

“Autumn . . . shows us how beautiful it is to let things go.”

--Anonymous

SAGE LEAVES

The Herb Society of America Wisconsin Unit

September/October 2023 – Vol XXXIV #5

Unit Meetings

Saturday, September 16, 9:30 am Social, 10:00 am Meeting, noon Lunch

Program: Annual Meeting & French Luncheon

Speaker: Lorrie Burrows, “Tea Herbs”

Location: St. Christopher’s Church

Tuesday, October 17, 9:30 am Social, 10:00 am Meeting, noon Lunch

Speaker: Pamela King, “Cultural Use of Herbs” (Armenian)

Location: St. Christopher’s Church



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

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Wisconsin Unit Website: herb-society-wisconsin.org

Herb Society Office: herbs@herbsociety.org

Herb Society of America Website: www.herbsociety.org

Facebook: HerbSocietyofAmericaWI

NEWSBUDS . . .



Since the June Wrap Up meeting, I have been on an immersive journey into the benefits of being an Herb Society Member. So much so that I'll call this Newsbuds, "A Reflection on the transition from being an active HSA WI-Unit member to being the Unit Chair."

On July 22, Melody and I represented HSA at the Chicago Botanical Gardens Herb event.

It was a great weather and attendance day. We think we talked to over 200 people about herb related topics at our info table. Looking forward to doing this again next July, 2024. On July 23, Pat, Kathy B, Mary Kay, Melody, Mary W., Latoya, Tricia and I engaged with MANY visitors at Boerner Botanical Gardens for Herb Day in the gardens. Some of our members came out to see the herb garden and to visit with us. The herb garden looked and smelled beautiful. What a lovely day! On August 2, 13 members (a few spouses included in that group) enjoyed a wonderful reception and tour of three Old World Wisconsin farms gardens. It was a feel-good experience for us all.

The Board met in July and Board/Committee Chairs met in August to prepare for our September meeting. You will be receiving the welcome back mailing packet soon. The packet includes a welcome back letter, the 2023-24 annual budget proposal, the program schedule and meeting dates for the year and the updated membership roster. Denise guided us through a thorough review of our finances. Joanne has arranged some very interesting programs for this year. There is a distinct 'International' feeling to this year's herbal education. We are going to *armchair* travel to England, France, Armenia, and Italy. Be sure to get to meetings so you won't miss a trip.

Melody and Denise, both women with impressive leadership skills, have been helping me navigate through the duties and responsibilities of this chair position. I can't thank them enough for giving me their gifts of time, knowledge and patience. I've learned that one of their greatest attributes is the ability to kindly communicate with members and be open to answering questions, listening to concerns and sharing ideas. Thanks for all your support as I grow from your example.

Hope you are enjoying the fruit (or is that herbs) of your gardening labor. Soon we will be together again as we open the 2023-2024 HSA WI-Unit year on Saturday, September 16 at St Christopher's. It promises to be a very Ooo-la-la kind of meeting. AJ

From Mary Kay McDevitt, Luncheon Chair

"Lunch at a Paris Cafe" will be served at the first meeting of the 2023-2024 HSA WI-Unit year. 21 members have already rsvp'd. We hope more of you will rsvp before September 9 to enjoy this French-inspired meal. Watch your email for the sign-up sheet listing ingredients needed for each of the luncheon menu items. If you will be attending and would like to contribute an ingredient, email or call me (or leave a message) and I will add your name to the sign-up sheet next to your choice. Amounts of ingredients will be sent on September 10 to those who signed up.

MENU

- *French Onion Soup with Cheese Croutons (recipes available)
- *Salade Nicoise made with Spring Greens Mix
- *Additions to Salade: an assortment of vegetables both raw and cooked.
- *Salade la Lemon Vinaigrette (recipe available)
- *Croissants - small size
- *Tarragon Butter (recipe available)
- *French inspired desserts - examples: Crepes, Eclaires, Profiteroles, Macaroons
- *Coffee, Tea, Bottled Water

Your enthusiasm and effort is appreciated. MK

**Ladies, I am looking to have a cooking demo for the month of April.
If any of you want to suggest someone, I'd be very interested! Thanks.
Joanne, Vice-Chair**

Holiday Luncheon – December 6, 2023

We are scheduled to have our Holiday Luncheon at the Town Club in Fox Point on Wednesday, December 6, 2023. A wreath theme has been planned with craft projects and decorations. An invitation will be shared with the group in Fall, which will list the luncheon menu and cost per person. If you have any questions, please contact me. ~Denise Nelson, Event Chair



September 2023 Herb of the Month - Aleppo Pepper (*Capsicum annuum* 'Aleppo')

(Susan Obry)

The Aleppo pepper, also known as the Halaby chile pepper, is named after the Syrian city of Aleppo and is a member of the nightshade family. Due to the ongoing civil war in Syria, most Aleppo pepper is now sourced from Turkey. In the mid-1990s, the spice became popular in the U.S. and is now being produced in Virginia, the Midwest and Southern California.

You will seldom find it fresh. The pepper is usually ground into flakes after being deseeded and sundried and then mixed with salt and olive oil. Its taste has been described as fairly mild, mildly sweet, tangy with hints of fruit like sun dried tomatoes with the earthiness of cumin. Aleppo pepper flakes should have a rich burgundy color and pleasant fruity aroma. Aleppo pepper is roughly half as spicy as red chile flakes.

This pepper works well in any dish that you would like to enhance the flavor with a slow building heat. It's commonly used in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean dishes as a seasoning for grilled meats such as pork, steak and chicken. It is sprinkled on eggs and avocado toast, with lamb, in shawarma and in marinades. Can be infused in oil as dips and drizzles. Rim a margarita glass. Can be used in place of red pepper flakes.

Aleppo peppers need at least 6 hours of direct sunlight a day. They prefer warm soil (sandy, silt, or loamy) and frequent, light watering. Fertilize with a phosphorous-rich product. Start them indoors from seeds 10 weeks before last frost or use transplants. Two weeks after the last frost, you can move your plants outdoors. Can be grown in containers. They can grow up to 4 feet and are bush-like. The main concern for these peppers is aphids.

If you grow your own peppers, it is best to sun dry them, then crush into flakes adding a tiny amount of salt and oil. The crushed pepper should be stored in an airtight container away from light, moisture and heat. If stored properly, it should stay fresh for several months.

October 2023 Herb of the Month - Sesame (*Sesamum indicum*)

(Susan Obry)

Sesame is also known as Bene/Til. This annual herb is one of the oldest oilseed plants. It is usually grown in hot dry tropical areas such as Africa, India, Indonesia and China but can be grown in USDA Zones 10 and above. Certain areas of Texas are known as the "sweet spot" for growing sesame crops.

The seeds and oil are an essential ingredient in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Indian and Middle Eastern dishes. Used on/in breads, pastries, stir-fries, ground into pastes, sprinkled on vegetables, in cereals, smoothies, hummus and many other dishes.

The plants love full sun and high temperatures with well drained loam soil. They like to be kept moist but not wet. They are drought tolerant. They produce purple to white to pale rose colored flowers and seed pockets that burst when ripe. Hence the term "open sesame".

When harvesting seeds, dry them thoroughly since they contain oil and may become rancid. Seeds can also be left to dry on the plant. Store them in jars out of direct sunlight. They can be frozen for longer storage.

A frequently asked question is "Can Sesame oil spoil or become rancid?". (See note) The answer is yes but the "when" really depends on how the oil is stored. It should be stored in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight. If toasted, it will last 5-6 months longer than untoasted. The best by date* on my unopened bottle of oil that I purchased 5 months ago is Oct. of 2024. If the bottle is opened, it should be used within 6 months. Opened bottles can also be stored in the refrigerator for up to 12 months. May become cloudy but will return to its usual consistency at room temperature.

How will I know if it is spoiled or rancid? Discard immediately if you see any sediment at the bottom of the bottle or any mold spots in the oil. If the taste or smell has changed, discard it.

Note: Rancid is related to taste or smell. Spoiled refers to food that is no longer edible.

*Use by dates varied depending on the informational source. Use your best judgement.

Easy Herb Sesame Dill Onion Dip

3 Tbsp fresh dill or to taste

3 Tbsp toasted sesame seeds

16 oz. container French onion dip or less to taste.

Mix together. Chill 1-2 hours for better flavor.

Recipes

Fresh Sage Muffins

(Gail Gabrelian – June 2023 Mtg)

The Herbal Companion Cooks, Recipes from the first five years of the Herbal Companion magazine.

These sage and parsley studded muffins are a wonderful complement to any meal. They make a wonderful snack or light lunch when paired with cheese and a salad. You can bake them in miniature muffin cups and serve them as an unusual hor's doeuvre.

2 cups flour	1 cup milk
2 teaspoons sugar	1 egg
2 teaspoons baking powder	¼ cup butter melted
½ teaspoon salt	½ cup freshly chopped sage
	½ cup freshly chopped parsley

Combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Mix milk with egg, melted butter, sage and parsley. Combine with dry ingredients, mixing just enough to moisten (overmixing results in heavy muffins). Pour into 12 muffin cups sprayed with cooking spray or fitted with paper cupcake liners. Bake in a preheated oven at 400 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes or until the tops of the muffins spring back when touched.

Roasted Veggie Orzo Salad

(Kathy Bussanich – June 2023 Mtg)

3 bell peppers	¾ t salt
1 c grape tomatoes	¼ t pepper
1 medium zucchini	1 c orzo
4 T olive oil (divided)	2 c chicken broth
1 garlic clove -minced	¾ c feta cheese
1 T Italian seasoning	

Cut vegetables (not tomatoes) and place in a 9x10 pan with 2 T olive oil, Italian seasoning, salt & pepper. Toss and roast 30 min at 350 or until tender. Add remaining 2 T olive oil to a large pan and saute orzo until slightly brown. Add the broth and bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and cook until all of the liquid is absorbed. Add orzo to the vegetables and mix well. Sprinkle with the feta cheese. Cover with foil and bake for 30 min. Serve warm or at room temperature.



Advice from a Tree

Ilam Shamir

- *Stand tall and proud*
- *Go out on a limb*
- *Remember your roots*
- *Drink plenty of water*
- *Be content with your natural beauty*
- *Enjoy the view*

Yarrow Salve

(Yarrow is 2024 International Herb of the Year)

1-1/2 to 2 c	fresh yarrow leaves
1-1/4 to 1-1/2 c	olive oil (or any other neutral oil)
1 oz	bees wax

1. Gather yarrow from a clean area that hasn't been sprayed with chemicals. Double-check that you have identified the yarrow properly before beginning this project.
2. Roughly chop the yarrow, filling a pint mason jar almost to the top with leaves.
3. Pour the olive oil or neutral oil of your choice over the yarrow leaves.
4. Fill a double boiler or slow cooker with 1" of water. Carefully place the yarrow and oil filled jar on a trivet in double boiler/slow cooker.
5. Slowly heat the water until it reaches 110 to 120 degrees. Turn off the heat.
6. Keep the contents of the jar incubating in the warm water. Bring the water back up to temperature periodically over the next 24-48 hours, never leaving the heat on for any prolonged amount of time and never allowing the water line to get too low.
7. When the oil is completely infused, strain out the yarrow leaves.
8. Pour infused yarrow oil into a heatproof bowl; place bowl over a pot of gently simmering water, creating another double boiler.
9. Stir in beeswax and let slowly melt into the oil. Remove from heat once the beeswax is completely incorporated.
10. Carefully pour oil and beeswax combination into prepared salve tins or small jars.
11. Let salve cool and set completely before using, around 30 minutes.

Simple Ways to Make Your Herbs Last Longer

(Alexandra Domrongchai, Food & Wine Magazine)

Storing fresh herbs like cilantro, parsley, mint, and basil can be tricky because they tend to wilt quickly. The secret for making soft fresh herbs last is as simple as a glass of water.

First, properly clean and prep your herbs to ensure their longevity. Remove the twist tie or rubber band holding the herbs in bunches, so they can breathe. Then run them under the tap, gently shaking off any dirt. After they are clean, dry the herbs with a clean dish towel or with a salad spinner. Make sure to remove as much water as possible to prevent the growth of surface bacteria and dirt.

Once your herbs are properly cleaned and dried, trim the bottom half inch from the stems and gather them into little bundles. Place them upright in a jar or container filled with about 1 to 2 inches of water, making sure no leaves touch the water. Once you have assembled your bouquet, place a clear plastic bag over the top of the leaves. Store cilantro, parsley, and mint in the refrigerator. Basil is best kept on the counter but in indirect sunlight (you don't want your basil to get warm).

With this bouquet method, your herbs will stay fresher for weeks instead of just days. The moisture from the water helps hydrate and refresh the herbs, preventing them from wilting too soon.

While the soft herbs are more delicate, hardier herbs like rosemary, dill, sage, thyme, chives, and oregano, have a bit more flexibility and do not dry out as easily.

Though hardier herbs can also be kept fresh with a glass of water, the best way to store them is to loosely wrap them in a damp paper towel and keep them in a tightly sealed container or reusable bag in the fridge to prevent oxygen from entering and the leaves from wilting. As the paper towels dry out, make sure to re-moisten them.

If your fresh herbs are properly cared for, they can last up to two to three weeks. To regulate moisture and make the most of these tips, consider dividing your herbs into smaller batches and storing them separately.

If you want to keep herbs even longer, freeze them. To freeze hardy herbs, wrap them in a damp paper towel and place them in a labeled, resealable freezer bag. You can also portion out smaller amounts and wrap them in plastic wrap, then store them in a freezer bag for use.

To freeze more tender herbs, blend them with a couple tablespoons of oil or water and freeze the mixture in an ice cube tray or freezer bag. These frozen herbs can last for several months in the freezer, giving you a taste of summer gardens even in the depths of winter.

eSaving Seeds for Replanting

(Ebert's Village Gardeners Express – July 27, 2023)

Greetings!

Saving seeds is a fun activity for new gardeners and seasoned plant lovers alike. It saves you money, and you can trade and share them with other gardeners - you could even start your own "seed saving club!" Get the kids involved - it's just another way to spend quality time together in the garden. This week we share some seed-saving basics from the National Gardening Bureau to get you started.

Successful Seed Saving

Saving seeds can be economical since a single flower can generate dozens or even hundreds of seeds. Although the procedure is simple, there are a few techniques that will improve your chances of being a successful seed saver.

Tools and Materials Needed:

- plant markers
- paper bags
- rubber bands
- envelopes
- labels

1. **Choose the best plants.** There's always some variability in a planting of the same variety – some plants will have stronger stems or a more pleasing color or fragrance. Use plant markers to help you remember which seeds to save since the flowers will have faded by the time you harvest the seeds.
2. **Observe seed formation.** Most flower seeds are borne in pods or capsules. The ideal time for gathering seeds varies from crop to crop, but in general, you want to let the seeds dry on the plant as long as possible. Observe plants frequently and watch as seeds develop and ripen.
3. **Use paper bags to collect seeds.** Shake the seed head over a paper bag to collect the seeds or snip the entire dried seed head and drop it into a labeled paper bag.
4. **Separate seeds from the chaff.** Some seeds fall freely from the seed heads or pods; others need to be rubbed to loosen them. Remove non-seed material.
5. **Store seeds in a tightly sealed container.** Good choices include small glass jars (baby food jars are handy) or film canisters. Keep them in a cool place – in the refrigerator if there's room. You can store several different types of seeds in separate, labeled envelopes in the same jar.

Additional Tips:

Decorate envelopes, insert seeds, seal tightly, then give as gifts. Include plant details and cultural information on the storage jars and envelopes, including plant name and variety, planting depth, and sun/shade preferences.



“Autumn that year painted the countryside in vivid shades of scarlet, saffron and russet, and the days were clear and crisp under the harvest skies.”

--Sharon Kay Penman, Novelist

In Memory

Joan Janssen



We are saddened by the news of Joan Janssen's passing on July 5, 2023. A founding and life member of the Herb Society of America's Wisconsin Unit, Joan was to have received her 50-year pin this coming year. Joan served as Chairperson of the unit in 1978-80 and in 1996-98. She was editor of *Sage Leaves* for many years. For each issue, she composed an original poem, later collected in her 1999 book of garden poetry, "Under the Leaf." Joan was also the first editor of our web page. The Herb Society of America awarded her their Nancy Putnam Howard Award for Excellence in Horticulture.

Joan was a sweet and gentle lady. We will miss her lovely smile and cheerful presence, always so kind.



Gloria Jones

Gloria, another founding member of our unit, passed away on May 30, 2023. Gloria is the aunt of member Kathy Laurent. Gloria enjoyed her work at Boerner Botanical Gardens where she was the Adult Education Coordinator. She served on the National Board of the Herb Society of America, was a docent at the Milwaukee Public Museum, and was a member of the Tuesday Club at the Woman's Club of Wisconsin. Gloria volunteered for many organizations throughout Southeastern Wisconsin.

The Herb Woman

She harvests yards and countryside
And hangs the dried snippets tied or braided
their aromas reeling from the rafters of her ceiling
Fennel, bergamot and yarrow
Plucked to song of thrush or sparrow
Coriander, mustard, squill, bay and basil, anise, dill,
Catnip, sage & elderflowers
Blessed in potent thundershowers,
Witch hazel leaves and cherry bark
Frisled with snows of winter's dark
So she listens - gives advice
Dispensing freely - herbs and spice.

-- Author unknown



Prayer at Rest

Dear God, on my vacation
There was time for contemplation –
I saw your glory in the sunsets golden
Your majesty in the flight of the heron
Your humor in the diving ducklings
Your grandeur in the rainbow's arc
Your power in the crashing thunder
Your grace in elderly faces
Your love in mothers' embraces
Your thoughtful care of your kingdom
Your peace in the silence of the forest
Your goodness in this blessed nation
Your pride in your splendid creation.
I felt love of friends
You gave me
I found support in those
You placed near.
And I am grateful.

J E Janssen ("Under The Leaf")



If you have an event, article, recipe, etc. that you feel members might be interested, please send to Diane and she 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 November 2, 2023 and January 1, 2024.