

"Anyone who thinks gardening begins in the spring and ends in the fall is missing the best part of the whole year; for gardening begins in January with the dream."

-- Josephine Nuese

SAGE LEAVES

The Herb Society of America Wisconsin Unit

Jan/Feb 2024 – Vol XXXIX #1

Unit Meetings

Tuesday, January 16, 10 a.m.

Program: Grants & Scholarship Recipients

Speaker: Lore Borth

Location: Zoom

Tuesday, February 20, 10 a.m.

Program: Bonsai Trees, Photographer Phil Wilcox

Speaker: Melody Orban

Location: Zoom

Please mark your calendar for the following upcoming events:

April 6, 2024	Spring Symposium at Woman's Club of Wisconsin
May 18, 2024	Herb & Artisan Fair at Boerner Botanical Gardens
December 11, 2024	Holiday Party at the Town Club, Fox Point

Editor: Diane Kescenovitz – if you will be going out of town for an extended period, please notify Diane of your change of address or request an email copy – thanks!

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NEWSBUDS . . .

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2024! I've been reflecting on my New Year's Resolution TO DO list. Here are a few on the list:

- Keep the scented geraniums and rosemary alive through the winter!
- Read through some *Tea Time* magazines and bake one of those scone recipes.
- Embrace WINTER by bundling up and walking outside during the afternoon when the temperature might increase by even one degree.
- Write notes to family and friends using my collection of herb and floral motif notecards. Oh, and then mail them! Ha!
- Read HSA National website and our own HSA WI-UNIT website. Thumbs-up content in both.
- Settle down with a good cuppa and watch an HSA webinar. Maybe sip and watch on January 12, which is National Tea Day!
- Use the lotions, candles, and soap I purchased from artisans this summer and fall of 2023.
- Cook a pot of soup. So many wonderful recipes in *Sage Leaves* and beyond!
- CULL a pile, FILE that pile ,and then SMILE awhile.

Looking forward to seeing you all during our ZOOM ONLY meetings and programs/speakers on January 16 and February 20.

AJ

FYI: I found an interesting factoid in an article from Urban Ecology Center. I never heard of The Windshield Phenomenon but now agree that my windshield is easier to clean due to fewer bug carcasses smashing on the shield. This is directly correlated with the decline (continued decline) in insects/pollinators due to climate change, habitat loss, and pollution. AJ

Holiday Luncheon

The 2023 Holiday Luncheon was a delightful event. The Town Club is always beautifully decorated. The Coffrey Room offered a cozy fireplace and several card tables on which to create our jingle bell wreath ornaments. Coffee, tea and delectable cookies were enjoyed as we relaxed and heard the story of *The Christmas Wreath*. Our thanks to A.J. Star, Unit Chair, for organizing our project, decorations and the favor bag cookies for our dear members and guests. Joanne, Tricia and her guest, Kimberly, helped set things in motion before the event. Our thanks to all of them!

At noon we adjourned to the Jefferson Room and Joanne Ruggieri shared her well-written invocation with us. After we savored our delicious lunches, we learned about the origins of wreaths around the world. Door prizes were offered to those who took part in the "Name that Holiday Tune" game. It was harder than we thought, even when A. J. sang a few bars of each song. *Thank You* favor bags were handed out with wishes for a lovely holiday.

Our members and guests generously brought along to the luncheon what amounted to a vanload of clothing and toiletry items for the "Repairers of the Breach" (daytime homeless shelter). This is the 12th year we've collected supplies for them. Checks in the amount of \$165 were donated for their heating/electricity fund. They have given our WI-Unit a "Bridge Builder" award for our generous support over the years.

The Holiday Luncheon date for 2024 is Wednesday, December 11. Place this important date on your new calendar!

Appreciatively,
Denise Nelson, Event Chair

Invocation - Holiday Luncheon 2023:



Our hopes for everyone in the coming year –
May God bless us and all we hold dear.

May we walk into the arms He's holding wide
Knowing He's our protector and guide.

May we look up and see Him smile
And hear the tune He's humming in His own style.

May He walk by our side day after day –
The Milwaukee Chapter of HSA.

-- Joanne Ruggieri

From Mary Kay McDevitt, Luncheon Chair

Our September and November luncheon menus featured French and Italian cuisines. Both were so well enjoyed by everyone who attended. It was a great opportunity to feature the herbs and spices in the cuisines of those countries. Since St. Patrick's Day is celebrated in March, the cuisine of Ireland will be on the menu. A hostess and a five person "Luncheon Team" are requested. If you are Irish, think about being part of the Saturday, March 16, team. I'll be sending a sign-up email in February. Thank you so much.

Nominations

We will be accepting nominations for secretary and treasurer for our elections in April. Please consider nominating someone or stepping forward and nominate yourself. However, any qualified member who is interested in being included on the slate of candidates must apply to the Nominating Chair, Melody Orban, by the end of the February meeting (February 20, 2024). Candidates for office should be an actively involved member in good standing for at least one year. The proposed slate of candidates will be sent to the unit membership in the March/April SAGE LEAVES for the election at our April 16 meeting. Nomination committee members include Louise Block and Gail Gabrelian.

January 2024 Herb of the Month – Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

How to Grow: Yarrow plants are best grown in full sun. Yarrow plants are perennial. Choose a permanent position where plants can grow undisturbed by regular digging or other disturbance. Space the plants 1 to 2 feet apart. Add a thin layer of compost around your plants each spring to keep them fed. Yarrow is very drought tolerant, but if you receive less than 1" of rain a week in the summer, remember to water your plants to keep them looking their best. Cut off "deadhead" flowers when they start to fade in mid-summer – this encourages most varieties to produce another round of flowers. Divide yarrow plants every 3 to 5 years to sustain vigorous, healthy plants. Lift the clumps in early spring or fall and remove any dead stems from the center of the clump. You can replant the divisions elsewhere in the garden or share with a friend! Yarrow can provide nutrients for the soil. It contains sulfur, copper, potassium, phosphates, nitrates and potash.

Recipes

Squash-Curry Soup

(Pat Greathead – Oct 2023 Mtg)

If like me you occasionally (or often and sometimes purposefully) miss a squash that was cleverly hidden beneath the exuberance of your plant, you're in luck! I'm fond of a summer squash 'Dirani Lebanese' - Cucurbita pepo (hybrid), not only for its mild flavor but very soft skin. If I didn't save seeds last year, I purchase them from Botanical Interests www.botanicalinterests.com, but I believe any squash can be used!

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil 1½ cups chopped onion – I use red
4 pounds of squash, seeded, cut into 1" pieces 1 tablespoon dried thyme, crushed (or to taste)
3 cup vegetable bouillon – I like the Better Than Bouillon brand 3 teaspoons curry (again to taste)
½ cup 1% organic milk (or whatever milk you have)
4 ounces Neufchatel cheese (or regular cream cheese)
1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1. In a large pot heat the olive oil, add onions over medium heat for 4-5 min. Add squash and thyme; cover and cook over medium heat for 10 min, or until the squash has softened, stirring occasionally.
2. Add bouillon, curry, milk, cheese and butter; cook over medium heat 12 minutes or until squash is soft.
3. In batches, process in a blender or food processor, placing creamed soup in another vessel/pot until all is processed.

Extra soup can be kept in the refrigerator for several days or frozen for up to three months and reheated.

Yarrow Tea

(Joanne Ruggieri – Nov 2023 Mtg)

2 teaspoons Yarrow; 1 tea bag/green tea; 2 teaspoon honey; 1 teaspoon lemon juice

Lemon Cookies with Yarrow

(Joanne Ruggieri – Nov 2023 Mtg)

1 ¼ cups flour
1/4 cup yarrow
1/4 cup + 2T cornstarch
zest + juice of 1 lemon (approx. 2T juice + 1/2 - 1T zest)
1/4 tsp. salt
3/4 cup + 2T butter (14T) softened butter
1/2 cup powdered sugar

- Whisk flour, yarrow, cornstarch, zest and salt
- Whisk butter and sugar until fluffy (3-5 min.)
- Add 1/2 flour and all lemon juice and mix
- Add remaining flour to form a dough (if sticky add 1+1/2 T. flour)
- Transfer dough to parchment paper and roll into a 1+1/2 inch-wide log. Wrap in parchment paper and refrigerate for 1 hour.
- Remove from refrigerator and cut into ½ inch slices.
- Place on large cookie sheet lined with parchment paper and refrigerate for 20 minutes.
- Preheat oven to 320-degrees and bake for 5 minutes.
- Raise oven heat to 350-degrees and bake for 9-10 minutes. (Cookies will be gold in color).
- Let sit on cookie sheet for 5 minutes and then move to wire rack.
- Frost with lemon glaze.

Lemon Glaze

1T lemon juice; zest of 1 lemon; and 1+1/2 cups powdered sugar. Mix until smooth; frost cooled cookies.

Propagating Plants from Cuttings

by Melinda Myers

Expand your indoor and outdoor garden by taking cuttings from your favorite plants. Focus on older varieties and heirloom plants. Many new varieties are protected by plant patents and should not be propagated.

Leaf and stem cuttings are the easiest way to propagate most houseplants and annuals. Use a hand pruner, a sharp knife or snips to take cuttings about 3 to 4 inches long. I like to make my cutting right above a set of healthy leaves so the remaining stem and plant remains attractive.

Remove any buds, flowers, and the lowest leaf or two on the cutting. The bottom of the stem will be buried, and the roots will form where the leaves were once attached. Dip the cut end in a rooting hormone, if needed, to increase rooting success. These products contain a fungicide to reduce the risk of rot and hormones to encourage rooting. Place the cutting in a container filled with moist potting mix or vermiculite.

Place the pot in a plastic bag to increase the humidity around the cutting and conserve soil moisture. Leave the top of the bag open to reduce the risk of root rot. Set the plant in a bright location out of direct sunlight. Water often enough to keep the potting mix moist but not soggy wet.

Roots usually form in several weeks. Move the rooted cutting to a container filled with a well-drained potting mix if it was not rooted in its own container filled with potting mix. Water as needed.

You may have started cuttings in water. The roots that form in water are different than those that grow in soil, so these cuttings basically need to root twice. Plus, those started in water are more likely to rot. But the joy of gardening is doing what works best for you.

You'll be amazed at the many plants you'll have to add to your garden, overwinter in a sunny window and share with your friends.

7 Herbs and Spices That May Help Boost Immunity Naturally

by Lauren Bedosky (Diet and Nutrition)

Adding these to your diet may help fend off colds and illnesses.

In folk medicine, peppermint, turmeric, and ginger have long been thought to have medicinal properties. For many of us, immunity has become more important than ever. Luckily, the path to a strong immune system is neither expensive nor complicated. "The best way to boost your immune system is right there on your plate, in the foods you choose," says [Wendy Bazilian, DrPH, RDN](#), the San Diego-based author of *The SuperfoodsRx Diet*.

Herbs and spices, in particular, have been used for centuries for medicinal purposes and may be one of your most potent dietary tools for boosting immunity, according to [research published in 2020 in *Integrative Medicine*](#).

"While more studies are needed to determine the specific benefits of certain herbs and spices on the immune system, we know that the therapeutic properties, along with a healthful, diverse diet, strengthen overall immune function," says [Mascha Davis, MPH, RDN](#), the author of *Eat Your Vitamins* who is based in Rye, New York.

[Here are seven immune-supporting herbs and spices worth adding to your diet.](#)

Turmeric

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) is a vibrant yellow spice with a long history of use in [ayurvedic medicine](#) (the ancient Indian medical system) as a treatment for inflammatory conditions, [according to a review](#). "While the research is unclear, consuming anti-inflammatory foods may help reduce the tissue inflammation associated with cold and flu," Dr. Bazilian says.

Curcumin, the primary active compound in turmeric, is especially potent. It offers powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, and has been shown to improve oxidative stress markers, per a [review and meta-analysis published in the *Journal of Functional Foods*](#).

Oxidative stress is a phenomenon caused by an imbalance between free radicals (unstable molecules often created by environmental pollutants) and antioxidants (molecules that neutralize free radicals), according to an [article in *Oxidative Medicine and Cellular Longevity*](#). When this happens, free radicals are able to damage various cells in your body. In response, the immune system triggers inflammation. While research is ongoing, there may be a connection between this immune system response to oxidative stress and autoimmune disorders, according to a [description published in March 2022 in *Oxidative Medicine and Cellular Longevity*](#).

How to Enjoy It

Turmeric can be better absorbed in the presence of some fats, as well as piperine, a compound in black pepper, according to [research](#). Therefore, Bazilian suggests mixing up a mug of golden milk — a hot drink made of turmeric, milk with fat, and other warm spices like black pepper — to score more of this anti-inflammatory spice. Turmeric is also great when added to curries, soups, and roasted meats.

Echinacea

Echinacea, a flowering plant that grows in North America, was traditionally used by Native Americans for medicinal purposes, according to the [National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health \(NCCIH\)](#). Today, this herb is promoted as a dietary supplement for the common cold and other infections, per the NCCIH. It's believed that echinacea contains active compounds that stimulate the immune system, helping shorten cold and [flu duration](#) and easing symptoms such as [sore throat](#), [cough](#), and fever, notes [Mount Sinai](#).

However, research on echinacea's effectiveness is mixed, says Frances Largeman-Roth, RDN, the New York City-based author of *Smoothies & Juices: Prevention Healing Kitchen*.

A [meta-analysis of 14 studies](#) found that echinacea lowered the odds of developing the common cold by 58 percent and cut the length of illness by one to four days. Meanwhile, in another [study](#), more than 700 people with a new onset common cold were given either echinacea supplements, a placebo, or no pills for five days. Those who received echinacea didn't see significant improvements in symptoms compared with the other groups. The echinacea group did see an average half-day reduction in the duration of their cold or a 10 percent reduction in severity, however. While not significant, the authors note that these improvements may make echinacea supplementation worthwhile for some people.

How to Enjoy It

Echinacea is typically available as a supplement (as an extract, tincture, tablet, or capsule). According to the NCCIH, most adults can safely take echinacea by mouth in the short term. For example, Mount Sinai suggests taking echinacea three times a day while you're sick; stop once you feel better and make sure not to take it for more than 10 days. However, echinacea can interact with certain medications, so consult your doctor before taking echinacea supplements, Largeman-Roth says. It's also noteworthy that people who are allergic to daisies should not use echinacea, and people with asthma and allergies may be at a higher risk for complications from the herb, according to Mount Sinai.

Ginger

Like many herbs and spices, ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) is a staple in traditional medicine. For centuries, people have turned to this warm spice for the treatment of headaches, colds, nausea, and vomiting, according to a paper in *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*.

Modern research shows that there may be something to this. In a study published in the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, fresh ginger prevented plaque formation from human respiratory syncytial virus, a common respiratory virus that causes mild, cold like symptoms.

According to a review in the *International Journal of Preventive Medicine*, the compounds in ginger — primarily gingerol and shogaol — have also exhibited antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and analgesic (pain-relieving) properties. These properties help strengthen the body's defenses, which may protect against many chronic diseases, the authors note. "Also, some of the anti-inflammatory and pain-reducing properties of ginger may help support the immune system when we are well," Bazilian notes, adding that this is achieved mainly by preventing or reducing the severity and duration of symptoms.

How to Enjoy It

Brew a mug of fragrant ginger tea. You can use commercial ginger tea bags or prepare fresh ginger root tea. To make your own tea, buy a piece of fresh ginger, trim off the tough knots and peel it. Then cut the root into thin, crosswise slices. Place a few slices in a cup, pour in boiling water, and cover and steep for 10 minutes, suggests Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Cinnamon

Another warming spice, cinnamon is renowned for its antioxidant properties, Largeman-Roth says. In fact, cinnamon has higher antioxidant properties than mint, ginger, and licorice, according to a [study](#).

Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum*) also offers anti-fungal, anti-bacterial, and anti-inflammatory benefits, Largeman-Roth says. According to [research published in Food & Function](#), E-cinnamaldehyde is one of the primary active compounds in cinnamon, offering potent anti-inflammatory effects.

E-cinnamaldehyde is also an antimicrobial compound. A [study published in Foods](#) suggests that E-cinnamaldehyde may inhibit the growth of listeria bacteria. A separate [study published in Foods](#) found that cinnamon essential oil had similar effects on salmonella bacteria.

How to Enjoy It

Give your toast a dusting of cinnamon or sprinkle it into your coffee or tea for added flavor. Cinnamon also pairs well with fruits like apples and pears.

Peppermint

Peppermint is an herb (a natural cross between water mint and spearmint) that contains a range of flavonoids. These are plant compounds that have beneficial effects on immune health. "I think of flavonoids as housekeepers that help tidy and put things away, enhance in some cases, repair when possible, and eliminate debris in the body," Bazilian says. They help the body react to, process, protect, and repair on a daily basis, she adds.

Peppermint also contains menthol, a compound with anesthetic (numbing) and analgesic effects, according to the [National Center for Biotechnology Information](#). As such, menthol is commonly added to over-the-counter [cold and flu treatments](#). "Menthol seems to open or relax the airways some," Bazilian says.

Research on menthol has been mixed, however. Some [research](#) found that inhaling menthol had no effect on nasal airflow in kids. That said, it did make nasal breathing seem easier, per research. More studies are needed for conclusive evidence.

How to Enjoy It

The next time your nose gets stuffed up, breathe in steam from hot water mixed with a few drops of peppermint oil, suggests [UCHealth](#). Or brew a mug of hot peppermint tea.

Astragalus

This native Chinese herb has traditionally been used as an adaptogen (a substance that protects the body from stress and disease), Largeman-Roth says. Astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*) is also used as part of an herbal combination to prevent or treat colds, according to [Mount Sinai](#). It's thought that astragalus strengthens and regulates the immune system, notes the [NCCIH](#).

While research is limited, some studies suggest that astragalus may help fight viral infections. For example, a [meta-analysis](#) of Chinese herbal medicines including astragalus found that it may be effective against the [hepatitis B virus](#). Not all the studies included astragalus, however, and the authors note that the studies were of poor quality and more research is warranted.

Another [study](#) suggests that astragalus may help white blood cells respond to infections.

How to Enjoy It

Astragalus is often taken as a supplement (available in tinctures, tablets, and capsules), per Mount Sinai. No adverse effects have been found when taken in doses up to 60 grams daily for up to four months, according to the NCCIH. However, it's best to talk to your doctor before taking it. In addition, astragalus may interact with medications that suppress the immune system, the NCCIH warns.

Paprika

You may not associate paprika (red pepper) with immune health, but this fiery spice is packed with helpful compounds like vitamins C and A, per the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#). "Though there isn't research about paprika directly related to the immune system, there are a few known associations," Bazilian says.

For example, [vitamin C](#) (ascorbic acid) is an antioxidant that helps protect your body against free radicals, per the [Mayo Clinic](#). It also helps keep your immune cells healthy, according to a [research article published in Nutrients](#). Many people believe that vitamin C can reduce the duration of the common cold, but this claim hasn't been fully proven, notes [MedlinePlus](#).

Meanwhile, [vitamin A](#) plays an important role in immune system development and helps regulate immune responses, according to a [review in the Journal of Clinical Medicine](#).

Capsaicin

Capsaicin is the compound that's responsible for the burning effect of peppers, per an [article in Molecules](#). "Capsaicin can relieve pain and inflammation," Bazilian says.

How to Enjoy It

Bazilian recommends sprinkling paprika on eggs, beans, stews, [cottage cheese](#), and popcorn. "It's also great in marinades and salad dressings," she says.

Medical Disclaimer: 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 a recommendation or an endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment. Please consult a health care provider before pursuing any herbal treatments.



"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart."



PATIENCE

There's a long, long time till summer
Until then it's springtime we need.
There's a long, long time for waiting
Until it's time to plant the seed.
There is snow and ice a plenty
To freshen bulbs asleep below
Until the tulips and forget-me-knot
Rise up to say hello.
May the fairies of the garden
Dust color among the flowers
And bless them in their sleeping pods
To enhance their growing powers.
At least, we'll notice emerald shoots
Wholesome air will come our way
We gardeners must begin to work
Even though we call it play.

J E Janssen "Under The Leaf"



If you have an event, article, recipe, books, etc. in which you feel members might be interested, please send to Diane Kescenovitz and I will try to put it in the next issue of *Sage Leaves* if there is room.

Future *Sage Leaves* will be mailed out to arrive by March 1 and May 1, 2024.