

Herbs Make Scents



THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XLIV, NUMBER 4

SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
APRIL 2021

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April 2021 Calendar

All in-person **Day and Evening Meetings** are cancelled until further notice!!!!

Apr 1-30

“Planting Palooza - 30 Days of Planting” hosted by Bellaire Parks and Recreation

Apr 7, Wed. at 7:00 pm

Board Meeting

Apr 10, Sat. at 10:00 am

Herbal Education: Westbury Community Garden 12581 Dunlap St., Houston, TX 77035 For more information, see page 7.

Apr 15, Thur.

Nominations for Annual Charitable Garden Donations Due

Apr 17, Wed. at 9:00 am

Garden Workday: Garden Oaks Elementary School, 901 Sue Barnett Dr., Houston, TX 77018 For more informations, see page 7.

Apr 21, Wed. at 7:00 pm

Pearls for the Pandemic: Zoom Meeting - *“Hold the Phone! Tips for Photographing Native Plants and Wildlife with Your Smartphone”* presented by **Lauren Simpson**, creator of **St. Julian’s Crossing Wildlife Habitat** in Houston, TX

Apr 27, Sat. at 7:00 pm

Full Moon Ramble - Members Only

May 2021 Calendar

May 19, Wed. at 7:00 pm

Annual Meeting

Newsletter deadline: the 25th of every month is strictly enforced
(April editor Janice Freeman)

April Birth Flower - Daisy



Photo courtesy of
Morguefile

“**Asteraceae**, also called Compositae, the aster, daisy, or composite family of the flowering-plant order Asterales. With more than 1,620 genera and 23,600 species of herbs, shrubs, and trees distributed throughout the world, Asteraceae is one of the largest plant families. Asteraceae is important primarily for its many garden ornamentals, such as ageratums, asters, chrysanthemums, cosmos, dahlias, marigolds (*Tagetes*), and zinnias. Paleobotanists suggest that the first members of this family may have evolved in Argentina some 50 million years ago, based on the discovery of well-preserved fossils that date to the Eocene Epoch (56 million to 33.9 million years ago).” - *The editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica*

Happy Birthday!

Janice Dana (4/1) Mike Jensvold (4/29) Kathy McDaniel (4/21)



Chairman's Corner

Greetings!

Things are popping up all over my life! Plants I thought might not make it after the freeze have little bits of green popping out, and volunteer gardening opportunities are popping up as well. Read more about them in the Back to Our Roots column.

We have started to look forward to the future and are making preliminary plans for our evening meetings in anticipation of a time when we **may** be able to meet in person again. This will be a major topic of discussion at the next board meeting. I feel confident we can make our way forward through the spring and summer with plans that make sense for the group as the whole and for individual members.

I have booked "regular" third Wednesday of the month evening meeting time slots with the Cherie Flores Pavilion starting in May. Of course, the Covid situation is changing rapidly and we will remain flexible with our plans. Gretchen assures me that Hermann Park will work to meet our needs, whether it involves using an outside venue, or changing the dates. I also booked a time slot for use of Cherie Flores Pavilion (Tuesday, May 11) for the Day Group Meeting. Again, we can use it or not, meet outside or whatever makes sense for the most people. **Janice Dana** and **Pam Harris** (Day Group Chairs) will be able to make that call closer to the proposed meeting date. The experience of one of our themed evening meetings - sharing food and herbal knowledge with a room full of 50 people - is a fond one for me. I also have wonderful memories of intimate Day Meetings in member's homes, crafting, sharing recipes and learning about herbs. I hope to experience both of these again.

May is also when I would like to have our Annual Meeting. I am inclined to hold this on Zoom, as it worked well last year. If you are a new member, the Annual Meeting, which may be one of the regular business meetings, will be held between April 1 and July 1. Major topics of discussion at this meeting include a review of unit finances for the year, a proposed budget for the following year, elections of officers, donations to gardens, review of programs, meetings and events, and ideas from members. This year the terms will run out for three of our Officers, **Julie Fordes** (Chair), **Karen Cottingham** (Vice-Chair/Program Director), and **Mary Sacilowski** (Secretary). The Nominating Committee is working on providing a slate of candidates for these positions to be voted on at the Annual Meeting. You will all hear more about this important meeting in the weeks to come.

April 15th is the deadline to submit a proposal and nominate a garden for the Annual Charitable Garden Donation. This deadline is designed to allow for the applications to be gathered and shared with our members for review at least 2 weeks in advance of the Annual Meeting. Please pay close attention to the deadline.

Past recipients of our charitable donations include:

Nature Discovery Center in Bellaire, Texas; Herb Gardens at Festival Institute in Round Top, Texas; Herbs Gardens in the following Houston area locations: Urban Harvest, Gardening Education for Children Program, Center for Contemporary Craft, Mercer Arboretum, Houston Arboretum, Houston Botanical Garden and Sight into Sound (non-profit for visually impaired).

Julie Fordes
Unit Chair



ANNUAL CHARITABLE GARDEN DONATION

Julie Fordes



As a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the knowledge, use, and delight of herbs, the HSA-STU allocates funds annually to support educational gardens that share our vision.

Past recipients of our charitable donations are listed in last paragraph in the Chairman Corner.

We are now **calling for members to propose** additional gardens they feel are deserving of our support. Big, small, famous, or tucked away in a corner - we are looking for gardens that exemplify a dedication to herbal education.

Please send a written proposal to **Julie Fordes** before April 15th. We need the full 411 on the garden - who, what, when, where, why and how. Be sure to let us know if the funds are to be used for a special project. Including pictures in your proposal would also be very helpful.

Your written proposals will be featured in the May newsletter. The gardens to be supported will then be determined by a vote of the membership at the Annual Meeting.

Due: Before April 15th

SUPPORT THE SOUTH TEXAS UNIT



You shop. Amazon gives.

An AmazonSmile account has been set up for the South Texas Unit. Be sure to sign up for www.smile.amazon.com and select the South Texas unit as described below. Each quarter the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible items to our unit.

The shopping experience is the same as shopping through amazon.com with the added benefit the foundation will donate to our organization.

Five Easy Steps to Support the South Texas Unit

1. Go to smile.amazon.com
2. No account? Create one! Have an account? Sign in.
3. Select charitable organization. Found near the top of the smile.amazon.com home page.
4. Type in Herb Society South Texas Unit and click Search. Once the name comes up hit Select.
5. Enjoy shopping!



**Announcing Our April 21 “Care and Share”
Pearls for the Pandemic Program**

***“Hold the Phone!”
Tips for Photographing Native Plants
and Wildlife with Your Smartphone***



***Presented by Lauren Simpson,
Creator of [St. Julian's Crossing Wildlife Habitat](#)
Photo Credits: Unsplash for Everyone***



Don't Miss the HMNS Cockrell Butterfly Center Virtual Spring Plant Sale



[image by bio.files.wordpress.com](http://image.bybio.files.wordpress.com)

Perfect timing!!! Replace your frozen plants with the native plants and shrubs that pollinators love. Butterflies, bees and hummingbirds will flock to your backyard!

Place Your Order April 10th through April 14th

Pick-Up Saturday April 17 and Monday April 19

More information at <http://www.hmns.org/cockrell-butterfly-center/virtual-plant-sale/>

[Hms Cockrell Butterfly Center](http://www.hmns.org/cockrell-butterfly-center)

Congratulations

to

Janice Dana

Pam Harris

Rosemary Circle Recipients

*Janice and Dana have been
members of
The Herb Society of America
for 25 years*

*Be sure to congratulate each one
when you see them*

Every Garden Needs a Protector
Who's Keeping Watch in Yours?



Photo courtesy of Susan Wood

Rabbits keep watch at McGovern
Centennial Gardens, Houston, TX



Julie Fordes

Houston, TX
Member since 2016
Board Member 2017
Current Position Unit Chair



My favorite herb would have to be calendula! Even though my introduction to this herb was fairly recent, its combination of usefulness and beauty has inspired me to learn as much as I can from and about this plant. In 2019 I took a class from the Sacred Journey School of Herbalism in Austin TX. This class, Kitchen Witchery 101 introduced me to calendula and its uses and I have not looked back!

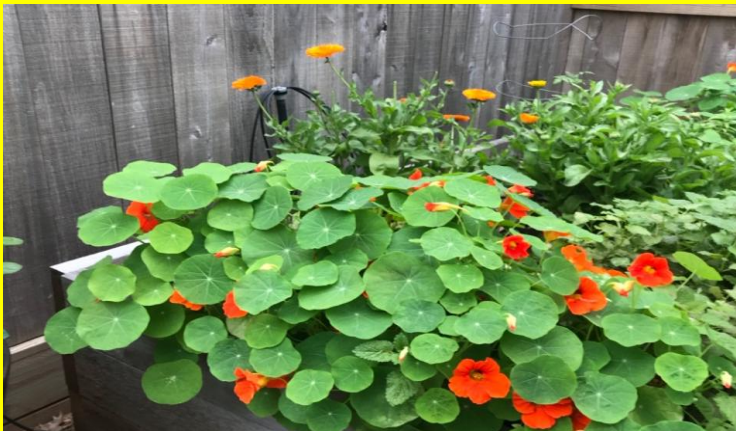
Karen Cottingham is to blame for my interest in the Herb Society. She and I discovered that we were interested in many of the same things, and she invited me to an Herb Society meeting. I immediately felt that this group was a good fit for me for so many reasons and I joined right away. Thanks, Karen.

I have been retired from teaching for a while now, but I have filled a lot of my time with things that I love to do. I love crafting of all kinds and have become a part of the crafting group. I love making concoctions of all kinds, tea, vinegars, salves, you name it!

I am a late-comer to gardening but have learned a lot from all the wonderful gardeners in this group. I have three raised beds full of herbs. The rest of the cooks in my family are starting to learn to use herbs in their cooking. I am always learning new ways to use and prepare all my beautiful herbs.

I guess I like organizing things. I chaired the 2017 Herb Fair (during my recovery from Hurricane Harvey) and co-chaired it with **Janice Freeman** the following year. Right now I am the Unit Chair. I am involved on some level with almost all aspects of what we do as a unit. I initiated the Back to Our Roots program to encourage members to grow as many of the herbs that we can that are used in the products we offer for sale at our major events. I feel strongly that we should grow what we use and use what we grow.

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer has to be my favorite book about plants. I have become more aware of the spiritual aspects of plants, gardening and nature.



Julie shares a photo of her garden in happier times.



BACK TO OUR ROOTS

Julie Fordes

This month getting “back to your roots” means digging in the dirt, planting, pruning and all the other aspects of gardening. Even after the freeze, signs of spring are everywhere, and so it seems so are gardening opportunities! Here are just a few our unit is involved in.

Saturday, April 10 @ 10 am

Herbal Education at Westbury Community Garden (WCG)

We had a nice group of HSA-STU members at the garden March 20 (see the photo below). Lots of comfrey is coming up, and we have planted four kinds of holy basil, chamomile, oregano, lemon balm, and nasturtiums. We

hope this can be an on-going venue for herbal education and a place where we can grow a few things for our own use. I am hoping to make this a regular event and am still working with WCG to align our participation with their Covid protocols. Please contact **Julie Fordes** now if you can come to this event.

Saturday, April 17 @ 9 am

Garden Workday – Garden Oaks Montessori School

New member **Lindsey Pollock** is the principal at Garden Oaks Montessori School, which is an Environmental Education Montessori Magnet School. We have offered to bring some volunteers to work alongside parents, teachers and children to give their 18 beds a spring cleaning. They will provide some tools and garden bed materials, soil etc. This could be the start of some wonderful herbal education collaboration between us! Covid protocols are in place, so wearing a mask, social distancing, and washing your hands will be important. We will need to check into the office and get our temperature taken before going to the gardens. You can find directions to the school on their website. Here is the link:

<https://www.houstonisd.org/Page/6959>

Several HSA-STU members spent the first day of Spring at the Westbury Community Garden revitalizing an herb bed. Pictured from left to right are: **Rose Wherry, Debbie Lancaster, Gayle McAdoo** (standing), **Jeanie Dunnihoo** and **Julie Fordes** (sitting).

The City of Bellaire, TX has created a month-long event promoting plants and gardens called “**Planting Palooza**”.

We were invited to participate by putting together a video featuring herbs. If you are an Herb Society member living in Bellaire, new member **Lucinda Kontos** (713-870-6451) will contact you to see



if we can shoot some of the video in your garden. New member **Debbie Lancaster** has agreed to be the camera person. If you know of an herb garden in Bellaire you think we should feature, call **Lucinda** and let her know. We are excited to get our name out there and to promote herb growing. ■



BOOK C O R N E R

If you have suggestions for books or other media members might like, submit your suggestions to Julie Fordes at fordes.julie@gmail.com



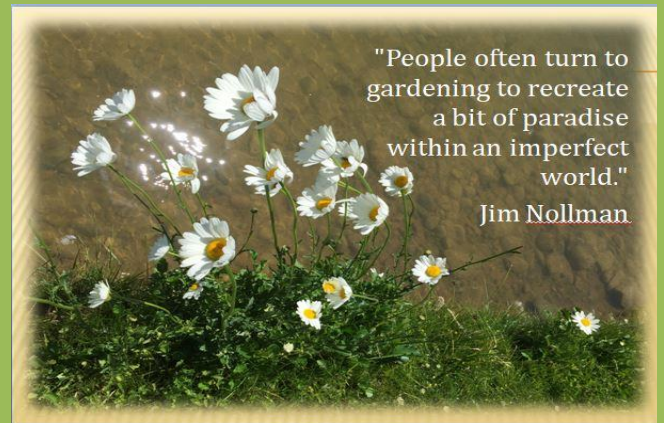
Julie Fordes

The Herb Society of America has launched three Herbal Fiction Book Clubs which HSA members can join. Additional information is available by accessing the Spring 2021 Newsletter on the HSA Member website.

Here is a brief schedule of the meetings:

- 1st Book Group meets April 14, 2 pm EST - *The Language of Flowers* by **Vanessa Diffenbaugh**
- 2nd Book Group meets April 21, 3 pm EST - *The Language of Flowers* by **Vanessa Diffenbaugh**
- 3rd Book Group Meets April 28, 7:30 pm EST - *A Memory of Violets: A Novel of London's Flower Sellers* by **Hazel Gaynor**

SLOW DOWN AND...



"People often turn to gardening to recreate a bit of paradise within an imperfect world."
Jim Nollman

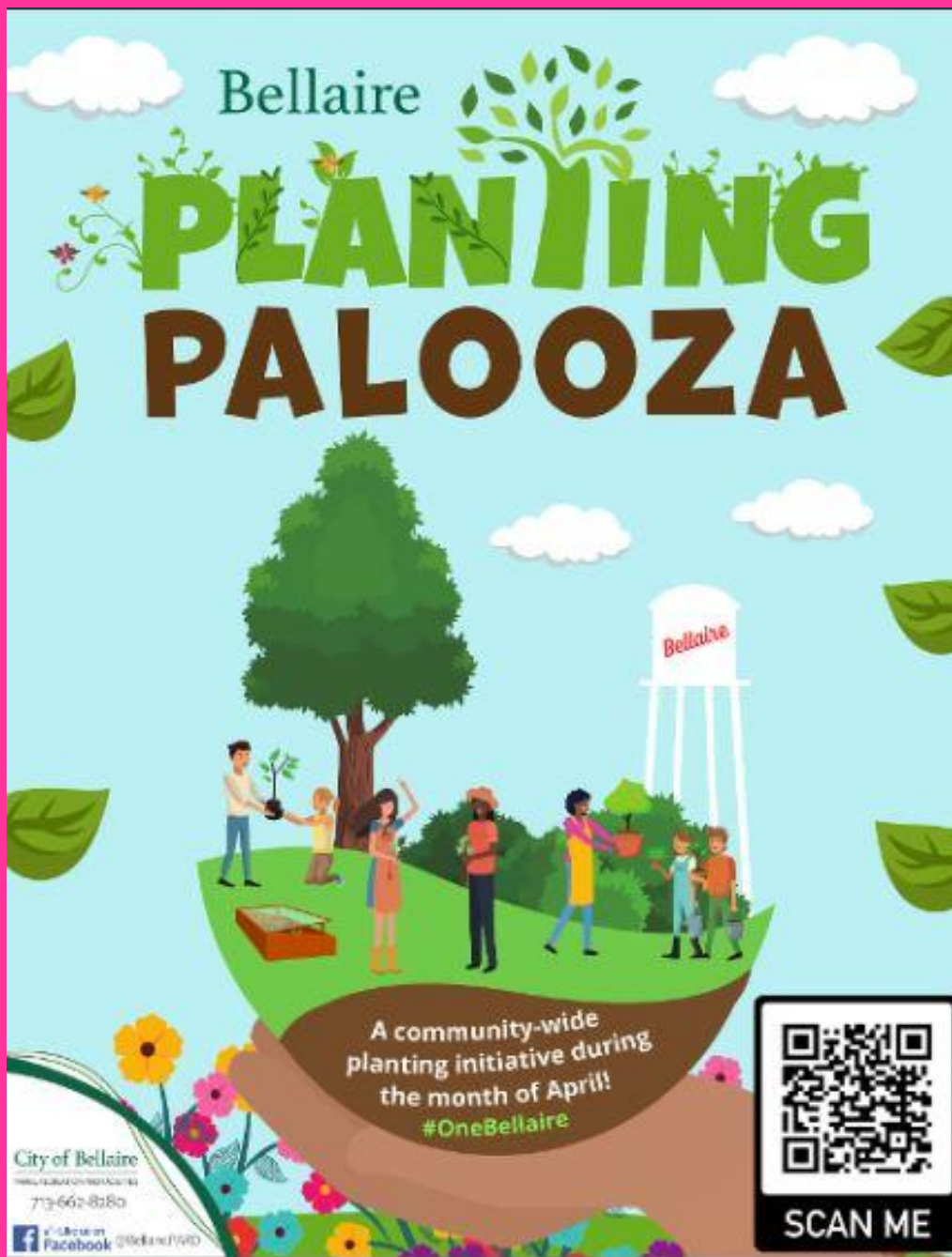
Photograph by Catherine O'Brien

SAVOR THE DAY!



With Love
&
Sympathy

Fatma Ozel and Family



May 5

The 9th Annual Gulf Coast Herb Fair will be held at Moody Gardens in Galveston, TX.

Reservation deadline is April 30th.

For more information visit:

www.facebook.com/TheFriendsofMoodyGardens/



Herb of the Month: Chervil



Farmer's Market – Chervil by Edsel Little
Creative Commons CC BY-SA 2.0 License
Non-altered

Joan Jordan

Lating name: *Anthriscus cerefolium*

Culinary Chervil was used in Roman cooking. Apicus, a first century cookbook author, recorded a recipe for green chervil sauce. Sometimes called “French parsley,” chervil is associated with French cooking in a blend called *finest herbes*. *Fines herbes* consist of chervil, tarragon, chives and parsley. Some recipes include either basil or thyme as one of the four herbs.

Growing Conditions With a taproot, chervil must be carefully transplanted. It is easily grown from seeds which are dark brown and splinter like in shape. Sow the seeds in rich organic soil, lightly covered. Light helps in the germination. The plants will grow in partial to full sun. Seeds will not germinate in hot weather so fall-to-winter planting will produce a crop all winter. Plant seeds every three weeks for continuous use. Day time temperatures between 40-50 degrees are best. The plant will bolt once it gets hot. Chervil makes a beautiful border and its light, lacey leaves are also attractive in pots. It will grow 8-10 inches tall with small white flowers that form umbels. It is an annual and seeds are viable for one year. It can be used as a companion plant for radishes and is said to make them hotter. Grown with lettuce it may help repel aphids and ants.

Health Benefits and Folklore Pliny the Elder (CE24-79) reported chervil's use as digestive. The Romans were probably the first to cultivate chervil. European folklore records a spring tonic that included chervil, and it was said to inspire cheerfulness and was named the “Herb of Joy”. Diffused with vinegar, it was a cure of hiccups. As an eye wash, chervil was used for conjunctivitis and inflamed eyelids. Culpepper, a 17th century herbalist, wrote “Chervil doth moderately warm the stomach and is a certain remedy to dissolve clotted blood....”.

Recipe The 1973 edition of *Joy of Cooking* lists three ways to use ravigote: a sauce or vinaigrette dressing, in a hot veloute sauce or in butter. Prepare one cup of your choice using your favorite recipe. The herbs to add to make the ravigote are 1T chopped parsley, 1 T chopped chervil, 1T chopped capers, 1/2 t chopped chives or shallots, 1/2 t chopped tarragon. The herbs can be doubled depending on your preferences. ■

It is the policy of The Herb Society of America not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal or health use. This information is intended for educational purposes only and should not be considered as a recommendation or an endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment.



STAY-AT-HOME RECIPES



STAY-AT-HOME RECIPES

April 2021

Carolyn Kosclskey

In the initial Roman calendar April was the second month of the year until January and February were added in 700 BC. It is thought that the name April comes from the Latin word "to open" and describes the flowers and trees "opening forth" at springtime. Easter, which is always on a Sunday between March 22 and April 25, will be observed on April 4 this year. One of the traditional Christian celebrations of Easter includes dyeing hard-boiled eggs, said to symbolize new life.

Hard-boiled eggs are nutritious and loaded with nutrients, proteins and healthy fats, and have a complete protein profile with all 9 amino acids. One large 50 gram egg contains 77 calories, 6.3 grams of protein and 212 mg of cholesterol. Home gardeners often take advantage of the calcium in the water from boiling eggs and when cool use it for watering. Tomatoes, peppers and eggplant plants benefit from the calcium available in dried and finely crushed eggshells added to the soil. There are several methods of boiling eggs for dyeing: on the stovetop, in the oven, steaming on the stovetop and in an electric pressure cooker.

METHODS FOR HARD-BOILING EGGS

Stovetop boiling is a good method for hard-boiling a small number of eggs. Remember, older eggs peel easier than fresher eggs. Add cold water to a saucepan and place eggs in water in a single layer, not over crowding and covering eggs by at least an inch. Heat the pot on high and bring to a rolling boil. Turn off heat and allow eggs to sit on the burner for 10 to 12 minutes, no more than a few minutes more. Drain the water from the pan and fill with cold water to cool eggs, or remove eggs with a spoon to an ice bath. It is difficult to overcook eggs using this method, but doing so causes the dark green coloring around the yolk. Eggs may be stored in the refrigerator up to 5 days. Eggs may also be "steamed" on the stovetop in a saucepan. For more information see https://simplyrecipes.com/recipes/how_to_steam_eggs.

Preparing hard-boiled eggs in the oven is useful for making a large number of eggs at one time. Heat the oven to 350°. Using muffin tins place one egg in each cup, cupcake liners optional, and bake for 30 minutes. Remove eggs from the oven and place in an ice bath for about 10 minutes to cool, then refrigerate.

The Instant Pot, an electric pressure cooker, is a recent popular way to hard-boil by steaming a few eggs or a dozen using the "5-5-5 method." Place a metal or silicone steaming basket, a metal trivet or an oven-proof dish on a trivet, in the Instant Pot and add eggs in a single layer, using crumpled foil if necessary. Add 1 cup or more of water to come up just below the eggs. Secure the lid and set on "manual with high pressure" for 5 minutes. After 5 minutes allow the pressure to release naturally, then flip the steam valve to "venting" to quick-release the remaining pressure. Remove the lid and using tongs or a spoon place eggs in an ice bath for 5 minutes for quick cooling. Store in the refrigerator (cover if peeled to contain the sulfur odor).



DYEING EGGS

Dyeing eggs for Easter is an activity that dates back to the first century AD when Christians in Mesopotamia colored their eggs red in memory of the blood of Christ. Methods included using onion skins and placing flowers or leaves onto the shells before dyeing to create patterns. In modern times there are different types of dyes available for the process, the most common and traditional being store-bought kits. Other ways to color or dye include water color and acrylic paints, alcohol inks, permanent markers and paint pens, and natural plant based dyes, to name a few.

When selecting eggs to dye, the white eggs show the lighter colors better, and plastic and wooden eggs may also be used. There are plant-based dyes available through Amazon including butterfly pea powder or tea (blue), beet powder (pink), Roselle powder (pink) and matcha tea (yellow). Natural dye kits shown were Natural Egg Dye Kit, India Tree Nature's Colors and Watkins Assorted Food Coloring. Ingredients from your kitchen may include freeze-dried blueberries (purple), coffee (strong, brown), yellow onion skins (yellow), paprika (orange), red cabbage (blue), freeze-dried strawberries (pink) and turmeric (yellow).

Dyeing requires 1 cup of boiling water plus 1 tablespoon of vinegar (lowers the pH allowing dye to adhere), plus dye material--intensity of hue depends on how much dye base is used. There is an abundance of information on the internet on dyeing eggs with plant-based dyes. An alternative method of dyeing eggs using whipped cream or topping seemed fun--plus, think of the many uses for the leftover cream! Even though Easter falls early in April, have fun dyeing eggs and enjoying them throughout the month. These websites have instructions on dyeing eggs using natural dyes and using whipped cream or topping when dyeing (<https://spinachtiger.com/spinachtiger.com> includes a video).

<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/holidays/easter-ideas/how-to/a31737/natural-easter-egg-dyes/>

<https://mybakingaddiction.com/whipped-cream-dyed-eggs/>

<https://howsweeteats.com/2019/03/dye-eggs-cool- whip/>

<https://spinachtiger.com/how-to-color-eggs-for-easter-with-whipped-cream-or-shaving-cream/>

CELEBRATING TEXAS SAN JACINTO DAY

On April 21, 1836, half past 3 o'clock on a Thursday afternoon, just east of the city of Houston, the maps of Texas, the United States and North America were changed in one of the world's most decisive battles. General Sam Houston and his 910 officers and men defeated the Mexican Army led by President and Dictator General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna and his force of 1265 in a battle that lasted less than 30 minutes. The Battle of San Jacinto established Texas as a free republic (1836 to 1845) and opened the way for the United States to extend its boundaries south to the Rio Grande River. Since that date this event has been celebrated in the state as San Jacinto Day.

The Texas Sheet Cake has appeared at numerous celebrations and even funerals, and has a history from the beginning of the 20th century of being a pass-along recipe. It appears in many Texas cookbooks under that name and others: Texas Sheath cake, Texas brownie cake, buttermilk brownie cake, chocolate cake, Mexican chocolate cake, and on. The commonalities are a chocolate cake mixed in one bowl, baked in a jelly roll pan and include cocoa powder, buttermilk and nuts, usually pecans, in the ingredients. And most important, it is enjoyed by all.



TEXAS SHEET CAKE a.k.a. TEXAS SHEATH CAKE

For the Cake

2 cups flour
2 cups sugar
¼ teaspoon salt
4 tablespoons (heaping) natural unsweetened cocoa powder
2 sticks butter
1 cup boiling water*
½ cup buttermilk
2 eggs, beaten
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon vanilla

**for a different flavor profile coffee, Coke or Dr. Pepper may be used*

For the Frosting

½ to 1 cup pecans, * finely chopped
1 ¾ stick butter
4 tablespoons (heaping) natural unsweetened cocoa powder
6 tablespoons evaporated milk**
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 box powdered sugar (about 3 ½ cups unsifted)

**walnuts may be used, shredded coconut may also be added*

***cans of milk come in 5 and 12 ounce sizes, 6 tablespoons = 3 ounces*

Spray an 18 X 13 half-sheet cake pan, line with parchment, and spray again. In a mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, and salt. In a saucepan, melt butter. Add cocoa and stir together. Add boiling water and stir, allow mixture to boil for 30 seconds, then turn off heat. Pour over flour mixture, and stir lightly to cool.

In a measuring cup, pour the buttermilk and add beaten eggs, baking soda, and vanilla. Stir buttermilk mixture into butter/chocolate mixture. Pour into cake pan and bake at 350° for 20 minutes.

While cake is baking, make the icing. Chop nuts finely. Melt butter in a saucepan. Add cocoa, stir to combine, then turn off heat. Add the milk, vanilla, and powdered sugar and stir together. Add the pecans, stir together, and pour over warm cake. Sifting the powdered sugar removes any lumps.

Other great Texas Sheet Cake recipes on the internet:

<https://grandbaby-cakes.com/texas-sheet-cake/>

<https://houseofnasheats.com/texas-sheet-cake-recipe/>

<https://thepioneerwoman.com/food-cooking/recipes/a11901/best-chocolate-sheet-cake-recipe/>

<https://www.southyourmouth.com/2019/03/the-best-chocolate-sheet-cake.html>

As we progress through springtime into early summer of this year remember the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans theme with portion control of selecting nutrient-dense foods and beverages with a variety from each food group, making “every bite count.”



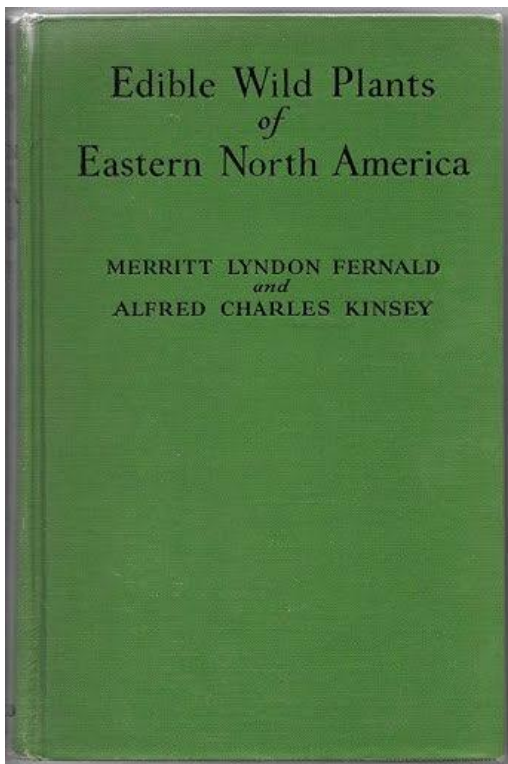
Memorial Day is on May 31st this year and is the first of four patriotic holidays ending with Labor Day on September 6. "Remembered family recipes" from these holidays will be featured for each holiday. Different members will be invited each month to submit a recipe they remember from years past, along with memories of how the holiday was celebrated.

The Book, the Weed, and the Two Scientists

Karen Cottingham

*What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.*

Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Inversnaid" (1918)



Edible Wild Plants of Eastern North America, 1943 edition, and Chenopodium album



Do you ever - like the brilliant Victorian poet **Gerard Manley Hopkins** - feel the urge to proclaim, “Long live the weeds”? Don’t worry if you do - you’re not alone. There’s even a special day for people like you. March 28 is **National Weed Appreciation Day**, the perfect day to show your support for misunderstood and vilified plants.

As a “weed appreciator” myself, I try to find something positive in all plants, even the most obnoxious and defiant. My own yard is bursting forth with the beautiful “weeds” of Spring - lush beds of tender chickweed and random splashes of dandelion yellow. Here’s the cheerful wood sorrel with its bright pink flowers and over there, see the tangled mats of “stickywilly” that cling to my shoes and climb up the fence. They’ll be replaced in the heat of the summer by succulent purslane, lovely sky-blue chicory, and whatever else might blow in on the wind. More beautiful weeds!

And they are all welcome... in my garden *and* in my kitchen.

After all, “weeds” were our first vegetables, vitamins, and medicines. While admittedly not well-disciplined, weeds have other, more important, attributes. They still retain, for example, the vitamins and minerals, antioxidants, phytonutrients, and other health-giving properties that have virtually disappeared from commercially produced crops.

And unlike fancy plants, weeds are independent and strong-willed survivors.

The plant shown above is a mature *Chenopodium album*, also known as lamb’s quarter, goose foot, wild spinach, pigweed, and fat-hen. It is said to grow “almost everywhere” (even in Antarctica) - although somehow, it hasn’t been able to find my yard. I keep hoping, though. For most gardeners, lamb’s quarter is a thuggish weed, but to a “weed appreciator”, its leaves and seeds are tasty, nutritious, and free.

Here’s a passage from **Fernald and Kinsey’s** *Edible Wild Plants of Eastern North America* that praises this generally maligned plant:

In spite of a spendthrift American prejudice against it because it is so common, the Pigweed [lamb’s quarter], which annually occurs in all good garden soils, is really one of the most valuable, though promptly destroyed crops of the garden before the planted vegetables are in season. Cooked and eaten like spinach, the tender shoots and leaves are often called delicious, and nearly everyone who tries it, unprejudiced by the knowledge that it is an every-day weed, is enthusiastic.

You might not guess from their refreshingly down-to-earth and accessible language, but the authors were serious scientists. Fernald was an established Harvard botanist who had already co-authored the seventh edition of **Asa Gray’s Manual of Botany**, and Kinsey had just begun his scientific career as an entomologist studying gall wasps.



Early in his career as an entomologist, **Alfred Kinsey** camped for days at a time while collecting galls for his research



Merritt Fernald, bravely collecting specimens in 1905, and back to safer ground at Harvard University

Their collaboration on wild edible foods began as a humanitarian project during World War I, when a dire food shortage threatened the future of America. Their detailed catalog of nutritious wild plants was truly a remarkable achievement - rigorous enough for scientists but easily understandable for novices. But just as they finally completed this massive task, the war ended and their publishers were no longer interested in a wartime wild food guide. The disappointed authors reluctantly set their manuscript aside and moved on to other scientific projects.



When the Second World War broke out, the long-neglected draft was quickly updated, expanded, and finally published. The U.S. Army used the comprehensive manual in its wilderness-survival training program; and back home, it was indispensable for civilians facing food shortages.

You can still buy a copy on the internet, where the now-classic guide is promoted as follows:

Everyone knows that certain mushrooms and species of berries are edible, but how many have experienced a salad of cat-brier sprouts, bread made of acorn-flour or seeds of cow lilies, escalloped roots of goat's-beard, sautéed ground-nuts, marmalade of squaw-huckleberry, pudding made of dried persimmons and other natural delights?

But back to *Chenopodium*...

Every species included in *Edible Wild Plants*, including *Chenopodium*, was tested as food by the primary author, Merritt Lyndon Fernald - a staggering accomplishment, given that the manual includes detailed descriptions of over 1,000 species!

This dedicated and highly regarded scholar was also famous for his boyish playfulness. Fernald loved to serve wild-plant meals to his colleagues - and the more unconventional the ingredients, the better! At that time, the meetings of The New England Botanical Club were held at the homes of individual members, so he had plenty of opportunity to indulge his passion. Fortunately, he seems to have had an accommodating wife who went along with the culinary pranks and guessing games for which his dinner parties were famous.

One of these winter meals featured a purée of dried Fairy Ring Mushrooms, escalloped Purslane, a salad of Pokeweed and Sorrel, and a bread of what locals called Pigweed-seeds. Obtaining the Pigweed seeds was somewhat challenging, but the determined botanist braved the bitter January wind to collect and then winnow a quart of the "black and drab" seeds. Here's how Fernald describes the meal in *Edible Wild Plants*:

When supper was served, Mrs. Fernald brought in the soup, which found favor, along with thin biscuits of Jack-in-the-Pulpit flour, then the Purslane and salad, with a plate of intensely black muffins. I explained that, having no cook, I had volunteered to make the muffins. The plate went around the table, regularly to receive a polite, "No, I thank you", until it reached the late Emile Williams, half-French and with more than usual Yankee consideration for others. Everyone else having declined my black muffins, Williams took one, put on his eye-glasses and inspected it, then sniffed at it.

"Ah, *Chenopodium album*" was his immediate diagnosis.

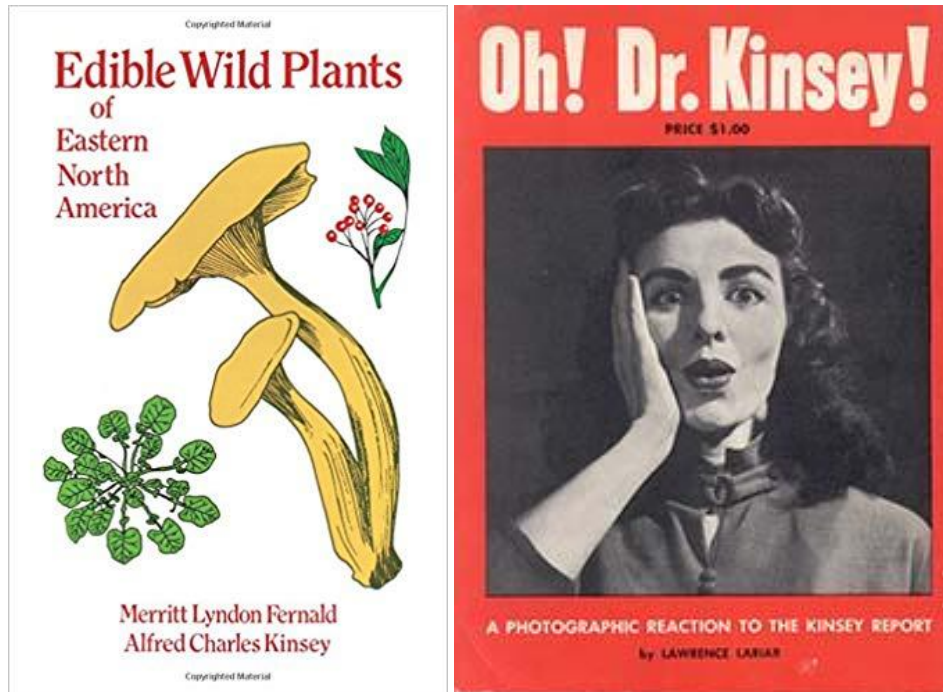
Asked how he guessed, he replied: "I've just been reading Napoleon's Memoirs. Napoleon at times had to live on it."

The plate was promptly cleared and returned to the kitchen for more, to nibble with the Beach-Plum preserve.



And so ended the section on *Chenopodium*, illustrating the foolish “prejudice against not too attractive or conventional foods”. Honestly, I would love to have attended one of Fernald’s wild-food dinner parties. And I feel sure I would have been brave enough to try a mysterious black muffin!

National Weed Appreciation Day gives me this great opportunity to honor my two favorite “weed enthusiasts” from history - **Merritt Lyndon Fernald** and **Alfred Charles Kinsey**.



Kinsey treated his new research specialty as just more biological fieldwork!

And if you think Alfred Charles Kinsey is a familiar name, you’re right. Before he shocked the world with his explosive research on human sexuality, Kinsey dedicated himself to the taxonomy of gall wasps (he collected more than seven million specimens!), and was the co-author of one of the finest, most comprehensive manuals of wild edible plants that was ever rejected for publication.

So “Long live the weed enthusiasts!” You never know what they’re going to come up with - another wild dinner party or a social tsunami for an entire generation! ■



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