

“The smell of sweet herbs and all kinds of wholesome growth made the whole air a great nosegay.”

--Charles Dickens, Bleak House

SAGE LEAVES

The Herb Society of America Wisconsin Unit

September/October 2025 – Vol XXXXVI #5

Saturday, September 20

Social 9:00 a.m., Brunch 9:30 a.m., Meeting 10:00 a.m.

Program: Annual Meeting

Speaker: Lindsay Kasten, “Overwintering Tender Plants”

Location: St. Christopher’s Church

Tuesday, October 21

Social 9:00 a.m., Brunch 9:30 a.m., Meeting 10:00 a.m.

Speaker: Shaun Keating, “Bees in the Herb Garden”

Location: St. Christopher’s Church



Please mark your calendar for upcoming events:

December 10, 2025	Holiday Luncheon at The Town Club, Fox Point
April 11, 2026	Spring Symposium at The Woman’s Club of Wisconsin
May 16, 2026	Herb & Artisan Fair at Boerner Botanical Gardens

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!

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Wisconsin Unit website: Herb-Society-Wisconsin.org

The Herb Society of America office: Herbs@HerbSociety.org

The Herb Society of America website: www.herbsociety.org

NEWSBUDS . . .



I received a message from Pat G. The simple words lifted my spirits. I am sharing the message with you with hope that you too find them to be a guideline for keeping your mind/body and soul balanced.

“Be happy on purpose. Go outside. Read a book. Call a friend. Meditate. Write in a journal. Eat good food. Learn something new. Express gratitude. Dance . . . Magic is simple to create.”

You will be receiving the Welcome Back information packet in a few days. The packet will include the 2025 -2026 Board approved budget proposal. Look it over. Bring your questions and comments and the budget to the Saturday, **September 20, 2025, meeting.**

Please let me know if you want to attend the **Thursday, September 18, 2025, Annual Meeting/End of the Season Party** being planned at Old World Wisconsin from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m. It is our chance to visit the Tavern, Brewhouse and Biergarten area of OWW. Nine people have signed up so far.

Lorrie Burrows is at work lining up speakers/programs that we hope address your interests. If you attended a class or program that had a good teacher and topic, please tell Lorrie about your experience. Mary Kay will be sending out the Annual Meeting BRUNCH information and sign-up sheet soon. Sue Obry will continue to educate us on the Herb of the Month at our meetings. I always learn so much from Sue's research. Pat has updated the membership roster. We hope to meet our new members and celebrate the 5-, 10-, 15- and 20-year members. Pat always makes this a special part of the meeting.

See you soon, AJ

From Mary Kay McDevitt, Brunch Chair

We're looking forward to another year to learn more about the growing and harvesting, the many uses, and the ultimate enjoyment of all the delicious flavors herbs can add to our recipes. Using them in our brunch dishes brings out that "umami" we all appreciate. "What is that taste?"

"Society Brunch with a Teacup Fruit Charcote" will be the brunch theme at our first meeting. AJ Star's collection of teacups will be the vessels for the "charcuterie" of fruits arrayed on the buffet table. Choose a teacup and fill it with your favorite fruits.

Watch for an email in early September; then call or email me to volunteer your talents on the Brunch Team. Find me in our Unit directory.

Your RSVP is required by September 16 to attend the brunch.



Holiday Luncheon – December 10, 2025

We are scheduled to have our Holiday Luncheon at The Town Club in Fox Point on Wednesday, December 10, 2025. A Cardinal bird theme has been planned with craft projects and decorations.

Party invitations will be attached to the November-December newsletter that lists the luncheon menu and cost per person. If you have any questions, please contact me at (262) 376-0482.

~Denise Nelson, Event Chair

September 2025 Herb of the Month – Butterfly Pea Flower (*Clitoria ternatea*)

(Susan Obry)

When you must have purple, blue, or pink food!

This perennial herbaceous legume is native to Indonesia. The genus "Clitoria" is derived from "clitoris" due to the shape of its blossoms. It is cultivated in Wisconsin as an annual as it does not survive frost or consistent temperatures below 60 degrees F. It can be grown in pots (repot annually) and overwintered indoors as a biennial. Choose a container 6 inches deep and 12 to 14 inches in diameter. It can grow as a vine or a creeper. It is grown for its ornamental, culinary and medicinal uses. This plant grows best in full sun in fertile, slightly sandy, well-draining soil. Once established, it is drought resistant. Being a legume, it is also a nitrogen fixer and can help improve soil quality. It is considered a revegetation plant.

Ornamental Uses: This plant is often grown just for its vibrant deep blue flowers. Some varieties yield white and pink flowers. The flowers can be used to dye natural fibers.

Culinary Uses: All parts of this plant are edible. The flower is used as a natural food coloring for desserts, drinks, rice dishes, and salads. It can be used to make cold or hot teas.

Medicinal Uses: Said to reduce stress, improve thinking, learning and memory. Used as antidepressant, anticonvulsant, tranquilizer, antimicrobial, fever reducer, anti-inflammatory agent, analgesic, diuretic, to regulate menstruation and ease cramps. Also used commercially as an insecticide and an insect deterrent.

Fun Facts: The flowers have a very light, slightly nutty flavor resembling the taste of green beans. Adding the flowers to water will turn it blue. Citrus drinks will turn pinkish purple. The flowers are open for only a day or two but can be harvested fresh, wilted, or dried.

Butterfly Pea Flower Tea

- 1–2 teaspoons dried butterfly pea flowers* or 5–7 flowers
- 1 cup hot, but not boiling, water
- Honey or lemon (will turn water purple)

Directions: Pour hot water over the flowers in a teapot or cup. Let steep for 5–7 minutes; water will turn deep blue. Strain and serve with honey and/or lemon.

*Pinches of dried lemongrass or hibiscus can be added for additional taste.

October 2025 Herb of the Month – Horseradish (*Armoracia rusticana*)

(Susan Obry)

It has been hot in Eau Claire for 96 years!

Horseradish is a hardy perennial, cold loving member of the Brassicaceae family, which includes mustard and wasabi. It grows underground and the taproot only develops in colder weather. It may only grow to a height of two feet, but the taproot can grow up to 10 feet. It is aggressive since any rootlet can become a plant and can overtake the growing area. Horseradish has a long growing season and matures at about one year. Smaller roots can be harvested at six months, but the full flavor will not be developed. Be alert for such pests as cabbage worms, flea beetles, aphids and cutworms. The root is high in calcium, potassium, iron, thiamine, vitamin C, magnesium, trace minerals and proteins. It is low in sodium.

As soon as the soil can be worked in the spring, plant small pieces of horseradish root in full sun and in rich moist soil. It can also be planted in the fall. Harvest in late October or early November. It can be grown in deep wide container but usually does not grow as well. New plants are easily propagated from root cuttings. Since horseradish has unique planting and harvesting requirements, I have included website references at the end of this article.

Culinary Uses: In sauces, relishes, meats (especially beef), fish, rarebits, and fondues. Roots should be refrigerated and used raw. Store in a cool dark place. Roots and gratings can be frozen or stored in vinegar.

Medicinal Uses: Used to help fight inflammation in arthritis and joint pain, heart disease, and other inflammatory diseases. Contains cancer-fighting nutrients, fights bacterial and fungal infections, and helps to clear sinuses and lungs.

Fun Facts:

- Wisconsin is Home to the World's largest Horseradish Farm; since 1929, the Huntsinger family of Eau Claire.
- My grandmother planted and harvested according to the phases of the moon. She harvested horseradish during a full moon or at the beginning of a waning moon for the best flavor.

Reference : https://abrahamsonnurseries.com/documents/1706543920_horseradish.pdf Herb Society of America <https://www.herbsociety.org>

The Herb Society of America's Essential Guide to HORSERADISH

Recipes

Cardamom Banana Cake with Orange Cream Cheese Frosting

(Lorrie Burrows – June 2025 Mtg.)

Cake:

2 c	flour	¾ c	buttermilk
¾ c	sugar	1 c	mashed bananas (2 large)
1 t	ground cardamom	2	eggs + 1 egg white
2 t	baking powder	1/3 c	canola oil
½ t	baking soda	1 t	vanilla
½ t	salt		

Stir together dry ingredients in a medium bowl. Combine wet ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Beat wet ingredients until smooth and combined. Gradually stir in dry ingredients and mix until smooth. Pour into greased 13 x 9" pan (or divide into 12 cupcakes). Bake in pre-heated 350 degree oven for 30-35 min (20-25 for cupcakes). Frost when thoroughly cooled.

Frosting:

8 oz cream cheese, softened
1 stick butter
1 t vanilla
1 t finely grated orange zest
3-1/2 c confectioner's sugar

Beat cream cheese and butter together in large bowl until light, fluffy and thoroughly combined. Beat in vanilla and orange zest. Gradually beat in confectioner's sugar (may adjust quantity for desired consistency).

This cake freezes well.

Blueberry Croissant Puff

(Louise Block – June 2025 Mtg.)

Ingredients:

3 - 4 large croissants, cut up about 5-5-1/2 cups)
1 c fresh or frozen blueberries
1 pkg 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
2/3 c sugar
2 eggs
1 T lemon juice
1 t lemon zest
1 t vanilla
1 c milk



Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees

Place croissant pieces in 9" square pan or deep dish pie plate. Sprinkle with blueberries.

Beat cream cheese and sugar until well blended. Add the eggs, lemon juice, lemon zest and vanilla in medium bowl with electric mixer until well blended. Gradually add milk, beating well after each addition. Pour evenly over croissant pieces. Let stand for 20 minutes or soak overnight.

Bake at 350 for 35-40 minutes or until set in center and golden brown. Check the dish halfway through baking – you may want to cover it with foil for the last 10 minutes if the tops are getting too browned. Serve warm sprinkled with powder sugar.

Note: This can easily be doubled in a 9 x 13 pan



Preserving Herbs: Drying, Freezing, and More

(by Jessica Walliser, Savvy Gardening)

Homegrown herbs are one of the garden's greatest pleasures. Preserving herbs in a way that doesn't negatively impact their flavor enables you to enjoy your homegrown herb harvest for months. In the following excerpt from the gorgeous and useful book *Herbal Houseplants*, author Susan Betz sheds some much-needed light on how to properly preserve herbs via drying and freezing. Plus, you'll learn tips for harvesting, as well as preserving herbs in butters and herb-infused vinegars.

Freshly harvested herbs can be preserved in several different ways.

Guidelines for harvesting and preserving herbs

The real beauty of herbs emerges when you get up close and personal with the plants. Knowing when and how to harvest them involves an intimate connection and firsthand knowledge of each plant's natural life cycle and reproductive habits. We can all benefit from a daily dose of green enchantment. Ultimately herbs appeal to each of the five senses and have something of value to satisfy the mind, body, and spirit of every person. Harvesting can begin anytime there is sufficient foliage on the plant to tolerate cutting. Except for annual herbs at the end of their growing season, never cut back a plant completely when harvesting it.

Rules for herbal harvesting

Follow these tips for the most bountiful harvest.

- Most herbs put out new growth at the tips of their branches and this is where they should be pinched to encourage a bushier shape. Use fresh herbs, or dry for later use. Some herbs, such as chives, parsley, or sorrel, grow from the base of the plant, so snip the older leaves growing outside first. Be careful not to over-harvest the plant.
- If your herbs are outdoors, harvest them in the morning after any dew has dried and before the sun gets too hot. To harvest properly, cut stems. Do not pull leaves from the plant.
- Pick healthy growth and discard damaged flowers and leaves.
- Only harvest what you have time to prepare and use.
- Wash, dry, and preserve herbs as quickly as possible after harvesting them.
- When harvesting herbs grown for their flavorful leaves, harvest the leaves just before the plant flowers.
- Harvest flowers for drying before they're fully opened.
- Harvest seeds when they're fully ripened. For this, you can cut the whole plant or just the seed stalk/head.

When harvesting herb flowers for use, be sure to harvest the blooms before they fully open.

Preserving herbs

There are several methods you can use to preserve and enjoy your herbal harvest. Here are some of my favorites.

Techniques for air-drying herbs

- Tie large leafy-stemmed herbs with rubber bands into loose bundles and hang them in a room or closet with good cross air circulation. Herb bundles tend to shrink and loosen as they dry—check them and tighten each bundle as needed. Depending on the herb, drying time ranges from two days to several weeks for the herbs to completely dry. They should feel crisp when fully dry.
- Strip the fresh leaves or flowers from the plant stems and spread them in a thin layer on screens. You can use a house window screen lined with cheesecloth or paper towels. Place screens in a well-ventilated area and let the herbs dry. Stir the herbs and spread them out again several times a day to speed drying times.
- Hang plants harvested for seeds upside-down to dry with the flower/seed heads enclosed in paper bags to catch dropping seeds.
- Store completely dried herbs in clean glass jars away from heat and light to preserve their flavors and fragrances. Be sure to check for moisture before putting freshly dried herbs into jars.

Techniques for freezing fresh herbs

There are three main ways to preserve herbs by freezing them.

1. Carefully chop fresh-cut herbs with a kitchen knife or kitchen shears. Evenly spread the herbs on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and place it in the freezer for several hours. Pack the frozen herbs in small containers, label and date the containers, and keep frozen for 6 to 8 months.
2. Freezing herbs in stock or water works well for preserving herbs for use in stews and dishes with high water content. Place finely chopped fresh herbs in water or broth in the desired concentration and freeze in ice-cube trays. Remove the frozen cubes from trays and place in zip-top bags. Keep frozen until needed. You can freeze whole edible flowers by placing them in ice-cube trays. Fill an ice-cube tray half full of water, then place the edible flowers face down in the water and finish filling the tray with water. Freeze until firm. Transfer to zip-top bags. Keep frozen until needed.
3. To freeze herbs in oil, blend 2 cups (weight varies) finely chopped fresh herbs into 1/2 cup (120 ml) good-quality oil. The oil acts as a carrier for the herbs, so use just enough oil to bind the mixture. Pack the herb oil into small airtight containers, label and date your containers, and freeze for up to 1 year. Chip or scrape off what is needed for each dish. Herbs in oil must be kept frozen until use.

Homemade herbal teas are a wonderful way to use your homegrown herbs. Use the leafy stalks fresh or dry them first.

Thymely tips and sage advice for using herbs

Herbs are meant to enhance the flavor of food, not smother or overpower it. Do not add herbs to taste, but merely for a touch of flavor. The general rule is ½ teaspoon dried herbs in a recipe per 4 servings. Use 4 times as much of a fresh green herb. The right amount of herb for your family may vary from this rule. Too little is better than too much; start with a “pinch” and add more after letting the herb’s flavor mingle and mix with the other ingredients.

Fresh herbs are heavenly. Any herb can be used fresh for seasoning food, mixing with salad greens, or brewing tea. Soft green stems can be used but woody stems should be discarded. Freshly cut herbs will last 3 to 4 days when wrapped in a damp towel placed in a plastic bag and kept refrigerated.

The longer an herb is in a dish, the more of the herb's volatile oil that is released, so allow time for flavor to develop. Heat brings out flavor more quickly than cold, so add herbs to cold dishes, vegetables, cocktails, butters, or cheese spreads several hours to overnight before serving. Don't worry about the "proper" herb. Blessed are the curious for they shall have an adventure.

A surprising number of herbs can be grown indoors. Pick up a copy of *Herbal Houseplants* by Susan Betz to learn how to grow herbs inside your home.

Quick and Simple Ways to Use Herbs

Making a basic herb butter

Herb butter may include any single herb or a combination of several.

Combine 2 or 3 tablespoons (weight varies) finely chopped fresh herbs with 1 cup (2 sticks, or 224 g) unsalted butter, at room temperature. Some cooks like to add 1 tablespoon (15 ml) olive oil to give the herb butter a more spreadable texture. You can also add a pinch of salt or a squeeze of fresh lemon juice. Pack the butter into a small crock or roll it into a log, using plastic wrap as an aid, for slicing. Refrigerate the herb butter in an airtight container for about 3 weeks or freeze for up to 3 months.

Herb-infused vinegar

Clean, unblemished fresh herb leaves, seeds, roots, and flowers can all be used to flavor vinegars, depending on the recipe. Make sure your herbs are thoroughly washed and dried before placing them into the vinegar. Use a high-quality vinegar within an acidity level no lower than 5 percent. Combine the ingredients in a ratio of ½ to 1 cup (weight varies) herbs to 2 cups (480 ml) vinegar.

Place the herb parts in a clear glass container, pour the vinegar over them, and tightly close the container. Let sit for several weeks for the flavor of the herb parts to infuse the vinegar. Strain the herbs from the vinegar and rebottle the vinegar. Use a plastic lid or add a layer of wax paper or plastic wrap to the bottle top before placing the cap on the bottle to avoid a metal lid corrosion.



I think the best teachers are the plants themselves . . . they teach us about the magic and beauty of life, the life force inherent in the green world. When you sit with a plant, observing its color and scent aware of the community of different plants it grows with, sensing its relationship to the world, you begin to develop a deep sense of peace, joy, and wisdom.

--Rosemary Gladstar, *Herbal Healing for Women*



COMPLAINTS, COMPLAINTS

Plantain weed and chicory blue
What have I ever done to you?
Why do you loll in my garden space?
Flowers are crowded in that place.
Herbs would exist if your leaves didn't spread
No wonder I don't like your bold, curly head.
When I survey my patch, it's green I need
Not yellow clover or pink Joe pye weed.
Globe thistles will do, plain thistles aren't right
Old plain thistle just spreads with a might.
What was in that dirt I shoveled last fall
Does "blended soil" mean weeds and all
Well, all you weeds that love it here
Pack up your roots and move to the rear.
Go out on the lawn or travel next door
I don't want you in my plot anymore.

J E Janssen



If you have an event, article, recipe, books, etc. that 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 November 1, 2025, and January 1, 2026.