

REBECCA'S GOOD THYMES & SAGE ADVICE AUTUMN 2009

**“Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it and if I
Were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns.”**

George Elliot

Autumn is my favorite season of the year. There's a certain excitement in the air--the anticipation of the fall and winter holidays, the start of school and clubs, and, fall planting! There's also an energy that comes with the cooler weather—an energy needed for this busy season.

Now is the time to cut back by 1/3 the perennial herbs: lavender, lemon verbena, sages, thyme. Other perennials such as lemon balm, mints, chives, oregano and marjoram can be cut to the ground to encourage lush new growth. Harvest and use your herbs to make herbal vinegars, oils and jellies. Use your basil for pesto and freeze. Now is also the time to plant annual herbs such as dill, cilantro and parsley which will grow well in the cooler months.

Of course I always like to use my harvest of herbs to make herbal wreaths. You may make an herbal wreath embellished with freeze-dried roses at “Girl Thyme”, a popular program I am repeating that celebrates women's friendship. Bring a friend or come and make new friends and make a beautiful and fragrant wreath and enjoy an herbal luncheon.

Later in October we'll celebrate autumn & Halloween at “Wicked!”. You'll learn about some of the interesting botanicals described in Amy Stewart's recent book *Wicked Plants*. (Amy is an award-winning author who lives and gardens in northern California.). We however, will not be using any “wicked” herbs at this autumn celebration, but will be using various herbs and botanicals to decorate a pumpkin which can be used for several weeks. A Halloween herbal luncheon follows the workshop.

The annual winter wreath workshop will be held Sunday November 29th. Using cones and berries and a variety of fragrant greens such as cedar, juniper, bay and others, this will be a bountiful holiday decoration. Reserve early as this workshop is only being offered once this year!

One green used in the winter wreath will of course be bay, which is being celebrated by the National Herb Society as the Herb of the Year 2009. Bay Laurel (*Laurus nobilis*) also known as True Laurel, Sweet Bay, is an aromatic evergreen tree or large shrub, native to the Mediterranean region. Bay Laurel is the source of the bay leaves which are used for their flavor in cooking. It was also the source of the laurel wreath of ancient Greece. A wreath of bay was given as a the prize at the Pythian Games because the games were in honor of Apollo and the laurel was one of his symbols. In the Bible, the bay is often an emblem of prosperity and fame and in Christianity it is said to symbolize the Resurrection of Christ. The aromatic laurel leaves are used in the cuisines of many countries, used to flavor stews, soups and meat dishes. The California bay can also be used in cooking but is much stronger, so be careful and use only half the amount that a recipe requires!

In September Tom and I'll be celebrating our 34th anniversary at Ashford Castle in Ireland. Therefore, this year's Annual Herbal Christmas celebration will be: Celtic Christmas. I hope you'll be able to join me in celebrating the seasons at one of these events.

Cynthia Jean McLin
July 22, 1966-December 30, 1995