

Herbs Make Scents



THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
VOLUME XLIX, NUMBER 2

SOUTH TEXAS UNIT
FEBRUARY 2026

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February 2026 Calendar

Feb 7, Sat.

Deadline to apply for Madalene Hill Education Funds to attend EdCon, see pg. 3

Feb 10, Tues. 10:00 am
Free and Open to the Public

Day Meeting "*Making Yogurt, Mozzarella and Ricotta*" presented by member **Catherine O'Brien**. Location: Cherie Flores Pavilion in Hermann Park (1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, TX 77004). Bring your bag lunch to socialize following the program. For those interested, the book group will be meeting during the lunch social to discuss *Endangered Eating* by **Sarah Lohman** (https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/123979551-endangered-eating?ref=nav_sb_ss_1_14)

Feb 14, Sat. 9:00 am
Feb 14, Sat.

Westbury Garden Workday 12581 Dunlap St., Houston, TX 77035
Last day to register for EdCon at the Member Early Bird Discounted Rate

Feb 18, Wed. 6:15 pm
Free and Open to the Public

Evening Meeting "*The Culinary Artistry of Frida Kahlo*" presented by **Chris Smith**, Houston restaurateur. Location: Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Houston, TX 77004. Doors open at 6:15 pm, with potluck meal and program at 7:00 pm

Feb 28, Sat. 9:00 am

Westbury Garden Workday 12581 Dunlap St., Houston, TX 77035

March 2026 Calendar

Mar 10, Tues. 10:00 am
Free and Open to the Public

Day Meeting "*The Herbs and Foods of Nowruz, the Persian New Year*" presented by guest speaker **Asal Shokati**. Location: McGovern-Stella Link Library (7405 Stella Link Rd, Houston, TX 77025). **Note location change**

Mar 14, Sat. 9:00 am

Westbury Garden Workday 12581 Dunlap St., Houston, TX 77035

Mar 18, Wed. 6:15 pm
Free and Open to the Public

Evening Meeting "*Agave Plants and the Spirits Obtained from Them*" presented by **Liliana Cracraft**, Member Houston Cactus and Succulents Society. Location: Cherie Flores Garden Pavilion, 1500 Hermann Dr. Houston, TX 77004. Doors open at 6:15 pm, with potluck meal and program at 7:00 pm

Mar 21, Sat. 10:00 am
Free and Open to the Public

Westbury Garden Special Event "*Healthy Eating with Spring Herbs*" presented by HSA/STU Members. Location: 12581 Dunlap St., Houston, TX 77035

Mar 28, Sat. 9:00 am

Westbury Garden Workday 12581 Dunlap St., Houston, TX 77035

Newsletter deadline is the 25th of the month, and is strictly enforced (March co-editor is Linda Alderman)



Happy Birthday!

Sharron Sims 2/8

Terry Snook 2/8

Maria Treviño 2/14

★ Readers: We apologize for issues with hyperlinks. Some open quick, others slow & some not at all.



Chairman's Corner

Hello Fellow Herbies,

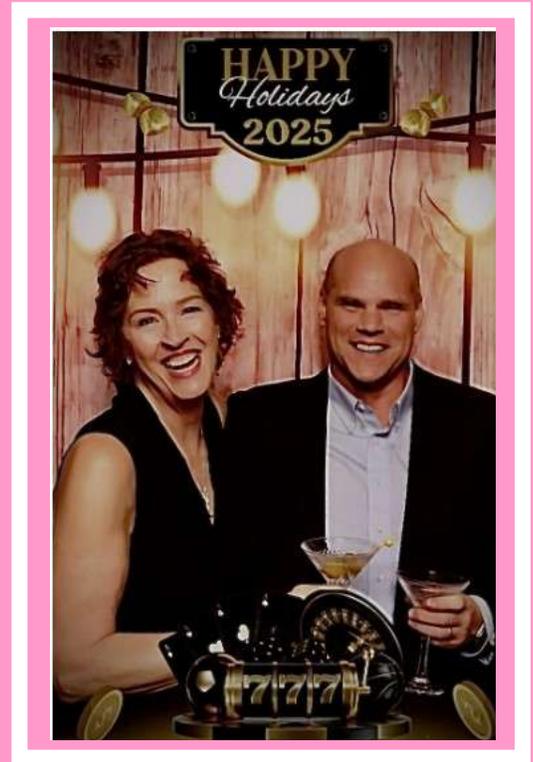
So glad to have been able to share the program on Aphrodisiacs through the Ages! My husband, Chris, had a great time researching the topic. We experimented with a number of recipes and giggled at some of them! We even found cookbooks on the topic and shared them at our program. Please share any of your ideas on programs with **Karen Cottingham**. She continues to do such a wonderful job putting together programs for us...no repeats in the last eight years!! Along those lines though, if you remember a program that you particularly enjoyed, maybe you would like to know even more about that topic? I have only been a member since 2020, so I would love to learn what I have missed.

Our two Herb Gardens at Westbury Community Garden are a fabulous way to get some fresh air and learn even more about growing and using herbs. Those of us who get out there are continually impressed and excited to see the herbs that grow so well here in Houston! After this crazy cold weather, you can also see what survived and plant that in your garden. I have most of my herbs in pots in my garage right now. Maybe next year we can have a workshop on growing herbs inside during the winter.

I know many people are very interested in attending our next Educational Conference, this year in San Antonio! We really want to get people involved so they learn even more about herbs. It is great to make new Herb friends and learn so much more!! Remember, we are all charged with learning and sharing information on using herbs!

**** **Benée Curtis** and I are giving the February 13th *Culinary Wreaths Workshop* for the Houston Federation of Garden Clubs, with whom we are now an Affiliate Organization. Come for the meeting and join us for the workshop for a \$10 donation to Hunt Garden Club. All HFGC meetings are open to the public.
Time: Meeting 10 am -12 noon; Workshop: 12-1 pm
Location: CityRise Bellaire, 4601 Bellaire Blvd. ****

*Chris and Angela
Celebrating an Anniversary*



If you are interested in giving programs on herbs to garden clubs or civic institutions, please let **Virginia Camerlo** know. I learn more every time I give a program.

See you in February!!
Angela Roth





Quick Response needed by February 7 Are You Heading to EdCon OR Wanting To?

Check this out! Members - if you're interested in attending EdCon and are willing to lend a hand we have some funding available from the Madalene Hill Education fund. Funds are intended for those who may not otherwise be able to attend and who are excited to learn and give back. Awards will be based on needs and willingness to volunteer. The Details:

- **The Perk:** Financial assistance toward your EdCon attendance.
- **The Commitment:** Helping out during the event (setup/sign in).
- **How to Apply:** Email lucindakontos@gmail.com by **February 7** to express your interest. Names of the scholarship recipients will be kept confidential.

Dates: Set up: April 14, 2026 and Conference: April 15-17, 2026

Website: <https://www.herbsociety.org/news-events/educational-conference-2026/its-spicier-in-texas/conference-details.html>



Are you interested in helping
with Evening Meeting
Hospitality?

Put your hands up high,
put your hands down low,
Put your hands in the middle
and wiggle just so.

Or maybe just email here:
karen.herbsociety@gmail.com

ANNOUNCING

The International Herb Association
celebrates Turmeric as the
Herb of the Year 2026

IHA.org

Mark Your March Calendar

31st Annual 2026 Herbal Forum and
Plant Sale at Round Top

Hosted by the Pioneer Unit of The Herb Society of America

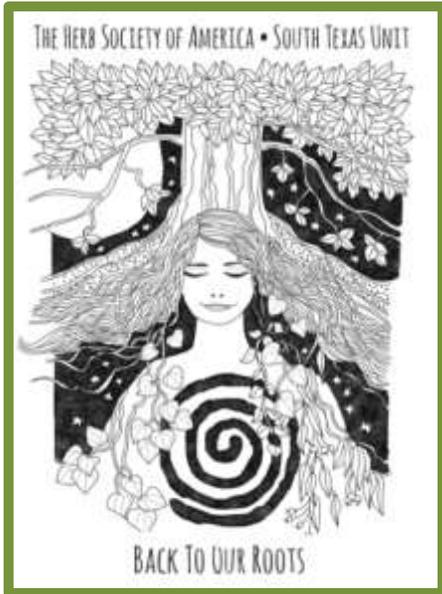
“DISHING THE DIRT ON HERBS”

March 14th

www.festivalhill.org



Back to Our Roots at the Westbury Garden



Westbury Workdays

Saturday, February 14 and 28 at 9:00 am

Saturday, March 14 and 28 at 9:00 am

Special Event: Saturday, March 21 at 10:00 am Herbal Education Class

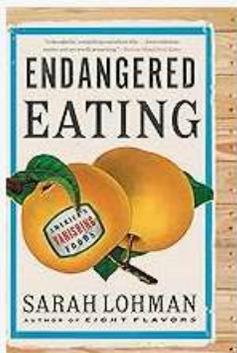
Saturday, January 17 was the first workday together with the newly formed Herb Committee from WCG. We had a nice turnout of six garden members and three HSA members. We took out the butterfly pea vine, making room for more chamomiles. We enlarged the section of the garden that we are calling the “Mediterranean Garden”. It is topped with pea gravel on the surface to allow for more water evaporation, making a dryer climate for the herbs that need it. The rosemary, oregano and thyme are amazingly healthy.

IMPORTANT!!!

Saturday, March 21 we will offer a class for the gardeners and the neighborhood. **Healthy Eating with Spring Herbs** will focus on practical uses of the herbs in the garden at WCG. Providing herbal education is one of the ways that STU can reciprocate with the garden for its use of the garden beds to grow the herbs we need. I need at least two more herbies to help me. This is a great opportunity to use our herbal knowledge to help others learn the beauty of herbs. It is also a great opportunity for new members to learn useful skills like making infusions, tea blending and the like. Please consider volunteering to be part of the planning and implementation of this class.



See you at the garden, Julie



The **Day Meeting Book Club** will discuss Sarah Lohman's **Endangered Eating** in February. Quoted from an Amazon book review:

In **Endangered Eating**, culinary historian Sarah Lohman draws inspiration from the Ark of Taste, a list compiled by *Slow Food International* that catalogues important regional foods. She travels the country learning about the distinct ingredients at risk of being lost: in Hawaii, she learns the stories behind heirloom sugarcane; in the Navajo Nation, she assists in the traditional butchering of a Navajo Churro ram; in the Upper Midwest, she harvests wild rice; in the Pacific Northwest, she spends a day reefnet fishing; on the Gulf Coast, she devours gumbo made with filé powder; in the Lowcountry of South Carolina, she tastes America’s oldest peanut. She learns from those who love these rare ingredients: shepherds, fishers, farmers, scientists, historians, and activists. And she tries her hand at raising these crops and preparing these dishes.

Animated by stories yet grounded in research, **Endangered Eating** gives listeners the tools to support community organizations and producers that work to preserve local culinary traditions and rare, cherished foods.

Herbs Make Scents – February



Adventure Luncheon to Savor the Flavors of West Africa at ChòpnBlòk

Benée Curtis

Fourteen of us gathered for the Day Meeting's Adventure Luncheon/January meeting at the ChòpnBlòk, a relatively new restaurant in Montrose featuring the culinary traditions of West Africa.

The countries of the African continent are clustered into 5 regions (North, South, East, West and Central). The food at ChòpnBlòk features those from West Africa, comprised of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde (Cabo Verde), Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire), The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone.

From Wikipedia:

Scores of foreign visitors to West African nations (e.g., traders, historians, emigrants, colonists, missionaries) have benefited from its citizens' generosity, and even left with a piece of its cultural heritage, via its foods. West African cuisines have had a significant influence on those of Western civilization for centuries; several dishes of West African origin are currently enjoyed in the Caribbean (such as the West Indies and Haiti); Australia; the US (particularly Louisiana, Virginia, North and South Carolina); Italy; and other countries. Although some of these recipes have been altered to suit the sensibilities of their adopters, they retain a distinct West African essence.

West African cuisines include fish (especially among the coastal areas), meat, vegetables, and fruits—most of which are grown by the nation's local farmers. In spite of the obvious differences among the various local cuisines in this multinational region, the foods display more similarities than differences. The small difference may be in the ingredients used. Most foods are cooked via boiling or frying. Commonly featured, starchy vegetables include yams, plantains, cassava, and sweet potatoes. Rice is also a staple food, as is sorghum couscous particularly in Senegal and the Gambia.

All of these ingredients are incorporated in the ChòpnBlòk's dishes. Our server EJ and the general manager Dexter gave us a wonderful tour of the rices and sauces that are featured in the premier dishes. Each of us got to taste the three rices and four sauces as they described what gives each their distinctive flavors.

In addition to the samplings, we also had these descriptions of a few typical dishes found on the menu.

Suya spice - (Yaji) is a smoky, spicy West African blend centered around ground peanuts (kuli kuli), mixed with cayenne/chili peppers, ginger, garlic, onion powder, and often paprika, bouillon cubes, and sometimes other traditional spices like cloves or uda (grains of paradise) for a savory, nutty, fiery kick.

Yassa - a West African dish, primarily from Senegal, featuring marinated chicken (or fish/lamb) in a zesty sauce dominated by onions, lemon juice, and Dijon mustard, often with garlic, hot peppers (Scotch bonnet/habanero), bay leaves, and spices, served over rice. Key ingredients include the protein, copious sliced onions, citrus (lemon/lime), mustard, garlic, oil, and chili for heat, creating a tangy, savory flavor.



Herbs Make Sense

February 2026

Nokoss - a vibrant, versatile West African (especially Senegalese) green seasoning paste or blend, primarily made from fresh ingredients like parsley, onions (white, green, or scallions), garlic, bell peppers, and spicy chiles (like habanero or Thai chiles) blended with oil, salt, and black pepper, sometimes with vinegar or other herbs like thyme **or** coriander. It's a foundational flavoring for marinades, stews, and grilled meats, providing a fresh, pungent, and spicy base.

Waakye - core spice ingredients focus on earthy, aromatic flavors from Ghana, primarily featuring dried sorghum (waakye) leaves for color and distinct taste, along with bay leaves, cloves, ginger, and often anise seeds, complemented by protein-rich black-eyed peas, rice, and savory additions like shrimp/fish powder in the accompanying stew.

Maafe - (West African Peanut Stew) ingredients center around a rich, creamy base of peanut butter, tomato paste/sauce, and aromatics like onion, garlic, and ginger, simmered with protein (beef, chicken) and hearty vegetables such as sweet potatoes, carrots, and bell peppers, spiced with **paprika** and chili peppers, and often enhanced with broth. The key is the savory, nutty flavor from the peanuts blended with tangy tomatoes and fragrant spices, creating a comforting one-pot meal.

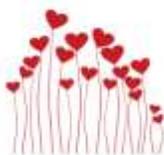
Jollof - Jollof rice ingredients center on rice cooked in a flavorful tomato-pepper base with **onions**, garlic, ginger, and stock, spiced with thyme, curry powder, and bay leaves, plus oil and salt, varying slightly by region but generally including long-grain rice, red bell peppers, tomatoes, scotch bonnets, and spices. Key components are the blended aromatics (tomatoes, peppers, onions) for the sauce, the type of rice (usually long-grain or parboiled), stock, and signature spices like thyme and curry. Originally from the Kingdom of Jolof (now part of modern-day Senegal).

Buka refers to the roadside restaurants and street stalls of Nigeria

Akarara (fried bean balls seasoned with spices served with sauce and bread) from Nigeria is a favorite breakfast for Gambians and Senegalese, as well as a favorite side snack or side dish in Brazil and the Caribbean just as it is in West Africa. It is said that its exact origin may be from Yorubaland in Nigeria

Swallow or **Fufu** (from the Twi language, a dough served with a spicy stew or sauce—for example, okra stew) from Ghana is enjoyed throughout the region and beyond even in Central Africa with their own versions of it.

Our experience at ChòpnBlòk was outstanding. The flavors, the fragrances, the service ...the whole experience was a delight. If you have the opportunity, I think any of us would recommend a visit. You'll need a reservation. Between word-of-mouth, making the New York Times' Top 50 Restaurants and Chef Ope Amosu's award as a James Beard semi-finalist, the restaurant is quite popular. ♥♥♥



February-March-April
SAVE THE DATES





Announcing Our February 18 Evening Program



"The Culinary Artistry of Frida Kahlo"

Presented by Chris Smith, Houston restaurateur and inspired by *Frida: The Making of an Icon* Special Exhibition at MFAH

Coming Soon!!!

"Agave Plants and the Spirits Obtained from Them"



Our March 18 Evening Program will be presented by *Liliana Cracraft* Member of Houston Cactus and Succulents Society

"Gardens of Texas:

In Conversation with Houston Gardeners"

A panel discussion moderated by *Pam Penick*

Garden writer, speaker, and advocate for climate-resilient design



**February 19, 6:00-9:30 pm
Houston Botanic Garden**

Texas gardens are shaped by long, hot summers, drought-and-flood cycles, and other unpredictable weather extremes.

In this panel conversation, author Pam Penick will bring the Houston garden owners featured in her new book, *Gardens of Texas*, to the stage to talk about how their gardens have taken shape over time. Through informal, interview-style discussions, the gardeners will share what they've learned about making inviting outdoor spaces, choosing plants, supporting wildlife, and tending gardens that are both resilient and deeply personal.

[Register here](#); tickets are \$55 for HBG members, \$70 for non-members.



Robin Wall Kimmerer **Is Speaking at Rice University** **April 13, 2026**



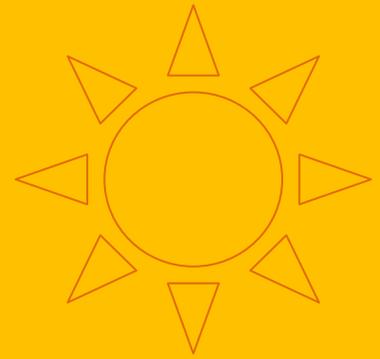
Robin Wall Kimmerer is a SUNY Distinguished Professor of Environmental Biology, and the founder and director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, whose mission is to create programs which draw on the wisdom of both indigenous and scientific knowledge for our shared goals of sustainability. In 2022 she was named a MacArthur Fellow.

I reserved 10 seats, so let me know if you wish to join our group. The reception and book sale begins at 5:00 pm in Duncan Hall, followed by the lecture at 6:00 pm. Would anyone be interested in a group Read-Along? It's been awhile since I read *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, and Kimmerer's new publications include *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* and *Bud Finds Her Gift*. Questions?
karen.herbsociety@gmail.com

Embark on a journey through cinder block gardens, bustling herbies & butterflies too. From the majestic trellis to the fragrant herbs, the herb garden offers endless opportunities just for you
All Welcome



Nasturium



NEW Mediterranean Garden

The Herb Gardens at

Westbury Community Gardens



Calendula



Lemongrass & Sage



Cilantro

[Visit: westburycommunitygarden.org](http://westburycommunitygarden.org)



WESTBURY COMMUNITY GARDEN 2026 GARDENING CLASSES FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



No pre-registration or fee except for Tomato Tasting



TOMATO GROWING IN HOUSTON

Presentation of best practices for plant selection, planting, soil preparation and much more. Handouts provided.
Shannon Walker Library 11630 Chimney Rock @ 3:30-5 PM

FEB.
21

MAR.
7

HANDS- ON TOMATO PLANTING

Demonstration of proper method of planting and best ways to care for your tomato plants. 10 AM
Westbury Community Garden 12581 Dunlap St. 77035



HEALTHY EATING WITH SPRING HERBS

Learn to identify and use spring herbs. Both culinary and medicinal uses will be discussed as well as tips on harvesting, processing and storing herbs. 10 AM
Westbury Community Garden 12581 Dunlap St. 77035

MAR.
21



A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT YOUR HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Your STU Membership includes membership to The Herb Society of America, which entitles you to free or reduced admission to public gardens associated with the American Horticultural Society.

With your HSA Membership Card, you can enjoy visiting the Houston Botanic Garden, Mercer Botanic Gardens, the John Fairey Garden, the San Antonio Botanical Garden, Beaumont Botanical Gardens, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Zilker Botanical Garden, South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center, East Texas Arboretum & Botanical Society, Tyler Municipal Rose Garden, Longview Arboretum, Fort Worth Botanic Garden and Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, Chandor Gardens, Texas Discovery Gardens, Clark Gardens Botanical Park, and the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center & Botanical Gardens.

And these are just the participating gardens in Texas!



RECIPES



Green Olive Dip – Creamy, Tangy & Flavorful

Delicious!!

Contributed by Tricia Bradbury

A smooth and savory dip made with tangy green olives, creamy cheese, and fresh lemon juice. Perfect for parties, game nights, or as a quick appetizer.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup pitted green olives (Castelvetrano, Manzanilla, or Kalamata green) (used 10 black kalamata, a little more than half Castelvetrano, and the rest little pimiento stuffed salad olives)
- 8 oz (225g) cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup sour cream or Greek yogurt (used Dahi Indian style yogurt)
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise (used Duke's)
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced (used garlic press)
- 2 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- Optional garnish: chopped parsley, chives, or a pinch of red pepper flakes

Instructions:

- Mix the base: In a medium bowl, beat the softened cream cheese, sour cream, and mayonnaise until smooth and creamy. (Hand mixer works well. A whisk is hard work.)
- Add flavor: Stir in the garlic and lemon juice.



Fold in olives: Roughly chop the green olives and mix them into the creamy base. (I use a hand-pull small chopper, but a knife is fine)

Customize: Add herbs (parsley, chives) or a little red pepper flakes if you want extra flavor.

Chill & serve: Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving for best flavor. (Fits into a 5 cup container)

Enjoy: Serve with crackers, toasted crostini, pita chips, or fresh veggies. (or kettle cooked potato chips)

Q&A Section

Q1: Can I make this dip ahead of time? Yes! It tastes even better if made a few hours or a day before, since the flavors develop while chilling.

Q2: What type of olives work best? Castelvetrano are buttery and mild, while Manzanilla are briny. You can even mix different olives for a unique taste.

Q3: Can I make it healthier? Replace cream cheese with light cream cheese, and mayonnaise with extra Greek yogurt.

Q4: How long does it last in the fridge? Store in an airtight container for up to 3–4 days. Stir before serving.

Q5: Can I make it spicy? Yes! Add a dash of cayenne, red pepper flakes, or even a little jalapeño for a kick.

Q6: What pairs well with this dip? Crackers, sliced baguette, celery sticks, cucumber, carrot sticks, or pita bread.



Hibiscus Berry Bliss Tea Blend

Contributed by Ro Jones

Hibiscus and berries have been associated with love, vitality, and emotional warmth. A perfect concoction for Valentine's season. This blend supports circulation, invites softness, and encourages moments of connection, pleasure, and self-love.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups dried hibiscus flowers
- 1/2 cup freeze-dried apples
- 1/2 cup freeze-dried strawberries (slightly heaping)
- 3–4 dried coconut strips, chopped
- 1/4 cup minced lemon peel
- Cinnamon sticks, for serving (optional)

Instructions:

1. In a large bowl, add the hibiscus flowers and gently crush them with your hands to break them into smaller pieces.
2. Add the freeze-dried apples and strawberries, lightly crushing them as well.
3. Stir in the chopped coconut and lemon peel.
4. Mix everything thoroughly until well combined.
5. Store your tea blend in an airtight container in a cool, dry place.

To Serve: Steep 1–2 tablespoons of the blend in hot water for 10–15 minutes. Enjoy hot or over ice, and garnish with a cinnamon stick if desired.



The Herb Society of America
South Texas Unit
P.O. Box 6515
Houston, TX 77265-6515



Find our Unit on the web at:
www.herbsociety-stu.org

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While authors or speakers may cite how they personally use herbs and may quote scientific, ethnographic, folkloric, or historic literature, the material presented does not represent a recommendation or an endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment.

Whom Do I Contact?

2025-26 STU Officers

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Ro Jones
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Treasurer: *Maria Treviño*

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- Member Concerns: *Donna Wheeler*

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- Social Media: *Virginia Camerlo*

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