

Herbs Make Scents

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XL, NUMBER 9



SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
OCT. 2017

Editor – Linda Alderman (ewalderman@comcast.net)

October 2017 Calendar

- Oct 10**, Tues. at 10 a.m. **Day Meeting** is at the home of Janice Stuff (2112 South Blvd. Houston, TX 77098). The program is an **Herb Fair workshop**. **Bring a dish to share.**
- Oct 18**, Wed. at 6:30 p.m. **Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), **hosted by Mary Sacilowski and Haley Bowen**. The program, “10 Easy to Grow Herbs for Fall”, is presented by **Susan Wood**. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**
- Oct 24**, Tues. at 7:00 p.m. **Board meeting** at the home of Sally Luna

November 2017 Calendar

- Nov 14**, Tues. at 10 a.m. **Day Meeting** is *open to guests* and members at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), **hosted by Joan Jordan and Beth Murphy**. The program, “Herbal Vinegars-Make and Take Workshop” is presented by **Linda Alderman**. **Please RSVP to Linda at ewalderman@comcast.net**. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**
- Nov 15**, Wed. at 6:30 p.m. **Evening Meeting** at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004), **Hosted by Donna and Dena Yanowski**. The program is “*Milkweed, Medicine and Menus: A Co-Evolution of the Monarch Butterfly and the Human Species*”, presented by Barbara Keller-Willy, Founder and Director, Monarch Gateway, and President, Native Prairies Association of Texas. **Bring your plate and napkin and a dish to share.**

Newsletter deadline: the 25th of every month

Happy Birthday!



© wondercliparts.com
13 – Benée Curtis
21 – Janice Stuff
29 – Martha Burg

Herbs Needed for Teas!

Lois Jean Howard asks you to harvest the following herbs for teas for Herb Fair.

- **Red Stem Apple Mint**
- **Mexican Mint Marigold**
- **Lemon Verbena**
- **Lemongrass**
- **Lemon Balm**

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



Chairman's Corner

Greetings!

I am both awed and humbled by the outpouring of compassion, money and labor during these last months. Our family, friends and communities seem especially precious right now. I am thankful for this Herb Society of friends and the common interest we share. My heart goes out to all those affected by the storm and many who are presently living the aftermath everyday. September 22 marked the first day of fall, although it doesn't feel much like it here in Houston. I have fingers crossed that we will be seeing cooler temperatures and less humidity this month.

Scanning the national Herb Society website, I noticed there will be a webinar Thursday November 9th at 1pm CST. Registration is simple and can be done for free on their website, www.herbsociety.org. Donna Wild of Loveland, Colorado and member of the Herb Society since 1989 will be presenting a program entitled "Herbal Scented Holidays". The items she will be demonstrating remind me of some we create and sell at our Ways and Means tables. These webinars are a great way to stay inspired and active in our online community. Do take advantage of all that our national group has to offer.

I can't close without mentioning Julie Fordes, Chair Extraordinaire of the Herb Fair. She has been writing informative copy for our newsletter, composing emails about the event, printing beautiful posters/flyers for us to distribute, planning, crafting & conducting meetings – all the while displaced from her home due to Harvey. Thank you so very much Julie – the epitome of a worker bee that we've been hearing so much about. Thank you to everyone else for your passion and commitment.

Donna Yanowski
Unit Chair



Looking for Interim Newsletter Editor

Don't want a long term commitment? HSA-STU is looking for someone to assume the role of editor of this newsletter while Linda Alderman cruises on her sailboat from February through May, 2018. Just a few hours each month is needed to format the unit information. No writing is necessary!

Contact: Linda Alderman
ewalderman@comcast.net or 832-465-3620



The HERB SOCIETY of AMERICA

A New HSA Award announced:

The Madalene Hill Award for Excellence in Herbal Education

This award is to honor those who have a passion for promoting the knowledge, use, and delight of herbs through educational activities at any level.

The recipient must be living at the time of nomination and can be either a professional or nonprofessional, but must show a great zeal for sharing their passion for herbs with the public. HSA members and non-members may be nominated for this award.

This award was proposed by Henry Flowers, an HSA Life Member, and member of the HSA Pioneer Unit.

The South Central District has unanimously voted to support the award in spirit and financially in the amount of up to \$300 per year.

The application deadline for the 2019 awards is September 1, 2018.



About Our Meetings . . .

Linda Alderman

Albert Ramos

We were all still reeling from the recent storm, but on Sept. 12th, 8 members gathered to plan the events of the day group for the upcoming learning season. What an exciting year it's going to be with the **theme "Crafting with Herbs."** Some of the topics to be included are Herbal Vinegars, Crafting with Rosemary, Lemony Herbs, Honey, & even a tea party! You won't want to miss a single meeting.

Many thanks go to Pam Harris for hosting this planning meeting in her lovely home.



November 14th Day Meeting is Open to all!

Herbal Vinegars – A Make and Take Workshop

Members and guests are welcome to join us at the Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion in Hermann Park for this meeting. In addition to learning about making herbal vinegars, Linda Alderman is planning for participants **to make a bottle of herbal vinegar** to take home. What a wonderful gift for the holidays!

Let Linda if you will be participating. She wants to make enough wine vinegar in advance, and have enough bottles and herbs for everyone! Send her a message to let her know you are coming. Thank you!

RSVP Required

ewalderman@comcast.net

How sweet it is! The recent heavy weather in Houston and surrounding areas wasn't enough to keep 26 members and 13 guests away from the September 20, 2017 evening meeting. Tonight's fascinating topic was *A Taste of Texas Honeys*. Coincidentally, the meeting was held on the first day of *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year that recognizes the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve. Our meeting topic of honey fit in well with celebrating the Jewish New Year since honey is traditionally consumed for this holiday. It symbolizes the desire for a sweet year with blessings and abundance.

Nicole Buegers was tonight's speaker. Nicole is a professional beekeeper, bee advocate, and educator. Her business, *bee2bee*, installs and maintains beehives for people and organizations that would like hives but don't quite have the time, talent, or equipment to care for them.

Before *bee2bee*, Nichole's professional career ranged from Customer Service Representative to Speed Date Hostess and from Poker Pit Boss to a juror in mock trials. She has also taught conversational English, cleaned houses, mowed yards, babysat, and done temporary work. And now Nicole is even a cheesemonger in addition to being a beekeeper.

The large variety of work Nicole has done to keep her own household going makes it appropriate that she ended up becoming a beekeeper because worker bees also perform a large variety of tasks to keep a hive humming. Tonight we learned that the worker bees (all females) build and clean the hive, explore for pollen and nectar, map out the food location so others can find it, process the nectar to make honey, clean and feed the queen, and care for the queen's offspring.

With all that activity, the worker bees can work themselves to death in just a few weeks. Incidentally, other worker bees act as undertakers when their colony-mate bees die. So when we learned that Nicole herself has had - and still has - a variety of jobs, well... it just makes sense that she's a beekeeper.

The topic was so fascinating that the audience was riveted to their seats and only moved at the end to applaud Nicole and ask her their many questions. Listening to members and guests buzz about during clean up after the presentation, I heard non-stop positive comments about the talk. Of particular fascination was the video Nicole showed about the "waggle dance". This is a "mapping" dance a worker bee performs to show the exact distance and location of the pollen and nectar source relative to the position of the sun. Using a form of applied vector mechanics, the dancing bee even compensates for the movement of the sun during the time it took to map the nectar location.



We also learned that pollen is the “internal tracking device” of honey. In other words, an analysis of the pollen tells us what specific type of honey it is (sage, cotton, lavender, or tallow, for example). A study in 2011 done at the Palynology Research Laboratory at Texas A&M University revealed that the vast majority of honey - 76% to 100% - sold at grocery, warehouse, and drug stores does not actually contain pollen. And without pollen, any beekeeper worth his or her hive would tell you that (a) it's not honey and (b) even if it were honey, there's no way to tell what *type* of “honey” it is. The manufacturers of these “honey products” often heat and water down the honey before forcing it through filters that remove the pollen. Then they add high fructose corn syrup! Without the pollen, there is no way to determine the source of the “honey”. Some of the sources are from countries that do not have a high regard for safety. For this and many other reasons, Nicole recommends only the purchase of known local honeys or honeys that come from reliable source.

In the final part of her presentation, Nicole took us on a “tasting tour” of 11 varietal honeys, almost all of them from Texas. One of the honeys was from the Houston Heights, courtesy of new member **Maria Treviño**, who along with her husband **Don Burger**, is a beekeeper. Thank you, Maria. Other local honeys came from the Houston neighborhood of Candlewood and from Katy, Texas. Only one of the 11 honeys was not from Texas: the Buckwheat honey, which comes from the cooler northern states. They were all delicious, but most of us expressed a preference for just one or two honeys in particular.

Thank you, Nicole, for this interesting, fun, and educational presentation.

New HSA-STU member **Haley Bowen**, a watercolorist (among many other professional talents), painted a lovely gift for our speaker. She presented Nicole a “Thank You” watercolor of a honeycomb and bee. **Karen Cottingham** also presented the speaker a thank you gift. Karen made a beeswax-infused cotton cloth (printed with buzzing bees, of course) that can be used as an alternative to plastic wrap. Fellow member **Jacqui Highton** instructed Karen on how to make the wrap and provided some of the supplies to do it. Thank you, Jacqui!

And the evening wouldn't have been as sweet as it was without the generous help of member **Andi Leger**. Andi brought dozens and dozens of small glass bowls, labeled them, and filled them with the 11 honeys we sampled - a complete set for each table. And being the professional caterer that she is (*The FrenchFig Catering*), Andi placed each set of 11 bowls on a vibrant, green banana leaf so that they looked beautiful on our tables. Andi even organized a crew of “worker bees” to help fill and set up the honey samples before the meeting and clean up afterwards. Thank you, Andi, for all your kind help to the HSA-STU. We really appreciate it.

The evening's hostesses were **Martha Burg** and **Janice Stuff**. We enjoyed the flower arrangements they made as

centerpieces for all the tables. They thoughtfully placed these flower arrangements in “vases” that were repurposed honey jars. Janice also supplied table napkins with bee images. Another special touch was the refreshing honey-sweetened punch made to accompany the potluck meal.

Jenna Wallis sweetly made all the members and guests feel welcomed by providing honey- and bee-themed music during the setup. Jenna also helped with technical issues that arose with the projector. Thank you, Jenna.

New member **Sarah Ballanfant** spread the dulcet word about tonight's meeting to her fellow members of the *West University Garden Club*. We were happy that three of them joined us for dinner and the presentation and hope they come again. Other guests of note were:

- **Kathryn Holler**, co-owner of *Holler Brewing Co.* (2206 Edwards Street, Suite A in the Washington Avenue Arts District). Kathryn and her husband, John, left the world of lesson plans and corporate spreadsheets in 2015 to study beers and brewing. Just 18 months later, they opened the doors of *Holler Brewing Co.* to a “thirsty public”. Kathryn will be speaking to us at the February 2018 evening meeting.
- **Merrienne Timko**, a culinary historian, researcher, and lecturer with a special interest in the history of herbs in Egypt, Greece, Italy, and France. Merrienne will be the speaker at our April 2018 evening meeting. In the past, she has spoken on topics as diverse as the food of Leonardo Da Vinci and the history of cocktails, so you can be sure that you won't want to miss the April meeting!

The potluck meal for tonight's meeting was appropriately and deliciously honey-themed. One of the standouts of the spread, although not precisely honey-themed, was a large platter of several herbal cheeses that the speaker, Nicole, brought from *Houston Dairymaids* (2201 Airline Dr). *Houston Dairymaids* is a local cheese shop that specializes in Texas artisan cheese. Thank you, Nicole, for all your excellent contributions to the feast of food and reason.

If you didn't get to attend the September meeting, you'll wish you had when you learn of the door prizes that were awarded: a jar of Houston Heights honey (donated by **Maria Treviño** from her backyard hives), a jar of Houston Candlewood honey (donated by the speaker, **Nicole Buergers**), two beautiful jars of delicate Sage honey (donated by new member **Kathy Ballanfant**), a jar of fragrant lavender honey (from “the other Karen”, a friend of **Jenna Wallis**), a set of bee-themed refrigerator magnets (donated by **Janice Stuff**), and a container of herb-enhanced beeswax salve (made and donated by **Karen Cottingham**). You could have won one of these truly sweet door prizes, but the only way to win is to attend the meetings!

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, October 18. Susan Wood will be discussing *Ten Easy Herbs to Grow in the Fall*. Susan is a popular and knowledgeable speaker, so be sure to mark your calendars now.



In memory of Lucia Ferrara Bettler



Lucia joined the South Texas Unit of The Herb Society of America in 1984. She participated in all our events, usually bringing her books & other items from Lucia's Garden to sell, and generously donating wonderful baskets of herb

products as door prizes too. Her calming and welcoming presence was always appreciated by members and guests alike. She took her shop on the road to the Herbal Forum in Round Top and for many years to the national Educational Conferences of The Herb Society. But to me, her strength was always in words. Whether written or spoken she shared her knowledge and love of life with everyone. Lucia never strayed from her belief in the Holy Spirit, goddesses, angels, wise women, fairies and all the other spirits that made up her world. She seemed to be seeking more ways in which a person could touch and be touched by faith, healing and blessings. She remained forever true to her essence.



To the left is a photo from my garden that reminds me of Lucia. I had wrongly called the goddess

next to the magnificent sky vine (*Thunbergia grandiflora*) Athena. Lucia quickly corrected me saying it was Diana: goddess of the hunt, the moon and nature. What, you don't see Lucia in this photo? Look closer, she is there in spirit and always will be for me. I'm sure you have many things in your life that will always remind you of Lucia. She will not be forgotten.

Some of Lucia's most memorable writings were for the Blessing of the Gardens during the annual Spring Herbal Forum at Festival Institute in Round Top.

Madalene Hill asked her to do this for the gardens she so lovingly created there. For 21 years we would gather in the incomparable Mediterranean Garden, near the statue of Mary, to hear Lucia give the blessing. I've asked our newsletter editor to include a garden blessing from 1999 to remember the essence of Lucia Ferrara Bettler. I received a copy of it just hours after Lucia passed on September 22nd, 2017 into the spirits beyond. A friend had sent it out to others to honor her memory and soothe our grief. We will always remember Lucia, born on September 17th, 1948, as a kind and gentle spirit who guided us to be so much better in our daily lives and to each other.

-Susan Gail Wood

Lucia Bettler and the Gardens at Festival Hill

Lucia Bettler was a wonderful fixture of the Herbal Forum at Round Top for many years. This past March was the 22nd annual event and Lucia performed the Blessing of the Gardens for 21 of those 22 years. The only event that wasn't marked by her blessing was the first. For 20 of those years Lucia also brought her book store and her selections of books and other items were always highly appreciated.

Lucia always told me that she looked forward to this event every year with much anticipation. Participants looked forward to what she would say in her blessing. What she wrote every year was a contemplative work that had many insights into nature, gardening and spiritualism. It didn't focus on a religion, rather on the way that we as gardeners commune with nature on various levels and how gardening and gardens are a boon to our souls.

Lucia's passing is a very sad event and her participation in the Herbal Forum will be greatly missed. Last March she said that she hoped to compile all of her writings for the Herbal Forum into a complete set. I'm not sure if she was ever able to do so, but I hope that they can all be found in her papers and perhaps we can finish this project in her memory. I plan to dedicate the Herbal Forum next March to Lucia. May her memory continue to bring us solace, especially when we garden and cook with the herbs that bind us in a collective way and bring spirit and joy to our lives.

-Henry Flowers, Garden Director at Festival Hill



Floating Herbal Bouquet from garden blessing at Festival Hill

Back to the Garden

by [Lucia Bettler](#)

No matter how you look at it, there is magic in the garden...the soothing color of new pale green shoots; the soft spring rains and tree-rustling winds that wash over us; the healing that comes when we walk with awareness.

Oh, I'm sure a botanist could explain how flowers come from seed, and how trees leaf out season after season. There would be talk of science, DNA, and genetics. Nevertheless, every spring the miracle occurs. The delicate anemones come from hard bulbs planted months ago; the ferns, symbols of energy and movement, spiral up out of the cool, brown earth; and the delicate lemon verbena delights all who witness its tiny leaves coming from what look like lifeless winter branches. It happens every spring and I am always surprised and in awe.

The ancients believed that shining spirits inhabited the trees, herbs, and flowers. They called them devas, flower fairies, and tree spirits, and their job was to help each plant remain true to its essence. In Victorian times, the fairies of the garden were thought to paint the faces on pansies, roll up the spider's webs, and sing to the bracken on the forest floor.

In the 60's and 70's, a group of dedicated seekers in Scotland had visions of a magnificent garden and a community of peace and light. They worked hard at Findhorn, augmented the poor soil, and

communicated with the spirits of nature who taught them the natural ways to grow plants. Their gardens are now abundant; their vegetables and flowers are huge. They taught us about true communion and partnership with the Earth.

We cannot all be expected to be so finely attuned to Nature, but we can rediscover the subtle changes in the garden as we witness the miracles of life right before our eyes.

I love to go outside late at night, after midnight. It's a quiet time, a magic time. There's something different about the wind. Even in the city the sounds have quieted. There's less competition from cars and human voices, and it's much easier to hear the Earth's voice. The other night I swept a few leaves and oak flower catkins full of pollen off the kitchen steps. I stopped and savored the quiet, caressed the rosemary, my face upraised to the moist, cool air, anticipating much needed rain. As I did, a prayer of thanksgiving lifted up from my heart to say, "Thanks for the reminder."

It had been a busy week: helping to plan a friend's wedding, preparing a meal for fifty, working in our shop, getting ready for the Round Top Herb Festival.

And just what was the reminder?

It was to stop, to listen, and to remember. The earth and the garden want to remind us of who we are. Like a visit to church or temple, the herb garden gently taps us on the shoulder and the green spirits remind us of our essence and our souls that thirst.

A very gifted garden writer and herb gardening friend died this year. Not an older wiser woman, but a woman in mid-life, in her prime. Occurrences like this give us pause. But we must look to the garden. Sometimes a plant leaves us, seemingly before it is time. But whose time, then?

Nature has her own time. It was thought that the fairies could take a person to their kingdom deep within the Earth and regale them with songs and tales for a night. Upon returning, the mortal would realize that 30 years had gone by.

Time does to us what it will. We are only asked to live with awareness, to live fully and wisely. Those of us who make gardens know what a spiritual endeavor this is. The herb garden reminds us that



we are a part of the Earth. Now is the time to see her and recognize the garden energy in all of us.

Take time to go to the special places in your garden. Look for signs of fairies. Listen for the Earth's songs. Let your soul be enchanted.

Joni Mitchell said it so well in her song.

"We are stardust.
We are golden.
And we've got to get ourselves
Back to the Garden".

green blessings,
Lucia

From the Sept. 26th Houston Chronicle...

Lucy "Lucia" Ferrara Bettler, 69, of Houston, Texas, passed away on Friday, September 22, 2017.

There will be a Memorial Gathering on Friday, October 20, 2017 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm with a Rosary Service at 7:00 pm at Pat H. Foley & Company.

A Memorial Mass will be held on Saturday, October 21, 2017 at 10:00 am at St. Anne's Catholic Community. A full obituary will be published at a later date.

A final note: The HSA Fall Newsletter features probably one of Lucia's final pieces of writing, "A Feast of Flowers: Nourishment for the Spirit" www.herbsociety.org



What's Coming Up Next?

*AUTUMN DAYS IN THE HERB GARDEN-
A TIME TO SOW AND A TIME TO REAP*

KAREN COTTINGHAM

- October 18, 2017: *10 Easy-to-Grow Herbs for Fall*, presented by Susan Wood, HSA-STU Member
- November 4, 2017: *45th Annual Herb Fair*, at Judson Robinson Community Center
- November 15, 2017: *Milkweed, Medicine and Menus: A Co-Evolution of the Monarch Butterfly and the Human Species*, presented by Barbara Keller-Willy, Founder and Director, Monarch Gateway, and President, Native Prairies Association of Texas



If you've wanted to grow your own herbs, you are in the right place at the right time! Fall is the best time of the year to plant herbs here on the Texas Gulf Coast. Come to **Susan Wood's** October program, *10 Easy-to-Grow Herbs for Fall*, and get ready to savor the flavor!

There are so many benefits to growing your own herbs. Planting and harvesting your own herbs will make your mealtimes sing. Freshly harvested

herbs contain lots of vitamins and anti-oxidants that processed foods may lack. Too much stress in your life? Take a relaxing evening stroll around your garden and let the fragrance of basil and fennel soothe your cares.

Sound good? Then mark your calendar for October 18. Everyone can have their own herb garden, even if it's on a back porch or an apartment balcony. Susan's program is designed for all gardeners from the first-timer to the old-hand. She is an excellent gardener and speaker who has been a member of The Herb Society of America since 1970.



Don't miss our **45th Annual Herb Fair**, one of Houston's favorite Fall traditions. This year, *Herb Fair* will be held November 4, 2017 at Judson Robinson Community Center, 2020 Hermann Drive, from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Enjoy shopping for locally grown, healthy

herbs that thrive in our climate. Our members can answer your questions and help you pick out just the right plants for your garden.

You can also stock up on organic garden supplies, snack on delicious herbal baked goods, and compose your very own special aromatherapy blends.

'Seasoned' Herb Society members will help you find the perfect herbal gift for everyone on your holiday list! And for the best selection of our famous herb blends and herbal jellies, you'll want to place your orders now. For further information, see <http://www.herbsociety-stu.org/annual-herb-fair.html>

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Join us November 15, 2017 for *Milkweed, Medicine and Menus: A Co-Evolution of the Monarch Butterfly and the Human Species*, a fast-paced talk presented by Barbara Keller-Willy. Barbara will take us on an evolutionary jaunt that starts in the ooze of the *LaBrea Tar Pits* and ends up with milkweed on the dinner table as a culinary delicacy.



Gourmet Stuffed Milkweed Pods

Can one really eat a plant that contains cardiac glycoside poison? Isn't this toxin the reason the milkweed plant is the perfect monarch caterpillar host?



Monarch caterpillar feeding on Milkweed

Milkweed was named for Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, because humans discovered milkweed's therapeutic benefits long ago. But is it really possible that monarchs also self-medicate? And can milkweed actually make your garden more productive?

For the answers to these and many more intriguing questions about monarch and human co-evolution, don't miss Barbara's fascinating presentation. We'll even learn about the the first recorded deficit of milkweed that occurred during World War II when the government confiscated 5,500 tons of milkweed for military purposes!

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Our meetings are held in the beautiful **CHERIE FLORES GARDEN PAVILION** at 1500 Hermann Dr. The entrance to the Pavilion's parking lot is where Crawford Street T-intersects with Hermann Drive. The spacious meeting room is reserved for us from 6:00 pm - 9:30 pm to allow us plenty of time to set up, socialize, eat, meet, and clean up. And don't forget about Herb Fair!





Karen Cottingham

With the calendar page now turned to October, images of Halloween are suddenly everywhere. A pointy-hatted woman flies past the full moon on a broomstick, her long, tangled hair streaming in the wind. A glaring black cat rides along behind her. Sinister concoctions foam and bubble over the rim of a pot-bellied cauldron on *terra firma* below.

We know instinctively that the woman on the broomstick is a witch - but *how* are we so sure?

Why have these particular images - broomsticks, hats, cauldrons, and cats - become so embedded in our imaginations that they immediately identify this woman as a witch?

Our modern-day trick-or-treat version of Halloween lets us playfully leap back and forth from pointy hat to witch and from bubbling cauldron to witches brew. It's part of the Halloween fun. But the medieval origins of these remarkably enduring symbols of witchcraft are anything but festive. Today's lighthearted imagery played a perverse and tragic role in the fate of tens of thousands of innocent women caught up by the witch mania of the dark past.

How did brooms and over-sized hats become associated with witchcraft? Why would cats and kettles expose a woman as a secret practitioner of the "dark arts"?

It's a shameful tale that begins with a bubbling brew... *witches brew*.

The deliberate fermenting of wet grain into a palatable, nutritious, and safe beverage that had pleasant effects on the nervous system began as early as 10,000 BC in ancient Sumeria. Women were the original and exclusive practitioners of the ancient art of brewing - the seemingly magical transformation of grain, water, and herbs into a delicious life-sustaining elixir. These female brewers (later called "brewsters") practiced their intoxicating alchemy under the tutelage and divine protection of female deities. In return, the elite brewsters functioned as priestesses and served the ale in religious ceremonies.

It makes sense that women were responsible for brewing in early times. Women prepared the family food and were already accustomed to safeguarding, grinding, and preparing grains for their daily bread. The equipment required for brewing - a kettle for boiling and

a stick for stirring - was already in place in the domestic domain of women.

Women were responsible for the health and wellbeing of the family, and ale was an important source of nutrition for the daily meal. In some situations, adults consumed up to a gallon of ale daily; and since its alcohol content was initially very low, ale could also be given to children. Having been boiled and then purified with various anti-bacterial herbs, ale was a safer beverage than water, which, by contrast, was frequently contaminated and caused disease epidemics.

Picture the amazement of a medieval peasant watching a bubbling mixture of grain and water transform itself into a nutritious, pleasantly intoxicating brew. This process, which would not be wholly understood for many more centuries, must have seemed like magic! The fermented "wort" (the liquid extracted from the boiled grain) was then "spiked", or further modified, by the addition of powerful bioactive botanicals. Herbs, spices, fruits, and flowers not only improved the flavor of ale and retarded its spoilage, but also induced a variety of pharmacological effects in the tippler. The brewster who selected these herbs for their desired effects might as well have been casting spells.

Herb-enhanced ale, as well as the herbs themselves, were known as "gruit". Specific herbs, either collected in the wild or purposefully cultivated in "wortyards", were chosen for their stimulatory, aphrodisiacal, or other medicinal qualities. Dozens of herbs, notably sweet gale, mugwort, yarrow, ground ivy, bog myrtle, sage, and rosemary - along with juniper berries, ginger, caraway seed, nutmeg, and cinnamon - provided a wide variety of flavors, aromas, bioactive effects, and anti-bacterial benefits. The task of selecting and gathering these additives naturally fell to the experienced herbalists and healers - the women. And in the course of perfecting the art of brewing, individual brewsters would have acquired extensive knowledge of the beneficial effects of herbs.

Women who brewed ale at home eventually began selling their excess - first to neighbors and passers-by, and later, on a larger scale, at markets and fairs. These "alewives" ("wife" in Old English meant "woman") were thus able to supplement the family income through their domestic labor or even support themselves if they were unmarried or widowed. Gradually, the particularly successful alewives began to enjoy an elevated social status and relative independence.

Alewives with surplus ale for sale at home communicated this availability by displaying a primitive "broom" against their gate, fence, or door. The broom consisted of a wooden rod or stake with many smaller sticks tied to one end. This easily-recognizable implement of domesticity was used to stir the brew-pot as well as to sweep the floor. Later, alewives attached a



Alewife advertising her wares

broom over their door to advertise their wares, projecting it outward for maximum visibility.

Other alewives conducted a lucrative business at crowded markets and fairs, places where people came prepared to spend money and have fun. The more conspicuous the alewives made themselves the more ale they sold, so they adopted the fashion of wealthy noblewomen and wore immense, colorfully beribboned conical hats which towered two to three feet above their heads. These fashionable alewives enjoyed financial success, relative ease, and the respect of their neighbors.

All of this changed, however, during the tumultuous times of the late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period. Medieval people became consumed by the presence of evil and the need to eradicate it. Even the success or failure of everyday activities was believed to be influenced by supernatural powers. The following quotation, referring to brewing within monasteries, is chilling in its depiction of casual institutional violence in this period:

Often the beer failed to live up to heavenly standards and a scapegoat had to be found. Sometimes it was blamed on evil spirits and specifically on "brew witches" or "beer witches". The last known burning of a "beer witch" was in 1591.

Imagine living in a society so superstitious and blood-thirsty that women were accused of witchcraft and then tortured and killed because of a failed batch of beer!

While officials were busy burning "beer witches" and other women accused of causing similar calamities, waves of devastating plagues were sweeping through Europe. Some 50 million people lost their lives in agony, and no one knew why. Desperate survivors looked to religion not only to make sense of this cataclysm, but, more importantly, to eliminate its cause. Scapegoats were urgently needed as moral panic mounted. Superstition prevailed over reason.

The most vulnerable members of society were accused of having caused the plagues by practicing "witchcraft" - magic that went against the power of God. The Catholic Church at first - and the Protestants later - were instrumental in fanning the flames of anti-witch hysteria and carried out sensational trials and public executions. Despite having clashed in most other ways, Catholics and Protestants were unified in their determination to

eradicate the "witches" responsible for disease, other disasters, and an increasingly vast array of social ills.

Women who disregarded the narrowly defined social expectations of the time were particularly susceptible to being accused of witchcraft - especially independent women, women without the protection of men, and women with "supernatural" knowledge and skills. Women like brewsters, who possessed the secret knowledge of herbs and could transform grain into alcohol as if by magic, and alewives, who came and went as they pleased and answered to no man, would have been seen as dangerous affronts to the social and religious order.

And hadn't Pope Innocent VIII himself declared in 1484 that "the cat was the devil's favorite animal and idol of all witches"? Cats and brewsters were constant companions, having traded rodent control for regular meals. But weren't black cats "known" to be surrogates for the devil in diabolical rituals? And couldn't witches shape-shift into cats to commit their atrocities in disguise?

It is not surprising, then, that alewives and brewsters, along with herbalists, were specifically targeted and accused of practicing the "Devil's Magic".

At the same time that their safety was becoming increasingly precarious, alewives were also being systematically excluded from participation in the expanding brewing industry. Newly-formed guilds controlled access to most livelihoods, including brewing, and women were denied full membership. The guilds for physicians and surgeons that were forming at the same time also made it difficult for female herbalists and healers to continue to compete with them.

Another strike against the alewives who wished to practice their craft came when the law mandated that hops, rather than the traditional blends of gathered herbs, were to be used for the "bitting" and preservation of beer. Cultivating or purchasing hops required a sizable financial investment, an impossibility for women, as they were prevented from borrowing money, running businesses, and owning property.

Alewives and brewsters suffered greatly during these chaotic and violent times. With legal, economic, social, and religious barriers to practicing their livelihood, many became impoverished and marginalized. Poverty and declining social status made them even more vulnerable to persecution. Some defiantly continued to brew ale in the traditional way in their kitchens or yards, but many others took employment at inns and taverns.

The plight of alewives in taverns continued to plummet as they became associated, if not by reality, then by



proximity and innuendo, with the promiscuity, prostitution, and drunkenness that were rampant wherever alcohol was served. Tavern alewives became convenient scapegoats that allowed beer-drinkers to excuse themselves for having engaged in lewd activities while intoxicated. Contemporary poems and dramas reflected their declining respectability and abounded with tales of drunken alewives with insatiable carnal desires tempting innocent men into immorality.

Male brewers eager to ruin the reputations of their female competitors were also known to cast aspersions and spread false rumors about them. As doubts about the competency and honesty of alewives swirled throughout common discourse, defamatory caricatures also began appearing in popular culture. Alewives were seen as cheats who not only served tainted brew, but also used false measures to avoid dispensing a full serving.

Some scholars also believe that the powerful male brewing community systematically made alewives the scapegoats for the deterioration of morality that resulted from imbibing their product. Public opinion has always been easy to manipulate; and in the Middle Ages, one of the most powerful tools of persuasion was religious visual art.

Church sculpture, carvings, paintings, and stained glass windows were the books of knowledge for the medieval illiterate. And whether for good or for bad, sponsoring church art provided the rich and powerful a means to influence general thoughts and attitudes.

The religious scholar Teresa Vaughn has pointed out that ecclesiastical art consistently depicted alewives as evil, depraved, and dishonest. Church decorations show them to be libidinous wenches "cavorting with demons" while carousing their way to hell. Remarkably, there are more depictions of alewives in hell than members of any other profession! Most medieval churches have at least one painting or carving of The Last Judgment that includes a naked alewife "gleefully brandishing a huge tankard" of ale while being condemned to hell.

Surely there were far more serious sins worthy of being denounced, so why did church art depict so many cavorting alewives in hell? The answer lies in the power of the purse. Wealthy brewing guilds contributed heavily to the construction and decoration of churches. In return, donors were allowed to direct the artists and sculptors to disparage, discredit, and ultimately doom the alewives. As marginalized, impoverished, and mistrusted outsiders, they were powerless to defend themselves.

The combination of all of these incendiary characterizations had dire consequences for alewives. In the frenzy of the escalating witch-hunts, trials, and executions, the diabolical imagery that signified witches began to cross over and merge with the traditional emblems of the female brewer.

The cauldron which had once produced pure and nutritious sustenance now held a repugnant brew of vile and nefarious ingredients. The broom that stirred the foaming brew, now enchanted, took flight. Cats that had been so useful to protect the grain from vermin became the devil incarnate or another witch in disguise. And the tall pointy hats the alewives wore, once symbols of prestige, were now marks of their guilt, for they resembled the hats that Jews were forced to wear by the Inquisitors.

Alewives and witches alike were described interchangeably as grotesque, sexually deviant demon-lovers who were adept at casting spells and brewing potions. And once alewives were thought of in the same terms as witches, it was but a small step to accuse them of being witches in reality. They became one and the same in the minds of their accusers.

In 2007, anthropologist Alan Eames was the first to recognize that the visual images that allow us to instantly identify a woman as a witch - her broom, hat, cauldron, and cat - were exactly the same objects that defined a medieval woman as a brewster. As the attributes of a witch had been appropriated to redefine the alewife, the attributes of the alewife simultaneously shifted to redefine the witch. Alewives and witches had become indistinguishable. And now when we see a woman with a wide-brimmed conical hat, a bubbling cauldron, a black cat or a broom, we automatically think, "WITCH!" instead of



A "modern" witch

"BREWSTER!"

When Eames researched the archives of witch trials in France, Germany, and Scotland, he found that 60% of the accused women with occupations were brewsters, alewives, or midwives. Is it any wonder that women since that time have had almost no role in brewing until very recently?

So this Halloween when you open your door to a black-cloaked, green-faced little "hag" sporting an over-sized pointy hat and carrying a cauldron to collect her treats, take a moment to reflect upon the lost souls of long ago whose only "crimes" were their skills, self-sufficiency, and courage. Then raise your tankard high in salute and down a "Witches Brew" in their honor!

45th Annual HERB FAIR 2017

Set-up: Friday, November 3
Sales: Saturday November 4

Herb Fair Chair: **Julie Fordes**
832-969-8349

Thanks to all who are helping make a difference by participating in Herb Fair preparations.

We are looking forward to all members and guests helping in the preparation for our Herb Fair and on the sale **day**. Participation in fair preparations is an expected commitment for all members. It is a great learning and enjoyable experience for **everyone!**

Spice Blends: Donna and Dena Yanowski

Crafts: Pam Harris, Jacqui Highton, & Lois Jean Howard

Publicity: Benee Curtis and Susan Wood, & Karen Cottingham

Plants: Janis Teas and Jeanie Dunnihoo

Jellies: Lois Jean Howard, Andi Leger, Jeanie Dunnihoo, Benee Curtis and Sally Luna

Craft Workshops:

There are several workshops planned where members can work on making some of the items we sell. The dates for the workshops are:

Oct. 12	Elayne Kouzounis home 2426 Maroneal	10am-2pm
Oct. 26	Jacqui Highton's home 3817 Marquette	10am-2pm

The Pre-order form has been posted on the website <http://www.herbsociety-stu.org/annual-herb-fair.html>. Please pre-order a **generic voucher**, the Unit does not have to pay 10% to the Judson Robinson Center, thus saving money!!!

This year we have a **Temporary Food Permit** which gives us the ability to give samples of our products and to sell food and drink that can be eaten at the fair. We need at least three different kinds of fall themed herby baked goods as well as our jellies, blends, etc. We will be asking all of you to step up and make something. If you have a suggestion, let Julie Fordes know!

Benee is making **Burgundy Rosemary Jelly**. We need at **least three more people** to step up and make a batch of Cranberry Jalepeno Jelly. I have the recipe ready to send you. We would also like to make a citrus jelly; maybe with ginger... we are looking for recipes. Call with any ideas.

Members of the craft team have had to cancel a few workshops due to Harvey, but are hard at work on our usual fabulous herbal products.

Volunteers are still needed for set up and day of... I will be contacting you to volunteer if you haven't already.

Timeline:

Friday (members work at least 2 hours)*

8 - 9 AM Preliminary setup

9 - 11 AM Plants arriving and setup Members working!

11 AM – 5 PM Finish setup on plants, blends, crafts, jellies etc.

Saturday (members work at least 4 hours)*

7:30 AM Members arrive and work--

8 - 9 AM Pre-sale, customers pickup vouchers and shop

9 - 2 PM Public sales

2 - 4 PM Close sales, tear down, clean up

NOTE: Coffee, snacks, and food provided for workers by hospitality team

NOTE: **Save and bring shopping bags** for our customers to use



Herbally Speaking...

...from the desk of Linda Alderman

Summer is starting to wane, and the glorious season of fall is upon us. This is the time of year when light summer eating is just about over and thoughts of comfort food begin! It's the time for thyme in my recipes! It's the "thyme" for soup.

Thyme *Thymus vulgaris* **Lamiaceae**



Description: Thyme is a small, many-branched, aromatic, perennial shrub. Its flowers are numerous, tubular and range from lilac to pink. They are under ¼ inch long

and are found in terminal clusters. The leaves are opposite, oblong-lanceolate, stalkless or nearly stalkless; they are ¼ - ½ inch in length. The undersides of the leaves are pale and often hairy. The fruit is four, tiny seedlike nutlets. Thyme can grow to a height of 12-18 inches tall.

A little History: *Thymus* is the original Greek name with one translation "courage." How appropriate is that for a herb that is invigorating to the senses? However, the name may also derive from the Greek's term "to fumigate." This would be fitting for an herb that was burned to chase stinging insects from the house. The plant represented style and elegance to the Greeks and chivalry in the Middle Ages. On a more practical level, its culinary uses include flavoring liqueurs and cheese. Over the centuries thyme's medicinal reputation grew. From the 15th – 17th centuries thyme was used to combat the plagues in Europe and as recently as World War I, antiseptics included thyme's essential oils. Thyme came to the New World with the first European settlers and grows wild in some areas of North America.

Cultivation: Thyme likes well-drained soil, and, my resource indicates, "ample sun." Keep thyme lightly pruned and do it regularly, as severe pruning is hard on them and will result in dieback in hot weather. If you don't prune them, thyme branches become very woody and are easily split. I've had mixed results with growing thyme; maybe I shirked my pruning! Once established in a sunny location, they are carefree and only need weeding. Thyme may be grown from seed, but you know I can't wait; it's easier to buy a small plant or get a cutting from a friend. Now is the time to think about

propagation. Semiwoody cuttings can be taken in fall, winter or spring and will root quickly in potting soil, perlite or sphagnum. If they are growing happily, thyme may be pegged – anchor a branch with soil or a hairpin and advantageous roots will quickly form. Carefully cut away the new plant and transplant the newly rooted section.

There are low, creeping thymes but they generally are not used for culinary purposes.

Thymes to try in your garden:

- T. vulgaris*, common thyme-the English call it garden thyme; good flavor
- T. v.* 'Broadleaf English'-has broader leaves; good flavor
- T. v.* 'Narrow-leaf French'-narrow gray leaves; good flavor
- Thymus x citriodorus*-lemon thyme; beautiful dark green, lemon-scented; excellent in the kitchen

Three-Pepper Thyme Soup

- ¼ c. olive oil
- 1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and cut into strips
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. dried thyme (2 – 3 tsp. fresh thyme)
- 2 jalapeño peppers, seeded, deveined, and chopped
- 4 red bell peppers, seeded, deveined, and diced
- 2 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 5 c. chicken stock
- ½ c. heavy cream
- Salt and pepper

In a medium sauce pan, heat oil. Sauté yellow pepper about 3 minutes, until just slightly softened. Remove and reserve. In same pan, cook onion, garlic, thyme, and jalapeño and red peppers about 12 minutes, until soft and wilted. Stir in tomato paste and stock, bring to a boil, and simmer, partially covered, for about 30 minutes. Puree soup in a blender or food processor, stir in cream, and taste for salt and pepper. Serve garnished with reserved yellow pepper.

Serves 6.

Resources:

- Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs
- The Culinary Herbal by Susan Belsinger and Arthur O. Tucker
- Southern Herb Growing by Madalene Hill & Gwen Barclay



Herb Fair Expenses

Please retain all sales slips and packing slips in order to be reimbursed for your expenses.

Submit these slips and the STU Reimbursement Form to Treasurer. If you need a form or have questions, contact: jestuff@pdq.net

Mail to Janice Stuff, Treasurer
P.O. Box 6515
Houston, TX 77265-6515

Herb Day 2018 Update:

Thank you to all who either responded to my email or stopped to chat at the September meeting regarding the possible themes for next year's event. We're already beginning to contact possible speakers and organize a timeline for planning meetings. I plan to keep these early stages of planning as transparent as possible and welcome any ideas regarding Herb Day 2018. Let's make this one the best one yet!

Dena Yanowski

Master Gardeners Host Annual Fall Plant Sale

On Saturday, Oct. 14

The Galveston County Master Gardeners' Fall Plant Sale will be conducted from 9 a.m. to 1p.m. at the Galveston County Fairgrounds, located on Highway 6 in Hitchcock.

October is the month to start many types of cool season vegetables as transplants for the fall garden. Such vegetables include broccoli, cauliflower, Brussel sprouts, lettuce, cabbage, dill, cilantro, parsley, Swiss chard and more. Fall is also the ideal time to plant citrus trees, perennials and ornamentals to provide ample time for plants to establish their root system before putting out new leaves in the spring.

Literally thousands of flowering plants, herbs, bulbs, vegetables transplants and citrus trees – all selected for the Texas Upper Gulf Coast growing environment – will be for sale.

The Master Gardeners also maintain the Discovery Garden, a four-acre public garden consisting of a fruit orchard and vegetable beds, in addition to an Earth-Kind garden, a butterfly garden, a serenity garden and a variety of landscape trees recommended for Galveston County. The Discovery Garden is located in Carbide Park in La Marque.

Proceeds from the plant sale are used to maintain the Discovery Garden and provide educational programs for area gardeners.

For more information contact
Ginger Benson 281-309-5065



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
P.O. Box 6515
Houston, TX 77265-6515



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

Herbs Make Scents – September 2017