

# Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
VOLUME XLII, NUMBER 1



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT  
JANUARY 2019

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## January 2019 Calendar

Jan 8, Tues. at 10 a.m.

**Day Meeting** is at the home of **Janice Dana**. The program, "*Melissodora – Grape-scented Sage*," is presented by **Lois Jean Howard**. Members should bring **a dish to share**. Guests should RSVP to Janice at [danas4086@sbcglobal.net](mailto:danas4086@sbcglobal.net)

Jan 16, Wed. at 6:30 p.m.

**Evening Meeting** is at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004). **Hosts** are **Julie Fordes** and **Andi Leger**. The program, "*Moringa – A Nutritional Powerhouse in Your Backyard*," is presented by **Tommy Garcia-Prats**, founder and general manager of Small Places, LLC. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**

## February 2019 Calendar

Feb 12, Tues. at 10 a.m.

**Day Meeting** is at the home of **Tamara Gruber**. The program, "*Salvia greggii – Hot Lips*," is presented by **Cathy Livingston**. Members should bring **a dish to share**. Guests should RSVP to Tamara at 713-665-0675

Feb 20, Wed. at 6:30 p.m.

**Evening Meeting** is at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004). **Hosts** are **Jenna Wallace**, **Mike Jensvold**, and **Virginia Camerlo**. The program, "*Molcajetes and Metates*," is presented by **Jesus Medel, PhD** and founder of Museo Guadalupe Aztlan. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**

**Newsletter deadline: the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month**



1/12

Linda van  
Heeckeren

## Member Concerns

Recent Surgery:

Susan Wood

Recent Illness:

Thelma Rowe



Members – If you would like to have your birthday remembered, and haven't seen it announced, send me an email. [janicehfreeman@comcast.net](mailto:janicehfreeman@comcast.net)



## Chairman's Corner

### Happy New Year, folks!

I hope that the holidays were everything you hoped for, or at least close. Most of my festivities are drawing to a close and it's time to jump into 2019. The first order of business is to thank our relatively new member Maria Treviño and her husband Donald Burger for opening their lovely Victorian home in the Heights and hosting our Holiday Party last month. Their house was beautifully decorated with plenty of places to sit and enjoy the delectable food and fellowship. There were such a variety of dishes, hot and cold, and a plethora of beverages to match. As a token of appreciation and prime example of their generosity, Maria and Donald gifted each guest with a present on their way out: a bottle of their own Heights Honey, recently extracted and screened in their own honey house.

The second order of business, as HSA has responsibilities and commitments to keep, is Herb Day 2019. St. Paul's United Methodist Church in the Museum District will again be hosting on Saturday, April 27. We will set up the day before so please mark whatever calendar you use for both days. The Board is still recruiting a Chair, or two members to Co-Chair this annual event. We have already received a commitment from Dena Yanowski to coordinate the food and refreshments for the day, and with many other subcommittees already filled the chair seems to have more than half the work done. Thank you in advance for stepping up to help support this educational event.

**Donna Yanowski**  
Unit Chair



**Maria Treviño and  
Donald Burger**  
for hosting the HSA-STU  
holiday party in their beautiful  
home



## What's Happening in our Unit!

### Back to our Roots - Part 2

Julie Fordes

At the December Board Meeting, I offered to spearhead an ongoing effort to get as many members as possible to grow, harvest and preserve herbs for use in products we sell at the Fair and at Herb Day. Some of our members have done this for years and my goal is to get more people doing this. There is a lot of wisdom in our group. This will also set our products apart as being locally grown and organic. It is also more cost effective!

In the coming days we will work on refining the educational and informational pieces that are integral to this process: getting more people to grow herbs for our recipes and testing new recipes that use what we can grow.

We hope to use the newsletter, demonstrations, and workshops to communicate best practices for growing, harvesting and drying herbs.

One useful plant to grow now in Houston is **calendula**. If you see it in the nurseries grab some and add it to your garden. The dried flowers are useful in salves and other preparations for the skin.

We are just beginning and hope to have a bit more information in time for the January meetings. It feels right to start a yearlong project in the new year. I look forward to seeing what can happen. If you have any ideas, let me know.



**Calendula**



New member Catherine O'Brien, friend Judy and her wonderful husband processing orange rind for our Christmas tea blend.



**At work in the kitchen**



**A closer look at the grating process**



**Orange rind ready for drying**



## What's Coming Up Next?

### MORINGA OLEIFERA – THE MIRACLE TREE

Karen Cottingham

I've heard of the Wishing Tree and the Giving Tree, but only recently have I become acquainted with the *Miracle Tree*. Also known as the Tree of Life, Mother's Best Friend, and *Nebedaye* (which means "never die" in many African languages), *Moringa oleifera* may well be the world's most important plant. As one of the most nutrient-dense plant foods known, moringa is being promoted as a potential solution to world-wide malnutrition. It was also named a Top Wellness Trend of 2018 and is an excellent source of complete plant protein for vegetarians and vegans. And if that's not enough, this easy-to-grow tropical/subtropical plant actually thrives in the Houston climate. So, if you don't already know about moringa, it's time you did.



You can learn about this life-saving "superfood" when you join us for the January 16, 2019 Evening Meeting of the **South Texas Unit of The Herb Society of America**. Don't miss this opportunity to hear moringa farmer **Tommy Garcia-Prats**, co-founder and farm manager of **Finca Tres Robles**, discuss *Moringa oleifera - A Nutritional Powerhouse in Your Backyard*.

Moringa is just one of the many nutritious crops being grown at *Finca Tres Robles*, the visionary urban farm just east of downtown Houston. This one-acre sustainable farm was established in 2014 by our speaker, **Tommy Garcia-Prats**, and his brother **Daniel**, to use a small pocket

of vacant urban space to produce high-quality food for the surrounding neighborhood.



Located "down Navigation Boulevard, past the popular Mexican restaurants... and across from the U.S. Zinc factory", the tiny farm produces year-round affordable, fresh, and nutritious produce. *Finca's* market is first and foremost the neighborhood community, but they also sell herbs, fruits, and vegetables to CSA subscribers, to local restaurants, and at farmer's markets. Visit their Saturday Market and take a tour of the farm - you'll see rows of the exotic-looking moringa trees next to the more familiar beets and arugula.

Moringa trees are bursting with life; and it truly is "miraculous" that one of the most nutritious plants on earth is so easy to grow - drought-resistant, easy to propagate from seeds or cuttings, and a rapid grower even in marginal soil. And if it dies back with freezing temperatures, you'll still be rewarded with new shoots in the spring.

You'll also find moringa right here in Hermann Park. If you visited the McGovern Family Garden last summer, you might have noticed two graceful young moringa trees in their classy metal tubs. Moringa's feathery legume-like leaves might have been dancing in the breeze; or perhaps the drooping panicles of beautiful ivory flowers were covered with bees or butterflies foraging for nectar.



While carpenter bees are the most frequent visitors, Monarch butterflies and honey bees are also attracted to the fragrant flowers.



Moringa honey is said to be tasty, and is often consumed as a medicine.

In Oaxaca, Mexico, the tree is grown solely for the year-round beautiful flowers which decorate churches and houses on religious festival days.

The Hermann Park moringa trees are taking their winter rest now. Foliage is not as lush as it was during the summer, and the flowers are now replaced by the dramatic yard-long seed pods that are known as *drumsticks*. These striking pods give moringa another of its many names, the Drumstick Tree. And the official genus name *Moringa* (of the family Moringaceae) comes from the word “murungai”, which means “twisted pod” in the Tamil language of North India.



Open one of these twisted pods and you will find dozens of seeds, each surrounded by a lightly wooded shell with three papery wings.

These seeds can be cold-pressed to extract a rich, nutritious oil similar to olive oil, which is used for cooking and in skin care products. The oil is also useful for *enfleurage*, the process by which perfume makers extract and concentrate the fragrance of flowers. The descriptive “oleifera” in the official nomenclature, *Moringa oleifera*, refers to this valuable “oil-bearing” property.

*But wait! There’s more!* Even after the oil is extracted, the moringa residue has one more life-saving gift to give.

In developing countries without water treatment facilities, the crushed “presscake” of moringa seeds is used to purify silty and contaminated water. The seeds contain charged proteins that “coagulate suspended particles, precipitate disease organisms, and generally help turn a dangerous muddy muck into a clear potable liquid.” (Lost Crops of Africa: Volume II: Vegetables). In other words, moringa seeds cause the dirt and pathogenic bacteria to settle to the bottom where they can be separated from the clean water. Moringa seed proteins also have direct bactericidal effects which significantly reduce the incidence of water-borne infectious diseases.



Moringa seeds might just be a doomsday prepper’s dream!



Or, if you're not a prepper, you can always use



the seeds for their original purpose – to plant your own grove of moringa trees.



It seems like there's no end to the miracles of "The Miracle Tree". If I could bring only one plant to a desert island - or maybe (in this modern era) to a space station - it would definitely be the multipurpose tool of trees, moringa! I think you will agree, once you've considered its exceptional nutritional value.

Now let's analyze moringa's value as a food using the trendy "head to tail" philosophy of responsible eating:

First the **flowers** - we don't usually think of flowers as being particularly nutritious, but moringa flowers are an excellent source of vitamins A and C, are rich in free radical quenching antioxidants and flavonoids, and supply abundant iron, calcium, and potassium.

These lovely blossoms are considered a culinary delicacy in many countries. Some say they taste like mushrooms; others say more like radishes.

Fried, the taste resembles fried eggs - at least according to farmers in Kenya. They can be added to salads, fried as fritters, brewed as teas, or added to a variety of dishes such as omelets, soups, seafood, pasta, or even pizza! Pictured below is a spicy moringa flower stir-fry called Swanjhane Ke Phool Ki Sabji (Drumstick Flowers with Peas) from The Secret Ingredient:



**Be aware, though, that moringa flowers should not be consumed during pregnancy.**

Next, moringa **leaves** - these are almost infinitely replaceable and can be consumed fresh or dehydrated for later use. Fresh leaves can be added to smoothies, stir-fries, soups or salads; or to pesto, pasta, or grains - basically to any dish that might call for a leafy green. For ideas on how to use moringa powder, think matcha - I have seen recipes for moringa-enhanced breads, porridges, lattes, and even cookies and cakes.

Here are just a couple of ways fresh moringa leaves can be prepared:





Moringa leaves also make a delicious and assertive tea:



And powdered moringa leaves provide a colorful flavor and nutritional boost to just about anything. Just imagine *these* lovely chocolates on your dessert tray:



More beautiful images and recipes can be seen at <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/wknd/kitchen-classics/moringa-magic>

A quick look at the nutritional analysis of moringa leaves confirms its potential to end malnutrition. According to the Church World Service, just three spoonfuls of moringa leaf powder contain 300 percent of a typical toddler's daily vitamin A requirement, along with 42 percent of the protein, 125 percent of the calcium, 71 percent of the iron and 22 percent of the vitamin C. It also contains a full complement of minerals and amino acids. With four times the beta-carotene of carrot, moringa has especial potential for programs dealing with avitaminosis, the vitamin A deficiency that causes 70 percent of childhood blindness. Other diseases caused by the lack of nutrients that are abundant in moringa

include beri beri, rickets, and scurvy." (Lost Crops of Africa: Volume II: Vegetables)



In many parts of the world, access to the good quality or "complete" protein usually provided by meat, fish, dairy products, and eggs is very limited. Of the twenty amino acids needed for proper function of the human body, eleven are "non-essential" and can be synthesized; but nine are "essential" and must be acquired through diet. Protein from plant sources is almost always "incomplete", meaning it contains some, but not all, of the essential amino acids. This is why we combine certain complementary foods, such as beans and rice, which together provide all nine of the essential amino acids.

There are only a handful of plant foods that are complete proteins, and the "Miracle Tree" moringa is one of them. For those curious, the others are quinoa, buckwheat, soy, amaranth, hemp seeds, and chia seeds.

Moringa leaves not only provide all nine essential amino acids, but the dry weight of leaves is an astonishing 30 percent protein! No wonder it is called "The Tree of Life" and is used world-wide as a life-saving nutritional supplement.

And then we have the **Pods**, or the drumsticks. A single tree grown under good conditions can bear more than 1,000 pods a season.

Looking like giant string beans, but tasting slightly like asparagus, the young green pods are the most sought-after of all moringa's edible parts.



The immature pods are prepared as vegetables or pickles and are frequently featured in curries.



The protein, vitamin, iron, and calcium content of pods is similar to that of the moringa leaves; but in addition, the young pods are rich in omega-3 fatty acids.

As pods mature, they become too fibrous to eat like string beans, but the sweet frothy material inside is scooped out for a popular snack.

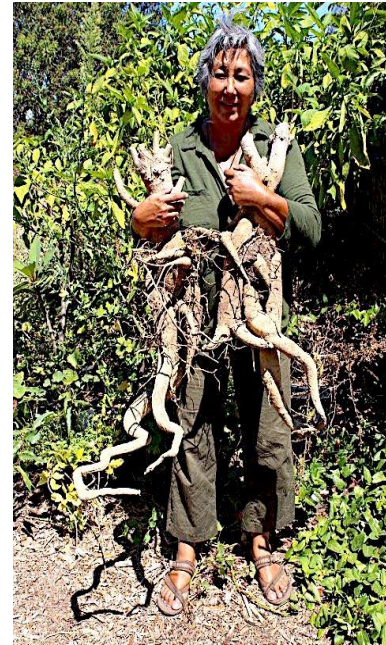
Even the **seeds** are edible and nutritious. The softer seeds from immature drumsticks can be boiled and eaten like fresh peas. When fried, they are said to taste like peanuts. They can also be popped like popcorn or husked and added to soups, stews, casseroles, and sauces.

Dried seeds can be ground and added as a nutritional supplement to everything from soup to nuts. Moringa seeds are very rich in Vitamin E, magnesium, and protein; but I don't think anyone could eat enough seeds to really make a difference since it is also a laxative.



In parts of West Africa though, eating a seed every day is thought to bestow magic powers - good to know!

And finally, the **roots** - the most potent part of the plant nutritionally and medicinally:



And oh, my, these are just about the most impressive roots I have ever seen!

The powerfully pungent flavor of the roots has given moringa yet another of its numerous popular names, the Horseradish Tree. Its thick, soft roots are made into a popular horseradish-flavored condiment or pickled, but are most valued for their many medicinal applications.

But be aware: Although the roots of the moringa tree have been used safely as far back as early Roman, Greek, and Egyptian times for treatment of hundreds of ailments, ***its medicinal properties are very potent. The consumption of the root can be exceedingly dangerous. If too much is consumed, its powerful compounds can cause paralysis and death.***

This is an excellent example of a basic principle of toxicology - "**The dose makes the poison**" ([Latin: sola dosis facit venenum](#)). What is therapeutic at one dose can be fatal at another.





So heed the admonition of Paracelsus, and don't make a substitute for horseradish from moringa roots unless you *really* know what you're doing.

There is so much more to know about moringa, the Miracle Tree. In this article, I have barely begun to scratch the surface of the myriad uses of this amazing tree. I hope you are curious enough to join us on Wednesday, January 16, 2019 when **Tommy Garcia-Prats** will share his expertise and experience with *Moringa: A Nutritional Powerhouse in Your Backyard*.

If you are interested in agronomy, urban farming, or humanitarian projects, this program is for you.

If you are vegan, vegetarian, or just want to improve your diet, mark your calendars now. And if you're a backyard gardener looking for something different or just like to travel around the world in your kitchen, you could hardly do better than with moringa.

The program is free and open to the public. We meet in the **Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion**, 1500 Hermann Drive, where it T-intersects with Crawford Street. There is free parking adjacent to the Pavilion. Members gather at 6:15 pm, and the public is welcome to join us at 7:15 to enjoy the program.



*The* HERB SOCIETY of AMERICA

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are encouraged to "friend/follow"  
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on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/HerbSociety.SouthTexasUnit/>

HSA posts almost daily nuggets of Herb information from short snippets and background to longer articles.

Janice Stuff notes, "It has been a delight to receive their notices through the Holiday season, and I look forward to their forthcoming notices."

