

*“Gardening is medicine that does not need a prescription . . . and with no limit on dosage.”*

--Author unknown

# SAGE LEAVES

**The Herb Society of America Wisconsin Unit**

July/August 2023 – Vol XXXIV #4

## **2023-24 Calendar of Events and Meetings**

Location: St. Christopher Church (unless specified elsewhere)

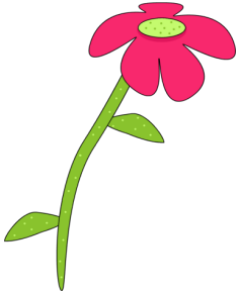
7845 N. River Road, River Hills

9:30 a.m. Social, 10 a.m. Meeting, Noon Luncheon (unless specified otherwise)

- July 23: Sunday, 11 am – 3 pm - Herb Day at Boerner Botanical Gardens
- September 16: Saturday, Annual meeting at the Church. French Tea, Birthday mention and poem, Herb of the month, Lorrie Burrows: Tea Herbs
- October 17: Tuesday, Herb of the month, Pamela Karg, speaker: Cultural Use of Herbs (Armenia)
- November 18: Saturday, Herb of the Year - Yarrow - lead by vice-chair; wreath making, Eva Boldt and AJ Star; Spaghetti lunch prepared by Fr. Geoffrey of St. Christopher's (Fr. and staff invited to share)
- December 6: Wednesday, 10:00 am for social, Noon for lunch at the Town Club, Fox Point. Donations collected for "Repairers of the Breach."
- January 16: Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. (ZOOM meeting) Grants for Boerner Botanical Gardens and Old World Wisconsin, and scholarship winner will speak.
- February 20: Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. (ZOOM meeting) Jane Hawley Stevens, speaker - topic TBA
- March 16: Saturday, Herb of the month, birthday mention and poem, speaker not confirmed yet; possible topic: Growing and caring for succulents and succulent propagation.
- April 6: Saturday, Symposium at the Woman's Club, Milwaukee.
- April 16: Tuesday, Unit meeting, herb of the month, elections for treasurer and secretary
- May 14: Tuesday, Unit meeting, Herb of the month, Herb and Artisan Fair prep
- May 18: Saturday, Herb and Artisan Fair
- June 15: Saturday, Wrap up of event details. Approval of Culinary Scholarship candidate.



# NEWSBUDS . . .



## From the Chair

As I sat down to write this message to you, my fellow herb loving friends, I realized it was June 21! Summer Solstice or the first day of Summer 2023 had arrived. What a glorious day! What a glorious Season! To mark the transition from spring to summer, I went out to snip some fresh mint to muddle into a tall glass of ice water. I snipped borage to put in one ice cube tray and lemon verbena to put into another. I noted that the dill was looking good, so I brought in a few snippets to use for a tuna salad sandwich.

So began, **the delighting in and using of herbs**, fresh from my own garden bed and pots. I have piles of papers on my dining table to deal with, and weeds are calling my name but gathering some herbs to nibble was so much more satisfying, in my opinion. Ha!

Nino and Susan McDonell are developing an information booklet on **Native American Herbs and Insect Repellent plants**, which will be used to instruct the public. This year's theme for the central area of the herb garden at Boerner is **Tea Time in the Garden**. I hope you will venture out to Boerner Botanical Gardens on Sunday July 23 to visit the herb garden and our Herb Day tent. Rubbing and sniffing herbs is always encouraged.

Be sure to venture out to enjoy local garden group tours and botanical gardens. Spoil your friends and family with a delicious herb infused something or other. Use that HSA membership card to the fullest. As one who practices mindfulness, I hope you too become one with the beauty that surrounds you as often as you can. Breathe in all that is fresh and enlivening. IT'S SUMMER! AJ

### Executive Board:

Chair:	AJ Star
Vice Chair & Programs:	Joanne Ruggieri
Secretary:	Tricia Hallam
Treasurer:	Dense Nelson



### Committee Chairs

By-Laws:	Joanne Ruggieri
Communications:	Pat Greathead
Facebook Admin:	Susan McDonell
Finance:	Denise Nelson
Grants/Scholarship:	Lore Borth
Herb Fair:	Melody Orban & AJ Star
Holiday Party:	Denise Nelson
Horticulture:	Sue Obry
Librarian:	Jean Longnecker
Luncheons:	Mary Kay McDevitt
Membership:	Pat Greathead
Nominating:	Melody Orban
Sage Leaves:	Diane Kescenovitz
Sunshine:	Pat Greathead & Joan Amundson
Symposium:	Denise Nelson
Webmaster:	Susan McDonell

## Herb Fair 2023

I want to shout out, loudly, an enormous thank you to all our members who planned and prepared and volunteered to make the Herb & Artisan Fair a success! We had publicity flyers, bookmarks and postcards created, vendors invited, volunteer times were scheduled, members signed up for food the day in the Artisan Café and bakers for the Tea Room, Herbal Heirlooms were arranged, greeters were friendly. Our members set up, volunteered during the day and helped at take down. Thank you for the generosity of time and effort. Our success is due to all your hard work. Thanks again, Melody

### Thank you from Melody

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be your chair during the past four years. It has been a very positive, rewarding experience and I have been humbled by the many kind words of encouragement given to me by you. I have had terrific, hardworking Board members that have made my job easy. I have gotten to know a lot of you personally by working with you on our various events, and I have also made friends with other Herb Society members in other states.

It has been my great pleasure to serve you during my two terms. I know our unit has great opportunities in the future to thrive and grow with AJ's leadership. I have made wonderful friendships and gleaned great knowledge from so many of you. I have been truly blessed to be part of such an outstanding group. Thank you, Melody

## **Herb Society Renewed Membership Cards**

The members of our Unit should have received their renewed cards for the 2023-2024 year. If you did not get your card, please contact me and we'll get a replacement for you.

Thank you! Denise Nelson

## **2023 Scholarship Winner - Another Truly Outstanding MATC Student**

Phoebe Bowles, who just completed her first year at MATC (Milwaukee Area Technical School) in the Baking and Pastry Arts program with an impressive 3.925 GPA, is the winner of our 2023 scholarship. Phoebe started work at 15 in the kitchen of the Java House in Cedarburg, and a year later moved into customer service at the front of the house, preparing and serving food and drinks. Her manager and Java House owner Lisa Bostracki (herself an herbalist), said that Phoebe is "an extremely hard worker," and as a barista could "serve up to 25 people in line with ease, was always polite, a very good communicator, a good hostess." Phoebe, according to Lisa, is a talented baker, very creative with herbs in baking, and a skilled photographer.

On her application, Phoebe said "I am interested in doing more and learning more about healing herbs and flavor enhancing herbs for baking. I have gardened in the past and learn[ed] through my employer at Java House how to grow herbs for drinks and baking." She added that she has taken classes at the Riveredge Nature Center and Schlitz Audubon, which has piqued her "interest in growing a garden for baking that is medicinal and tastes good". One reason she applied for our scholarship, says Phoebe, is that it would help her not just continue at MATC, but would let her "experiment with healthy baking ingredients that are more expensive, such as stress-relieving herbs, alternative flours, and non-dairy ingredients".

We will all meet Phoebe (by Zoom) at our January 16, 2024, meeting. I, for one, can't wait!

*Submitted by Lore Borth, Chair of the Grants & Scholarship Committee, who thanks committee members Eva Boldt, Denise Nelson, and Susan Williams for their usual conscientious work!*

## **July 2023 Herb of the Month: Tarragon (*Artemisia Dracunculus*)**

(Susan Obry)



Dracunculus means "little dragon" and this perennial herb (zone 4 or warmer) was so named because of its serpentine roots. It was reputed to cure the bites of small dragons and all serpents. I was first introduced to tarragon when I was Melody's sous chef in a cooking class. I was tasked with creating a chicken salad for tasting. Many of the recipes I found contained tarragon. I liked its anise-peppery like taste. Some say it also has touches of vanilla and mint. It can be used fresh or dried. Note: if using dried leaves, remove them after cooking since they do not soften.

It is commonly used in French cooking and is one of the four herbs in *finest herbs*. It is used in sauces such as a Bearnaise and remoulade sauce and in salad dressings, herbed butters and flavored vinegars. Tarragon enhances poultry, beef fish, shellfish, pork, lamb egg and cheese dishes, and many vegetables such as tomatoes, potatoes, carrots, beets, peas mushrooms. Note: Cooking it too long can bring out its bitter side so only add during the last 10 to 15 minutes. Frozen tarragon and tarragon in vinegar are better in flavor than dried. Does not pair well with rosemary, sage or thyme.

French tarragon is the variety used for cooking since its leaves are more flavorful. French tarragon flowers are sterile, so it is propagated by root division/cuttings or obtained as transplants. If you obtain seeds, they are from Russian tarragon and the leaves will be mild in spring but bitter as they mature. Young Russian stems can be used as a substitute for asparagus. A substitute for Russian tarragon would be Mexican tarragon.

Tarragon can be grown in full sun to partial shade. French tarragon prefers well drained, a little on the sandy side soil while Russian tolerates poor soils, drought and neglect. Grows in full sun to partial shade but does not like high humidity so plant spacing is essential. Start harvesting at about 6-8 inches. Can be grown in containers and indoors but requires long periods of light.

### **Tarragon Chicken Salad – Makes 4 Servings**

- 1/2 cup chopped fresh tarragon or 3 tablespoons dried
- 1/4 cup minced sweet onion
- 1/2 cup finely sliced celery
- 1/2 cup diced water chestnuts
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise or more to taste
- 1 tablespoon white wine or apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups cooked chicken-chopped
- 1/3-1/2 cup dried cherries, raisins, or cranberries
- 1 cup sliced green grapes (optional)
- 1/4 cup chopped toasted almonds or 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds

Directions: Mix the first eight ingredients. Stir in chicken, dried berries, grapes if using, and nuts. Toss lightly to coat. Serve immediately or chill to meld flavors. Serve on greens or bread.

### **August 2023 Herb of the Month: Lemongrass**

(Susan Obry)

Lemongrass is an easy to grow tender perennial herb in the Citronella family with a strong citrus flavor but without the acidity. In colder zones, it should be grown as an annual or brought indoors for winter. Lemongrass can be started from seed or a plant. It is tolerant of a wide range of soil conditions but does best in loamy, well-draining soil. It prefers moist soil but is drought tolerant. Plant in full sun. It may grow 4 feet wide to 3 feet high. Lemongrass needs a nitrogen-rich fertilizer for the best growth. Plant it when night temperatures are in the 50s. Lemongrass is very frost sensitive so bring indoors before the temperature drops into the 40s.

To harvest/prepare lemon grass: cut or snap off the older stalks that are one quarter to one half inch thick. Remove the tough chewy woody parts. The pale lower section is the usable part. It must be sliced thin, finely chopped, pounded into a paste, grated or tossed in a food processor. You can also buy pre-ground paste. You can snip the green leafy portions for steeping in tea or broth.

- West Indian ornamental lemongrass (*Cymbopogon citratus*) is the chef's choice for cooking.
- East Indian lemongrass (*Cymbopogon flexuosus*) is also edible.
- Citronella grass (*Cymbopogon nardus*) is not edible; pungent odor that can serve as an insect deterrent.

Lemongrass is a staple in southeast Asian food. Use lemongrass in fish and shellfish dishes. Use the paste in curries, soups, satays and a variety of stir-fried dishes. Lemongrass pairs well with coconut milk and ginger. It can also be used in creamy pasta and ice cream. Use raw thin slices in salads or use the paste in dressings. Once minced or pounded, lemongrass can be added to marinades or grilled meats and chicken. Lemongrass also works well with poultry as a stuffing and for slow roasted meats. You can use lemon grass to replace the flavor of lemons or limes in some cocktails.

To store, wrap loosely in a towel and refrigerate. The stalks will stay fresh and flavorful for a few weeks. They can be frozen. Dried and powdered lemongrass should be kept in sealed containers out of the light.

### **YARROW - 2024 HERB OF THE YEAR**

HSA members PLEASE let AJ Star and/or Eva Boldt know if you are growing Yarrow, the 2024 Herb of the Year. We're thinking about a craft project for herb study meeting day that includes dried yarrow flowers. I'm growing some yellow and red types because the colors will add a color pop to the project. If you grow some nice flowers, would you dry a few heads for the project? We would appreciate your help.



### **Rule of Three**

When substituting fresh for dried herbs, multiply by three to use fresh herbs.

A tablespoon of fresh herbs for each teaspoon of dried.

# RECIPES

## White Cheddar-Broccoli Quiches

(Louise Block – May 2023 Mtg)

1	14.1 oz pkg refrigerated piecrust dough (2 sheets)	½ c	heavy whipping cream
5 T	finely shredded white cheddar cheese	¼ t	minced fresh thyme
3 T + 1 t	finely chopped broccoli florets	¼ t	fine sea salt
5 t	finely chopped roasted red pepper	1/8 t	ground black pepper
1-1/2 t	finely chopped green onion	Garnish	edible flowers*
1	large egg, lightly beaten		

- Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Lightly spray 10 fluted 5" barquette molds with cooking spray
  - On a lightly floured surface, unroll piecrust. Cut 5 (5x2-½") rectangles from each dough sheet. Transfer rectangles to prepared molds, gently pressing into bottoms, sides, and into indentations of molds. Using rolling pin or fingers, trim excess dough. Using a fork, prick bottom of dough in each mold. Place molds on a rimmed baking sheet. Freeze for 10 minutes.
  - Bake till crust edges are lightly golden brown (10 min.). Let cool completely in molds on baking sheet.
  - Reduce heat to 375 degrees. Arrange oven rack in lower third of oven.
  - Into each cooled crust, sprinkle ½ T cheese, 1 t broccoli, ½ t roasted pepper and ¼ t onion.
  - In large, liquid-measuring cup whisk together egg, cream, thyme, salt/pepper until combined. Carefully pour egg mixture evenly into crusts.
  - Bake quiches until filling is puffed and a knife inserted in centers comes out clean, 10-15 minutes.
  - Let quiches cool slightly on a wire rack before carefully removing. Serve warm or room temp within 2 hrs.
- \*Just before serving, garnish with edible flowers if desired.

## Pecan Tassies

(Patricia Hallam – May 2023 Mtg)

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Beat ½ c softened butter with 3 oz softened cream cheese. Add 1 c flour and mix until soft dough forms.
3. Shape dough into 24 1" balls. Place into ungreased muffin pan. Press tart shape in until dough rises slightly above rim of the pan.
4. Mix 2 T melted butter, ¾ c brown sugar, 1 egg, 1 t vanilla. Add 1 c chopped pecans.
5. Fill each tart shell level with top of shell.
6. Bake 20-25 min until light golden brown. Remove from oven and cool 3 min. Remove from pan and cool completely. Top with powdered sugar.

## Lemon Rosemary Olive Oil Cake

(Susan Steinhafel/The Olive Sprig - 2023 Herb & Artisan Fair)

2/3 c	rosemary olive oil	1 ½ c	granulated sugar
¼ c	Sicilian lemon white balsamic	3 c	flour
2	eggs	2 t	baking powder
1 T	lemon zest	½ t	baking soda
1 ½ t	fresh chopped rosemary	½ t	sea salt
½ t	vanilla	1 c	powdered sugar (for icing)
1 c	plain Greek yogurt	1-2 T	Sicilian Lemon White Balsamic (for icing)

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a baking pan of your choice and coat with a light dusting of flour. (Susan used bundt pan)
- In a bowl combine the first 8 ingredients. Whisk until mixture is light and smooth, about 1-2 min.
- In separate bowl combine flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. When thoroughly mixed, fold into wet ingredients. Stir till mixed together.
- Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake about 45 min. or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Remove from oven and let cool in pan for 10 minutes before removing from pan to cool on wire rack.
- Whisk 1-2 T of balsamic into 1 cup of powdered sugar, adding more balsamic or sugar to achieve a smooth consistency. Drizzle over cooled cake and let it set up before serving.

# **Harvesting Herbs in Five Easy Steps**

(Ann McCormick)



There's nothing like the satisfaction of harvesting herbs from your garden. You've planted, watered, weeded, and fertilized them month after month and now it's time for the big payoff. Here's what you need to do to capture all that aroma and flavor for the coming year.

## **Step One – Prep the Plant**

A day before harvesting, water your leafy herbs. This will help them survive the loss of leaves. While you're out there, take a close look at your herb. If it looks stressed or – worse yet – under attack by insects or fungus, don't harvest. Fix the problem first.

## **Step 2 – Gather Equipment**

Gather your harvesting equipment. Use sharp clippers so you don't mangle the stems. Have something to carry the clipped herbs; a bucket, a large basket, or paper grocery bags will do the trick. Wear garden gloves, ideally the ones with stretch knit fabric and rubberized palms.

## **Step 3 – Make the Cut**

Go out to the garden and start snipping stems. Ideally, this should be done during the cool of the day when your herbs are at their best. For most herbs, cut about one third to one half of the plant's height. Removing too much can over-stress the plant. If you're gathering dill, caraway and other seeds, watch for the seeds to plump and turn brown. Clip the heads immediately or you'll lose your harvest to hungry birds or high winds. Harvest edible herb flowers such as lavender, borage and pot marigold when the flowers have just opened. The heads will be firm and at maximum flavor. For all your herbs, harvest only parts that are in good condition. Leaves, seeds or flowers that are damaged or wilted won't improve after they're clipped. After clipping my rosemary, the bush is more compact and tidier. This bowlful of rosemary will last for a year of good cooking.

## **Step 4 – Clean and Dry**

Bring your harvest indoors. Spread it out on a table or kitchen counter and remove any debris. Lay the stalks in a single layer on an absorbent towel or screen placed on a flat surface. Allow them to air-dry for 6 to 8 days – more for thick-leaved herbs such as sage and rosemary. Each day during the drying, fluff or stir the herb stalks to expose new parts to the air.

Some gardeners prefer to speed up the drying process. I don't recommend using the microwave oven to do this. The microwave will only work for a small handful of herbs at a time. Larger quantities will tend to cook like spinach, leaving you with a fragrant microwave and a mushy mess. Conventional heat ovens aren't much better, but for a different reason. Many ovens have a minimum temperature setting of 200 degrees. The essential oils that provide flavor and fragrance in herbs are volatile at temperatures of 150 degrees and above. Using your oven will give you a fragrant kitchen but less flavorful herbs.

## **Step 5 – Store for Future Use**

Remove leaves, seeds and flowers from the stems once they are crackly dry. Place them whole (not crushed or ground) in airtight containers. I prefer wide-mouth jars with screw tops. Label with the contents and date of harvest.

That's all there is to it. You can count the rules of herb harvesting on one hand. Water before you start. Use sharp clippers and sturdy gloves. Harvest stems from healthy plants. Dry them quickly. Store away from light and moisture. You can now clip your herbs with confidence.

## **Easy Pesto**

1 cup packed fresh basil leaves	1/3 cup virgin olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced	1/4 cup parmesan cheese, grated
1/8 cup pine (pinon) nuts	Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Place washed and dried basil leaves, garlic, and pine nuts in a food processor. Pulse ingredients until coarsely chopped. Add a portion of the olive oil, processing the mixture until all ingredients are incorporated and the mixture is smooth. Season as desired with salt and pepper.



## **Save Money with your HSA Membership!**

(Pat Greathead)

One of the benefits of your membership in The Herb Society of America (HSA) is the ability to participate in the American Horticultural Society's Reciprocity Admissions Program (AHS RAP). When you show your HSA membership card at up to 345 botanical gardens and arboretums, you can have free or reduced admission/parking, and a discount at the gift shop. Each of the 345 gardens and arboretums is listed individually by state on the AHS RAP website at:

<https://ahsgardening.org/gardening-programs/rap/>.

To learn which benefits are currently offered, you must check their listing at the above website. The garden may need to check that HSA is a member of the Reciprocity Admissions Program, so they need to look under OHIO, where headquarters is, to find The Herb Society of America.

## **Garden Talk**

Gardens speak of Paradise,  
of freedom  
of being yourself

Gardens say,  
Slow down,  
Look around you,  
Believe,  
Hope,  
Blow away those cranky thoughts

Gardens talk –  
If you are willing to listen,  
And remain quiet only –

Awed by the greatness  
Of the music of your soul.

--Zoraida Rivera Morales



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.

Subscription Rate: \$6 for 6 issues

Wisconsin Unit Website: [herb-society-wisconsin.org](http://herb-society-wisconsin.org)

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Herb Society of America Website: [www.herbsociety.org](http://www.herbsociety.org)

Facebook: HerbSocietyofAmericaWI



### **THE HONEY BEE**

Apix mellifera is a most pompous title  
For a soft and sticky insect who can't be idle.  
Working around us he gathers liquid gold  
To fill a waxy trademark amazing to behold.  
It's hard to catch this creature free in daily flight  
But no one knows if bees ever sleep at night.  
Life is easy for this insect soft and fuzzy  
Everyone is aware of his signature buzzy.  
Floral scents attract him, this you will see  
You don't want to meet him, accidentally.  
Wearing prisoner stripes, and clear, filmy wing.  
Bees answer back with their painful sting.  
If one is spreading pollen, don't get in the way  
If one comes in your path, run off, don't delay.

*J E Janssen*



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 September 1 and November 1, 2023.