

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XXXIX, NUMBER 12



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
DECEMBER 2016

Editor –Linda Alderman ewalderman@comcast.net

Dec. 2016 Calendar

Dec. 11 – Sun. 3:30 PM

Winter Herbal Celebration at the home of Lois Sutton. There is only one party for ALL members; gift exchange is optional; limit is \$20. Member + Guest Only. Bring a dish to share. Main course & beverages will be provided.

Jan. 2017 Calendar

Jan. 10 – Tues. 10:00 AM

Day Meeting at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004). **Hosted by: Janice Stuff.** Program: "*Winter Solstice*"; **presented by Jacqui Highton.** **Bring your plate, napkin and a dish to share.**

Jan. 18 – Wed. 6:30 PM

Evening Meeting at the Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004). **Hosted by: Lois Jean Howard and Martha Burg.** Program: "*Henna Artistry - Ephemeral Yet Enduring; Enduring Yet Ephemeral*"; **presented by Macy Ulbricht, Rose Proler & Douniazed Wong.** **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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12/26 Donna Fay Hilliard



Member and Guest Email Communication Coordinator

After January 1, Julie Fordes fordes.julie@gmail.com will coordinate email distribution of special announcements to members and guests including meeting announcements, and other important information.



Chairman's Corner

PARTY, PARTY, PARTY AND PARTY SOME MORE seems to be the practice for December in the 21st century.

So why does the modern western world party in December? Why are decorations important? Was the original reason for these to celebrate the birth of Christ? Not hardly, since winter celebrations and decorations date to ancient Rome and the barbarian tribes of Europe pre-dating the birth of Christ.

Since the beginning of time, western cultures have dreaded the dark weeks of December with the longest nights of the year when daylight wanes. People comforted themselves with rituals involving feasting, drinking, preserving light and conserving the spirit of life by saving greenery. The festivals were in conjunction with the winter solstice, the longest day of the year. Thus the origin of contemporary parties and decorations including the Yule log, candles, holly, mistletoe and even the Christmas tree are of ancient and pagan origin.

Despite their conversion, the early Christians continued to celebrate the pagan winter festivals much to the consternation of the Church. The recent Christians had good reason to hold on to the winter festivals because life was monotonous and food was scarce for most of the year. No one wanted to forfeit their main chance for plentiful food and drink. In December large animals could be slaughtered without the necessity of salt preservation. Plentiful fresh meat was a treat associated with winter festivals. Fall grape harvests provided an abundance of new wine. These festivals were a time of debauchery, gluttony, drunkenness and promiscuousness.

Realizing that the pagan winter festivals were not going away, the Church decided to Christianize the festivals turning the elements of the Roman winter festival honoring Saturn, the god of agriculture, to Christian ends. In the fourth century the Church decreed that the celebration of the nativity would be a holy day and would be observed on December 25th, the same day as the winter solstice. By the fourth century, calendars had changed and the appointed day to celebrate the solstice was the December 25th. Some modern Christians have difficulty accepting the fact that early Christians did not celebrate the birth of Christ.

Since Roman times, slave masters and heads of Estates have prepared food during the solstice

season for slaves, serfs and tenants. Often times these banquets included a performance of games, songs and mumming in disguise. With disguise ordinary restraint could be violated giving way to mockery, expressions of anger, lust and begging with impunity.

Over the centuries Christmas became a time of misrule with little emphasis on devotion and the birth of Christ. It was the misrule that Jean Calvin, Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans set out to abolish, both in England, and in the New England colonies during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Massachusetts Bay Colony had specific laws prescribing the ways Christmas Day was to be observed, really not observed. There was to be no cessation of work, no feasting, dancing, card playing or playing any musical instruments except the drum, trumpet and jew's-harp. The culture and tradition of no Christmas celebrations or decorations in the New England colonies - what is now much of the north eastern United States- continued well into the mid-19th century.

The southern and middle colonies celebrated Christmas seasons with general conviviality, feasting, balls, hunts, and church attendance on Christmas Day. There was no present exchange among equals, but presents were given to the less fortunate.

In the United States the practice of giving presents to children at Christmas does not become an established practice until about the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The Dutch colonials in New York did observe Saint Nicholas Day on December 6th upon arrival in the new world. They followed the popular Dutch tradition of Saint Nicholas bringing presents to children that originated in the late third century in what is now modern day Turkey. It will not be until the second half of the 19th century that the modern red- suited Santa Claus is created by the American cartoonist Thomas Nast.

This Christmas season relax and indulge, do not count calories. Enjoy the comfort of food, drink and friends. Realize that you can not fight thousands of years of history, the rotation of the sun and the darkest nights of the year. Food, drink and parties cannot be separated from the winter solstice and the Christmas season!

Sally Luna
Unit Cair



Herb Fair: A Huge Success!

Thanks and Appreciation

Thanks to everyone who worked before, during, and after the fair. We tackled a new location at the Judson Robinson Center and overall the location was a success in terms of a feasible layout and parking, and customers finding us. Our Unit should be proud and recognized for completing another successful Herb Fair.

The teams completed their workshops and produced a wonderful array of crafts, soap, jelly, blends. Plant ordering was perfect and we had healthy specimens of herbal plants. Additionally much work went into publicity, communication and coordination with the center staff, signage, preorders, storage unit pickup and take back, membership information and contact, and financial/cashier team. A special shout out to **Donna Yanowski** who coordinated our snacks and beverages that included securing donations from *HEB and Picnic Bakery and Deli*. Finally, we appreciate the presence and contribution of vendors Lucia and Donna Fay. Thank you also to **Robert Jucker** of **Three Brothers Bakery** for donating three huge boxes of delicious baked goods.

We nearly sold out jellies; sold out soap and all plants; sold nearly all blends and most crafts. Hopefully, customers enjoyed shopping, talking with members, and receiving informal herbal education.

Thanks again!
Janice Stuff and Donna Yanowski, Herb Fair Chairs



Herb Fair Evaluation -

We need your input to improve future Herb Fairs. Please 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 any negative aspects of the Herb Fair you encountered or observed:

Any suggestions for future Herb Fairs?



From the Night Meeting

MEMBERSHIP REPORT by Albert Ramos

When you read **Karen Cottingham's** article in this newsletter about the recent *Colonial Day* celebration at Poe Elementary, you may find yourself marveling at the tenacity, skills, and ingenuity of our early American ancestors. And if you were fortunate enough to have attended the November 16, 2016 HSA-STU evening meeting, you learned even more exciting herbal history. Our speaker, **Mark "Merriwether" Vorderbruggen, PhD**, led our 20 members and 24 guests on a thrilling exploration of "*How Wild Plants Saved the Early Texas Settlers*".

One thing we learned about the plants that nourished and sustained the settlers was that while it may have been relatively easy to get enough vitamins and fiber from a foraging diet, getting enough calories was a real challenge. Dr. Vorderbruggen knows this not only as a scientist, but as someone who grew up in a family that depended on foraging for a portion of their daily diet.

We all thoroughly enjoyed the presentation. Afterwards, members and guests alike clamored around Dr. Vorderbruggen like he was a rock star, asking him to identify and tell us about the "mystery weeds" they brought from their own yards. Since guests came from as far north as the Sam Houston National Forest area, from Liberty County to the east, and from Brazos County to the west, there was a wide variety of plants to inspect. Dr. Vorderbruggen made it look easy to identify all of the plants presented to him. He gave detailed and frequently amusing advice about how to prepare and use them for nourishment and medicinal purposes. We should all now be able to prepare beautyberry jelly and roasted saw palmetto root for dinner! All of this information and much more is in his new book, *Idiot's Guide: Foraging*, an excellent and practical resource for budding foragers. His website, foragingtexas.com, also has detailed information about edible wild plants of Texas arranged by geographic location, environment, season, and many other characteristics. Dr. Vorderbruggen generously devotes a lot of time to educating and encouraging all those interested in foraging, especially students and scouts. We appreciate the time he spent with us this evening. Thank you, Dr. Vorderbruggen!

Although foraging was the topic of the evening, thankfully we did not have to forage for our food. Instead, all we had to do was walk up to the fall-themed food tables and partake of the delicious potluck dishes that members and guests alike brought to the meeting. At STU President **Sally Luna's** suggestion, the common theme in these dishes was pumpkin. The food was creative and tasty, but what I found surprising was that no one brought pumpkin pie!

One of tonight's 24 guests was **Jerra Wise**, mother of our own **Benée Curtis**. Jerra is a lovely and kind woman, and I know Benée and her dining mates enjoyed visiting with her at the meeting. Interest in herbs must be a family trait as Jerra is also a long-time member of the HSA through her local unit, the Virginia Commonwealth Unit.

Jeanie Dunnihoo, Mary Sacilowski, and Lucia Bettler were tonight's hostesses. Jeanie brought lovely herbal floral arrangements and delightful herbal beverages. Mary and Lucia decorated the tables with autumn themed tablecloths and centerpieces. Thank you, ladies. It was all beautiful!

The meeting was so full of information that there was no time for the **door prizes**. This means that at our next public meeting in January 2017, you will have plenty of chances to win a great prize. But the only way you can win is to attend the meeting. We need more members to attend since we had 4 more guests than members tonight! Let's have enough members at the meetings to encourage and welcome guests who are interested in learning about herbs!

From the Day Meeting

We had 14 members who attended our day meeting at our new location, Cherie Flores Pavilion, in Hermann Park, rather than meeting in members' homes. Lois Jean Howard presented a very interesting program on the "*The Beauty of Fall Native Herbs*".



What's Coming Next?

A NIGHT OF HENNA - JANUARY 18, 2017

by Karen Cottingham

Twining vines leaves, and flowers decorated her hands, arms, and feet. This was my introduction to henna nearly twenty years ago by my Muslim friend, a bride exotically adorned for her wedding day. Henna artistry piqued my interest again when years later I received an invitation to a young friend's Night of Henna celebration, which was a prelude to her Jewish wedding ceremony in Jerusalem. While I was unable to attend this wedding, the invitation rekindled my curiosity about what I considered to be a mysterious and exotic practice, one that I didn't quite feel comfortable with. Little did I then suspect that henna, or *Lawsonia inermis*, is actually an *herb*, and a most interesting one at that.

Why should we recognize henna as an herb? We are all familiar with the culinary herbs used as flavorings and the important medicinal herbs, but there are many other more subtle hallmarks of "herbal-ness". A plant's usefulness as a source of fragrance, for example, is one feature that allows it to be designated as an herb. The sweet-scented henna has been used in perfumery for thousands of years. The sensuous fragrance of henna blossoms is vividly memorialized in the *Song of Songs* of the Old Testament and in the compilations of Cleopatra's alluring arsenal of seductive scents.

A plant that is used ceremonially is also considered an herb. In many cultures, henna is an essential element in the rituals marking the major stages of life: birth, circumcision, marriage, and death. Even the occasion of a boy's first haircut is commemorated by a henna ritual. In some belief systems, henna's "magical" powers are invoked to protect against illness or misfortune and to please or placate various spirits.

The herbal sphere also includes plants used as cosmetics, and this is where henna shines. Used as a fingernail stain, a hair and beard dye, and for complex and symbolic body art, henna is unsurpassed as a medium for personal expression. Henna is also a natural herbal dye used as ink and to decorate material objects such as drums and textiles. Ceremonial and colorant functions of henna even merge during some Middle Eastern religious festivals for which the manes and tails of horses are dyed bright red.



We also recognize plants as herbs if they have medicinal qualities. The antibacterial, anti-fungal, and anti-inflammatory phytochemicals in henna have provided effective treatments throughout history for many skin and scalp disorders. The reddish henna paste best known for erotic and symbolic body art displays has also been used to treat the disfiguring disease of leprosy.

Clearly, henna exemplifies many of the properties of plants we recognize as "herbal" - their value as fragrance, their role in cultural ceremonies, as cosmetics, dyes, and medicinals, and as expressions of spirituality. Notably, however, henna lacks the most widely recognized hallmark of "herbal-ness": there seems to be no place for henna in the culinary arts.

Our January 18, 2017 program, *Henna Artistry - Ephemeral Yet Enduring; Enduring Yet Ephemeral*, will feature three women who have "hands-on" experience with henna. **Rose Proler** will share her expertise on the use of henna in the Jewish culture, particularly as part of the traditional wedding ceremony. **Douniazed Wong**, born and raised in Morocco, will discuss the prominent role henna plays in contemporary social and family life in Morocco. And **Macy Ulbricht**, who has seventeen years of experience as a henna artist, will demonstrate her henna body art designs and techniques on HSA-STU member **Dena Yanowski**. Thank you, Dena, for volunteering to be the evening's work of art!

This should truly be *A Night of Henna to Remember*.



Community Outreach and Education

COLONIAL DAY INDIGO DEMONSTRATION by Karen Cottingham

One of the highlights of the fall season for Poe Elementary Fifth Grade Students is their annual “Colonial Day” celebration held the Friday before Thanksgiving. Students dress in period garb for this day-long event: the somber attire of Pilgrims; the practical deerskins, leggings, and moccasins of Native Americans; the elegant cravats, waistcoats, and breeches of Colonial gentlemen; or the ruffled caps, gowns, and petticoats of Colonial wives. But this celebration is about more than just dressing up for a part. The students learn about the essential, practical skills of the Colonial era through the expertise of community volunteers. Our **HSA-STU group** was invited to be a part of this educational event and to relate the inspiring life story of Eliza Lucas. Eliza was the teenaged girl who introduced indigo growing and production into South Carolina in the 1740s. She was able to master this complex process by relying on the traditional knowledge of her slaves who knew about indigo production from their native Africa. Once successful, Eliza decided to share the seeds, the knowledge, and the potential profits of indigo with all the other farmers in her area. Indigo production thus became one of the three most important American industries that supported our successful American Revolution against King George. Eliza’s contribution to the independence and success of America was so important that President George Washington was one of the pallbearers at her funeral more than five decades later.

In advance of Colonial Day, the fifth grade students meticulously prepared cotton handkerchiefs by folding and rubber-banding them in *shibori* style. And while I was recounting the exciting story of Eliza’s many challenges and accomplishments in the Colonial era, textile artist **Lisa Hardaway**, assisted by Albert Ramos, dyed the handkerchiefs in an indigo vat that Lisa generously provided and prepared. In all, 150 students got to see their handkerchiefs evolve from folded and tied white fabric into unique works of indigo art.

The children watched in delight as their rubber-banded handkerchiefs were lifted from the vat, were unbound and unfolded, and then “magically” changed from yellowish-green to deep blue before their eyes.



Each child’s creation was thus revealed as a true work of art. The children not only went home with their own beautiful and unique creations, but they also took with them a deepened appreciation for America’s early history and the people who made all the difference in our country’s destiny

I am grateful for the time, expertise, and generosity of textile artist **Lisa Hardaway**. Lisa is a spinner, weaver and natural dyer who is currently an artist-in-residence at the *Houston Center for Contemporary Craft* (HCCC). See www.craftHouston.org to appreciate Lisa’s many accomplishments in the fields of music, musicology, ethnomusicology, photography, and fiber arts. Lisa’s studio door at the HCCC is open several days a week for those interested in what it takes to transform animal fleece into yarn and then into textile art.

I had the good fortune of meeting Lisa at a recent Hands-On Houston event. Hands-On Houston is a free event held at the HCCC the first Saturday of every month to introduce children to the wonders and joys of handcrafting. This is an excellent opportunity to watch a teaching artist demonstrate a craft that you can then try for yourself. It’s great for families with children and for those who simply like to be around children learning and having fun. Lisa volunteered to help the HSA-STU when I described my enthusiasm for Poe Elementary’s Colonial Day event. Thank you very much, Lisa. We couldn’t have done it without you.



Directory Update

Freezer Space Needed

Nutti Doodeheefver is looking for space in a member's freezer for the blends. I used my neighbor's freezer for years but they moved to the hill country.

Please call me at 713-667-7939 if you have space available.

Thank you.
Nutti Doodeheefver

baggetx@yahoo.com

Cheryl Israel

(832) 459-7236 (cell)



SHARE YOUR HERBAL ABUNDANCE

I am slowly rejuvenating an herb garden for someone who loves herbs but cannot garden right now. Any extra herb plants would be greatly appreciated. Are some of your herbs re-seeding or threatening to take over? Did you buy more herb plants that you needed at Herb Fair? There's always someone whose "eyes are bigger than her garden" when buying beautiful plants. Give your herbal abundance a good home. Please contact **Karen Cottingham** if you would like to share.

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