

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
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SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
MAY 2017

Editor –Linda Alderman ewalderman@comcast.net

May 2017 Calendar

- May 9, Tues. at 10:00 am** **Day Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), **Hosted by: Linda Alderman.** Program: “*Mountain Mint*”, presented by Beth Murphy. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**
- May 10, Wed. at 7:00 pm** **Board Meeting** is at the home of **Thelma Rowe**
- May 17, Wed. at 6:30 pm** **Annual Meeting of Members of the South Texas Unit** at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), **Hosted by Donna and Dena Yanowski.** **Bring your plate, napkin, flowers and a special dish to share.**

June 2017 Calendar

- June 21, Wed. at 6:30 pm** **Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), **Hosted by Lucia Bettler and Kerry Madole.** Program: “*Super Herbs and Super Spices*”, presented by Haley Brown. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**

Newsletter deadline: 25th of each month

Submissions should be at most 1 page in Times New Roman 12

Happy Birthday!



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- 13- Jane Littell
- 25- Nutti Doodeheever
- 28- Cathy Livingston

Rosemary for Remembrance



Linda Lain

Obituary on page 11



Chairman's Corner

This May there is change in the rhythm of the STU calendar and let us do it with some flowers! Nothing elaborate! Just bring a couple of posies from your yard in a recycled bottle to the May meeting. There is a long tradition of hanging small baskets of flowers on the doors of friends on May Day. Let us do it for each other and at our meeting.

MAY is now the month of the annual meeting! It will be a time to celebrate our friendships and the accomplishments of the past year. We have changed this annual meeting from a Sunday afternoon in June to the May evening meeting. It will be on 5-17-17 at Flores Pavilion.

This will allow for an early budget approval and confirmation of officers as presented by the nominating committee. These two accomplishments will allow the new officers to fill the appointed board positions and make plans for the coming year before the middle of June as in the past. Plans can be made for all events and projects much earlier and should provide a schedule for stress-free events. The minutes of the last annual meeting will be read and approved as corrected at this May meeting.

The emphasis of the meeting is entirely different this year. We will focus on the future and not where we have been. Each member needs to prepare a 2 minute statement about their dreams and objectives for the coming five years! Be creative, there are no right or wrong answers Just think and dream. Help us to open doors to new ways of thinking. Additionally we need to begin considering the possibilities for celebrating our 50th anniversary next year.

Written reports of the officers and chairs will be due on June 15th and will be circulated via email immediately thereafter. Two hard copies need to be

submitted to the secretary (one for archival records and one for the in-coming board).

Check Karen Cottingham's column for the menu details and a new free shopping/swap feature for the May meeting! It will be fun!

Now for a little history lesson.

The earliest May Day celebrations appeared in pre-Christian times, with the Floralia, festival of Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers.

The day was a traditional summer holiday in many pre-Christian European pagan cultures. The secular versions of May Day, observed in Europe and America, may be best known for their traditions of dancing around the maypole and crowning the Queen of May. Fading in popularity since the late 20th century is the giving of "May baskets," small baskets of sweets or flowers, usually left anonymously on neighbors' doorsteps.

Since the 18th century, many Roman Catholics have observed May – and May Day – with various May devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary in works of art, school skits, and so forth. Mary's head will often be adorned with flowers in a May crowning.

**Sally Luna
Unit Chair**





Herb Day Symposium



From Dena Yanowski
Herb Day Chair



Enjoying the presentation

Thank you all for helping make this year's Herb Day such a success! I've never chaired an event this large, and didn't quite understand what I was taking on until I was in the thick of it. That being said, the pay off was beyond measure. It was such an honor to stand on stage and look out onto an audience of smiling herbies. I was reassured of the success through many pats on the back and positive comments from guests in attendance. It was thanks to your many hours of crafting, baking, collecting, emailing, picking up and assisting that the event went so smoothly. Please remember to account for your hours in our membership binder. Go ahead and pat *yourself* on the back for helping make the 2017 Herb Day one few will forget!

Dena Yanowski



The beautiful centerpieces



Lunches catered by the FrenchFig

Financial Calendar Notes



- **May 1 – Proposed Budget emailed to members; Please review and bring a copy with you (if possible) for our Annual Meeting, Wed. May 17**
- **June – We will begin collecting membership dues during June and July, deadline August 1.**

\$67.50, single
\$98.75 joint membership
\$80.00 Sustaining

Mail to Janice Stuff, Treasurer
P.O. Box 6515
Houston, TX 77265-6515
Questions? jestuff@pdq.net



About Our Meetings

Thelma Rowe and Janice Stuff

We had a wonderful surprise when the day group met on April 11 at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park. When we arrived at our usual meeting location, we were certain we were in the wrong room; the tables and chairs were decorated as if we were about to attend a wedding. Soon we were told not to worry; it was, indeed, the correct place for our meeting. We were sharing the room! A floral arranging group was having a seminar in the afternoon, with no time to decorate following our meeting, they decorated the room before our meeting. What a lovely backdrop for Janice Stuff's presentation on sumac!

Sumac

- Sumac is an attractive group of plants distributed in N. America, Canada, Europe, and Asia
- Plants are deciduous and vary in size from low bushes and shrubs to mid-sized trees
- Plants are found growing in abandoned areas of roadsides, railways, or farmland
- Usual height 8-15 feet
- Sumac contains large compound pinnate leaves (9 to 27 leaflets on a stem)
- Leaves are green in the spring and summer, change to a flaming orange and red in the fall
- Tiny flowers bloom in summer, their color is white to greenish white or yellow
- Flowers mature to tiny berrylike drupes, first red in color and later maturing into a dark brown color in winter
- Sumac berries or plant derivatives are used as a culinary ingredient, in tanning processes, to produce varnish and lacquer products; Native Americans used sumac for the treatment of several ailments
- One variety, poisonous sumac also known as White Sumac *Toxicodendron vernix* or *Rhus vernix* is extremely toxic. Don't pick berries or consume. Poisonous sumac can produce painful rashes and blisters similar to that of poison ivy or poison oak; skin contact should be avoided.

Smooth Sumac *Rhus glabra* is a deciduous shrub found growing in prairies, abandoned farmland, clearings, along roads and railroads. The large open spreading shrub grows 8 – 15' tall, spreads by root suckers to form large thickets. The distinguishing characteristics are the plant's smooth stems in contrast to the Staghorn Sumac which contains hairy stems. Female plants produce showy, erect pyramidal fruiting clusters. Each cluster contains numerous hairy, berry-like drupes which ripen to red and turn to maroon-brown as they persist through the winter.

Staghorn Sumac *Rhus typhina* 'Dissecta' is also known as velvet sumac, fuzzy sumac, or hairy sumac. Staghorn is the largest species and is native to North America. This plant has reddish brown hairs that cover the young branches, similar to the velvet of stag horns. The botanical term 'dissecta' refers to the spreading nature of the plant.

Fragrant Sumac *Rhus aromatic-* produces a fragrance as the plant (leaves and twigs) are bruised. It grows in open woods, glades, and thickets in the central midwest region. The plant is a low growing and rambling shrub about 4' tall.

Winged Sumac *Rhus copallinum* is found growing from New York to Florida. It is a small tree or deciduous shrub growing in dry soil, hillsides, and along railroad tracks. The variety has the same flower cycle as described above. It is similar to smooth sumac except the leaves are untoothed, and the leaf midribs have leafy ridges or wings that give rise to the common name

Rhus glabra 🗣️





Sumacs in Texas

Evergreen Sumac – *Rhus Virens* (From the Central Texas Gardner (KLRU PBS Website <http://www.klr.org/ctg/resource/evergreen-sumac/>)

This native shrub thrives with little care. It grows in full sun, and it gets large and bushy. The bright green shiny leaves often with red tinged petioles, make this an attractive shrub. Blooming in late summer, the flowers are small and are usually a lovely creamy white color that attracts bees and other tiny pollinators. Berries are attractive, good for birds and wildlife, and edible too. It responds to light pruning, and can be used in your landscape. It is native to rocky hillsides with almost no soil, and performs in areas with a little heavy clay.

Prairie Flameleaf Sumac *Rhus lanceolata* (TAMU) Texas Native Plant Database http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/texasnativetrees/plant_details.php?pid=998

Prairie flameleaf Sumac is named for (and known for) its brilliant red and orange fall foliage. A large shrub or small tree, growing 20 to 30 feet tall, it is a great ornamental that has some of the best fall color in Central Texas. Besides its great fall color, it also has large plumes of white flowers in summer, followed by clusters of red fruit in the fall. The fruit are an important food source for many species of birds and small mammals. The fruit makes a high Vitamin C drink that has a lemony flavor. The plant is found in Central and West Texas in rocky limestone hillsides and grasslands. It is available in nurseries that specialize in native plants.

Culinary Uses

When it comes to food, a defining characteristic of the Middle East is their love of sour flavors. Lemons, pomegranates and sumac are all used to add a refreshing tartness. Sumac has a lovely lemon flavor, unknown outside the Middle East. Sumac is purchased as a coarse powder, obtained by grinding the berries of widely-growing shrubs. It is used especially in Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq and Turkey. You can buy sumac in Middle Eastern stores. It has a pretty red-brown color, with a sour, salty flavor. Many Middle Eastern recipes wash the sumac first to intensify the flavor. To prepare fresh sumac: Pick red sumac clusters in early fall. Ripe berries are firm and will have a fresh taste when you bite them. Separate berries from stems and let

them air-dry on a baking sheet for approximately 1 week. Grind in a blender, sift out seeds.

Zataar Blend

¼ c dried Sumac
2 Tbs Dried Thyme
1 Tbs Roasted Sesame Seeds
2 Tbs Oregano
1 Tbs Coarse Salt
Crush all ingredients with mortar and pestle (except salt). Add coarse salt last. Serve on Pita Bread or as a topping for hummus or yogurt.
Bread Dip: 2 Tbs Zataar blend + 2 Tbs Oil.
May be stored in refrigerator for 6 mos.

An important note: Zataar is the Arabic word for thyme..... Zataar is used both for thyme and the spice blend.

About Our Meetings (Cont.)

Albert Ramos

The Wednesday, April 19, 2017 evening meeting was the day after this year's "tax day"; so many of us were ready for a little rest and relaxation. Tonight's meeting was an excellent opportunity to do so as 26 members and 15 guests gathered for a Scottish-inspired herbal evening. HSA-STU member **Kerry Madole** took us overseas to Scotland for *An Outlander Herbal Evening – Travel Through Time with the Scottish Highland Herbalist*. Kerry shared lovely pictures of 18th century Scotland and gave colorful descriptions of Scotland's herbal heritage, often through the lens of a woman named Claire in the book *Outlander*. Claire was a WWII nurse who inadvertently traveled back in time to the 1700s after stepping into an ancient Scottish stone circle. She became involved in war, adventure, and romance and used her medical training as a nurse to function as an herbalist and healer when necessary.

In keeping with the presentation theme, many of the members and guests brought Scottish-inspired pot-luck dishes. Notable amongst them were:

- Cock-a-Leekie thoughtfully prepared by **Jenna Wallis** and **Mike Jensvold**. Cock-a-Leekie is a traditional Scottish soup made with the basic ingredients of chicken, plenty of leeks, rice,



prunes, and parsley; but there are many variations and additions made for individual taste. It's a delightful soup and is so much a part of Scottish tradition that I've often encountered it in British literature from the early 1900s. Cock-a-Leekie has even figured prominently in a film adaptation of a humorous short story by famed novelist **P.G. Wodehouse** (1881 - 1975). The soup also has an association with the Scottish poet **Robert Burns** (1759 - 1796) of the "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world" fame (and hundreds of other quotable lines). Devotees of Burns honor him annually on his birthdate, January 25, with a dinner that features Cock-a-Leekie. Our Cock-a-Leekie was rich and flavorful. Thank you, Jenna and Mike!

- Scottish salmon in two dishes brought by **Joan Jordan** and **new member Debbie Breaux**. Joan and Debbie know that Scotland is famous for its salmon fishing and that salmon accounts for 40% of Scotland's food exports. They certainly brought that idea home to us tonight with their delicious salmon dishes. Joan's dish was a salmon salad made with herbed and steamed salmon in orzo with fresh peas, chives, and other vegetables. Debbie brought smoked salmon that was beautifully arrayed on a serving platter. It was lovely to look at - but even more wonderful to eat! Thank you, Joan and Debbie, for your delightful and delicious contributions to the evening meal.
- Kale salad made by **Karen Cottingham**. You may not be aware of kale's Scottish connection, but kale was so prevalent in 18th century Scotland that one could find it in poetry as well as in gardens. In fact, gardens in Scotland were often called "kailyards". There were also certain ancient rites associated with kale that were still practiced in the early 1900s, such as "pulling the green kail". This was a "*Hallowe'en*" ritual in which "*youths and maidens went hand in hand with shut eyes into a bachelor's garden, to pull up the first kail stalks which came their way.*" [Guthrie, E.J.; *Old Scottish Customs: Local and General*, London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1885.] Strong and straight stems with lots of rich dirt on the roots foretold of a future spouse who would be young, comely, and rich. Conversely, if the stalks were crooked or paltry and the roots lacked a cover of rich earth, so would the future husband or wife be lacking in looks and fortune. And the temper or temperament of the future spouse was believed to be determined by the

sweetness or bitterness of the kale stems! Karen's kale salad was both a visual and gustatory delight: fresh kale, feta cheese, *pepitas*, dried cranberries, and an intensely flavorful vinaigrette made with *Calamansi Balsam* from **Vom Fass Oils, Vinegars, and Spices** in the Rice Village. Excellent salad, Karen. I hope your kale selection was successful!

- Oat cakes - I wish I knew whom to thank for bringing traditional oat cakes, but I don't. Oats grow well in the rocky Scottish soil; *se* oat cakes, or *bannocks*, have a long tradition in the "northern part of Great Britain". Their plain flavor makes them an excellent accompaniment to smoked salmon. Recognizing the practical but ironic Scottish sensibilities, some people say that one can make perfectly-sized oat cakes by cutting them out with an overturned whisky glass! [And **Susan Wood** thought I was going to make a pun about our meeting theme being *Oatlander!*]
- Shortbread - I also don't know who brought these traditional Scottish sweet treats - these by Walkers - but I'm glad someone did. Shortbreads have only four basic ingredients: wheat flour, butter, sugar, and salt - which proves to me once again the sagacity of that old food motto, "It's better with butter!" *Much* better. Thank you, anonymous April meeting attendee!
- Outlander Cake - This was a special dessert created by baker and **new member Robert Jucker**, owner of **Three Brothers Bakery**. My family has been trading at Three Brothers since the early 1960s when we moved to Houston, and it was always a special treat to buy one of their cakes with its light but rich and flavorful butter-cream frosting. This cake had that same frosting I remember so well from the birthdays of my youth, but it was updated with *chai* flavoring. In keeping with the Outlander theme, the cake was decorated and formed in the shape of a stone circle in the Scottish countryside. If you were fortunate enough to be at the meeting, you soon learned that the cake was as tasty and toothsome to eat as it was fun and smile-inducing to see! Thank you, Bobby.

Scotland ruled the board tonight for food, but I was hoping someone would dress for the meeting as **James Bond**, novelist **Ian Fleming's** fictional British spy. In Fleming's penultimate novel, *You Only Live Twice*, a fake obituary reveals that



Bond's father was Scottish and his mother was Swiss. Bond may "only live twice", but we had just one shot for that character to appear at an Herb Society meeting, and it didn't happen!

While the decorations for the evening meeting did not include rocky outcrops and bogs from the



highlands and lowlands, hostesses **Beth Murphy** and **Nita Rowe** did provide lovely wildflower arrangements. The flowers came from Beth's garden and included a wide variety of "spring bloomers" like cornflower (bachelor's buttons - *Centaurea cyanus*), pink cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus*), purple coneflowers (*echinacea purpurea*), black-eyed-Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), delicate *Coreopsis tinctoria*, and maidenhair fern for greenery. And there is a tangential Scottish connection in Beth's flowers. It's through the botanical name for the black-eyed-Susan, *Rudbeckia hirta*. "Hirta" is the name of the largest island in the St. Kilda archipelago off the western shore of Scotland.

Nita had the excellent idea to decorate the tables with attractive samples of herbal crafts that would be available for sale at Herb Day just a few days later. Note cards on the tables thoughtfully informed us that these items could be purchased at Herb Day on Saturday, April 22. Speaking of Herb Day, it's a good thing that Beth brought the wildflowers to tonight's meeting. Her flowers did double duty in the lovely centerpieces **Shirley Mills** created for the event.

Finally, we welcomed four new members to the meeting: **Sarah Ballanfant**, **Debbie Breaux**, **Ellen Brown**, and **Robert Jucker**. We'll write "New Member" articles about them soon; but in the meantime, if you see these wonderful additions to the ranks of our membership, please take the time to welcome them. It should be easy as every one of them has come early and stayed late for the meetings to help set up and clean. They have all

been extremely generous with their time and talents, and we are grateful that they have joined our South Texas Unit of The Herb Society of America.

To help welcome these new members, eligibility for the two door prizes this evening was limited to them. **Robert Jucker** won a comprehensive book on herbs that I know he appreciates because he has been expanding his home gardens. **Sarah Ballanfant** won a fragrant and beautifully decorated and handmade *Mocha Java* soap. **Karen Cottingham** made the soap for the herbal crafts we sell on Herb Day.

Next month is our annual meeting; so there won't be a public evening meeting again until June 21. Our June evening speaker will be **Haley Bowen** who is a yoga instructor, fine artist, and health coach. Haley will talk about the truth and the hype behind the health benefits of chia seed (*Salvia hispanica*) and how to incorporate it into your diet. Make plans now to attend the June evening meeting. It will be the first of a series of programs on *Super Herbs and Super Spices*.



AGAPANTHUS:



WHAT'S IN A NAME? by Karen Cottingham

Have you had an opportunity yet to explore the lovely McGovern Centennial Gardens? If you haven't, I encourage you to do so before any more time passes. Arrive a little early for our next HSA-STU meeting and wander at your leisure as evening approaches. Even though it's been a year since I first walked through the Gardens, I still vividly remember the experience. I hope *your* first visit is just as memorable and rewarding as mine was.

It was last May when, as we often do, a friend and I took the afternoon off to visit a museum. Afterwards, we enjoyed a leisurely stroll along the arbor-covered walkways that flank the formal rectangular green. Benches beckoned us to take a seat and take time to admire the lush perennial plantings. We particularly marveled at the splendid displays of the elegant agapanthus, also known as lily of the Nile. Captivated by the starbursts of light blue florets held high and swaying gently in the breeze, we paused and pondered its exquisite beauty. "I wonder," my always curious friend mused aloud, "what the name 'agapanthus' means." A seemingly simple question, but one that led me to appreciate some fascinating hidden dimensions of what I thought was just a very beautiful landscape plant. I will never look at an agapanthus the same way again.

Let's start with its name. The Latinized genus nomenclature for plants traditionally highlights an attribute of the plant, honors a person who is frequently but not always a botanist, commemorates the place the plant was found, or connects the plant in some way to mythology or literature. Occasionally plants have even been named purely at the whim of the namer or as a puzzle or joke. In the absence of an obvious reference, agapanthus seemed likely to be one of these enigmatic curiosities of nomenclature. There had to be an interesting story somewhere just waiting to be told.

That night, the mystery of the name was solved - agapanthus is derived from two Greek words, *agapē* and *anthos*. *Agapē*, one of several Greek words used to describe various aspects of love, specifically refers to charitable love, or the type of love concerned with the well-being of others. And you will probably recognize *anthos* as the Greek word for flower, as in anthurium, chrysanthemum,

and dianthus. The English translation of "agapanthus", then, is the appropriately beautiful name "Love Flower" or "Flower of Love", a fitting description of this graceful and elegant bloom.

The highly ornamental agapanthus is native to South Africa. It has been under cultivation in Europe since being brought to Holland from The Cape of Good Hope in 1679. Originally named *Crinum africanum* by Linnaeus himself, its name was later changed to *Agapanthus umbelliferae* by the French botanist Charles L'Héritier. No one knows what prompted him to select this particularly evocative name, but I like to imagine there was a secret love story inspiring this romantic choice.

By now thoroughly engrossed with the mysterious etymology of agapanthus, I became curious about its symbolic meaning in the language of flowers. This elaborate code, also called floriography, was used to convey messages through flowers rather than words in closely monitored societies such as Turkish harems. The art of communicating through flowers reached its height of popularity in the restrained and proper Victorian era. Luckily for the tongue-tied or rule-bound suitor, the alluring and provocative agapanthus could be sent as a floral love letter to express sentiments that could not otherwise be conveyed. If the recipient was fluent in the language of flowers, this dramatic cluster of delicate, blue florets would indeed convey love... sometimes even a secret or "magical" love.

At this point, I thought I knew everything there was to know about agapanthus lore. I soon found out how wide of the mark *that* idea was. In a charmingly jumbled used-book store one afternoon, I couldn't resist looking through a precariously balanced stack of books. As I shuffled through random titles, an old volume devoted to the culture of agapanthus emerged from the teetering stack. Eagerly flipping through the pages, I was amazed to read that indigenous women in South Africa have for centuries worn necklaces of dried agapanthus rhizomes to ensure fertility and an easy birth.

Dried agapanthus is a fertility charm? An entirely new appreciation of agapanthus came over me in that bookstore. This gorgeous, popular landscape plant seen all over Houston is actually an herb in South Africa! Remember that any plant used for ritual or spiritual purposes is considered an herb - just like the more familiar herbal plants used for flavoring, fragrance, cosmetics, dyeing, or medicine. A plant serving as a fertility amulet is as



much an herb as a plant whose leaves are sprinkled on your pizza!

Now I was really hooked on the ethnobotany of agapanthus. In South Africa, where agapanthus grows abundantly, there continues to be a strong reliance on traditional healers and plant medicine for women's reproductive health in particular, but for other health concerns as well. The Zulu, for example, use remedies derived from agapanthus for heart disease and respiratory conditions. The root is used by many traditional healers to treat tuberculosis, and the leaf contains some of the same chemical compounds used in modern pharmacology for elevated blood pressure.

Because of their high concentration of chemicals called saponins, agapanthus leaves have potent anti-inflammatory properties. Not only are they handy to keep poultices in place, but special slippers of woven agapanthus leaves are worn to soothe sore feet. The smooth, silky leaves slowly release the anti-inflammatory saponins just where they are needed.

Other constituents present in agapanthus rhizomes are strongly anti-fungal and anti-parasitic and are of vital importance in controlling chronic, debilitating disease in this underdeveloped area. These agapanthus-derived remedies are also essential for keeping the livestock herds healthy and worm-free. And of course - true to its name - agapanthus is considered to be both an aphrodisiac and a cure for infertility.

This brings us back to the use of agapanthus for female reproductive health. Fertility is of great importance for the continued survival of many of the tribes, but is frequently impaired because of poor nutrition and chronic disease. Infertility in these tribes can be a cause for disgrace and economic insecurity and thus calls for aggressive treatment. Experienced elderly women, herbal healers, and even spiritual healers all use various parts of the agapanthus plant in their fertility remedies and rituals. The tins and pots of agapanthus grown around many South African homes are testimony to the common belief that these plants enhance fertility.

Agapanthus also plays an important role during pregnancy and delivery. In addition to wearing a charm of desiccated agapanthus root, pregnant women of the Xhosa tribe drink the water in which an agapanthus plant is growing from the sixth month of their pregnancy until delivery. It is even

believed that the health of the unborn baby can be judged by the manner in which the plant grows. Vigorous plant growth indicates a healthy baby *in-utero*. But if the plant dies, it is accepted that the baby will also die. At the time of delivery the woman may be given a much stronger decoction of agapanthus roots to induce labor, augment contractions, expel the placenta, and reduce post-partum hemorrhage. The newborn is also treated with agapanthus - a lotion made from the crushed root is applied to the baby's skin soon after birth. In some cultures the infant also receives a dilute agapanthus tonic to keep him strong and healthy.

This sounds like powerful medicine, and it is. Consider this: in a typical Western labor and delivery setting, an infusion of a medicine called oxytocin is given when necessary to induce labor or treat various complications of childbirth. In countries where traditional healers provide most of the medical care, an oxytocic herb (an herb which, like oxytocin, stimulates the uterus) is used instead. Agapanthus is one of the most frequently used oxytocic herbs in its native South Africa.

You may recognize oxytocin as the hormone important for human emotional attachment as well as for successful childbirth and lactation. It is produced by the human pituitary gland, but sometimes needs to be augmented for labor to proceed safely and effectively. Scientists have studied the effects of agapanthus leaves and roots on uterine contractibility. They have found that agapanthus works to improve uterine function by enhancing the effect of the naturally occurring oxytocin.

And you may also know that oxytocin is popularly called the "Bonding Hormone", the "Cuddle Hormone", and even the "Love Hormone". So it turns out that the "Love Flower" (agapanthus) works by strengthening the effects of our own naturally produced "Love Hormone" (oxytocin). Who would ever have guessed? How on earth did L'Héritier intuit the connection between the beautiful flower and its myriad applications in the realm of love? The name "agapanthus" was an absolutely brilliant choice for an herb so useful in conception, pregnancy and childbirth.

Agapanthus truly is the "Flower of Love": from secret messages of Victorian infatuation to the joyful birth of a child; from the health of indigenous South Africans to the vigor of their livestock; and from traditional knowledge to scientific verification -



the *not* so simple question my friend asked that afternoon in the Centennial Gardens has come full circle. Visit the Centennial Gardens yourself to gaze upon the lovely agapanthus. Then walk the Gardens and let your own curiosity take you where it may.

What's Coming Up Next?

Karen Cottingham

This year, our Annual Meeting for Members is scheduled at a different time and place so that more members may attend. We hope that all members, especially all the new ones, will mark their calendars right now!

Please join us at 6:30 pm on Wednesday, May 17 at the beautiful Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion. This meeting will replace the May evening program that was formerly held at this time.

What's going to be happening at the Annual Meeting?

- New officers for 2017 - 2019 will be elected;
- Budget will be approved (hopefully quickly);
- Suggestions will be solicited for future charitable donations; and most importantly,
- Your ideas for our continued growth and future direction will be discussed.

What's going to be different about this year's Annual Meeting?

- "Give and Take Table" - We all need some motivation to tackle our Spring Cleaning, so we created a "Give and Take Table". Bring "gently used" but no longer needed items that you think your fellow members might enjoy or that we might use for door prizes. These include:

1. Gardening items (seeds, books, small tools, small plants, pots, vases, etc.);
2. Culinary items (cookbooks, serving platters, gadgets, etc.); and
3. Craft materials (paper, ribbons, fabric, containers for herbal products, dried herbs, etc.).

- Please bring your leftover paper plates, napkins, and cutlery to help replenish the hostess boxes. We're always short of forks, and have even run out of plates a couple of times this year.
- "Bouquet Table" set up next to the buffet table. Bring a small bouquet in a recyclable jar or bottle to put on the table. Everyone can then select the bouquet they like best to enjoy during dinner and that they can take home afterwards. This bouquet exchange idea was inspired by the traditional May Day baskets that people used to hang on the doorknobs of family, friends, and neighbors on May 1. If you are coming directly from work or otherwise can not bring a bouquet, don't worry - there will be plenty of extra bouquets so everyone will get one.
- For potluck dishes, please think back over some of the recent programs and then bring a dish inspired by one of your favorite program topics. If you liked the program on fermentation, bring *kimchee*. If you were inspired by the program on herbal teas, bring cake flavored with *chai* tea. I'd love to see some dishes featuring foraged foods, micro-greens, or a delicious herbal vinegar. If your favorite program was the one on indigo, then just bring something blue!

Seriously, I would really like you to think about what you liked and did not like about the programming so we can make sure that future programs are appealing to everyone.

The Board looks forward to seeing all Members at this important meeting. Let's have fun and plan another great year!





Linda Kay Lain
1950 – 2017



Newer unit members may have met Linda for the first time at last year's Herb Day. She shared one of her passions with us, the life of Beatrix Potter. The depth of information she presented, along with engaging images, typified Linda's presentations. Longer-term members, especially those who attend the day section, often benefited from Linda's comprehensive presentations, her tri-fold poster boards and her demonstrations. I will never wrap a tussie-mussie in lace or a paper doily without thinking about the meaning of the flowers and herbs that Linda taught to us.

Linda actively contributed to the unit from the moment she joined. She participated in the craft group getting ready for Herb Fair or Herb Day. Think back, fellow members, to the Herb Fair days when we made herbal mustards. That was Linda leading the team.

She served the unit as treasurer, vice chair and chair. While her administrative strengths also supported our early web site development, the real gift to our unit was through her approach of always using members and their input to make plans for our next steps and projects.

This was her gift to The Herb Society of America as well. She began her board tenure as secretary. The job may have started as the typical secretarial position, but soon Linda took on the challenges of updating the national newsletter and The Society's website. After a bit (actually a lot) of encouragement, Linda stepped into the role of the national president.

This added six more years to her board service, two years each as vice-president, president (2010 – 2012) and nominating chair (past-president role). After her board tenure ended Linda continued to be The Society's champion in our unit.

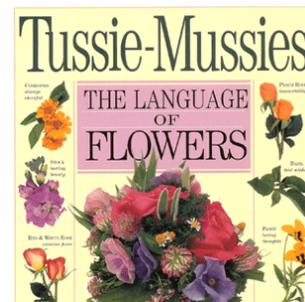
It was my privilege to be on the national board at the same time as Linda and to have her as my vice-president. We drove far and wide together – Grand Rapids, Michigan; Nashville, Tennessee; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Montgomery, Alabama to name a few. It was on the Nashville trip that I discovered one of Linda's few weaknesses, navigating. We had decided to take back roads from Memphis to Nashville as there were numerous small towns to explore. Eventually we found ourselves on the Natchez Trace – heading to Jackson, Mississippi, rather than Nashville!

Linda was preceded in death by her father, Ford Reynolds, and her brother, Michael Reynolds. She is survived by her mother, Virginia Reynolds; her husband, Billy Lain; children, Rhonda and Brian; her cherished granddaughter, Julie and many cousins in the Ft. worth area with whom she shared riotous childhood and adult adventures.

Donations in Linda's memory may be sent to:

- The Herb Society of America, 9019 Kirtland Chardon Rd, Kirtland OH 44094
- The National Ovarian Cancer Coalition, 2501 Oak Lawn Ave #435, Dallas TX 75219
- A charity of your choice.

Lois Sutton, Ph.D.
Friend and co-member, South Texas Unit
Past President (2008 – 2010), The Herb Society of America





Herbally Speaking...

...from the desk of Linda Alderman

On my mind this month is the coming warm weather. One of my favorite refreshing beverages is the Mojito. It is usually made with spearmint. Let's talk about mints, in general, and you can decide which you might like to try growing.

Mint *Mentha* spp. **Lamiaceae**



Description: A distinctive feature of mints is their square stems. Well-established mints may be

invasive, spreading via underground stolons. Their

Spearmint

flowers are tiny, purple, pink or white, and born in whorls around terminal spikes. The leaves are opposite, simple, toothed and very fragrant. While mint may reach a height of two feet, in our hot climate they tend to sprawl rather than grow upright.

A little History: When Persephone learned that Pluto was in love with the beautiful nymph Minthe, she jealously changed her into a lowly plant. Pluto couldn't undo the spell, but he was able to soften it so that the more Minthe was tread upon, the sweeter her smell would be. The Romans crowned themselves with peppermint wreaths. The Greeks used mint in herbal treatments and temple rites. Mint continued to be an aromatic herb in medieval times. Peppermint and spearmint came to the New World with the colonists.

Cultivation: Mints do best in a rich, loose, well-drained soil. My spearmint grows well and has its best flavor grown in the full sun but it tolerated the shade of my Bellaire garden. I find it best to trim it back frequently – but don't overdo it when mint is dormant in the summer. When I don't keep it pruned, it begins to bloom, become leggy and woody. Worse, the fragrance I love so much decreases. It seems this is true of most mints. Mints like plenty of water of and an occasional light feeding with an all-purpose fertilizer. Once I must have overdone it, because I had lots of growth, but not much flavor!

I found out the hard way that mints will take over if you don't control them with a barrier. I began

growing mine in a large pot. I have a friend who grows mint in a hanging basket and it does well. Mint can be propagated from cuttings or divisions.

Some Uses: scenting potpourri, flavoring drinks and candies, also found in a host of commercial products (toothpaste, gum, medicine)

Common Mints:

Apple Mint (*Mentha suaveolens*) – apple flavor
Doublemint (*M. xgracilis* 'Madalene Hill') – the

Unit's favorite red-stemmed apple mint. Combines the flavors of spearmint and peppermint

Orange (*M. xpiperita* 'Orange') – citrus flavored, nice for tea or potpourri

Peppermint (*M. xpiperita*) – this is the peppermint

most likely found in nurseries, wonderful flavor

Spearmint (*M. spicata*) – this is the mint meant when referred to in the following mojito recipe.

The cultivar 'Kentucky Colonel' is the official mint of the Kentucky Derby.

Mojito

2 ounces [light rum](#)

2 teaspoons sugar

6-8 [fresh mint leaves](#)

[Club soda](#)

[1 lime cut in two halves](#)

Mint sprig for garnish

Place the sugar, mint leaves, and a splash of club soda into a [highball glass](#).

[Muddle well](#) to dissolve the sugar and to release the flavor of the mint.

[Squeeze the juice](#) from both halves of a lime into the glass, dropping one-half into the glass.

Add the rum.

[Stir well](#).

[Fill the glass with ice cubes](#).

Top with club soda. Garnish with the mint sprig.

Resources:

- Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs
- Southern Herb Growing by Madalene Hill & Gwen Barclay
- The Pleasure of Herbs by Phyllis V. Shaudys
- The Encyclopedia of Herbs by Arthur Tucker & Thomas DeBaggio
- <https://www.thespruce.com/mojito-cocktail-recipe-759319>

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 solely through the efforts of our volunteers.

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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