

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XXXVIII, NUMBER 7



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
DECEMBER 2015

Editor –Linda Alderman ewalderman@comcast.net

December 2015 Calendar

- Dec 3** - Thurs. - 7 p.m. **Board Meeting** at the home of Lois Sutton.
- Dec 8** - Tues. - 10 a.m. **Day Meeting/Christmas 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. 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. Members only.**

January 2016 Calendar

- Jan 12** - Tues. - 10 a.m **Day Meeting** at the home of Linda Alderman. Program “*The Herbs of China Bales: Spanish Dagger*”, presented by Janice Dana. **Bring a dish to share.** Carpooling is recommended, the driver will need to contact Linda for the gate code.
- Jan 20** - Wed. - 7 p.m **Evening Meeting** at Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), hosted by Lucia Bettler and Vivian Scallan, Program: “*Plants and Herbs of North Africa,*” presented by Lois Sutton. **Bring your plate, napkin and a dish to share.**

Newsletter deadline: 25th of every month
Submissions should be *at most 1 page in Times New Roman 12*

Happy Birthday!



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12/3 Irene Potoczniak
12/16 Dona Fay Hilliard

Member's Corner

CONGRATULATIONS to our member **Pam Harris** who received one of the Certificate of Appreciation awards from The Herb Society of America.

Member Concerns – our condolences on the passing of the spouses of
Cathy Livingston
Chloe Rowles



Chairman's Corner

Our unit had a great Herb Fair even with many obstacles not the least of which was a broken water main beneath our venue and a change of date. We all pulled together, wore a genuinely happy face and spread the word about the joy and delight of herbal culture. We all deserve congratulations. Our treasurer, Lois Sutton, will have the final numbers for us in January.

Members will celebrate the Christmas Season with member only parties on December the 8th for the day group and December 20th for the evening group. Bring a covered dish to share and a present if you choose to participate in the gift exchange.

The day group will need to carpool to Sally Luna's because of limited parking. Arrange to meet you group in front of nearby members and ride together. Nearby members are Pam Harris and Elayne Kouzounis.

Feliz Navidad!
Frohe Weihnachten!
Joyeux Noël!
Buon Natale!
Feliz Natal!

Sally Luna, Unit Chair



Community Outreach

My three children are new students at Poe Elementary. One is in Kindergarten, one in Fourth, and one in Fifth. We were so happy to learn that Poe hosts an annual Colonial Day program for Fifth Graders. When I heard that the school seeks volunteer groups that can present relevant knowledge and activities to the 5th graders on that topic, I immediately thought of my wonderful friend, Karen Cottingham, and her knowledgeable members of the **Herb Society of Houston**. I did not hesitate to tell the Colonial Day planners that I had an amazing "possible" volunteer group who could contribute a whole new topic associated with the Colonial period. I had no doubt in my mind that this group would love to share their knowledge and expertise with young horticulturalists of tomorrow, and I was right.

Fast forward to Colonial Day, November 20, 2015. Excitement was brewing in the air on the campus at Poe Elementary. Fifth Grade students arrived dressed as Pilgrims, Native Americans, Patriots, and Founding Fathers. Tricorn hats and bonnets abounded. The day started with traditional dance and music presented by the Fifth Graders. Then, off to the classrooms where each fifth grade class rotated from lesson to lesson. There was calligraphy, clay pot making, basket weaving, Colonial Period toys, and indigo dying. I had the great fortune of spending my entire morning with The Herb Society as they told, and retold, the mesmerizing story of Eliza Lucas, a teenage botanist, who, during the 1700s, single-handedly cultivated and progressed the farming and trade of indigo. She was so successful with her endeavor that indigo (from South Carolina) became the third most exported product from the Colonies. Then, the science of producing indigo dye was explained, and the students were invited to dye a swatch of material, with indigo dye, that they could keep. It was perfection... a fascinating story combined with science and a fun hands-on activity that the fifth graders at Poe will not forget. The day was topped off with a Thanksgiving Feast and an afternoon production.

On behalf of the parents at Poe Elementary, I would like to extend a huge THANK YOU to the participating members of the Herb Society of Houston who offered their time and talents to our fifth grade students and shared a story of an amazing woman from Colonial Times. Your contribution was relevant and fun!

Thank you,
Elizabeth Grandich



Herbal Celebration for the Winter Season

Thanks and Appreciation

to members and working guests who worked before, during, and after the fair. Overall, we survived the barriers and unknowns about the condition and readiness of the West Gray facility. Our Unit should be proud and recognized for completing another successful Herb Fair. Every year, the fair has its own character and personality. Again, we made a significant effort towards public outreach and herbal education.

The teams produced a wonderful array of crafts, soaps, jellies, and blends. Plant ordering was perfect and we had healthy specimens of herbal plants. Additionally much work went into publicity, communication and coordination with multi-service center staff, signage, preorders, storage unit pickup and take back, membership information and contact, member snack and beverage setup, and financial/cashier team. Finally, we appreciate the presence and contribution of vendors Lucia and Donna Fay, and the garage sale.

Although our attendance was lower than last year, we sold out jellies, and soap; nearly all plants and blends were sold, and most crafts were sold out. Hopefully, customers enjoyed shopping, talking with members, and received herbal education ---- informally and in organized classes.

Expenses

Please send your Check Request and sales slips to Lois Sutton, as soon as possible. See next page.

Thanks! Janice Stuff, Herb Fair Chair 2015



Herb Fair Evaluation

We need your input to improve future Herb Fairs. Please snail mail or email to jestuff@pdq.net.

List positive aspects of the Herb Fair you encountered or observed:

My overall impression of the fair products or plants:
___poor ___good ___very good ___excellent

My impression of the fair location and facility:
___poor ___good ___very good ___excellent

My impression of the fair staff and helpfulness:
___poor ___good ___very good ___excellent

List negative aspects of the Herb Fair you encountered or observed:

Suggestions for future Herb Fairs:



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, PO 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



Darcia, Karen, Emily and Jacqui label fragrant products



Carol, Emily and Pam wrapping soaps

Herb Fair Financial Comments

Lois Sutton, Treasurer

Andy & I went out of town immediately after the Fair, and I was not back in town to do even a preliminary report before the newsletter deadline. But as a teaser ... overall we had fewer people placing preorders in 2015 than we had in 2014, but the overall ticket sale was higher. Enough higher that we took in more money than in 2014! A special nod of appreciation to Susan Wood who worked on getting that wonderful article in the Houston Chronicle triggering some late preorders. My sincere thanks to Sally Luna who filled in for me in getting the deposits to the bank after the Fair. And of course, I know the bottom line of the Fair will reflect all the production, set-up and on site efforts of us, the members and friends who joined us.



About Our Meetings . . .

In November we gave thanks as a nation for our many blessings. The November evening meeting of the STU gave us many more reasons to be thankful: gracious hostesses, an engaging speaker, a thoughtful door prize, and 14 guests.

Hostesses **Joan Jordan and Nita Rowe** beautifully decorated the beverage and meal tables for the harvest season. Nita's Thanksgiving-themed tablecloth highlighted one table; and Joan brought an heirloom tablecloth her mother had made as well as several vintage, dried gourds with removable tops. Our members and guests made the tables all the more sumptuous and inviting with the delicious food they brought for the pot luck dinner.

Tonight's speaker, Amy Sullivan (landscape architect, civil engineer, artist, and art historian), gave us a thoughtful overview of therapeutic gardens in a talk entitled, *Designing a Therapeutic Garden: Herbs to Appeal to All of the Senses*. Amy's knowledge of the subject was informed not only by her formal education, but also by her volunteer activities with several Houston-based horticultural and conservancy programs. We especially enjoyed Amy's engaging way of interspersing humorous observations within her scholarly ones. Throughout and after Amy's talk, the members enlivened the discussion with many insightful questions about therapeutic gardens and their own observations about the value of time spent in nature. Tonight's talk was Amy's second visit with our group this year, and we hope she'll soon join our STU.

For our popular door prize contest, **Lois Sutton** donated a lovely pair of Japanese tea brewing cups decorated with a delicate bamboo design. Program Chair Karen Cottingham beautifully gift-wrapped the cups for presentation to the winner. This month's contest question was:

In Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit, Peter has a misadventure in Mr. MacGregor's garden and barely escapes with his life. When he returns home, Peter's mother first punishes him and then consoles him with... what?

Guest **Dena Yanowski** knew the correct answer and was thrilled to win the lovely tea cups. Congratulations, Dena! We thank Lois for her

generous and highly relevant door prize donation (as the answer at the end of this article will show!) We appreciate all you do for the STU, Lois!

With such generous members and interesting speakers, how could our meetings get any better? By our guests! Tonight our 19 members hosted 14 guests, and seven of our guests were first-time visitors. Our guests expressed interest in herb gardening, cooking with herbs, and reading about herbs.

Tonight's guests have varied and interesting backgrounds. We hosted several teachers, a librarian working on her Masters of Library Science degree, the owner of two Montessori schools, a fabric weaver/natural dye artist, the owner of a technology and marketing company, a research assistant from MD Anderson, a retired technologist from Exxon-Mobil, a landscape architect, and a mixed media artist who makes her own paper. We enjoyed meeting every one of them and want to see them again at future meetings.

I'd also like to recognize and thank members **Pam Harris and Shirley Mills** for bringing two of the guests. We also thank guests **Dena Yanowski and Carolyn Catlos** for each bringing interesting friends.

In addition, four recent guests, three of whom were at the November meeting, volunteered to help Program Chair **Karen Cottingham** at Poe Elementary's "Colonial Days" event the Friday before Thanksgiving. Carolyn Catlos, who is a fabric weaver and natural dye artist, will demonstrate to Poe's 5th graders how early Americans dyed fabric, and Elizabeth Grandich, Donna Yanowski, and Julie Fordes will assist with the demonstration. Karen will tell the students the fascinating story of how indigo was introduced to the American colonies by a teenaged girl in South Carolina. Thank you, ladies, for representing our STU so well! Incidentally, Elizabeth and Donna, both of whom are school teachers, have now attended three STU meetings each and are eligible to become members. We look forward to formally welcoming them to our STU.

Answer to the Herbal Quiz Question: Peter Rabbit's mother gave him chamomile tea, which is known to soothe anxiety.

-Albert Ramos



Our Meetings... (continued)

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

Many thanks to Pam Harris for opening her home for the day meeting. Despite the fact the rain threatened, **Linda Alderman** drove in from Kemah, brought a guest, and presented the program! "*The Herbs of China Bayles: Mistletoe,*" was a program not to be missed! It was evident that she is a teacher, although retired. She still opened up her bag of teaching tricks and prepared her program in an interactive format! Everyone jumped in to participate and, at the end, they unanimously requested she repeat this program!



November Program

The Herbs of China Bayles: Mistletoe
Linda Alderman
November 17, 2015

There are 3 species of Mistletoe; two are American and one is European. All of them are parasites which invade a host tree and feed off its nutrients. The first, **Western Dwarf Mistletoes (*Arceuthobium sp.*)** are deadly tree pests whose infestations threaten whole forests. Their leaves have no decorative or medicinal value. Dwarf mistletoe, is a genus of 42 species of parasitic plants that parasitize members of Pinaceae (pines) and Cupressaceae (cypress family, or conifers) in North America, Central America, Asia, Europe, and Africa. Of the 42 species, 39 are endemic to North America and 21 to the United States.

They all have very reduced shoots and leaves (mostly reduced to scales) with the bulk of the plant living under the host's bark.

American Mistletoe (*Phoradendron sp.*) is a genus of mistletoes, native to warm temperate and tropical regions of the Americas. They are woody hemi-parasitic shrubs with branches 4-31 inches long, which grow on other trees. The flowers are inconspicuous, greenish-yellow, 1-3 mm diameter. The fruit is a berry, white, yellow, orange, or red when mature, containing several seeds embedded in very sticky juice. The seeds are dispersed when birds eat the fruit and remove the sticky seeds from their bills by wiping them on tree branches where they can germinate. The foliage and berries of some species are toxic. Leafy mistletoes seldom kill but they cause stress reducing crop productions in fruits and nut trees.

Phoradendron californicum was used by Native American peoples as a food and medicinal remedy. It was used to treat toothache, measles, and dog bites. It was also used in childbirth to stimulate contractions or as an abortifacient. *Phoradendron* species, such as *Phoradendron serotinum* and *Phoradendron flavescens*, are used in North America as Christmas decoration, substituting for the European mistletoe *Viscum album*. They are harvested commercially for that purpose. Goldthwaite, a small town in Mills County, in West Central Texas, is "*the mistletoe capital of the world*" because more than a million packages of mistletoe are sent out each Christmas season to cities all over North America.

European Mistletoe (*Viscum album*) is a species of mistletoe in the family Santalaceae. They are native to Europe and southern Asia. It has a significant role in European mythology, legends, and customs. In modern times, it is commonly featured in Christmas decoration and symbology. (*V. album* is found only rarely in North America, as an introduced species; its cultural roles are usually fulfilled by the similar native species *Phoradendron leucarpum*.)



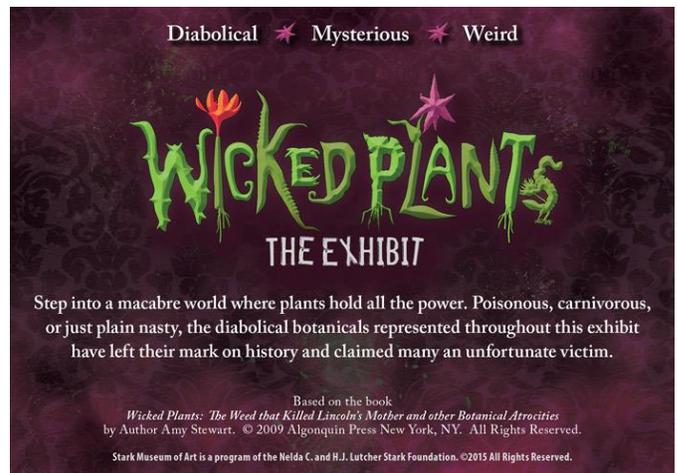
It grows on the stems of other trees. It has stems 12–39 in long with dichotomous branching. It is an evergreen with leaves in opposite pairs, oblong, leathery textured 1-3 in long, 0.31–0.98 inches broad and are a yellowish-green in color. This species is dioecious (male and female on separate plants) and the insect-pollinated flowers are inconspicuous, yellowish-green, 2–3 millimeters in diameter. The fruit is a white or yellow berry containing one seed embedded in the very sticky, pulp. It grows 1-2 ft in height. It is commonly found in the crowns of broad-leaved trees, particularly apple, linden, hawthorn and poplar. It usually does not choose evergreens.

European mistletoe is an ingredient of pomace brandy based liquor, biska, made in Istra, Croatia. Also, the mistletoe leaves and young twigs are used by herbalists, and it is popular in Europe, especially in Germany, for treating circulatory and respiratory system problems. Use of mistletoe extract in the treatment of cancer originated with Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), the founder of Anthroposophy. Mistletoe extract is sold as Iscador, Helixor, and several other trade names. Public interest in the United States was spurred in 2001 following actress Suzanne Somers' decision to use Iscador *in lieu* of chemotherapy following her treatment for breast cancer using surgery and radiotherapy.

European mistletoe has always attracted popular interest and has been surrounded by a number of myths and legends, too many to mention here, but following are a sample:
Italian Folklore: In Northern Italy, mistletoe is thought to grow where a tree has been struck by lightning. It can be destroyed by neither fire nor water, and it communicates its indestructibility to the oak on which it grows. In **Welch folklore**, a sprig of mistletoe gathered on Midsummer Eve is placed under the pillow to induce prophetic dreams.

By **Victorian times**, this tradition had evolved into the ritual of the Christmas kiss; Each time a gentleman kissed a lady, he was required to pluck one of the mistletoe berries. Since the kissing ended when the berries were gone. It was to everyone's advantage to hang a sprig with a great many berries. In **German folklore**, it is believed that if mistletoe is found growing on a hazelnut tree, a golden treasure trove will be discovered nearby.

In the **Victorian language of flowers**, mistletoe symbolized "I overcome everything"; "I surmount difficulties"; "I rise above all."
 Kathleen Gips – Flora's Dictionary



Highly Recommended by Joan Jordan!

Stark Museum of Art, Orange, TX
 Now – Jan. 2, 2016

Stepping into the exhibit is like stepping into a great game of Clue. Divided into rooms you are invited to identify and solve the problems presented in each one. There is the library, the parlor and the dining room among others. At the end of the exhibit is an display of herbals from the Stark Museum collection. All open to wicked plants.

Based on Amy Stewart's book the exhibit is as clever and witty as the book.

Looking for a place to eat in Orange-try the Old Orange Cafe, 914 W. Division St.



“Forest Bathing” for Body, Mind, and Soul by Karen L. Cottingham

In 1912, naturalist John Muir made the following observation as he reflected upon the two years he had spent wandering through the spectacular wilderness of the Yosemite:

Everybody needs beauty as well as bread,
places to play in and pray in, where nature
may heal and give strength to body and soul.
([The Yosemite](#))

This statement encapsulates the message of landscape architect Amy Sullivan in her November STU program entitled “Designing a Therapeutic Garden: Herbs to Appeal to All of the Senses”.

Muir’s convictions stemmed from an immersive wilderness experience that is not possible to recreate today; however, even in a stressful, urban environment, we can all develop a stronger and more thoughtful connection with nature. Your own garden can be that place to “play in and pray in,” that place where “nature may heal and give strength to body and soul”.

To further develop her theme that time spent in nature is vital to our well-being, Amy introduced us to the Japanese practice of shinrin-yoku. Shinrin-yoku is generally translated as “forest bathing” or “basking in the forest”, but can also mean “taking in, through all of our senses, the forest atmosphere”. Many of the old-growth conifer forests in Japan have been made available for therapeutic activities. Forest retreats and regular forest visits for recreation and relaxation are frequently prescribed by Japanese physicians.

This practice of spending time “opening the senses” to nature is catching on elsewhere, notably in Scandinavia and the United States. Research shows that shinrin-yoku increases cerebral blood flow and ability to focus - even for people with ADHD; improves immune function, stress hormone levels and blood pressure; and enhances emotional health. These beneficial effects are partially due to the inhalation of phytoncides, which are the volatile oils plants produce to protect themselves from bacterial, fungal, and viral infections. The best-studied phytoncide is extracted from the Japanese Hinoki cypress tree; inhalation of the volatile oil in the laboratory setting duplicates many of the

physiologic and emotional benefits of “forest bathing”.

Intriguingly, common herbs that we enjoy growing in our own gardens produce many of the same phytoncides present in forest air. More research is being done to assess potential benefits of spending time in natural environments other than conifer forests. This could include parks and private gardens as well as exposure to indoor plants.

Engagement of our senses is crucial for the effectiveness of shinrin-yoku, and Amy also discussed specific herbs that are particularly stimulating to our five basic senses. Another theme of Amy’s program was that nature serves as an increasingly necessary respite from news of violent disturbances around the world. Her choice of Wendell Berry’s poem “The Peace of Wild Things” beautifully illustrated the deep solace that can come from nature:

When despair grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's
lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the
great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still
water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting for their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am
free.

Thank you for giving us so much to think about, Amy. For those interested in further study, I recommend these books:

[Your Brain on Nature](#) (Eva C. Selhub and Brian C. Logan)

[Gardening at the Dragon's Gate](#) (Wendy Johnson)

[Last Child in the Woods](#) (Richard Louv)

May we all “rest in the grace” of the natural world.

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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