



*“If you look the right way, you can see
that the whole world is a garden.”*

--Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*

SAGE LEAVES

The Herb Society of America Wisconsin Unit

May/June 2026 – Vol XXXXVII #3

Unit Meetings

Tuesday, May 12, 9:30 a.m. Brunch, 10:00 a.m. Meeting

Program: Preparations for the Herb & Artisan Fair held on May 16

Melody will talk about her experience at EdCon, “It’s Spicier in Texas”

Location: St. Christopher’s

Saturday, May 16, 9:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. – Annual Herb & Artisan Fair

Location: Boerner Botanical Gardens, Hales Corners

Saturday, June 12, 9:30 a.m. Brunch, 10:00 a.m. Meeting

Program: Wrap-up meeting for Unit events – potluck brunch

Location: St. Christopher’s

2026 Election Results

Melody Orban

Congratulations on the unanimous election of Secretary Tricia Hallam and Treasurer Denise Nelson. Thank you to the Nomination Committee.

Nominations in 2027 will be for chair and vice-chair. Please consider being on the committee or, better yet, consider becoming more involved at the board level and being on the ballot.

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

Wisconsin Unit website: Herb-Society-Wisconsin.org

Herb Society of America office: Herbs@HerbSociety.org

Herb Society of America website: www.herbsociety.org



NEWSBUDS . . . from AJ

This May/June 2026 *Sage Leaves* is very special in that it is the final edition Diane Kescenovitz will be publishing. THANK YOU DIANE K. for devoting 10 years of creative energy to this dearly loved publication. See Diane's message to us on the final page.

Here are some dates you may want to get on your calendar for May and June:

Saturday, May 16 – 16th Annual Herb & Artisan Fair – our annual fundraiser for Grants and Scholarships. We have two educational seminars lined up and 23 artisans committed to sell their special products. Three of these vendors will be selling plants! The Herb Ladies Bake Shop and lavender lemonade stand are on the schedule too.

Saturday, June 13 – Old World Wisconsin's Friends Appreciation Day – begins at 8:45 a.m. with a breakfast in the Upper Clausing Bar. I'll have more information and a sign-up sheet at our May 12 Unit meeting.

Saturday and Sunday, June 27-28 – Chicago Botanic Gardens, Herb and Vegetable Garden event – the HSA, WI-Unit will have an 'educate the public' booth there.

Wednesday, July 8 – Herb Garden Walk at Boerner Botanical Gardens – at 6:00 p.m. we will join Kate Stefanik, Herb Garden Horticulturist, as she tours the garden and talks about the herb plants in the Goth theme beds.

See you May 12 for our Unit meeting!

Spring Symposium – April 11, 2026

Dearest HSA Members, our major educational event was a great success. Over 100 guests enjoyed our ever-delightful speaker, Carrie Hennessy of Johnson's Nursery. Chef Jan Solbjerg created delightful herb-related food for our guests to enjoy at The Woman's Club of Wisconsin.

We so very much appreciated all of your kind help in preparing the details of this major event. From the masterful designs Susan McDonnell placed on our invitations, menu, event schedule, and name badges to the artwork placed on our Website/Facebook pages Susan made us look very professional. Melody, Lore, Diane, Tricia and her friend Kimberly made sure our guests were welcomed and provided the supplies they needed for the day. The gorgeous centerpieces were constructed by Diane and Marlene with AJ. Setting up on Friday afternoon was aided by Maureen Powers-Todt and Elaine Wilhelm. Sisters Kathy Bussanich and Dorothy Mietz whipped mushroom coffee and served treats in the Tasting Room. Paula Peters sold a record number of raffle tickets, \$1,001. Maureen answered questions and made sure guests were given the correct prize. Melody, Tricia and Kimberly compared tickets for our winners. Full details will be shared at our June 20 wrap-up meeting.

Pablo Picasso Quote: "The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it." We want you to know that we are grateful you shared your gifts with us and all of those who joined the celebration for our 30th Symposium. The air was filled with a sense of happiness and delight. It doesn't get any better than that! Appreciatively, AJ Star and Denise Nelson, Event Co-chairs

Unit Membership Renewals Due May 12, 2026

My thanks to so many of you for already mailing in your membership renewals. If you have not yet done so, please send your renewal fees for the 2026-2027 business year to me by May 12. You should have received a renewal form with the amount due for your type of membership (individual, joint, or business). If you need a replacement form, please let me know. On that form is a survey, so the Board can assess what members would like to do in the next year and who has an interest in helping on various committees. If you are a committee chair and have receipts for budgeted expenses, please send them to me for reimbursement.

Please send your check (payable to HSA-WI Unit) to me at the address listed below. Thanks!

Denise Nelson – HSA-WI Unit Treasurer, W72N904 London Court, Cedarburg, WI 53012

Herb Ladies Bakeshop Donations – Denise Nelson

The Herb Ladies Bake Sale is one of two areas at the Herb & Artisan Fair that earn money for Grants and Scholarships. Your donations to the bake sale are greatly appreciated. Please donate generously. If everyone brings as much as they did in the past, we should be in good shape.

- Package items in plastic baggies with pretty ribbon.
- Label items with the name (ex. Chocolate Chip Cookies with Mint). Blank address size labels work well. Please add the word NUTS on labels if items contain them.
- Customers wanted Lavender items last year.
- Cookies, bars, and scones work well in baggies. Crumbles, crisps, slices of tea bread, and cakes do well on plates, then wrapped in plastic. Small tea breads can be wrapped whole.
- On May 16, please bring your packaged items to Boerner where the Bake Sale table will be set up. Bring them as early as possible, and they will be priced with stickers at that table.
- Please let Denise know what you will be bringing. Call: 262-376-0482 and leave a message. Thanks for your kind contributions.

Reminders for the Artisan Café:

Mary Kay McDevitt, Brunch Chair

Marlene Mravik, Joanne Ruggieri, and Louise Block

Artisan Café Breakfast and Lunch Buffet Menus:

I hope you had a chance to look over the menus sent to you on March 31. Several members have sent their choices, but there are still many open spaces to be filled for both meals. If they were "lost" among your emails, I will send the menus again.

Please Email or call me at mkmcd@mac.com or 414-418-2322 with your choice(s), and I will print your name on the menu item. Clipboards will be available at the May 12 meeting for last minute signups.

On May 16, bring all breakfast items to the upstairs kitchen before 8 a.m., and bring all lunch items up before noon. Please label your own plates, utensils etc. if you want them returned to you.

The May 12 Brunch Team is complete. Rsvp's required. Thank you all so very much.

EdCon – It's Spicier in Texas – Melody Orban

The HSA Education Conference "It's Spicier in Texas" was held April 15–17, 2026, in San Antonio, Texas with three full days of presentations, demonstrations, and workshops at the conference hotel located on San Antonio's Riverwalk district.

The focuses were on Capsicums with presentations on herbs in Southwestern gardens and cuisines:

- **Keynote Speaker** – Chef Sergio Remolina presented "Nature's Heat," exploring the bold flavors of edible herbs like arugula and mustard greens. Visit his website at: <https://www.epicurious.com/contributors/sergio-remolina>
- **Chile Peppers** – Susan Belsinger and Tina Marie Wilcox lead sessions on cultivating capsicums ("Chile Peppers from Mild to Wild") and their culinary uses (Chilis in the Kitchen). See the blog <https://blog.herbsociety.org/blog/gardening/seasonal-gardening/>
- **Herbal Landscapes** – Sue Goetz presented on garden design and combining herbs with ornamental plants. Suggestions for the best herbs for garden design that add architecture and color for all seasons and ways to mingle and combine herbs beautifully with other ornamental landscape plants.
- **Herbs in Every Season with Bevin Cohen** – do you remember him from a zoom meeting or maybe he was a presenter in Madison??? He was an energetic, fun and informative presenter. He described his favorite herbs –



2026 HERB & ARTISAN FAIR

SATURDAY, MAY 16

9 AM TO 3 PM

Boerner Botanical Gardens
9400 Boerner Dr., Hales Corners WI

Free Parking and Event Entry



- ✿ Artisan vendors selling soaps, teas, jewelry, ceramics, garden art, herbal products, and herb plants.
- ✿ Herb Ladies Bake Shop offering homemade, sweet and savory baked goods and lavender lemonade.
- ✿ Children's activity table.



Herb Seminars:

- 10:00 Beekeeping and Plants for Pollinators presented by Shaun Keating, Waterford Bee Company
- 11:15 Herbal Alchemy in my Kitchen presented by Venice Williams, Alice's Garden Urban Farm

Website: herb-society-wisconsin.org

Facebook: [HerbSocietyofAmericaWIUnit](https://www.facebook.com/HerbSocietyofAmericaWIUnit)



through the lens of the seasons. <https://www.smallhousefarm.com/>

- I was the volunteer photographer for the sessions on Friday that included: hands-on workshops on Texas wildflowers for wellness products, turmeric cooking (Turmeric-Herb of the Year), and mocktails. I got to pop into each room several times for photos but ended up staying with the opportunity for the hands-on “Wellness Products” and Mocktails.
- **Mythic Plants: Herbs and Spices in Ancient Greece, Ellen Zachos** – in this presentation, Ellen Zachos, celebrated plants through the lens of Greek mythology and ancient everyday life, when herbs and spices were used to nourish, intoxicate, heal, and make magic. This session inspired me to check out books about Greek Myths that were favorites from my elementary school years.
- **Spice Up Your Life with a Healthy Mocktail**, Gayle Engels – fun recipes to use. One hint, if you muddle sugar for a drink, experiment with using jam instead of sugar.
- **Growing Scented Geraniums (Pelargonium)** – the presenter brought in many plants, described taking cuttings, and we worked with the plants on our tables. I have a cutting of a “Nutmeg Scented Geranium.”
- **Events** – included the Golden Sage Luncheon, Awards Dinner—they had slides for last year’s award winners, so there was a photo of Diane Kecenovitz in the PowerPoint presentation.

It was fun to see Venice Williams from Alice’s Garden who will be at our Herb & Artisan Fair in May. We had breakfast together before the start of a morning session. The conference was a great opportunity to meet people, learn about herbs, and have wonderful food—breakfast, lunch and dinner with herbs added! EdCon will continue to be alternate years; next EdCon is March 22-24, 2028, in Orlando, Florida. Save the date!

Book Club – Melody Orban

There was interest in Kathy's book suggestion from Helen Pizzi for “The Girl Who Drew Butterflies” by Joyce Sidman. A small group met at Boerner’s library to discuss the book. It is a children's nonfiction book about Maria Sibylla Eleanora Merian, a pioneering female naturalist and artist, who defied 17th-century conventions to study and illustrate the life cycle of insects, proving butterflies metamorphose from caterpillars. Additionally, AJ brought a beautiful art book and Melody brought articles about the author. www.joycesidman.com/books/qjrl-who-drew-butterflies

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: “To Everything There is a Season” by Thalasso Caruso - the author had a plant show on public television in the 1960’s. She was somewhat of a Julia Child of gardening. This book is a series of essays by month on a variety of subjects and plants.

Book Club will return in fall. Keep reading, but it is time to be working in our gardens. Kathy and Cheryl have made great reading suggestions. There are also great booklists on the HSA website, and you may even join a zoom discussion. www.herbsociety.org/portal-log-in-page/special-intrest-groups/

The Tea Party

In a shady garden bower
At the best-appointed hour
The lady bugs and spiders meet for tea.
There’s a hustle and a bustle
Underneath a spreading flower
Because they chatter and they patter
Till the mealy bugs and earwigs seek to flee.
Sipping warm dew drops under leafy rooftops
They gossip to heart’s desire
In their fancy winged attire.
They sup from bluebell cups
They lounge on daisy tufts
While they munch on organic matter
From a tiny violet platter.
Eating bits of cookie crusties
Topped with toasted compost butter
A thousand wings aflutter
Help make music as they mutter

Sharing recipes for the batter
Of a cake to make them fatter
Yes, that would be a treat
For they simply love to eat
They discuss with buggy passion
Winged styles and gossamer fashion
Foxgloves they rate but cattails they hate
The sound of garden chatter rises to high key
It’s like the buzzing buzz of the honeybee
These tea parties in the spring
Have a happy lilted ring
The reason for the celebration is quite clear
After winter slips away
They need to have their day
To wiggle out into the buggy land
And join into a buggy band
To play in garden soil and sand
And help give gardeners a hand.



JE Janssen, Former Editor of *Sage Leaves*

May 2026 Herb of the Month: Lemon Verbena (*Aloysia citriodora*)

One Sprig to Beat Them All!

Susan Obry



Lemon verbena, also called Bee brush or Vervain, is a woody shrub native to Argentina, Chile, and Peru. It traveled to the United States via Europe. The leaves and blossoms have a strong lemon scent and taste like lemon with a less bitter flavor.

Though a perennial in its native region, Lemon verbena will not survive temperatures below 40 degrees in Wisconsin. It is best to move the plant indoors before the first frost. Plant in full sun and in rich, well-drained soil; plant at the same time you would tomatoes. It does not tolerate shady areas. When planted outdoors, its mature size is 6 feet tall by 8 feet wide, and in containers it grows to 2 to 3 feet tall.* It blooms in late summer with white or purple flowers. Prune as you would other woody shrubs. Since Lemon verbena does not produce consistent viable seeds, it is best to start from transplants. Harvest the leaves by cutting rather than plucking them. Lemon verbena grows well when planted with dill, cilantro, and basil.

Culinary Uses: Use in desserts, syrups, sauces, sugars; add to salads, teas and other drinks; season meat dishes. Use anywhere you would use lemons or lemon zest. Since the leaves are tough, mince them finely to use. The blossoms can be used as you would the leaves.

Medicinal: Its leaves have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. It has been used to soothe digestive issues, reduce stress, and promote restful sleep.

Of Note: Due to its high oil concentration, one sprig when touched can freshen an entire room!

Of Great Note: Lemon verbena is toxic to horses, dogs, and cats.

Resource: *https://cultivatingflora.com/how-to-grow-lemon-verbena-indoor-only-in-wisconsin/#google_vignette

June 2026 Herb of the Month: Lemon Basil (*Ocimum X africanum*)

Susan Obry



Lemon basil, a centuries old annual herb, is native to Asia and Africa and is a hybrid between sweet basil and American basil*. It is related to mint, rosemary, and oregano. It is also known as "hoary basil" because it has a fuzzy, white coating on the underside of its leaves and whitish silver hairs on its stems.

Lemon basil has a citrusy lemon flavor and a strong lemon fragrance. It attracts pollinators and other beneficial insects.

Growing lemon basil is easy in Wisconsin. Seeds can be started indoors or sown directly into the garden. Lemon basil flourishes in sunny locations with well-drained soil. Keep the soil consistently moist but not soggy. It will benefit from regular fertilizing. To encourage bushy growth, regularly pinch back the tops. Lemon basil is sensitive to frost so do not plant until after the last frost. It grows well in containers. It produces seeds that stay on the plant until they dry.

Culinary Uses: It is used in Southeast Asian cuisine, especially in Thai and Indonesian dishes. It is used in seafood, meats, salads, pesto, marinades, dressings, soups, stews, curries, garnishes, pasta, drinks, oils and desserts. The seeds can be soaked and used to make a sweet dessert and cooling summer drink. It contains many essential nutrients such as vitamin A, K and C as well as magnesium, iron and potassium. It is also eaten raw.

Medicinal Uses: It is believed to have antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, immune building and calming properties. It is used to ease digestive issues, relieve stress, ease headaches and to treat certain skin issues.

Other Uses: It is said to repel insects and evil spirits. The essential oils are used in beauty products, facial scrubs, and perfumes.

Of Note: Some sources said Lemon basil is not a hybrid of sweet basil and American basil but a hybrid between sweet basil and African basil. I did not find a definitive answer.

RECIPES

TYPICAL SARDINIAN FLATBREAD

Helene Pizzi – March 2026 Mtg

For our WI-unit meeting brunch, instead of bread, I brought a paper-thin crispy curiosity, Pane Guttiau, a traditional “bread” from the Island of Sardinia. It looks like a sheet of thin parchment and is also called Carta di Musica (Music Paper). This flatbread has been made for literally thousands of years on the island, perfect for the shepherds to take with them as they pastured their sheep far from home and would be away for weeks sometimes. This paper-thin bread is baked to be dry and crispy so it will keep for a long time.

We tasted the ‘fancy’ Pane Guttiau type that is made with extra virgin olive oil; the ‘classic’ Pane Carasau type has no oil. It is available on Amazon, made in Italy on the island of Sardinia by Cherci, in the city of Alghero and is very expensive - \$19.99 for two packets of 3.52 ounces. It is, however, the real McCoy and will save you the work to make it. If you are curious to give it a try, here is the recipe:

PANE CARASAU: Place 1 packet of active dry yeast (1/4th ounce) in 1½ cups warm water, stir and let sit a few minutes until bubbly. Stir in 1½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour and 1½ cups semolina flour. Add 1½ teaspoons salt.* Mix well (adding a little more water if necessary to form a soft, but firm, ball).

Cover with a towel and let rest for 1 hour at room temperature. Then knead well for about 6-7 minutes, cover again and let rest for another hour. Preheat oven to 450F. Use a non-stick spray on two baking sheet pans. Divide dough into 8 parts, form each part into a ball and roll out paper thin on a floured board. Place in pan and cut to fit. Bake for 3 minutes, flip and bake for another 3 minutes until the dough is browned and crispy. Cool completely, then store in airtight tins. *NOTE: To make the Pane Carasau into the fancy version, Pane Guttiau, when you add the salt, add 2 or 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil.

Serve as you would bread, flatbread or crackers. It is excellent with dips. It makes a charming snack too and matches well with chilled white wine or pale lager beer. BUON APPETITO!

ELENA’S THREE-CREAM ARTICHOKE DIP

Helene Pizzi – March 2026 Mtg

An excellent substitute for tartar sauce and good on baked, boiled or fried fish. Works well as a garnish for sliced tomatoes and salads, as well as on baked potatoes or potato salad. As a proper dip, it turns every crispy treat into a need for a repeat performance. Here are the secrets of this easy-to-make dip:

Place the following ingredients into a mixing bowl:

½ cup crème fraiche	2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
¾ cup sour cream	4 oz. Philadelphia cream cheese (room temperature)
¼ cup heavy whipping cream	2 teaspoons lemon juice

Beat for several minutes until all is mixed and smooth. Then gently fold in:

¾ cup (give or take) canned roasted artichokes, cut into small pieces
2 heaping tablespoons capers
2 heaping tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley (or 1 heaping tablespoon dried parsley)
Stir in grated Parmesan cheese until the consistency is soft and creamy, but not drippy. Taste and add salt if necessary and freshly grated black pepper (optional).

Note: a golden variation can be made by adding 2 teaspoons of turmeric with the creams, or for more ‘kick,’ add 1 tablespoon of mustard with the creams.

Keep refrigerated until needed. Garnish with parsley, black pepper, and turmeric or paprika. ENJOY!!!!

HOT MULLED CIDER

Mary Williams – March 2026 Mtg – from Cider Hard and Sweet by Ben Watson

½ gal	sweet cider	10-12	whole cloves
4-6	cinnamon sticks	4-6	star anise pods (optional)
6	cardamon pods, crushed		Zest of ½ lemon or ½ orange, cut into thin strips
1	whole nutmeg, cracked open		

Put cider, spices, and lemon zest in large pot and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat and simmer gently for 15 minutes. (Mary left in crock pot overnight on low. She put the spices in little muslin bags, except for cinnamon sticks which were too large.) If you don’t put in bags, you will have to strain out the spices. You can add orange slices and serve hot. Optional – add 1-½ cup rum or brandy after straining and reheat.



Reading the Tea Leaves

Grow your own favorite herbal teas in your garden.

BY TERRY SCHUSTER

Sipping a cup of tea warms the heart, especially during the cold and dark days of winter when you dream about gardening again. One idea to consider is combining the two and growing your own tea garden — it can be as simple as a few plants that add extra flavor to your traditional tea bags, or as elaborate as a whole array of herbs.

Beverages commonly referred to as “tea” are made from the leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* tea plant, a glossy green shrub whose leaves are brewed for green and black teas.

“Herbal teas” are not teas at all, but tisanes. This term refers to the infusions made from the leaves, seeds, flowers or fruits of any plant other than *Camellia sinensis*.

Whether you prefer fruity and floral or spicy and minty, here are some easy to grow herbs that will add great flavor to your brews.

Rosemary

Size: 2-6 feet tall, and 2-4 feet wide
Conditions: Full sun; slightly acidic, dry to medium, well-drained soil
 Rosemary is a versatile evergreen ornamental woody sub-shrub, full of aromatic essential oils, that comes in many shapes and sizes. All want full sun, excellent drainage, and minimal summer water. Easy to care for, virtually pest-free, and ignored by deer and gophers. Rosemary makes an excellent tea garden.



Peppermint

Size: 1-2 feet tall and wide
Conditions: Full sun to partial shade; rich, well-drained, moist soil
 This is an incredibly useful, vigorous, low-growing perennial herb with true green, fragrant leaves and clusters of lilac-pink flowers in summer. It's a wonderful addition to jellies, teas, and many savory and sweet dishes. Peppermint likes full sun and rich, well-drained, evenly moist soil, but can grow almost anywhere (so best in a pot).

Lemon verbena

Size: 4-6 feet tall and wide
Conditions: Full sun; moist, well-drained fertile loams
 The fragrant, narrow green leaves of this semi-deciduous perennial shrub add a unique flavor to teas. With a flavor tasting of licorice, mint, and citrus, it's quite powerful when freshly harvested and a little more subtle when dried.



Mandarin lemon balm

Size: 18-26 inches tall, and 24-36 inches wide
Conditions: Full sun to partial shade; moist, well-drained soil
 Its tender foliage, mandarin orange fragrance, and citrus taste set Mandarin apart from regular lemon balm, making it ideal for teas or salads.

Betony

Size: 18-24 inches tall, and 12-18 inches wide
Conditions: Full sun to partial shade; average, well-drained soil
 Pretty pink bloom spikes grow above a lush basal rosette of green leaves that, when brewed, bring out a slightly spicy and sweet flavor with just a hint of bitterness.

Roman chamomile

Size: 3-6 inches tall, and 6-12 inches wide
Conditions: Full sun to partial shade; average, well-drained soil
 Roman chamomile is a leafy, fine-textured herb well-known for its relaxing, sleep-inducing properties. It makes a mild, floral, slightly sweet tea, with a smooth, fruity taste of fresh apples and is a must-have when growing a tea garden.

Recipe for Relief

Try adding the leaves of rosemary, peppermint, and lemon verbena for a stress-relieving, antioxidant-rich combo. The perfect brew calls for 1 tablespoon each of fresh rosemary, peppermint, and lemon verbena leaves, torn or muddled, and then steeped (covered) for 10 to 15 minutes in 2 cups of boiling water. Strain, pour, add a little honey to taste, and add a wedge of lemon. MKE





The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies.



Hi Herbies –

After over 10 years as editor of *Sage Leaves*, a job I've so enjoyed doing, it's time for me to pass the job on to someone else. Fortunately, we have the perfect member for the job, Susan McDonell who is both skilled and knowledgeable and will do a great job as she has done with all the many tasks we have already given her, including our website. She will be emailing *Sage Leaves* quarterly. For those who prefer the "green," Denise will have copies printed and I will continue to mail to your homes.

Diane