

Third Quarter  
Jul/Aug/Sep  
2026  
Vol. 47 No. 4

# SAGE LEAVES

The Herb Society of America Wisconsin Unit

Educates and inspires people to explore the wonder and pleasure of herbs.



AJ Star, Unit Chair

## Newsbuds

Happy summer into fall 2026. Sun and rain are sure making my herb pots and gardens grow. Love seeing everything thrive, don't you?!

This and subsequent *Sage Leaves* will be a quarterly publication. Thank you Susan McD for stepping up to continue our newsletter. We look forward to it!

**July:** The Executive Board – AJ, Denise, and Tricia – will meet to review the 2025-26 budget for possible changes and to discuss working without a vice/program chair. July also means an opportunity to walk the Boerner Botanical Herb Gardens with Kate Stefaniak on July 8 at 6:00 p.m. Visit the [BBG website](#) for Wednesday night garden walk details.

**August:** The full Board of Directors will meet to develop our annual budget based on committee chair needs, as well as address any bylaw or policy changes that may be needed. Your input is always welcome!

**September:** Our Annual Unit Meeting means a return to St. Christopher's for in-person meetings. We will celebrate July through December 2026 birthdays, meet and greet new members since May 2026, and recognize our 5-, 10-, and 15-year Unit members. You will receive an information packet in the mail before the meeting. **Important:** bring the packet to the meeting; it contains the 2026-27 proposed budget, which we will vote on at this meeting. Horticulture Chair Sue Obry will be our speaker, presenting the herb of the month, Pelargonium, scented geraniums. You don't want to miss this fun and informative meeting.

Enjoy the Growing Season

## 2026-27 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### 2026

- Sep 19 Saturday, Annual Meeting  
Pelargoniums and How to Grow 'em  
presented by Sue Obry
- Oct 24 Saturday, Monthly Meeting  
50th Anniversary Event
- Nov 17 Tuesday, Monthly Meeting  
My Rose Garden Work at Boerner  
presented by Samantha Gilbert
- Dec 9 Wednesday, Holiday Party and Meeting  
at The Town Club, Fox Point  
10 a.m. Social with Noon Luncheon

### 2027

- Jan 19 Tuesday, Monthly Meeting – Zoom Only  
10 a.m. Grants & Scholarships
- Feb None; informational email will be sent
- Mar 20 Saturday, Monthly Meeting  
Herb of the Year Study – Flax
- Apr 20 Tuesday, Monthly Meeting, Program TBA  
Election for Chair and Vice Chair
- May 18 Tuesday, Monthly Meeting  
Final Preparation for Herb & Artisan Fair
- May 22 Saturday, Herb & Artisan Fair  
at Boerner Botanical Gardens  
9 a.m. to 3 p.m., all members involved
- Jun 19 Saturday, Monthly Meeting  
Wrap-up of Unit Events

Unless otherwise noted, monthly meetings are held at 9:30 a.m. at St. Christopher's Church.

Denise Nelson

## 2026 Membership Renewal

Unit members should have received their 2026-27 membership cards. If you did not receive your membership card, please email Denise at [travelinggardener52@yahoo.com](mailto:travelinggardener52@yahoo.com) and she will get your card to you.



The rose – official flower of the United States – symbolizing love, beauty, and devotion.  
Designated as the national floral emblem by Congress and President Ronald Reagan in 1986.

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Mary Kay McDevitt

## Brunch Chair

Our June wrap-up meeting/brunch was attended by 15 members. Everyone who came brought a dish to share and the table was brimming with delicious homemade fare. Herbs were featured in salads, breads, and desserts. Thank you to all who participated in the end-of-year event.

September brings new and interesting topics and new cuisines to explore. Join the brunch team – choose a favorite herb and enjoy the taste it creates – entree, side, bread and spread, sweet, and beverage are needed. Please reach out to Mary Kay to sign up early for September's brunch, call 414-418-2322 or email [mkmcd@mac.com](mailto:mkmcd@mac.com).

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**As for rosemary, I let it run all over my garden walls, not only because my bees love it but because it is the herb sacred to remembrance and to friendship. –Sir Thomas Moore**

### The Fourth of July Herb Garden

Roots deep in the soil, where the pilgrims first walked,  
From the purple mountain's majesty to the corn-covered stalk.

**Lavender** sits for the memories we hold,  
Of a "Sea to Shining Sea" story told.

**Echinacea** blooms, sturdy and bright,  
A purple-coned crown for the brave and the right.

**Thyme** for the history, the struggle, and pain,  
As we forge a new dream in the summer rain.

**Sage** clears the air from the smoke in the sky,  
As the fireworks burst and the roman candles fly.

**Rosemary** brings remembrance, a fragrant reminder,  
That through every flaw, we can still be kinder.

**Chamomile** calm for the hard-working soul,  
Making the broken, the torn, and the weary whole.

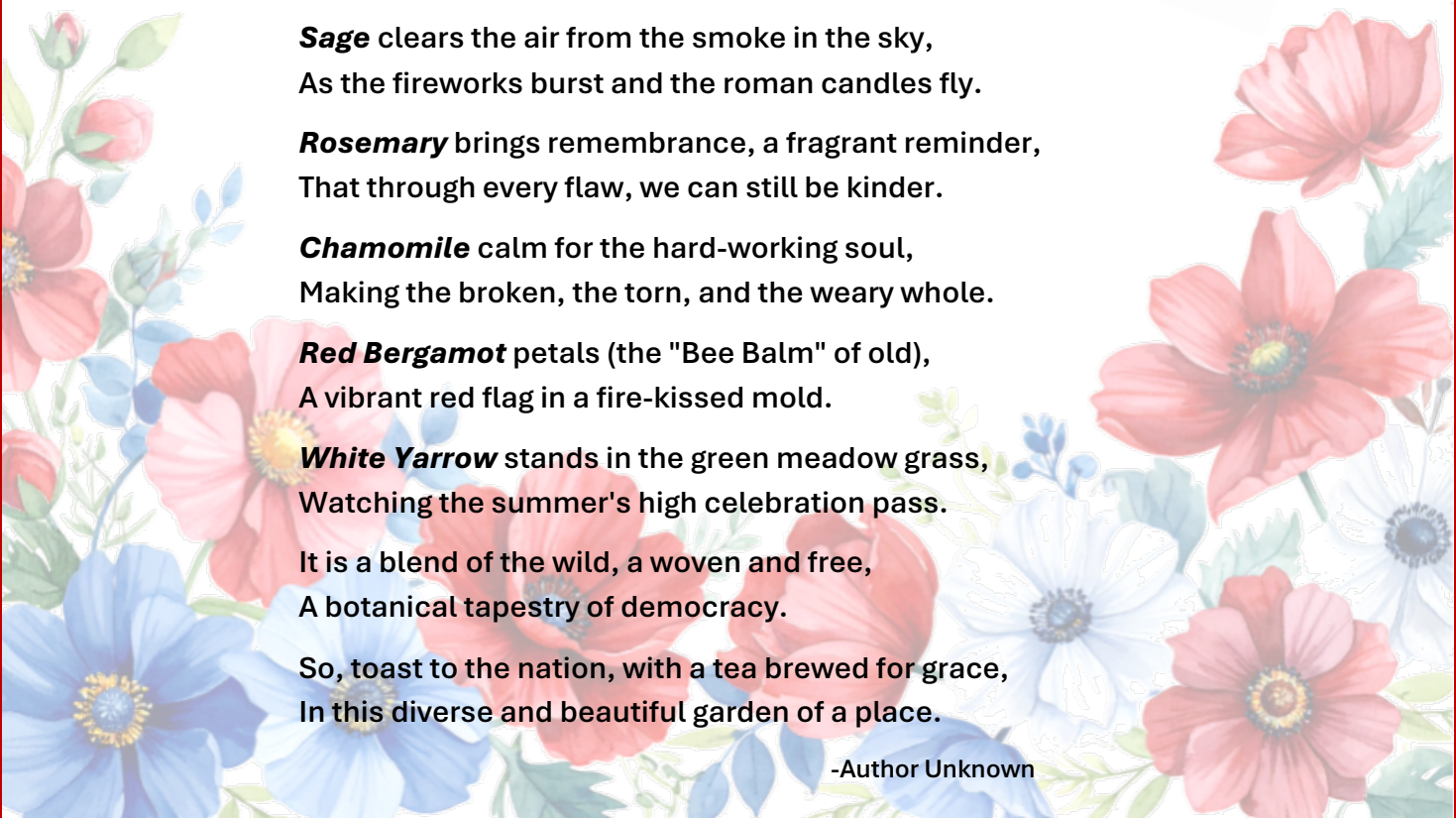
**Red Bergamot** petals (the "Bee Balm" of old),  
A vibrant red flag in a fire-kissed mold.

**White Yarrow** stands in the green meadow grass,  
Watching the summer's high celebration pass.

It is a blend of the wild, a woven and free,  
A botanical tapestry of democracy.

So, toast to the nation, with a tea brewed for grace,  
In this diverse and beautiful garden of a place.

-Author Unknown



## Herbs of the Month

July

### Wasabi, *Eutrema japonicum*



The Condiment to Clear Your Nose!

A member of the mustard family, wasabi grows

naturally in shaded, clean flowing water in Japan. True wasabi is difficult to grow and harvested by hand to ensure the delicate flavor and quality are preserved.

Wasabi can be grown in Wisconsin but requires full shade, controlled temperatures, and moist well-drained soil. It is best grown in a greenhouse or a container that can be moved indoors.

Authentic wasabi paste is made from the shredded rhizome of the plant finely grated into a paste using a special tool called an oroshigane, creating a smooth and velvety texture that differs from its imitators. Most wasabi served outside of Japan is a horseradish mustard paste.

**Culinary:** Used in sushi, noodles, dips, rice bowls, soups, dressings, snacks, sauces, vegetables, and seafood dishes. Since its flavor-intense heat that is both aromatic and fleeting—can be overpowering, use freshly grated in small amounts.

**Medicinal:** Further human studies are needed, but wasabi is said to inhibit the growth of certain cancer cells, relieve sinus and respiratory issues, support heart health, and improve digestion. It also has anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties.

**Interesting:** Unlike chili peppers, wasabi's sharp, pungent vapors hit your nose first then your tongue.

August

### Rose, *Rosa* spp.



The Guilt Free Flower!

Roses are native to Asia, Europe, North America, and parts of Africa. Valued for their

fragrance, petals and rose hips, roses have been cultivated for thousands of years with over 150 rose species and more than 30,000 varieties.

In Wisconsin, the best time to plant roses is late April to mid-May after the last frost or late August to early September for fall planting. Choose hardy, disease-resistant varieties. All roses are edible provided they have NOT been treated with chemicals; always ensure roses are food-grade before consumption.

**Culinary:** The better the fragrance, the better the taste! Pesticide-free petals are used in teas, syrups, jams and jellies, cakes, puddings, baklava, pancakes, salads, infused oils, vinegars, as garnishes, and water. Rose hips/leaves are often made into teas, hot chocolate, jellies, and preserves. Buds can also be used.

Suggested varieties: *Rosa rugosa*, *Rosa canina*, *Rosa moyesii*, *Rosa virginiana*, and David Austin English.

**Medicinal:** Used for their calming fragrance and for their astringent qualities in skincare products. Petals and hips have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties and aid in digestion. Roses are rich in vitamins A and C, potassium, and fiber.

**Interesting:** Almonds, peaches, plums, pears, cherries, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, apples, and apricots all belong to the rose family. A cup of edible rose petals contains only 5-7 calories.

September

### Pelargonium, *Pelargonium* spp.



Yay, A Flower that Tastes Like Insect Repellent

Often referred to as scented

geraniums, Pelargoniums are valued for their colorful flowers and aromatic leaves. Native to Southern and Eastern Africa and Australia, they are not true geraniums and are sensitive to the cold.

In Wisconsin, they are usually grown as outdoor annuals but can be grown in containers and moved indoors before frost. There are over 200 varieties categorized by their scents:

- Citrus: lemon, lime, orange, and citronella
- Rose: true rose and peppermint rose
- Minty: peppermint and chocolate
- Fruit & Nuts: apple, apricot, coconut, and nutmeg
- Spicy & Pungent: cinnamon, ginger, and pine

**Culinary:** Edible plants grown without pesticides are used in sugars, syrups, teas and other beverages, jellies, baked goods, whipped cream, puddings, fruit salads, roasted vegetables, soups, seafood and pasta dishes.

**Medicinal:** Used in aromatherapy to calm the nervous system. They have anti-inflammatory, antiseptic and astringent properties useful in skin care and wound healing, digestive relief, and treatments for sore throats and mouth ulcers. Also, used as an insect repellent.

**Tip:** lace leaves in the bottom of a greased pan before pouring in cake batter.



Kathy Bussanich & Cheryl Kazimier

## Botanical Reads Recommendations

**Fiction:** “The Botanist’s Assistant” by Peggy Townsend. A cozy mystery with a quirky protagonist. Margaret Finch thrives on routine, sensible, methodical with an eye for detail. When a colleague is found dead, she takes it upon herself to find out what really happened.

**Nonfiction:** “Eight Flavors: The Untold Story of American Cuisine” by Sarah Lohman. Explore the history of eight key flavors that shaped American food, blending culinary history, travelogue, and recipes to show how these ingredients became staples through immigration, trade, and cultural exchange.

The Herb Society of America’s book clubs and favorite reads can be found on the [HSAs blog site](#).

## RECIPES

### Tex-Mex Sheet Cake by Denise Nelson

#### Cake Ingredients:

1 cup butter  
1 cup water  
1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
2 cups sugar  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1/2 tsp. salt  
2 tsp. ground ancho chili pepper  
2 large eggs, slightly beaten  
1/2 cup buttermilk  
1-1/2 tsp. vanilla

#### Cake Directions:

Preheat oven to 375°F

1. Grease a 15x10x1 baking pan, set aside.  
In a medium saucepan combine butter, water and cocoa powder. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat and cool.
2. In a large mixing bowl combine flour, sugar, salt, baking soda, and ancho chili powder.  
Add eggs, buttermilk, and vanilla. Beat with electric mixer on low to medium speed to combine. Add cooled cocoa mixture and beat until blended. Pour batter into prepared pan.
3. Bake in 375°F oven for 20 minutes or until cake springs back when lightly touched.

#### Chocolate Frosting Ingredients:

1/2 cup butter  
6 T unsweetened cocoa powder  
2 tsp. ground cinnamon  
2 tsp. ground ancho chili pepper  
6 T buttermilk  
4-1/2 cups sifted powdered sugar  
1 tsp. vanilla

#### Frosting Directions:

In a medium saucepan, stir together the butter, cocoa, cinnamon and ancho pepper powders and the buttermilk. Cook and stir until boiling.

Remove from heat. Beat in powdered sugar and vanilla with an electric mixer on low until blended.

Pour over cake, hot out of the oven!

Let the frosted cake cool. Cut into 60 small squares.

#### Important Note:

**Immediately prepare frosting recipe; be ready to pour it over the hot cake right out of the oven.**



# Roasted Vegetable & Herb Lasagna by Marcy at Backyard Patch Herbs



**Serves Four  
as Main Dish**

## Ingredients:

10-ounce lasagna noodles or 9 to 12 pieces

### Vegetables

- 2 cups diced butternut squash (about 10-11 ounces prepared weight), cut into ½-inch pieces
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1 red onion, cut into thin wedges
- 1 parsnip, peeled and cut into ¾-inch matchsticks
- 8 ounces Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- 3 cloves garlic, smashed (skins on)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- salt and pepper, to taste

### Lemon Parmesan Crumb

- 1 cup coarsely grated fresh sourdough breadcrumbs (crusts removed)
- 2 tablespoons finely grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

### Herb Dressing

- 2 cups loosely packed fresh herbs (such as parsley, mint, and basil)
- 2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 3 green onions, sliced
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- ½ cup olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

## Directions:

### 1. Roast Vegetables

Preheat oven to 400°F

Line a baking dish with parchment paper.

Place butternut squash, sweet potatoes, red onion, and parsnip in the dish. Toss with most of the olive oil (reserve a little for the Brussels sprouts).

Season with salt and pepper.

Roast for about 20 minutes, then add Brussels sprouts, smashed garlic, and remaining oil. Continue roasting another 25 minutes, or until vegetables are tender and lightly caramelized. Cover loosely and keep warm while preparing the crumb.

### 2. Make Crumb

Combine breadcrumbs, Parmesan, lemon zest, garlic, and olive oil in a bowl.

Spread on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake at 400°F until golden and crisp, stirring occasionally (about 8–12 minutes). Set aside.

### 3. Prepare Dressing

In a food processor, pulse herbs, garlic, green onions, lemon zest and juice. With the motor running, drizzle in olive oil until you have a coarse-textured sauce. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

### 4. Cook Pasta

Cook in boiling salted water for the time stated on the packaging or until al dente. Drain well and toss with two-thirds of the dressing.

### 5. Assemble

Toss the remaining dressing with the roasted vegetables.

Gently combine vegetables with pasta and transfer to a serving platter. Sprinkle generously with the lemon Parmesan crumb before serving.

## Candied/Sugared Flowers

Large flowers such as roses disassemble to candy each petal. Smaller flowers like pansies can be candied whole.



### Ingredients & Tools:

- Egg white, lightly whisked
- Granulated sugar in shallow bowl
- Pesticide-free edible flowers
- Paint brush (culinary or craft reserved for cooking)
- Wire cooling rack

### Directions:

1. Gently wash flowers; dry thoroughly on paper towel.
2. Brush a very fine layer of egg wash over both sides.
3. Using tweezers, gently transfer flower to sugar bowl; sprinkle flower with sugar, coat completely.
4. Transfer to wire cooling rack until hardened, 8-24 hours.
5. Store sugared flowers in single layers in an airtight container at room temperature for up to one month.

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# Edible Flowers

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Edible flowers bring a beautiful, unexpected pop of color when they appear on a plate or used to garnish drinks. Each variety of edible flower varies in flavor from mild onion to aromatic to sweet, and there are endless possibilities - use fresh, dried, frozen, or candied. Sprinkle in salads with fresh purple chive flowers in spring. Dried rose petals sprinkled on cakes gives a beautiful pop of color. Lavender frozen into ice cubes adds a touch to specialty drinks. Candied edible flowers are a fabulous, delicate garnish for sweet dishes, cakes or pastries.

Stroll through your herb garden and harvest blooms from chamomile, chives, dill, oregano, sage, thyme, rosemary and more. These blooms make delicious additions to your favorite recipes. Other edibles to enjoy, include:



## Annuals

### 1. Calendula

Who doesn't love a burst of sunshiny flowers in the garden, especially when they both feed pollinators and support the gardener's immune system? Used traditionally as a medicinal herb, the edible ray florets of calendula (which look like yellow or orange petals) burst with antioxidant compounds. Known as the "poor man's saffron," calendula provides warm flavor and bright color at a fraction of the price of saffron. Use it speckled in quiche, sprinkled in a frittata, or added to salads.

### 2. Nasturtium

If you want maximum value in an edible flower, you'll love growing nasturtium. Not only are the flowers gorgeous, but every part of the plant is edible: flowers, leaves, stems, and even the young seed pods, which are often pickled to make "poor man's capers." (Poor man's saffron, poor man's capers...there's a theme here about the value of edible flowers!) While the flowers sport aromatic and floral flavors with a bit of spiciness, the leaves and stems bring the heat to dishes, similar to radishes.

### 3. Pansy

If you're looking to add an aesthetically pleasing splash to your cakes, cookies, or cocktails, consider adding pansies. Not only are these cuties adorable in your favorite cuisine, but pansies provide pretty blooms during cooler days, when many other flowers are just emerging in spring—or winding down for the season in fall. With charming faces and a mild flavor, pansies make a perfectly pretty addition to salads, desserts, and garnishing charcuterie boards. Freeze the flowers in ice cube trays to jazz up a basic glass of lemonade or press the blooms into soft cheese for a uniquely lovely appetizer. Sugared pansies make desserts look—and taste—extra-fancy.

### 4. Squash Blossoms

If you find yourself overwhelmed with zucchini each summer, it may be time to cull the harvest a tad—and savor squash blossoms in your summer dinners. A classic Italian delicacy, fiori di zucca fritti involves filling fresh squash blossoms with cheese—then frying them into a delicious, decadent treat. Because of their neutral flavor, squash blossoms are a highly versatile edible flower. Slice the flowers and mix them in frittatas or omelets, top risotto, add to quesadillas, or use raw in salads. Note: know the difference between male and female flowers so you don't deplete your entire squash harvest; female flowers produce squash and have a fleshy ovary behind the flower where it attaches to the vine; leave a few male flowers as well, so the pollinators can do their job and make baby squash.

**Harvest healthy, vibrant blooms early in the morning, once the dew dries but before the sun scorches.  
Edible flowers taste best when used the same day as harvested.**



## Perennials

### 5. Bee Balm (Monarda)

Bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds aren't alone in their love of bee balm. A beauty in the landscape, these edible flowers add a perfect pop of color and flavor in the kitchen. Because bee balm is a member of the mint family, you'll note a minty flavor when you enjoy these edible flowers in your favorite treats. Add bee balm to salads, brew into tea, mix into compound butter, garnish savory dishes, and decorate desserts.

### 6. Dianthus

With a hint of peppery flavor, dianthus not only adds prettiness to your recipes, but they also punch up garden-to-table goodies with nutmeg and clove notes. Add these beautiful blooms to wine. Create a syrup with them for cocktails. Or pour the syrup over plain vanilla ice cream to create an inspired dessert.

### 7. Lavender

From sweet treats to savory dishes, lavender creates a unique and aromatic twist to your favorite recipes. The delicate floral notes pair beautifully with a variety of ingredients, adding sophisticated elegance to your meals and treats. Line a path with this gorgeous, highly aromatic herb and enjoy its sweet scent as you brush by it. Find more recipes for [Cooking with Lavender](#). The pollinators will adore lavender, too.

### 8. Daylilies

If you're feeling adventurous, why not add a new ingredient to your culinary lineup? Not only are daylilies gorgeous, low-maintenance landscape plants, but the entire plant—from tubers to shoots to buds and blooms—is edible. Now, you're probably thinking, "Why would I eat daylily tubers when I love the look of the flowers in the garden?" If you only harvest a portion of the tuber and replant the remaining segment, you'll enjoy an interesting ingredient in your recipes, while the flowers will keep growing for years. All portions of daylilies make excellent additions to your meal plans. Harvest young shoots for stir-fries and pasta. Pluck buds to steam, boil, or stir-fry. The flower buds taste like a cross between asparagus and green peas, perfect for sauteing with garlic and butter. Buds also taste great pickled. Boil the tubers like potatoes. Add fresh petals to salads. The versatility of daylilies creates interesting, beautiful dishes.

*Hemerocallis*, means "beauty for a day" (Greek Hemera "day" and kallos "beauty"). Daylilies typically last only one day, open at sunrise and wither at sunset, and produce many buds to ensure weeks of continuous color.

**Only harvest *Hemerocallis* (Daylily) for use in meals.**

**Other lilies, such as Asiatic, star, calla, peace lilies, and crinum, can be poisonous or cause irritation.**

**If you're unsure which lily is growing in the garden—err on the side of caution and forgo harvesting for meals.**

Source: National Garden Bureau (NGB.org) and Silvertooth Home (silvertoothhome.com)

## Patriotic Flowers to Celebrate America

**Red** Coneflowers, Carnations, Geraniums, Roses, Zinnias

**White** Daisies, Lilies, Queen Anne's Lace, Lily of the Valley, Carnations

**Blue** Salvia, Blue Hydrangea, Irises, Cornflower, Statice, Larkspur, Delphinium





## SUMMER AND FALL



Today it still is summer,  
Tomorrow will be fall.  
I see the purple asters,  
I hear the autumn's call.

I feel the warm sun shining  
As a balmy south wind blows;  
I see more flowers blooming,  
And I see the grass still grows;

The goldenrod is waving,  
The bees are in the clover.  
I hear a distant honking---  
The geese are flying over.

The maple leaves are golden;  
The pumpkins, round and yellow.  
The apple cheeks are rosy,  
The pears are getting mellow.

The nuts are growing rounder,  
The cornstalks, brown and sear.  
By twenty lovely tokens  
I know that fall is near.

Today it still is summer,  
Tomorrow will be fall.  
Today I still am barefoot---  
Oh, how I love it all!

--Nona Keen Duffy

HSA Wisconsin Unit website: <https://herb-society-wisconsin.org>

Herb Society of America website: <https://www.herbsociety.org>

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Please email Susan any item(s) you would like to see included in *Sage Leaves*