

*Open the bloom of your heart and
become a gift of beauty to the world.* "

-- Bryant McGill



The Herb Society of America

Wisconsin Unit

Mar/Apr 2025 – Vol XXXXVI #2

Unit Meetings

Saturday, March 15, 9:30 a.m. Brunch, 10:00 a.m. Meeting

Program: Hemlock Project

Presider: LaToya Williams

Location: St. Christopher's

Tuesday, April 15, 9:30 a.m. Brunch, 10:00 a.m. Meeting

Program: Visit to Hundred Acre Farm, 3945 N. 31st St., Milwaukee

Unit Elections for Chair and Vice Chair

Please mark your calendar for these upcoming events:

April 5, 2025	Spring Symposium at The Woman's Club of Wisconsin
May 17, 2025	Herb & Artisan Fair at Boerner Botanical Gardens
December 10, 2025	Holiday Party at 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!

Subscription rate: \$6 for 6 issues

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Herb Society of America website: www.herbsociety.org

NEWSBUDS...



Do any of you still use a paper calendar to keep yourself organized? I sure do, and I am so looking forward to being able to flip February to March. Will March come in like a lion? I don't really care as long as we can all get together for that in-person Unit meeting at St. Christopher's.

We have many fun events coming up in March and April. On March 15, Unit member, LaToya Williams, will be speaking about her research on Hemlock. What an intriguing topic! Our annual seed swap will take place at the March meeting too. I know some of you really enjoy this activity.

This year, our April meeting is a field trip to Hundred Acre Farm located in Century City Business Park in Milwaukee. Joanne arranged this very interesting opportunity for us. We will hold our business meeting there, eat lunch, and tour the urban, hydroponics farm. I'm really looking forward to learning about how greens are grown here. Our April business meeting will include the election of chair and vice chair. Candidate information is in this issue of *Sage Leaves*. Please call, email, or text Melody Orban ASAP if YOU would like to get on the election ballot.

The 29th Annual Spring Symposium is scheduled for Saturday, April 5, 2025. This is always a great educational and social event for our Unit. Be sure to spread the word among your family and friends. I know you won't be disappointed. Lots of FUN!!
Stay safe and warm out there, AJ

Spring Symposium – April 5, 2025

Check your mailbox for your personal invitation to the 29th Annual Spring Symposium – our major educational event sponsored by the Unit. The historic downtown Woman's Club is a delightful site to host a day filled with herbal gourmet meals and tastings, a raffle table, and herb-related vendor offerings for sale. Our featured speaker, Carrie Hennessy, will present on: Lavender, chamomile, and other adaptogenic herbs that enhance our well-being.

If you have volunteered in the past, you will be hearing from me to see if you will reprise your role in our event. My phone number is (262) 376-0482.

Appreciatively, Denise Nelson

Renewal Message from the Treasurer – Denise Nelson

It will soon be time to renew your HSA-WI Unit membership. We look forward to having you as a continuing part of our society. Your friendship, support, and generosity toward the Unit is greatly appreciated.

In the envelope with the symposium invitation, you will find a membership renewal form. Please complete the survey portion and send it to me with your check payable to HSA-WI Unit. If you have any questions, call me at (262) 376-0482. Thank you in advance for paying your dues promptly by May 12, 2025. Checks should be mailed to me at: W72N904 London Court, Cedarburg, WI 52012.

Elections

Election candidates for chair and vice-chair will be voted on at the April meeting. The committee reports that the slate for elections is set: AJ Star for chair and Lorrie Burrows for vice-chair. An absentee ballot may be requested before April 1 from Melody Orban (melody.orban@yahoo.com) and must be returned to her ten days before the April meeting. The ballots will be opened and counted by the Nominating Committee; officers shall be elected by a majority vote of the members present and the returned absentee ballots at the April meeting.
Submitted by the Nominating Committee: Chair Melody Orban, Cheryl Kazmier, and Kathy Bussanich

Chair Candidate – AJ Star

I have been a member of our HSA WI-Unit for nearly 17 years. Time is nearing for me to complete a two-year (2023-2025) term as our HSA WI-Unit Chair. With the consistently patient and knowledgeable assistance from the Executive Board members and Unit Committee chairs, I have gained many skills that have allowed me to navigate the responsibilities of the job.

Prior to being elected Unit chair, I served as chair of the Ways and Means Committee for ten years and a two-year term as secretary. I have continued to support the Unit's projects and programs by helping with the Spring Symposium, Herb & Artisan Fair, Holiday Party, craft projects, Herb Day in the Garden at Boerner and Chicago Botanic Gardens. It has been a great pleasure representing HSA when co-teaching cooking classes with Denise Nelson, as part of the FBBG's adult education outreach program. I also enjoy volunteering at BBG as a garden bed weeder.

I am happy to serve a second, two-year term as chair if elected. AJ Star

Vice Chair – Lorrie Burrows

I joined the Herb Society in 2019 when I became Boerner Botanical Gardens' herb garden horticulturist. I was the garden's rosarian before that and worked closely with a great mentor, retired herb gardener Peggy Zautke. I have her to thank for furthering my herbal interests. It was impossible to work in the rose garden and not fall in love with the herb garden next door. It smelled like heaven – the joke at Boerner was that Peggy had the best smelling compost because it was full of mint (four kinds duke it out that always need to be reined in).

I started at Boerner in 2016, after moving to the Racine area from Illinois. I joined as a seasonal horticulturist, but by November, I earned my place as a full-time staffer. I have an Associate Degree in Horticulture from College of Lake County, Ornamental Plant Materials Certificate from Chicago Botanic Garden, and trained as a University of Illinois County Extension Service Master Gardener. I spent two years as a volunteer in CBG's Plant Information Office (before Google or Internet) before starting my own small garden design and container business. I also worked for The Perennial Professionals, a design/build firm based in Northbrook and various garden centers in the area, most notably Chalet Nursery. Although I've always been a gardener, I studied journalism and anthropology at Illinois State University. I worked as a newspaper reporter in Maine, began doing some freelance food writing including for the Chicago Sun Times, and eventually became an advertising copywriter. I worked on food (Dove Chocolate), medical, pet food (Lucky Dog and Happy Cat from Purina), Ameritech (yes, I remember the "Baby Bells"), and agricultural chemical accounts during my 11-year stint before turning my sights on horticulture and family.

I love researching subjects and that has stood me in good stead in the herb garden, since so much of our knowledge comes from lore handed down. I look forward to developing programs for the society and helping in creative ventures. Thanks! Lorrie

HSA-WI Unit 2025 Grant Awards to Milwaukee Area Public Gardens

The Herb Society of America-WI Unit continues to financially support area public gardens and their educational programs, and we made the following donations to Old World Wisconsin, Boerner Botanical Gardens, and Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens in 2025. These grants are supported with income generated by the Unit in the sponsorship of its annual Herb & Artisan Fair, and we thank all who continue to support us by attending and working at the Fair.

Old World Wisconsin will use its \$1,000 grant to restore and refurbish the heirloom herbs in the 1860s Norwegian farmstead that are used to create natural dyes for their wool-dyeing and wool-dyeing exhibits at the farmstead. These heirloom herbs include Wormwood, Dyer's Chamomile, Woad, Yarrow, St. John's Wort, and Black Hollyhock. Funds will also be used to provide natural edging with small diameter logs sourced on-site, as well as a gravel pathway to help improve access to the garden.

Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens continues to sponsor educational programs through their Children's Plant Science Education initiative, which provides hands-on, in-nature classes at Boerner for third grade, public school students from low-income areas. These classes are taught by Wisconsin-certified educators. All costs, including materials and bus transportation, are paid for by Friends of Boerner, who will use our 2025 grant of \$1,000 to continue this vital educational program.

The Unit's 2025 grant of \$1,000 to **Boerner Botanical Gardens** will be used to create a "Goth" themed Herb Garden that will educate visitors to the colorful (and sometimes deadly) history of potentially poisonous herbs. Better to learn about them from this display at Boerner Botanical Gardens than through trial and error in our own gardens!

These grants were solicited through Request for Proposals in early fall of 2024, and the awards were unanimously approved by our Board and the Unit.

Committee members are Chair Lore Borth, Eva Boldt, Denise Nelson, and Susan Williams.

Herb of the Month for March 2025 – Mustard (Brassica spp. And Sinapsis spp.) **(Susan Obry)**

There are two main types of mustard plants:



1. White or yellow mustard (*Sinapsis alba*). This is the mildest mustard. It is grown for its seeds, not for its leaves. Yellow mustard comprises about 90% of the crop in the Upper Midwest.
2. Brown mustard (*Brassica juncea*). This is the hottest mustard. The seeds are used for Dijon-type and hot mustards. It is also grown for its greens.

Mustard is widely used as a condiment with various foods. It is also used as an ingredient in mayonnaise, sauces, curries, and pickles. The flowers of this annual plant are also edible.

Mustard can be planted in the spring or fall in Wisconsin, but since it is a cool weather crop, it must be planted at the appropriate time. The recommended spring seeding date in Wisconsin is May 1 to 25. For fall planting, choose early maturing varieties.

Mustards should be planted in well-drained, fertile and slightly acidic soil in full sun. Direct seeding is the preferred method. To lessen disease and insect issues, do not plant in areas where other Brassicas have been planted in the last two years. If growing for seeds, do not plant different varieties at the same time since cross pollination may occur.

Depending on intended use, leaves can be harvested at any time prior to seed stalk formation.

Harvest the seeds when the seed pods turn from green to brown but are not yet open.

There is evidence that the Greek and Roman empires used mustards in traditional medicine. Mustard seeds are said to have several health benefits*, such as lowering cholesterol levels, promoting digestion, improving cardiovascular health, treating psoriasis, controlling diabetes, treating infections, and controlling muscle pain.

Fun Facts:

- More than 700 million lbs. of mustard is consumed worldwide each year.
- Garlic mustard is botanically not mustard.

*Further research is needed to support these claims.

Herb of the Month for April 2025 – Salad Burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*) **(Susan Obry)**



Salad burnet is a short-lived herbaceous perennial herb. It originated in Europe and North Africa and was brought to the new world by the first English colonists.

Its cucumber flavored leaves are used in dressings, salads, soups, sauces, herbed butters, cheese spreads, as garnish, in vinegars, and can be used in place of parsley if a light cucumber flavor is desired. Salad Burnet also pairs well with potatoes and eggs.

The flowers are edible. The leaves are usually used fresh since they easily lose flavor when dried. They do freeze well for use in soups and similar dishes. Add towards the end of cooking time.

Salad Burnet is hardy in zones 4-8. It is heat and drought tolerant but must be kept moist not wet. Plant in a well-drained, sandy loam soil in a sunny to partially shaded location. It will grow 12-18 inches but die back to the ground each year in Wisconsin. Remove old foliage and stems to encourage new growth. Salad Burnet can be divided in the spring or fall but does not respond well to transplanting. Salad Burnet can be started indoors or directly seeded in the garden. It can be planted in the spring or fall. It easily reseeds. The flowers are not self-pollinating so place in a well-ventilated area. Continually harvest in early spring through summer.

Medicinally, it was once used against the bubonic plague. Salad Burnet is rich in vitamins and antioxidants, which can boost the immune system. It is also said to aid in digestion, to improve skin health, serve as an anti-inflammatory and its astringent properties aid in wound healing*.

Fun Facts: Thomas Jefferson grew Salad Burnet in his gardens and on his farms. He used it for grazing livestock, erosion control and in salads. In 1778, he purchased six to eight bushels of seed – enough to cover 16 acres.

*Further research is needed to support these claims.

Resource for Salad Burnet Recipes – <https://saladburnet.org>

Recipes

Sage Cottage Herb Garden Cookbook

Seedy Noodles

Noodles mixed with flavorful seeds and nuts make a quick and easy main course for a meatless meal, especially when paired with a green salad or steamed vegetables.

8 oz. pkg noodles or pasta

3/4 cup plain, nonfat yogurt

1/2 tsp. cornstarch

Prepare one of the seasoning combinations below. Cook noodles according to package directions, drain, and pour into a heated casserole. Combine yogurt, cornstarch, and choice of seasoning. Combine with noodles, toss and serve.

Seasonings:

1 1/2 t crushed fennel seeds
2 T tomato paste
3 T raisins, soaked in 2 T hot water

OR

1/4 c silvered almonds
2 T poppy seeds

Combine and toast in a heavy skillet over medium flame.

OR

1 t crumbled sage
1 T onion seeds
1 t minced lovage

OR

1 1/2 t crushed caraway seeds, toasted
1 t dried thyme

Salad Dressing for One

A depressing aspect of single-person cookery is bottled salad dressing – it lasts for so long! Freshly mixed dressing on salad is one of life's luxuries. Here are two options:

Mix 1

1 t mayonnaise
1 t plain, low-fat yogurt
½ t minced shallots (winter) or 2 t minced chives (summer)
Combine all ingredients, whisk with a fork. Toss with greens.

Mix 2

1 t lemon juice
1 t brown rice vinegar
2 t apple juice
1 t water
¼ t Dijon-style mustard
1 T olive oil
Whisk all ingredients together. Seve over greens and fruit.

Growing Herbs Indoor and Out

(Melinda Myers, Dec. 17, 2024)

No matter where you live, you can add some flavor to your winter meals and beverages with homegrown herbs. They add unbeatable flavor and nutrition to every dish, making even mediocre cooks, like me, look good. An indoor herb garden (or all the supplies needed to create one) is a great gift for your favorite gardener or cook.

Most herbs need 6 to 8 hours of bright light each day. A south-facing window in winter is best but an east- or west-facing window may be sufficient. Increase success with artificial lights. Set the timer for 14 to 16 hours a day and keep the lights 6 to 12 inches above the plants.

Start with a quality potting mix and a container with drainage holes or a self-watering pot. Be sure to use a saucer or tray beneath the pot to protect your woodwork or windowsill. Add a vinyl, felt, or cork placemat for another layer of protection.

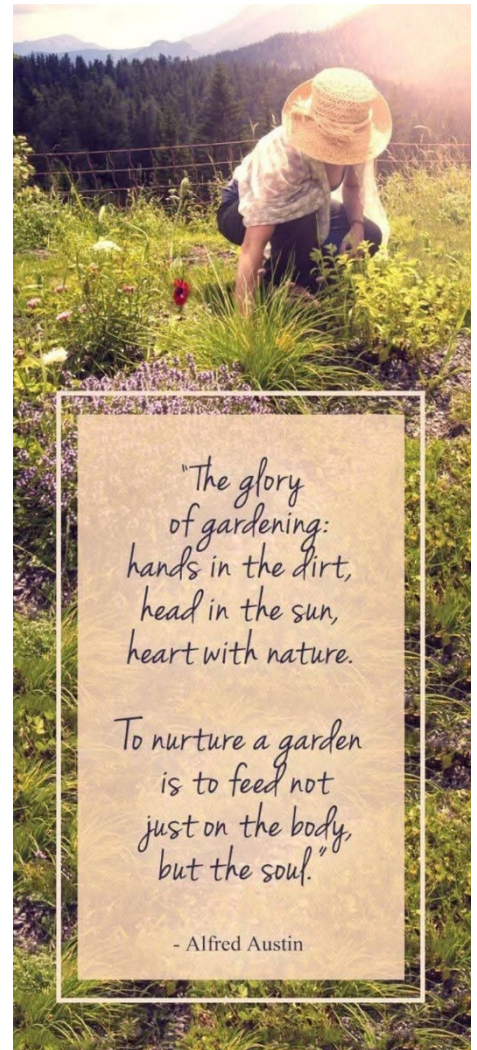
Purchase plants or seeds from a garden center, favorite garden catalog, or grocery store. Basil, chives, cilantro, oregano, marjoram, mint, parsley, sage, and thyme are some of the easier herbs to grow indoors. Those who like a challenge may want to give rosemary and lavender a try.

Use a variety of plants to create an attractive display in a large container. Combine plants that have the same growing requirements to ensure success; or, place each herb plant in its own container. A six-inch pot is a good size when starting with smaller plants. Growing individual plants in their own container allows you to provide the specific watering, care, and transplanting they need.

Water the containers thoroughly whenever the top inch of soil is dry. Pour off excess water so the plant does not sit in water, succumbing to root rot; or place pebbles in the tray to elevate the pot above any excess water. This means less work for you and better growing conditions for the plant.

You can begin harvesting most herbs when they reach 6 to 8 inches in height. As the plant grows you can harvest larger quantities and more often.

Note: Melinda Myers will be hosting a webinar "Growing Pollinator-friendly Spring & Summer Flowering Bulbs" on March 12 at 6:30 p.m. – go to melindamyers.com to register for this and other free webinars.



Attracting Beneficial Insects

(Burlington Garden Center, Feb. 13, 2024)

Life as we know it depends on insects. They are the foundation of the food web in our ecosystems, particularly in our gardens. Insects pollinate flowers and maintain soil structure, but they also munch on our cabbage and attack other desirable plants in the garden and landscape. When we see damage done to our plants, our first instinct may be to apply whatever product will kill the insect quickly in order to save the plant. But nature already has a remedy.

In a healthy ecosystem, damaging insects or “pests” are controlled by insect-eating birds, frogs, and other animals. There are also insects that eat other insects. We call these beneficial insects. Beneficials (good bugs) help us in two ways: either they prey on other insects (bad bugs), or they parasitize them by laying their eggs in or on them so their larvae can feed on and kill the pest.

Ladybugs, lacewings, and predatory wasps are commonly known beneficials. Instead of ordering them from a gardening catalog, we can attract these and other good bugs to our yards. Here are six ways:

1. Avoid using pesticides as most can't differentiate between pests and beneficials and end up killing both.
2. Create a garden that celebrates diversity by planting trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses, and groundcovers.
3. Plan a garden with continuous blooms from spring into fall. Include different kinds of flowers, especially ones called umbels like dill, yarrow, parsley, and cilantro which attract parasitic wasps.
4. Include native plants, especially keystone natives.
5. Provide a water source, even a small dish with pebbles and water.
6. Practice companion planting in the vegetable garden. Interplanting flowers with edibles can attract beneficial insects and help keep pests to a minimum.

Here's one final thought. If a plant is struggling and continually susceptible to pests, perhaps it is the wrong plant for in that spot. It may not be suitable for that location or even your ecoregion. Maybe the best thing to do is remove it and replace it with a plant that is better suited to the site - like natives!

The Beautiful snow of Winter extols the grandeur of earth.
Spring in the air tells of its' blooming rebirth.

We each fit into this all-encompassing scene
By giving and taking – whatever that may mean.

We enjoy sky, water, and all the wonders of growth
While watching or planting or maybe doing both.

Everyone here changes the earth a bit each day
Adding or detracting in what we do and say.

Birthdays unroll our stories as we steadily move along
And tell the earth who we are through our own melodious song.

So HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JANUARY through JUNE, for the year that you just spent.
For all you gave, for all you took and all that it has meant.



~ Joanne Ruggieri

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"And the Spring arose on the
garden fair,

Like the Spirit of Love felt
everywhere;

And each flower and herb on Earth's
dark breast

Rose from the dreams of its wintry
rest."

--Percy Bysshe Shelley, The Complete Poems

Happy Spring

If you have an event, article, recipe, book, etc.
that you think members might find interesting,
please send to Diane at
kescenovitz.diane@att.net, and I will try to put
it in the next issue of *Sage Leaves* if room
allows.

Future *Sage Leaves* will be mailed out to arrive
by March 1, 2025, and May 1,
2025.