com



During the Spring Equinox, we sit at a point of balance of equal light and dark, winter releasing its grip, and the body naturally wanting to wake up and move again.

Spring is a great time to create herbal tonic vinegars. Tonics are gentle and nutritive. In herbalism, a tonic is taken regularly to nourish and strengthen the body over time. It doesn't force anything. It doesn't shock your system. It simply reminds your body how to come back into balance.

Ro Jones

And that's exactly what the Spring Equinox invites us into: balance, renewal, and slow reawakening.

Some of my favorite Spring herbs:

- Nettle
- Dandelion
- Cleavers

A spring tonic is about honoring the seasonal shift. More light. More circulation. More awakening. It's about giving your body mineral-rich, plant-based support as it moves out of winter's heaviness and into spring's rhythm.

Spring Vinegar Tonic:

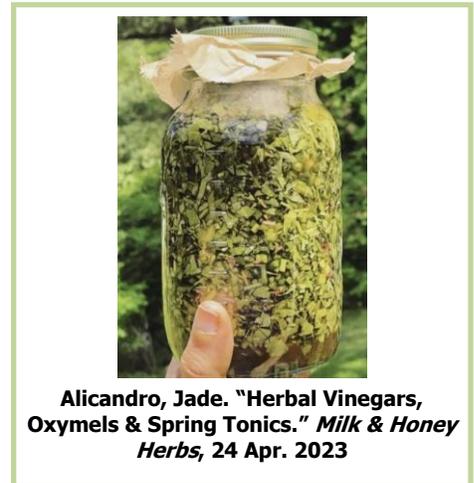
A vinegar tonic is one of the simplest ways to pull minerals and gentle plant medicine from spring herbs—especially nettle and dandelion.

You'll need:

- Fresh nettle
- Dandelion leaf and/or root
- Cleavers
- Raw apple cider vinegar
- Glass jar with lid

Directions:

1. Loosely fill a jar with fresh herbs.
2. Pour apple cider vinegar over them until fully covered.
3. Cap tightly and let sit 2–4 weeks (shake every few days).
4. Strain and store in a cool, dark place.



*Tip: Use a plastic lid or use parchment paper to separate the lid and vinegar to prevent rusting.

How to use it:

- Take 1 tsp–1 Tbsp in a little water before meals
- Use as a base for salad dressings
- Splash into soups, beans, or sautéed greens
- Mix with a little honey for a daily spring tonic shot

With Loving Intention,
Ro



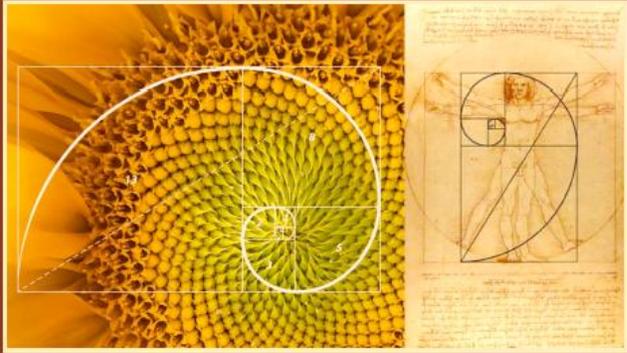
Announcing our March Evening Meeting
Agave Plants and the Spirits Obtained from Them



TEQUILA

Presented by: **Liliana Cracraft**
 Member Houston Cactus & Succulent Society
 March 18, 2026

Announcing Our April Evening Meeting
Patterns in Nature

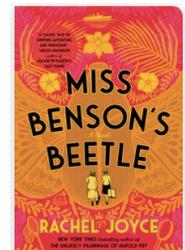


Presented by: **Diana Wilson**
 Professional Landscape Architect
 Certified Urban Planner

April 29, 2026



Following the **Day Meeting in May**, the next book discussion will be about **Miss Benson's Beetle** by Rachel Joyce (https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/52674676-miss-benson-s-beetle?ref=nav_sb_ss_1_12)





Drying Herbs the Right Way

By: Dr. Mark "Merriwether" Vorderbruggen
(ForagingTexas.com)

Dehydrating, air drying, or freeze drying - it actually matters

The STU is proud to sponsor
Dr. Mark "Merriwether" Vorderbruggen
(ForagingTexas.com) as a featured speaker
at EdCon 2026.

The following guide for drying herbs is re-printed
with permission from Merriwether's Substack,
<merriwether@substack.com>

Subscribe to <https://merriwether.substack.com/>
to keep getting great information!

Keeping Herbs

I'm not saying scientifically created, Western medicines are bad...but thankfully more and more people are realizing starting with the herbs humanity co-evolved with may be a better first choice. Think about it this way, evolution simply states that the organisms best suited for survival in a particular ecosystem or situation will likely be the ones producing the most offspring, thereby passing on the favorable genetic factors. Use of herbal medicines can be seen going back hundreds of thousands of years, predating Homo sapiens and playing a key role in the survival of our ancestors. It doesn't take much of a leap in logic to realize those who responded best to these medicinal plants and mushrooms likely passed those genes down over and over through their descendants all the way to you. We are designed to use herbs.



As a medicinal chemist, I wanted to understand why they worked and also how to best use them. “Why” is far too big of field for a single Substack article, but “how best” is critical knowledge for any herbalist, but often ignored, leading to inferior results. The biggest misunderstanding is how to properly dry one’s precious herbs to maximize their power. I like the analogy that picking the right drying technique is akin to picking out the proper clothing for the day’s weather. Yes, one could randomly grab an outfit, but you’re likely to end up miserable or at least unhappy with the results. Thankfully, there’s only three basic drying techniques - dehydrating with heat, air-drying with time, or freeze drying with vacuum, so knowing which to use is easy.

Dehydration

People love to dehydrate herbs because it’s fast and easy. The most basic way is to set your oven between 120F and 180F, lay the herbs in single layers on cookie sheets, and leave them in the oven until they turn brittle. No need for an expensive dehydrator, though I do LOVE my [Excalibur](#), over 20 years old and still going strong!

Pros of dehydrating

- Fast (2-4 hours)
- Low risk of spoilage
- Rarely interferes with daily life

Cons of dehydrating

- Heat may drive off or break down flavorful and/or medicinal volatile oils or other compounds
- Plant cellular walls remain mostly intact, keeping the good stuff trapped inside them
- Best dehydrators can be expensive

When to dehydrate

Use your dehydrator on herbs that will be physically consumed in their entirety. This includes spices/seasonings added to foods or herbs that will be put into [capsules](#). In these situations, your teeth and digestive tract will break apart the majority of intact cell walls, releasing the compounds you seek.



Pick a temperature that dries the herbs in about three hours, though highly volatile ones such as mints, rosemary, oregano, or cat nip should be done at lower temperatures, aiming for a drying time of 4-5 hours.

Recommended dehydrators

- Your oven - it's already in your kitchen so no extra space is needed
- [Elite Gourmet EFD319 Food Dehydrator*](#) (\$39.99) - 11.4" diameter & 10.75" height, can dry plants and meat
- [Excalibur Electric Food Dehydrator*](#) (\$249.99) - 19"D x 17"W x 12.5"H, can dry plants & meat, make yogurt, proof bread. I do LOVE my [Excalibur](#), over 20 years old and still going strong!

Air drying is likely the oldest form of preserving herbs. Loose bundles of the entire herb are tied, then hung in a place with good airflow and out of direct sunlight, usually up out of the way near the ceiling. They are left there for several weeks until crisp and well dried. Think cottage-core or a witch's hut, depending on the type of person you are. :)

Air Drying

Pros of air drying

- Better breakdown of cellular walls for better release of plant compounds
- Generally less loss of volatile oils

Cons of air drying

- Takes up a lot of space
- Takes 2-4 weeks
- Risk of spoilage or mildewing

When to air dry

If you are going to use the herb to make some sort of infusion (water, tincture, |oil, salve) I believe air drying is best. Remember, each plant cell is surrounded by a tough cell wall with only a few openings



for stuff to enter/exit. But when a plant “dies”, the last thing it does is trigger several enzymes whose purpose is to “chew” holes through these cell walls. This process returns the stuff inside the cells back to the soil so that it’s available to feed other plants. When air-drying, this process goes until there’s enough holes through the cell walls so that all their water can evaporate, which then stops the enzymes from more chewing. The result is akin to plant jerky, but now the goods in each cell have multiple escape routes to enter into the extraction fluid aka menstruum.

Note, the aforementioned enzymatic breakdown of the cell walls is why one first blanches fresh carrots, beans, and other veggies in boiling water for 30-60 seconds before freezing them. If one doesn’t blanch the produce, it’ll turn mushy in the freezer because those enzymes will still slowly be chewing apart the cell walls. The boiling water denatures/destroys the enzymes, thereby maintaining the crispness of the veggies. However, herbalists want the cell walls opened to release the flavors and medicinal compounds trapped within.

Recommended Air Dryers

1. [Ball of Butcher’s Twine*](#) (\$4.99) - cotton string to tie up and hang herb bundles.
2. [Multi-Layer Herb Drying Hanging Rack*](#) (\$17.99) - large, space-filling column of mesh shelves that hangs from ceiling
3. [4-Pack Hanging Herb Drying Rack, Stainless Steel with 30 Hooks](#) *(\$22.79) - decorative and somewhat compact way to easily hang bundles of herbs

Freeze Drying

Pros of freeze drying

- Creates the most escape routes through cell walls, yet retains overall structural integrity
- Great preservation of volatile oils and other beneficial plant compounds
- Removes the most water in the shortest amount of time
- Longest shelf life of dried materials

Cons of freeze drying

- Expensive!



- Requires mechanical skills to use, maintain, and troubleshoot the equipment
- Requires secondary materials such as food-safe vacuum pump oil
- Units takes up more space than dehydrators

Recommended Freeze Dryer

Harvest Right Home Pro Freeze Dryer (Feb. sale price \$1,595.00, normally \$2495.00) - I don't have one, but this is the most common model used by everyone I know who does

When to freeze dry

If you're willing to deal with the space, cost, and maintenance, freeze drying gives the best results in regards to plenty of compound escape routes, not losing good compounds, and extremely long shelf life once dry. The resulting herbs are great for seasoning food, encapsulating, or extracting into a menstruum.

Storage After Drying

As pretty as bundles of dried herbs look, if you can see them you're doing it wrong. The three killers of herb potency are oxygen (air), heat, and light, so proper storage requires minimizing access of these to the dried plants.

- **Oxygen** - herbs need to be stored in airtight containers so that oxygen can't react with the herbs. Lids should have some sort of rubber, silicone, or plastic gasket to seal tightly
- **Heat** - store the herbs in an air conditioned location as warmth speeds up the chemical reactions breaking down the plant compounds. 74F and lower is ideal
- **Light** - both sunlight and modern electric lights contain UV and other high energy frequencies that break down plant matter. Amber or smoked glass jars block these damaging rays, preserving the herbs

Recommended Storage Containers

1. [6-Pack 32 oz Wide Mouth Amber Glass Mason Jars*](#) (\$31.98) - No BPA's, uses standard, airtight canning lids, blocks light
2. [12-Pack 16 oz Bulk Amber Mason Jars with Lids*](#) (\$34.99) - smaller size, still uses standard airtight lid, blocks light

*As an Amazon Influencer, I am required to disclose that I may get a small sales commission from anything purchased through the links I've provided.



**Frida-Inspired Fashion Statements
At Our Frida Kahlo Program**



**Cecilia, Lorena, Susan, Angela, Julie,
Freya & Megan, Stephanie, and Enrique**

**More photos from the Frida Kahlo
Program!**



Viva La Frida!

**Robin Wall Kimmerer
Is Speaking at Rice University
April 13, 2026**



Robin Wall Kimmerer is a SUNY Distinguished Professor of Environmental Biology, and the founder and director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, whose mission is to create programs which draw on the wisdom of both indigenous and scientific knowledge for our shared goals of sustainability. In 2022 she was named a MacArthur Fellow.

I reserved 10 seats, so let me know if you wish to join our group. The reception and book sale begins at 5:00 pm in Duncan Hall, followed by the lecture at 6:00 pm. Would anyone be interested in a group Read-Along? It's been awhile since I read *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, and Kimmerer's new publications include *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* and *Bud Finds Her Gift*. Questions? karen.herbsociety@gmail.com



The Herb Society of America
South Texas Unit
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Houston, TX 77265-6515



Find our Unit on the web at:
www.herbsociety-stu.org

Information obtained through your association with The South Texas Unit of The Herb Society of America is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. Everyone, especially women who are pregnant or nursing and persons with known medical conditions, should consult their licensed healthcare provider before taking any herbal product.

While authors or speakers may cite how they personally use herbs and may quote scientific, ethnographic, folkloric, or historic literature, the material presented does not represent a recommendation or an endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment.

Whom Do I Contact?

2025-26 STU Officers

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Ro Jones
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Treasurer: *Maria Treviño*

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Membership: *Janice Freeman*

- Member Concerns: *Donna Wheeler*

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Janice Freeman
- Website: *Benée Curtis*
- Social Media: *Virginia Camerlo*

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