

*"The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature.  
To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul."*

-- Alfred Austin

# SAGE LEAVES

## The Herb Society of America Wisconsin Unit

July/August 2025 – Vol XXXXVI #4

### **2025-26 Calendar of Events and Meetings**

Location: St. Christopher's Church (unless specified elsewhere)  
7845 North River Road, River Hills

9:30 a.m. Social & Brunch; 10:00 a.m. Meeting; 11:00 a.m. Program

#### **2025**

- Sep 20 Saturday, Annual Meeting
- Oct 21 Tuesday, Monthly Meeting
- Nov 15 Saturday, Monthly Meeting
- Dec 10 Wednesday, Holiday Luncheon at The Town Club, Fox Point  
10 a.m Social, Noon Luncheon, Donation Collection

#### **2026**

- Jan 20 Tuesday, Grants & Scholarship - Lore Borth, Zoom Only
- Feb 17 Tuesday, Monthly Meeting, Zoom Only
- Mar 21 Saturday, Monthly Meeting
- Apr 11 Saturday, Spring Symposium at the Woman's Club of Wisconsin
- Apr 21 Tuesday, Monthly Meeting - Election for Secretary and Treasurer
- May 12 Tuesday, Monthly Meeting - Final Preparation for Herb & Artisan Fair
- May 16 Saturday, Herb & Artisan Fair at Boerner Botanical Gardens  
9 a.m. to 3 p.m., all members involved
- Jun 20 Saturday, Monthly Meeting - Wrap-up of Unit Events

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 – thanks!

Subscription rate: \$6 for 6 issues

Wisconsin Unit website: [Herb-Society-Wisconsin.org](http://Herb-Society-Wisconsin.org)

Herb Society of America office: [Herbs@HerbSociety.org](mailto:Herbs@HerbSociety.org)

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

# NEWSBUDS . . .



Happy Summer 2025. Here are a few suggestions you might add to your TO DO list:

Come to Boerner Botanical Gardens on **Wednesday, July 2 for a garden walkabout with Kate Stefanick, our Herb Garden liaison. The walk is scheduled for 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. There is a \$5.00 fee.** Kate will talk about "Dangerous Plants". I'm sure we will learn some interesting facts about the plants Kate chose to plant this year.

Get over to Old World Wisconsin to check out the farm gardens. Remember, OWW built Wittnebel Tavern so you might want to see the hops growing and taste a beer the brewmaster created in the brewery.

I love to go to the many Farmer's Markets that are near and far. Lake Geneva has a nice Thursday Market held near the downtown. On Saturday, I suggest West Allis, South Shore Park in Milwaukee, Brookfield, Kenosha Harbor, and Madison on the Square. Estabrook Park in Shorewood has a nice market on Sunday morning. Some of the vendors from Herb & Artisan Fair sell their wares at these markets so it's good to say hello and support their business.

The Executive Board is meeting in July, and the full Board of Directors will meet in August to develop our WI-Unit annual budget and to brainstorm ideas for celebrating our 50th Anniversary as an HSA Unit. If you have something specific that you'd like to know about our Unit's history or have some facts to share, please email me or any Board member. We'd love to hear from you. All the best, AJ

## **From Mary Kay McDevitt, Brunches Committee Chair**

Dear HSA Members, many vendors and volunteers were quick with compliments as they enjoyed the selections on the buffet table in the Artisan Café. Thank you again to all who participated. Special thanks to Marlene Mravik and Joanne Ruggieri. You made a big job fun.

Thank you to all who attended the potluck wrap up meeting. Just about everyone who came brought a dish to share. Each was different and all were delicious. We missed you who couldn't be with us. Look forward to new tastes this fall. Please send Diane recipes made for the wrap up brunch.

Changing the monthly meeting schedule to begin with a 9:30 a.m. brunch has been unanimously supported so the menu will reflect a midmorning meal rather than lunch. Endless ideas are available, so be creative, tweak traditional recipes, and be innovative with herb combinations and ingredients. The brunch roster will have a hostess, entrée, side, bread/spread/pastry, and beverage. If you would like to be on the roster for the September 20 meeting, please let me know by September 4.

## **Herb Society Renewed Membership Cards**

The members of our Unit should have received their renewed cards for the 2025-2026 year. If you did not receive your card, please contact me and we'll get a replacement for you. Thank you! Denise Nelson

## **Our Visit to Hundred Acres Farm**

Helene Pizzi

Another extremely interesting HSA-Wisconsin Unit 'adventure' taken in April! This is a visit that will keep us in our thoughts for a while.

The owner and enterprising creator of this vertical hydroponic farm, Chris Cockery, told us of his eclectic background and explained the secrets of what will be a more sustainable type of farming in the future. It is the largest indoor urban farm in Wisconsin. They grow leafy salad greens and Italian basil in 5,000 square feet of vertical hydroponics.

With a year-round weekly harvested supply, these greens and basil are completely free of pesticides, herbicides, and GMOs. Hundred Acres Farm's (hundred-acre.org) basil and leafy greens are available at Pick 'n Save and Outpost, as well as on the menus of many Milwaukee restaurants. Together with Freshchef (freshchefmke.com) they also sell natural, no preservative, fresh basil pesto that has a 12-week shelf life. Add this visit to others of our active, interesting HSA Unit and on we go!!!!

## **July 2025 Herb of the Month – Sumac (*Rhus coriaria*)**

**Susan Obry**



This perennial plant is native to the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean regions. It is a member of the cashew and mango family.

Sumac is characterized by the large, dense clusters of bright red fruit. The berries are dried, ground and then sifted to get rid of the bitter inner seed. You can find Sumac in the spice section of grocery stores or in the International Foods section.

Staghorn and Smooth Sumac can be grown in Wisconsin and are cold hardy to zone 3.

It is also grown as a landscaping shrub. Sumac grows best in rocky or sandy soil but is adaptable to many soil types and to both dry and moist (not soggy) locations. It prefers full sun to part shade with protection from direct afternoon sun.

Culinary Uses: Sumac is a popular ingredient in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cuisines. Sumac, with its sharp acidic taste, is used in spice blends such as za'atar, salad dressings, juice drinks and teas, dips (hummus), soups, chicken, meat marinades, fish, fruit and dessert dishes and as a seasoning on popcorn. It is often compared to lemon zest but with a smokier earthy flavor. Lemon zest can be substituted for Sumac.

Medicinal Uses: More research is needed but it may help control blood sugar, relieve muscle pain and reduce inflammation. It is rich in antioxidants and contains important nutrients such as fiber, healthy fats and some essential vitamins. Since Sumac is usually consumed in small amounts, its nutritional value is limited.

Of Great Note: Do not confuse the Sumac spice "*Rhus coriaria*" with its relative Poison Sumac! Poison Sumac produces white-colored fruit and can cause allergic reactions similar to those from poison ivy, poison oak, and nuts.

## **August 2025 Herb of the Month – Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*)**

**Susan Obry**



Nasturtium is a fast-growing annual plant known for its vibrant flowers and edible leaves. The flowers come in many different shades of red, yellow, orange, and cream. They are a favorite of pollinators. There are about 80 species of nasturtiums. They are native to South and Central America.

They prefer poor but well-draining, moist soil, so fertilizer is usually not necessary. They grow well in containers, hanging baskets or as ground cover. Nasturtiums prefer full sun but will grow in partial shade but with limited blooming.

Nasturtiums are frost and cold sensitive so in Wisconsin, plant nasturtium two weeks after the last frost. Nasturtium seeds may be sown directly in the garden (recommended) or started indoors. Harvest leaves when they are young since older leaves can be bitter. Leaves and flowers can be harvested at any time. Mature seed pods may be saved for the next season.

There two main types: trailing/climbing types and bush types. Nasturtium varieties that grow well in Wisconsin include Alaska, Apricot, Black Velvet, Empress of India, Peach Melba, and many others.

Culinary Uses: All parts of nasturtiums are edible. Their leaves, flowers and seedpods have a peppery mustard-like taste. They are used in salads, oils, dressings, vinegars, teas, butters, cheese blends, in sandwiches and as garnishes. Seeds can be pickled and used like capers.

Medical Uses: Further research is needed but nasturtiums may have antibacterial, antifungal, antiseptic, disinfectant, expectorant, wound healing and antimicrobial properties.

Of interest: Nasturtiums are often used as a trap crop in companion planting, drawing aphids and other garden pests away from other plants. Trap plants must be monitored and treated if overrun by pests.

# **Recipes**

## **Crockpot Breakfast Soup - Serves 6**

(Susan Obry)

### **Ingredients**

- 1 lb. breakfast sausage links, cut into slices (Johnsonville original)
- 2 cups diced potatoes or refrigerated hashbrowns. Do not use frozen potatoes since they will get mushy.
- 1 can (15 oz.) diced seasoned or unseasoned tomatoes, undrained. Your choice.
- 4 cups chicken or vegetable broth (I used chicken)
- 1 clove garlic, minced or to taste
- 1 packet Hollandaise sauce
- Italian seasoning mix-to taste
- Dried basil-to taste
- 1/2 cup bacon, cooked, drained, crumbled or diced
- 4 scrambled eggs or chopped hard boiled eggs. I used hard boiled eggs.
- Cheddar cheese as garnish (optional)

### **Instructions**

1. Fry and crumble the bacon. Remove the bacon and brown the sausage links in the bacon grease. Do not fully cook. Add the bacon, browned sausage, potatoes, and undrained tomatoes to the crockpot.
2. Whisk the broth, garlic, and hollandaise packet together until smooth. Pour the mixture into the pot.
3. Cover and cook on high for 4 hours or overnight on low for 8 hours. I cooked it overnight.
4. Ladle the soup into bowls. Top each with eggs. Serve with hearty bread or toast.

## **Lavender Lemonade – Serves 4**

("The Herbalist's Kitchen Cooking and Healing with Herbs" by Pat Crocker)

- |     |   |         |                              |
|-----|---|---------|------------------------------|
| 1 T | dried lavender buds <u>or</u> 3 fresh sprigs lavender | 1-1/2 c | freshly squeezed lemon juice |
| 1 c | sugar   | 2 c     | cold water                   |
| 2 c | boiling water   | 1 c     | ice cubes                    |

1. In a large bowl, combine lavender and sugar. Rub the buds and sugar between your fingers to mix well. Pour boiling water over and stir to melt sugar. Cover and set aside for a minimum of 30 minutes and up to 4 hours to infuse the water. The longer the mixture steeps, the stronger the lavender taste will be.
2. Strain the water through a fine-mesh strainer into a jug and discard lavender. Add lemon juice and cold water. Taste and add more sugar or lemon if necessary. Divide ice among 4 glasses and pour lemonade.

## **Herbes de Provence Spice Blend – Makes about 3/4 cup**

("The Herbalist's Kitchen Cooking and Healing with Herbs" by Pat Crocker)

- |     |                |     |                     |
|-----|----------------|-----|---------------------|
| 3 T | dried marjoram | 1 T | dried rosemary      |
| 3 T | dried thyme    | 1 T | dried lavender buds |
| 3 T | dried savory   | 1 T | fennel seeds        |

In a bowl, combine herbs and mix well. Transfer to glass jar; cap, label, and store in dry, dark place up to 1 year.

## **Dill Cream Sauce – Makes 2 cups**

("The Herbalist's Kitchen Cooking and Healing with Herbs" by Pat Crocker)

- |     |                                  |       |                             |
|-----|----------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|
| 1 T | dill seeds                       | 1/4 c | chopped fresh dill          |
| 1 T | coriander seeds                  | 2 T   | drained capers              |
| 2 c | strained plain yogurt (see note) | 1     | green onion, finely chopped |

NOTE: To strain yogurt, line a fine-mesh strainer with a cheesecloth and set over a bowl. Empty a 23 oz. container of plain yogurt into the strainer and set the strainer and bowl in the refrigerator to drain for 15 min. Use the clear- drained liquid in soups or baked goods, or discard.

1. Using a mortar and pestle, crush dill and coriander seeds to desired consistency, fine or coarse.
2. In a bowl, combine yogurt, dill, capers, green onion and crushed seeds.

## **Top Tips On Preserving Herbs**

(Green Ripe Garden website by alvinadmin July 22, 2021)

Adding herbs to a dish can enhance the flavor profile and make your quick and easy dinner taste like five-star cuisine. Most cooking enthusiasts grow herbs in their gardens and face the issue of herbs spoiling. It is never fun to watch herbs or any produce spoil before you have the chance to either use it in a dish or preserve it for later use.



Thankfully there are many ways to extend the life of your herbs. Typically, dried or preserved herbs in the proper conditions last for years. This means you no longer have to worry about tossing out herbs and wasting all your hard work. Below are all the tricks you must know to prevent your herbs from spoiling before you have the chance to use them.

### **Tips For Bringing Herbs Home**

1. Excess moisture can reduce the lifespan of the herb, so you need to make sure to wash the herbs properly with cold water and dry them up properly and make sure that not a single drop of moisture is left that could affect the taste of the herb. You can spread them out on a dry paper towel and pat them dry.
2. Some herbs, such as parsley, basil, cilantro, and mint, need proper storage not to spoil. The first step to do is to spin the base of the stem and remove the discolored part of the herb. Now take a jar filled with an inch of water in it and transfer them. Put the lid on the jar and store them in a refrigerator. It would be best if you kept in mind to change the water of the jar every day. This process will retain the moisture of the herbs. When you store basil, you need to keep them in a jar at room temperature as the basil turns black once refrigerated.
3. Take a damp paper towel and wrap the rosemary, thyme, and chives loosely. These herbs need some moisture so that they don't dry completely, so the paper towel ensures that the herbs retain some moisture and do not dry out and keep the oxygen out.

### **Tips For Storing Fresh Herbs**

When buying herbs, it is essential to store them properly as they lose their color and flavor quite soon. To keep the herbs fresh and dried up completely, you need to store them away from the moisture unless you need to use them for cooking. Some of the famous herbs used in our daily lives are cilantro, coriander, parsley, mint, chives, thyme, and celery. Do not store herbs in the refrigerator as soon as you buy them. If you do so, the moisture can make the leaves limp and soggy, which will waste money and food.

Some of the herbs can quickly go bad by several factors like moisture. Also, too much exposure to light can make their color go away. For example, it can make the leaf's color turn pale yellow.

### **Tips For Storing Dried Herbs**

This is one of the easiest methods of storing dried herbs. The only thing you have to compromise here is that the herbs can lose a little flavor, which is just a minor drawback of storing dried herbs. You can follow some methods to dry the herbs properly: hang them in bundles upside down, use a drying rack to dry them. Once these herbs are completely dried, you can store them in bags or containers. Oregano, rosemary, mint, sage, and lavender are herbs that need to be dried.

Another method is to use a counter tray to dry the herbs: you need to spread the herbs all over the kitchen counter, and it will dry in a few days. Ensure proper air circulation in the kitchen to soak all the moisture and leave the herbs to dry. To extend the life of the herb, you need to store them in a cool and dry place. Keep these herbs away from the sunlight as sunlight may ruin the potency of the herbs.

### **Preserving Herbs Using Oil**

The infused oil is a fantastic way to store herbs. There are many creative ways that you can experiment with to find the right way to preserve herbs. One of the methods is simply adding herbs with olive oil and freezing them in an ice cube tray. Whenever you need oil, you simply pop out a herb-infused oil cube.

### **Conclusion**

By preserving herbs, you are saving money and time. It also allows you to enjoy the fresh taste of herbs straight from the garden. So make sure that you do not waste any tips on preserving herbs this year. There are many other methods out there for you to explore once you understand the basics. Once you take charge of your herbs, you will be amazed by how fantastic your dishes taste.

# **Proper Watering Practices**

(Eberts Newsletter, June 2, 2017)

Proper watering practices are just as important in the early spring growing season as they are during the hot summer months. In this newsletter, Mike Timm (our horticultural expert) provides some tips on getting it right no matter what time of year it is!

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## **To Water, or Not to Water, that is the Question!**

Watering your plants can be tricky - one minute your plants look great and the next minute they're drooping. Going from one extreme to the other is very stressful on plants and could lead to their demise. Let's look at some watering strategies that will keep your plants happy.

**First, distinguish between plants grown in the ground and those grown in containers.** Always think of the environment a plant is growing in when you're thinking of their care. For those plants grown in the ground there are some considerations we need to think about. First, what type of plants are they? Second, are they newly planted or established?

**Annuals and vegetables are going to require more water.** One thing to keep in mind is that just because a plant is wilting, doesn't necessarily mean it needs water. An over-watered plant will also wilt because of a compromised root system. Wilting can also just be a natural reaction from the plant when it loses water faster than it can take it up. What we need to strive for is to mimic rain. It doesn't rain a little every day; it rains about ½ inch to 1 inch of water once a week. The goal is to water deeply and less often. Applying ½ inch to ¾ inch of water every 3 to 4 days on annuals is recommended and should be plenty.

Vegetables are a little different. Leafy vegetables don't require as much as those that fruit. Fruiting plants like tomatoes require more water and should be watered every 2-3 days. They simply use more water because of the fruit. Peppers should be kept on the drier side.

**Perennials on the other hand actually like it a little bit on the drier side.** Newly planted ones should receive that ½ to 1 inch of water once a week and maybe every 5 to 6 days in really hot weather. Established perennials should be fine unless we really get into a long drought. Water them every 1-2 weeks with 1 inch of water depending on heat and length of drought.

**Roses, trees and shrubs can be treated the same as perennials.** Newly planted ones should be watered every 4-5 days whether there is heat and drought or not. If it does rain, count it as one watering. They need that moisture to establish correctly. When watering, apply 5-10 gallons, yes gallons, of water to roses and 20-30 gallons for trees and shrubs. This is best done with a hose on a slow trickle. Typically 5 minutes on each side of a rose and 20-30 minutes on each side of a tree and shrub. Established plants only require water every 2-3 weeks if we experience drought, not heat. Big-leafed shrubs may wilt during really hot weather but don't jump the gun with the water. Like I said above, it may just be that it can't take the water up quickly enough.

**What about container plants and hanging baskets?** Early in the season, when plants are young and it's cooler, a container may only need watering every 2-3 days. As the heat increases and the plants get bigger, watering increases. Watering daily in normal summer heat and sometimes twice a day in really hot times is a good rule of thumb. It's always a good idea to check the soil and weight of your pots or baskets first to avoid over-watering.

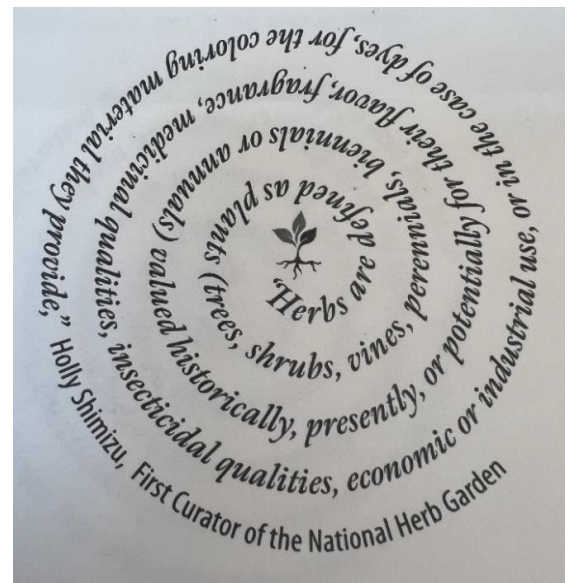
Get to know your plants and their environment before you establish a regular watering routine. Check the soil first for signs of moisture and then use the guidelines above if needed. Proper watering is an important part of the equation for healthy plants!



## THIS SUMMER DAY

That sprinkler is at it again,  
hissing and spitting its arc  
of silver, and he parched  
lawn is tickled green. The air  
hums with the busy traffic  
of butterflies and bees,  
who navigate without lane  
markers, stop signs, directional  
signals. One of my friends  
says we're now in the shady  
side of the garden, having moved  
past pollination, fruition,  
and all that bee-buzzed jazz  
into our autumn days. But I say wait.  
It's still summer, and the breeze is full  
of sweetness spilled from a million petals;  
it wraps around your arms, lifts the hair  
from the back of your neck.  
The salvia, coreopsis, roses  
have set the borders on fire,  
and the peaches waiting to be picked  
are heavy with juice. We are still ripening  
into our bodies, still in the act of becoming.  
Rejoice in the day's long sugar.  
Praise that big fat tomato of a sun.

--Barbara Crooker



One study found that adults who garden were more likely to eat vegetables than those who didn't.

On top of that, other research shows that people who get their hands in dirt are generally happier and healthier.

(Good Housekeeping Jan/Feb 2020)



### BLESSING FOR A GARDENER

May you work within earth's plenty,  
befriend more than you can see.

May you discover life's hidden bounty,  
feast on its sumptuous fare.

May what you touch be blessed,  
and what you touch bless you.

May your garden grow all season to fill  
your heart all year.

... Maryanne Hannan



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 September 1 and November 1, 2025.