

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
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SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
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September 2019 Calendar

- Sept. 10**, Tues. at 10:00 am **Day Meeting** is at the home of **Elayne Kouzounis**. The program, "Thinking of You with this Tussie Mussie" will be presented by **Gloria Borocca**. Please RSVP to Elayne at 713-665-1143 so we will have supplies for you.
- Sept. 11**, Tues. at 6:30 pm **Board Meeting** is at the home of **Sally Luna**.
- Sept. 18**, Wed. at 6:30 pm **Evening Meeting** is at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004). The program, "*The Prickly Pear Cactus: Texas State Plant*" is presented by **Liliana R. Cracraft**, PhD, member Houston Cactus and Succulents Society. **Hosts** are **Jeanie Dunnihoo** and **Janice Stuff**. **Bring your plate, cutlery, napkin and a dish to share.**
- Sept. 25**, Wed. at 6:30 pm **New Member Dinner and Social** at the home of **Elayne Kouzounis**.

October 2019 Calendar

- Oct. 08**, Tues. at 10:00 am **Day Meeting** is at the home of **Lois Jean Howard**. The program is to be announced and presented by **Pam Harris**.
- Oct. 16**, Wed at 6:30 pm **Evening Meeting** is at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004). The program, "*Holistic Animal Care - An Introduction to Veterinary Herbal Medicine*" is presented by Shana Buchanan, DVM, private practice. **Hosts** are **Janet Ruffin** and **Mary Sacilowski**. **Bring your plate, cutlery, napkin and a dish to share.**

Newsletter deadline: the 25th of every month

Members – If you would like to have your birthday remembered, and haven't seen it announced, send an email to Linda Alderman at ewalderman@comcast.net



Chairman's Corner

Hello all,

If you can't take the heat...go inside and **read!** Of course, I find myself reading about gardening and all things herbal. Some of this summer reading is on the HSA National Website. www.herbsociety.org My favorite things there are archived webinars.

Did you know the STU has our many past newsletters archived on our website? I recently perused back issues for about an hour or so. Talk about going down a rabbit hole! What a great diversity of topics and information! Also, on our website is a monthly to-do list for the garden written by long-time member and fantastic gardener Beth Murphy. What a great resource!

www.herbsociety-stu.org

We had a good turnout at the **Herb Fair and Back to Our Roots Kickoff** meeting August 7. We had lots of fun with the slide show of previous fairs and got a lot of great ideas for this year. Thanks to **Donna Wheeler, Donna Yanowski and Janice Stuff** for making it happen. Also, many thanks to **Susan Wood**, another long-time member and fantastic gardener for her hand out on **Harvesting, Drying and Storing Herbs**. We have copies of this handout for all our members, so if you didn't get one in August, make sure you come to the September meeting to get your copy.

It's been a few years since we have had a gathering for our new members. These events are great opportunities for new members to ask questions of the long-time members and officers in an informal setting. If you have joined STU **since 2017**, look for your personal invitation to our **New Member Dinner and Social** to be held **Wednesday, September 25** at the home of **Elayne and Demo Kouzounis**. You won't want to miss smoked brisket and turkey from **George and Michael Fordes** as well as all the delicious side dishes the board is going to make! We have almost 30 people who have joined in the past two years and I look forward being able to talk to everyone!

Thanks to all of you who continue to brave the heat and keep our gardens and herbs going.

So many of the herbs in our gardens are just asking to be picked (I guess they're hot too)! I am so grateful to be able to grow and harvest herbs using the best practices I have learned from being in the Herb Society. The handout from Susan Wood is an invaluable tool in using locally grown herbs in the products we make for the **Herbal Marketplace/Herb Fair**.

At the Herb Fair Kickoff, we were able to sample a tea blend made with Holy Basil (Tulsi) and Kaffir lime leaves. It was delicious and may be a possible addition to our tea offerings at Herb Fair. Another potential product to sell is Butterfly Pea flowers. Every table at the August 7 event got to do a little science experiment with the dried flowers in hot water. These petals will turn teal blue and then purple with the addition of lemon or lime juice. How cool is that! I think that it might be a big seller!

With Herb Fair approaching it is time to start using our harvest, so please begin to bring your dried herbs to the September and October meetings. Stay tuned for information on when the teas, blends and other products will be put together.

For use and delight,
Julie Fordes



Announcements

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Cynthia Card

Yvette Darnell

Carolyn Kosclskey

Happy Birthday!

9/2 Steven van Heeckerer

9/8 Jenna Wallis

9/11 Janet Ruffin

9/13 Chloe Rowles

9/14 Janice Freeman

9/16 Andi Leger

September Day Meeting

Our first **Day Herb Meeting** of the new season is very special! On Tuesday, September 10, starting at 10:00 a.m., **Elayne Kouzounis** will be our host. The program *"Thinking of You with a Tussie Mussie"* will be given by guest speaker **Gloria Borreca**.

Gloria was a member for many years and has always continued to gift friends with her thoughtfulness. Each participant will be able to make her own tussie mussie to take home with an explanation of the meanings of each herb. This meeting will be a great refresher for us seasoned members! We look forward to welcoming new members.

Bring a dish to share at lunch and see old friends and make new ones. **Please RSVP to Elayne at 713-665-1143**, so we will have supplies for you. You will be so delighted to see Elayne's garden - it is a wonderful combination of textures, colors and fragrances.

"Rosemary for Remembrance"

Cathy Livingston

Day Section Chair



HSA is a non-profit educational organization that promotes the cultivation of herbs and the study of their history and uses, both past and present.

www.herbsociety.org



SAVE THE DATE 47TH ANNUAL HERB FAIR Nov. 2, 2019

Attention Herb Society Members of the South Texas Unit Herb Fair is upon us!

Herb Fair 2019 is being researched, organized and planned as we go to press.

Donna Yanowski and Donna Wheeler are co-chairing the event and need some new ideas and suggestions to keep it fresh and interesting. As a reminder, this is one of our key fundraisers. In addition to the edibles and products that are part of our history, we are interested in new products and trending ideas.

We plan to incorporate the Back to Our Roots campaign as much as possible. As an active member of this organization, **you are required to** “participate in the preparation of one major event” and “participate on-site in one major event” as outlined in the Membership Directory.

Best Regards and Thank You in advance,
Donna Yanowski and Donna Wheeler

There are many ways to help out – please email or call one of us and we will work together to decide on how to best use your talents.

Donna Wheeler
ddwheeler16@hotmail.com
713-203-0249 (cell)

Donna Yanowski
donnayanowski@gmail.com
832 998-3655 (cell)
713 524-3542 (home)

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Our July edition of Herbs Make Scents included a community outreach article written by **Julie Fordes**. She spoke at the **Westbury Community Garden** of ways to preserve and use herbs. Fresh herbal teas were prepared. Review of the many mediums to infuse herbs generated excitement and enthusiasm. See pictures below from this event. ■

Looking out at the gardens.



Identifying and selecting herbs for our teas.





Back to Our Roots

Janice Freeman

At the July meeting, **Julie Fordes** prepared delicious Holy Basil tea for us to taste and enjoy, so it is fitting that the Back to Our Roots column this month features *Ocimum tenuiflorum* (synonym *Ocimum sanctum*), which is also known as Holy Basil. This delightful herb is called *Tulsi* in India, *Oleleldl* in Ethiopia, and *Bai Gkaprow* in Thailand, just to mention a few of its many additional names. This herb is described as a 12-24 inch tall shrub from the mint family Lamiaceae and requires sunlight and plenty of water. Holy Basil will self-sow and pollinates easily.

The aromatic leaves can taste bitter and astringent, or pungent and peppery - resulting in the nickname of "hot basil" seen in many cookbooks.

Holy Basil has been utilized by humans for thousands of years; it is grown on many continents, has a variety of names and is used in environmental protection strategies, religious rituals, and for medical and culinary purposes. Various parts of the plant is used to make beads for meditation or religious rituals, and the leaves are added to stews, soups, infusions, and teas. Madalene Hill and Gwen Barclay recommended using the dried leaves in potpourri.

The following is adapted from, organicindiausa.com, "for more than 5000 years, Tulsi (Holy Basil) has been revered as one of the most sacred herbs in India, infused with restorative power. Hindus view her as a goddess (a manifestation of Lakshmi) in the form of a plant bestowed with great spiritual powers. As Tulsi (Holy Basil) traveled west along the early trade routes from the Orient to Europe, it became known to Christians as "sacred" or "holy" basil as is reflected in its Latin botanical name, *Ocimum sanctum*. Holy Basil became routinely included in legends, offerings, and worship rituals and was looked on by many as a gift of Christ."



Holy Basil is an adaptogenic herb. See "[Tulsi-*Ocimum sanctum*: A herb for all reasons](#)".

Holy Basil may have side effects and medication interactions. For a general list of side effects and medication interactions review [WebMD-Holy Basil Safety and Side Effects](#) or consult with a physician. ■



Photo courtesy of Julie Fordes



Ecoprinting - A Way to Capture Nature's Beauty

Karen Cottingham

Ecoprinting is a natural process that uses the pigments already present in leaves and flowers to create intricate botanical prints on fabric or paper. The artistic possibilities are as varied and endless as the plants themselves - from the delicate imprint of a heart-shaped ginkgo leaf, to the graceful curve of a tendril from a climbing vine, to the assertive arrangement of needles from a rosemary branch. Even an insect-damaged leaf picked up on a morning walk has its own unique beauty.



The basic process of ecoprinting is that leaves, flowers and stems are scattered on material which is then bundled tightly and tied. When these bundles are steamed over hot water the plant's pigments are extracted and create an image - sometimes delicate and sometimes bold - on the fabric or paper. Various mordants can also be used to create vivid colors or outline the leaves dramatically. While some aspects of this printing technique can be expected to follow semi-predictable "rules", there is always an exciting element of surprise and suspense in the unrolling of each bundle.

Houston artist **Molly Koehn** and I have been talking about organizing a workshop devoted to ecoprinting with herbs for Herb Society members, but so far, time and space logistics have been challenging. Good news, though - Molly has teamed up with the Contemporary Handweavers of Houston for a workshop



September 7, 2019 to introduce beginners to the basics of ecoprinting. What a great opportunity to appreciate and maybe even enhance the beauty of nature.

You may remember Molly from previous Herb Society meetings. Her environmental art practice examines “idealizations of nature” through drawing, weaving, sculptural installation, and ecoprinting. She was recently an artist-in-residence at The Center for Contemporary Craft and teaches at Art League Houston. Learn more about Molly at <https://www.mollykoehn.com/> and register now for a morning of creativity and good company.

ECOPRINTING WORKSHOP

Saturday, September 7, 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
\$75 per person plus \$25 materials fee

Instructor: Molly Koehn
Contemporary Handweavers of Houston Guild House
2327 Commerce St #106
Houston, TX 77002

For further information:
<https://www.weavehouston.org/classes/>





SUNDAY IN THE “YARDS” WITH BEE - FLORAL COCKTAILS

Karen Cottingham



I could have stayed all day - and practically did! So much fun!

We cocktail/mocktail-makers joined up with Bee, our favorite Flower Chef of **Flora Cocina**, one lovely Sunday afternoon down at the Sawyer Yards Creative Campus. “Rhonda’s Lounge” was the perfect setting (Thank you, Rhonda!) for us to design and concoct our own inspired beverages. There’s nothing like being in an amazing artist’s studio to make a person feel creative - especially if it’s furnished with Japanese screens and a curvaceous mustard gold sofa. And *especially* if Bee has provided flowers and herbs from her yard and refreshments from her kitchen.

We each made something a little different. First, the herbal/floral infusion - Of the dozens of possibilities offered, I selected lemon verbena, anise hyssop, lemon balm, tulsi, and phlox blossoms for my simple syrup. Delicious! Next, I chose a hibiscus “tea” to complement the concentrated infusion, but could have tried Bee’s butterfly pea flower infusion, sparkling wine, or gin. The final flourish - a gentle misting of orange flower water - was pure culinary genius - and I can say that because it was Bee who suggested it!

But a drink is just not complete without rimmers and a garnish. Mine, which you can see above, is all decked out with a zigzag pattern of cornflower petals applied to the glass. The secret is to use agave syrup as the “glue” and to place the petals low enough that they don’t stick to your lips or fall into your glass. Add a skewer loaded with a sine wave cucumber slice, sprinkle on a bit more cornflower and punctuate with a torenia blossom. Your drink is ready to enjoy.



Everyone needs a day off once in a while. The laundry and paperwork can wait. Let us keep you posted on Bee's upcoming workshops so you too can "take time to smell the flowers". ■



**TIME TO
BRING IN
YOUR DRIED
HERBS**

Please bring dried herbs
to September and
October meetings.

Basil, oregano,
lemon balm,
mexican mint marigold,
all mints, sage,
thyme, lemon verbena
and anything else you have
that I forgot!





DON'T JUDGE A CACTUS BY ITS SPINES - IN PRAISE OF THE PRICKLY PEAR

Karen Cottingham

Some plants have a strange way of eliciting intense emotions and opinions - *seriously* intense opinions. Take prickly pear, for example. Some see its incredible beauty and marvel at the plant's tenacity and usefulness, and others see only the treacherous barbs. Which do *you* see? The beauty or the barbs? Or the beauty *in* the barbs?



The relationship between prickly pear and its human neighbors is surprisingly complex - one might even say “prickly” - and at times, completely paradoxical. In some situations, prickly pear is embraced as “green gold”, as life-saving food and water for desperate times; but in other circumstances, it's an unstoppable “green hell” that overruns and even collapses people's homes. “Green gold” or “green hell”? I would have to say, “Both”.

Prickly pear is kind of like the botanical Prince and the Pauper. The plant that many would dismiss as a lowly, noxious weed somehow became the premiere status symbol for the very elite. It all started when Christopher Columbus presented the first cactus ever seen in Europe to Queen Isabella of Spain. From then on, aristocrats demonstrated their prestige and power by importing prickly pears for their carefully curated “exotic” gardens. The great expense required to acquire this plant undeniably enhanced its value as a status symbol for Europe's “A-listers”. Meanwhile, the same plant back home was disdained and derided as the “Fruit of the Poor”.

When a plant's contradictory aspects are as conspicuous as those of the prickly pear, it can definitely stimulate some polarized opinions. Prickly pear has been hailed as “The Treasure Under the Thorns” for its many medicinal, nutritional, and therapeutic properties; but at the same time it has been reviled as a “Monstrous Tree”. Meriwether Lewis utterly despised it as one of the “greatest pests of the plains”.



Ranchers punctured by a savage spine cursed prickly pear as the “Devil’s Tongue”. But to the Navajo, it was the sacred embodiment of a divine Spirit. To demonstrate their gratitude while harvesting the fruit, they reverently left a strand of their hair behind as a symbolic sacrifice. Prickly pear was also considered divine by the Aztecs - a talisman of dried nopal protected them from all evil, and eating the powerful fruits was thought to bestow strength and unwavering resolution upon the warriors.

Father Nicholas Point, a 19th century Jesuit missionary who was also a gifted water-colorist, saw prickly pear through the eyes of an artist rather than an explorer or warrior - “I never saw anything,” he enthused, “as pure and vivid as the bloom of this charming flower.” He went even further by stating that the prickly pear, “more than the rose, could be the symbol of the pleasures of this world.” I don’t think everyone would agree with him, but it is definitely an interesting “point” of view! Hmm... a bed of roses or a bed of prickly pear? Let me think about it!



So this is prickly pear - a botanical bundle of contradictions. A treasure and a monster, the devil and the divine.

Prickly pear is also a fascinating plant to study, especially if you are interested in any of the following topics: Texas history, Mexican and Native American culture, botanical dyes, anti-aging cosmetics, improved blood sugar control for diabetics, plants that can purify water, “superfoods”, Luther Burbank’s spineless cactus fiasco, hot-pink Margaritas, plant symbolism, colonialism, traditional Mexican cuisine, symbols of national identity, the latest trends in flavored waters and herbal teas, peculiarities of language, the design of hazmat suits... and the list could go on...and on...and on.



Kachina, Yuna (Cactus) Wearing Mask, Body Paint, Surmounted By Prickly Pears, and in Costume; Yuna Mana (Cactus Maiden) Wearing Mask and in Costume and Carrying Cactus Tongs And Cactus Fruit in Basket/Bowl (Introduced by Homovi) 1899 Drawing Colored pencil graphite and Watercolor drawing in album Published: Fewkes, Jesse Walter "Hopi Kachinas Drawn by Native Artists" (NM Nov 1899-Mar 1900); BAE 21st AR; Wash, 1903; PI LXIX, P 113

We can't cover everything in one evening, but for an excellent introduction, please join us on September 18, 2019 for *The Prickly Pear Cactus: Texas State Plant* presented by Houston Cactus and Succulents Society member **Liliana R. Cracraft, PhD**. Dr. Cracraft is a retired medical educator, researcher, and administrator at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston where she taught microbiology to medical and public health students for many years. She combines her interest in cacti and succulents with her experience in healthcare through her involvement as an honorary member of the Texas Cactus Council. She is a native of Monterrey, Mexico and treasures Hispanic culture and her own Mexican heritage.

Liliana also feels at home here in Texas, having spent more than half of her life in Houston.

Hispanic, Mexican, and Texan - I suddenly understood Liliana's passion for prickly pear in a different light. Prickly pear has also lived on both sides of the border and has influenced and been influenced by Amerindian, Spanish, Mexican, and Texan cultures and narratives. All of these historical strands are intertwined and woven together into one long multicultural braid.

Nothing illustrates the interconnection between these cultures more clearly than this - when each group selected a symbol to represent the best of itself, it was the prickly pear that was chosen. The nopal that symbolized the lost civilization of the Aztecs and colonial Mexico represents both Texas and Mexico today - Mexico as its national emblem and Texas as its official state plant. Although the attitude toward prickly pear was vastly different in these four populations, there was something about the tenacity and usefulness of the plant that they saw, or hoped to see, in themselves.



Pictured above, the imposing prickly pear - equally commanding in the vast and glorious desert, on the grounds of Spanish missions in the American Southwest, and bearing silent witness near the famous ruins of Teotihuacán in the Valley of Mexico. The mission on the left is Mission San Xavier del Bac, also known as The White Dove of the Desert. It is located on the Tohono O'odham Nation San Xavier Indian Reservation near Tucson, AZ. On the right is Mission San Juan in San Antonio, Texas.

The mythic story of the founding of the great Aztec capital, Tenochtitlàn, pictured below, has been passed down to us in the form of several legends. While they differ in their details, all of the versions agree on one basic point - the central role of the prickly pear. The basic story is that when a group of homeless wanderers were told by their gods to settle down, they were instructed to look for a bird atop a cactus growing from a rock.



Cactus plant symbolically representing Mexico in the Codex Osuna, with Náhuatl in Latin script underneath; artist's rendition of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan; eagle perched on a cactus (detail), Miguel González, *The Virgin of Guadalupe (Virgen de Guadalupe)*, c. 1698, oil on canvas on wood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl (*enconchado*) (Los Angeles County Museum of Art), and the iconic image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The promised sign appeared on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco, so it was there that they established their home. They named it Tenochtitlan, “the place of the prickly pear cactus on the rock”. The glyph for Tenochtitlan, seen above, combined two pictograms: stone (*te-tl*) and cactus (*nochtli*), and eventually came to symbolize the entire Aztec empire.

And below Tenochtitlan, an image of The Virgin of Guadalupe exemplifies the fusion of native and Spanish traditions that defined Colonial Mexico. As seen in this small detail of a much larger mother-of-pearl depiction of “Our Lady”, she was frequently pictured with what were by now seen as the symbols of Colonial Mexico - the iconic eagle perched on the prickly pear cactus. The snake was added later by the Spanish to symbolize the struggle between good and evil.



On September 16, 1810, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a Catholic priest, launched the Mexican War of Independence with the issuing of his *Grito de Dolores*, or “Cry of Dolores”. The Mexican eagle became a popular seal for official documents during the war, and once independence was finally won, the seal was redesigned to reflect the famous Aztec legend. Thus, the pictorial representation of the Aztec empire and the symbols of Catholic New Spain became the national Coat of Arms of Mexico that appears on the silver peso, the national flag, and all official documents:



Top: The National Coat of Arms of Mexico
Bottom: Detail with eagle, cactus and shield, Frontispiece, *Codex Mendoza*, Viceroyalty of New Spain, c. 1541–1542, pigment on paper
© Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

And don't forget that the prickly pear also flew over Texas until 1836, when Anglo-American and Tejano settlers banded together to overthrow Mexican rule.

To complete this story, the prickly pear cactus was officially adopted as the Texas state plant on May 25, 1995. Promoted for its ruggedness, beauty, and versatility, the prickly pear was affirmed by the Texas State Legislature to be “singularly qualified to represent the indomitable and unique Texas spirit as an official state symbol.”

I think we can all agree that no other plant could possibly say “Don't Mess with Texas” more effectively than the mighty Prickly Pear!



For more legends, lore, botany, recipes, public health applications, and maybe even instructions for hot-pink “adult beverages”, please join us on September 18, 2019 for *The Prickly Pear Cactus: Texas State Plant* presented by **Liliana R. Cracraft, PhD**.

The South Texas Unit of The Herb Society of America is dedicated to sharing “The Use and Delight of Herbs” and welcomes all interested guests to our meetings. There is no charge to attend. We meet in the **Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park, 1500 Hermann Drive** and you may enter the Pavilion’s free parking lot where Crawford Street T-intersects with Hermann Drive.

Hostesses and others interested in setting up the tables and displays can start arriving at 6:00 pm. Other members and guests will gather at 6:30 pm; the potluck dinner will start around 7:00 pm, and the program will begin a half-hour later. ■

