

"If you want to be happy all your life - plant a garden."

--Author Unknown

SAGE LEAVES

The Herb Society of America Wisconsin Unit

May/June 2025 – Vol XXXXVI #3

Unit Meetings

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

Please note that this is a **Monday!**

Program: Prep for Herb & Artisan Fair held May 17 and Members Craft

Location: St. Christopher's Church and Zoom

Saturday, May 17, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. - Annual Herb & Artisan Fair at Boerner Botanical Gardens

This is a friendly reminder that our Herb & Artisan Fair is May 17 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Please plan to help by baking for the Tea Room, cooking for the café, and giving at least two hours of your time to help the day of the sale. All proceeds benefit Grants and Scholarships.

Thank you for making the fair a success in the past, and we look forward to your participation this year.

Saturday, June 21 - 9:30 a.m. Brunch, 10:00 a.m. Meeting

Program: Wrap-up Meeting for Unit Events – Potluck Brunch

Location: St. Christopher's Church and Zoom

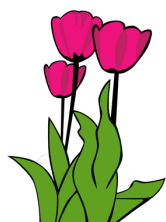
Editor: Diane Kescenovitz – if you will be going out of town for an extended period, please notify Diane of your change of address or request an email copy – thanks!

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Herb Society of America website: www.herbsociety.org



NEWSBUDS . . .

. . . from AJ

It was a dark and cloudy Good Friday 2025 when I began to write down my Newsbuds thoughts. The Earth needed the April showers so it can bring forth the May flowers. My heart became full of hope once the sun shone through the clouds. Easter was on the horizon, and then it will be MAY!

May 6, 2025, is the HSA All Members Annual Recognition and Awards Meeting. This is a virtual meeting so be sure to log onto the National website at 6:00 p.m. CST (our time in Wisconsin). This year our own member Diane Kescenovitz will be recognized with a Certificate of Appreciation for her years of service to our Wisconsin Unit. As Pat G. might say, "You Rock" Diane. We are so grateful for you.

Saturday, May 17, 2025, will be our 15th Herb & Artisan Fair held at Boerner Botanical Gardens. We have two very interesting educational seminar topics this year, and Pat has contracted 23 artisans, one-half being return vendors. Be sure to sign up for at least two hours of HAF volunteer time. The volunteer roster will be available to sign up at the **Monday, May 12 Unit meeting** at St Christopher's Church.

Boerner Botanical Gardens free days are scheduled for the last Thursday of each month from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. starting May 29. Be sure to visit the Herb Garden to see what's growing.

June wrap-up meeting is scheduled for Saturday, June 21. Come for brunch and the year in review. HSA WI-Unit has been invited to set up an herbal education display at the Chicago Botanic Gardens, June 28-29, 2025. Melody and Cheryl will represent The Herb Society of America and our WI-Unit at this event. Please talk to them if you are interested in joining them for this program.

The 2025 Spring Symposium

Denise Nelson and AJ Star, Event Co-Chairs

We wish to express our heartfelt thanks to all the members of our Unit who made the Symposium a WONDERFUL success. We appreciate the help of our members who publicized the event, designed our invitations, planned the tasting room samples, and created herbal craft and culinary items for the vendor area. On Friday, before the event, a dedicated group adorned the raffle table, set up the beautiful tasting room, and made the registration area welcoming. Everything was so artistically arranged. We are also grateful for the members who worked on Saturday to greet guests and welcome them into a friendly environment. What a terrific sales job our members did at the raffle table and the vendor area where guests could shop. We also appreciate the ladies who served herbal refreshments in the pleasant tasting room.

We wish to recognize the members who invited guests to our Symposium, the major educational event of the year. Without those additional people to enjoy the herbal breakfast and delicious luncheon, we would not have accomplished our attendance goal. With your help, we are certain our guests left the Woman's Club having had a delightful day. Members, we thank you all so much.

Reminder from the Treasurer Denise Nelson

Hello Members – Just a reminder that we are getting close to the deadline for the payment of the 2025-26 HSA and Unit dues. If you have already paid your dues, I thank you.

Our bylaws state all members need to renew their membership by the May Unit meeting, which is Monday, May 12, this year. You should have received a renewal form/survey in March. If you need another copy, let me know. If you will not be at the May Unit meeting, please mail your check, payable to HSA-WI Unit, so I receive it by May 12.

Mail to: Denise Nelson
W72N904 London Court Cedarburg, WI 53012

If you will not be renewing your membership, please let me know so that I can remove your name from my list and won't send additional reminders.



2025 Herb & Artisan Fair

Saturday, May 17 – 9 AM to 3 PM

Boerner Botanical Gardens

9400 Boerner Drive, Hales Corners WI

Free Parking and Event Entry

- Artisan vendors selling soaps, teas, jewelry, ceramics, garden art, medicinal and other herbal products; some herb plants.
- Tea Room offering tea and homemade, sweet and savory baked goods.
- Children's activity table.



Herb Seminars:

10:00 a.m. Companion Planting with Herbs and Flowers
presented by Sue Obry

11:15 a.m. Edible Flowers presented by Tracy Hankwitz

Website: herb-society-wisconsin.org
Facebook: HerbSocietyofAmericaWIUnit



Tea Room Donations – Denise Nelson

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

- Package your items in plastic baggies with pretty ribbon.
- Label your items with the name of the item, (ex. Chocolate Chip Cookies with Mint). Blank address size labels work well. Please add the word NUTS on your labels if your items contain them.
- Our customers were looking for 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 17, please bring your packaged items to the Boerner Atrium where the Tea Room table will be set up in the Lobby. Please bring them as early as possible. 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. Thank you for your kind contributions.

Reminders for the Artisan Café from Bruncheon Chair Mary Kay McDevitt

Thank you to all who volunteered to provide delicious food items for the May 17 Artisan Café at BBG.

Breakfast begins at 8:00 a.m. Lunch is at Noon. Please bring your breakfast and lunch items to the upstairs kitchen as early as you can. Serving size: 10 to 12. Refrigerator space is limited but we can store items until needed.

Please label your own plates, bowls, and utensils. All items must be picked up before 3:00 p.m. Leftovers will be wrapped for you to take home.

Breakfast and lunch food lists will be sent next week. A few spaces are still open.

The May Brunch Team is complete. The reminder will be sent next week.

Marlene Mravik and Joanne Ruggieri have graciously volunteered their talents in the kitchen.

Questions? Call 414-418-2322 or email mkmcd@mac.com.

See you at the Monday, May 12 monthly meeting.

April Election Results

Congratulations to our Chair-Elect Alice Jo (AJ) Star
and to Vice Chair-Elect Lorrie Burrows.
They will assume their new roles on June 1, 2025.

We appreciate Chair AJ Star's willingness to serve a second amazing term.

We are very grateful to our outgoing Vice-Chair Joanne Ruggieri
for two years of exemplary service to our Unit.

Their work will be acknowledged with a celebration at the June Unit meeting.

Hello everyone, in just a few words, I thank you for the ideas and help you gave me during my two years as vice-chair. This is such an outstanding group - hardworking team players, always ready to lend a hand - and you helped me in many ways, as I'm sure you'll help Lorrie to whom I wish the best.

Again, my thanks -Joanne

May 2025 Herb of the Month – Oregano (*Origanum spp*)

Pizza's Best Friend

Susan Obry



Other Names: Spanish Thyme, Wild Marjoram, European Oregano

Oregano, which is a member of the mint family, originated in Eurasia and the Mediterranean regions. Oregano was introduced to the United States after the Second World War by soldiers who were introduced to the herb while stationed in Italy. Oregano was introduced to China in the Middle Ages.

Oregano is a perennial plant that can survive winters in Wisconsin if protected by mulch in late fall. It is cold hardy in zones 4-9. Plant it in a sunny location in well-drained medium rich soil. Oregano is easy to start from seed indoors.

When directly sowing seeds, press the seeds into the soil, but don't cover them since they require light to germinate. Oregano is an invasive plant and should be pruned or harvested frequently. Oregano grows well in containers and can be overwintered in the house for continued use.

Culinary use: Greek oregano is the most common variety used since it has the most flavor. Oregano is most often used in Italian and Mexican cuisine. It is a key ingredient in tomato sauce and other tomato-based dishes, such as pasta and pizza. It is used in soups, meat and vegetable dishes, dressings, and herbal oils and vinegars. Oregano can be used as a substitute for marjoram or thyme.

Medicinal use: Oregano has been used throughout history for the treatment of diarrhea, indigestion and nausea. It is used in the treatment of arthritis, muscle and joint pain. Oregano is said to be useful in treating anxiety, insomnia and tension headaches.

Decorative use: Ornamental oregano is grown more for its looks than its flavor. Its cascading pink flowers bloom from spring to fall. Growing requirements are the same as other oreganos. It dries easily and is used in various displays. The flowers fade to a purply shade when dried. My vase of ornamental oregano has lasted over nine years and was labeled as ornamental oregano when I purchased it.

Of interest: Each variety of oregano has its own flavor profile, so pinch and smell the plant before buying it. You may not like the taste.

June 2025 Herb of the Month – Garlic Chives (*Allium tuberosum*)

Kiss freely with no lingering doubts!

Susan Obry



Garlic chives are a member of the allium family. Its origin is southeastern Asia and has been around for over three thousand years. It is also known as Chinese chives or Chinese leek.

This herbaceous perennial is heat, drought and cold tolerant. It is hardy in zones 3-9 so it will easily grow in Wisconsin. It dies to the ground in winter. Winterize container plants by burying the container in the ground or place it in a larger container for insulation. Chives can be started indoors or directly seeded when the soil warms. Divide clumps every three years to rejuvenate the plant. Container plants can be overwintered indoors for continued harvest.

Garlic chives are sun loving so plant in full sun in fertile well-drained soil. Although drought tolerant, keep the soil moderately moist. Cut off the flower heads when they have finished blooming to prevent invasive spreading. Harvest when the plant reaches a height of 12 to 18 inches. Harvest just the number of leaves you need or cut the entire plant to about an inch above the ground. Continued harvesting will help the plant thrive. The flavor of garlic chives is best when they are harvested before the flowers fully bloom. The scent of the fall blooming flowers attracts pollinators and other beneficial insects.

Culinary use: The leaves have a mild garlic flavor. Use as you would chives, green onions or garlic. Add to egg dishes, stir fries, vegetable dishes, soups, or stews. The flowers and buds are also edible and can be used to make herbal vinegars or chopped for salads. The flower stems are edible but are very tough and chewy. Add chives the last few minutes of cooking to avoid stringiness.

Medicinal use: Chives are said to increase appetite and encourage good digestion, reduce stress and fatigue. It is used in the treatment of liver, bladder and kidney problems. It is also said to assist in wound healing.

Decorative use: The flowers and seed heads can be used in flower arrangements.

Companion plants: Beets, carrots, tomatoes, potatoes, rhubarb, broccoli, eggplant, and peppers.

Tip: Drying chives is not recommended since they lose their aroma very quickly. Use fresh or frozen.

Of interest: It is said that garlic chives leave no lingering smell after eating.

Recipes

Fruit Salad

(Kathy Bussanich – March 2024 Mtg)

Ingredients

- 1 lb. strawberries, sliced
- 1 lb. chopped fresh pineapple
- 12 oz fresh blueberries
- 12 oz red or green grapes, sliced into halves
- 4 kiwis, peeled and chopped
- 3 mandarin oranges or fresh oranges (I used caracara oranges)
- 2 bananas sliced (optional - I did not use)

Honey Lime Dressing

- 1/4 cup honey
- 2 tsp lime zest (zest of 2 medium limes)
- 1 1/2 Tbsp fresh lime juice

Instructions

1. Add all fruit to a large mixing bowl.
2. In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the honey, lime zest and lime juice.
3. Pour over fruit and toss to evenly coat, and serve immediately

Spinach Quiche

(Dorothy Mietz – March 2024 Mtg – from Once Upon a Chef)

Ingredients

- 1 9-inch deep dish frozen pie crust
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced shallots
- 4 large eggs
- 1 1/4 cups heavy cream
- Pinch ground nutmeg
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 cup (4 oz) finely shredded Gruyère, packed
- 1 10-ounce package frozen chopped spinach, defrosted and wrung free of water

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F and set a rack in the middle position. Remove pie crust from freezer and thaw until just soft enough to easily prick with a fork, about 10 minutes. Prick the bottom and sides all over with a fork (pricking about an inch apart). Bake until fully cooked and lightly golden, 10 to 15 minutes. (Keep an eye on it...if it puffs up while cooking, gently prick it with a fork so it will deflate.) Don't worry if the crust cracks while baking; see note below to fix it before proceeding. Set aside and turn oven down to 325°F.
2. Heat the butter in a small skillet over medium-low heat. Cook the shallots until soft and translucent, about 8 minutes. Do not brown. Set aside to cool.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together eggs, heavy cream, nutmeg, salt and cayenne pepper.
4. Place the cooked pie crust on a baking sheet (this makes it easy to move in and out of the oven). Spread the shallots over the bottom of the cooked crust, then sprinkle the shredded Gruyère over top. Scatter the spinach evenly over cheese, breaking up the clumps as best you can. Pour the egg and cream mixture over top.
5. Bake at 325°F degrees for 50 to 55 minutes until the custard is set and top is lightly golden. Serve hot or warm.

Recipe for Quiche Lorraine: <https://youtu.be/Dne7laO7M3U>

BASIL - A ROYAL PLANT

Helene Pizzi



What could be better on a hot summer day than a dish of sliced, vine-ripened tomatoes dressed with crumbled feta cheese, a sprinkle of salt, a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil, and...of course...fragrant-flavorful-beautiful leaves of fresh basil? That - with warm crusty bread, a glass of chilled white wine, and good company - makes an easy, quick to prepare, light lunch fit for the mightiest king (and queens too)!!!!

Ocimum basilicum, or the now familiar sweet basil, has now become a very well-loved herb for many delicious dishes. The word 'basil' comes from both the Greek (*basilikon*) and Latin (*basilius*) words, and it was considered a royal plant. Both the Ancient Greeks and Romans used it in making perfumes, for the upper classes and royalty, along with rosemary, pine, and other, then available, scented plants. The fragrance and taste of basil are unique, and it is a vital ingredient of many Mediterranean dishes.

Here in last century Wisconsin, with mostly northern European immigrants, basil was almost unknown until after the Second World War. In the early days of The American Herb Society's Wisconsin Unit, people flocked to Boerner Botanical Gardens for the Unit's annual plant sale in May, where they could find herb plants for sale, including basil.

In those days, other than at this HSA-WI UNIT Herb Fair, almost all fresh herb plants were simply unavailable. The annual herb sale event was always a huge success. Basil, as well as many other herbs are now familiar to almost everyone. For years in the past, herbs were almost only available at the West Allis Farmer's Market. Now fresh herb plants, including basil, are easily found for sale everywhere...in supermarkets, nurseries, and even hardware stores.

If you buy a little pot of basil (usually many small plants, crowded together), harvest the tops and larger leaves to use right away, then gently divide the roots and plant the tender little plants in separate pots, or in full, well drained, soil in a sunny position, of course after there is no danger of frost. Basil loves sun, heat, and thrives with very little water. To have the best-of-the-best basil plants, plant them with tomatoes. They love each other and each will grow better this way.

How quickly we have been globalized thanks to easy inexpensive transportation and mass-media. Pesto - that everyone, everywhere, now knows - was totally undiscovered and unknown in 1961, unless you happened to be in Italy, in the region of Liguria, on the Italian Riviera.

It was 1961 when my Roman husband and I honeymooned by car to the French Riviera; we stopped on the way to see his friend in the city Genoa, on the Ligurian coast. At lunch the friend introduced us to 'pesto'. . . a culinary specialty of Liguria, he explained. When we returned to Rome, not one restaurant had pesto on the menu and most people had never heard of it. The world changed almost overnight. Two years later pesto was available in Rome, and shortly after that thanks to TV, cooking shows, and travelers who introduced their culinary discovery of this unique pasta sauce. Here in Milwaukee and all over the world, it now seems like we all always had known about pesto. Globalization has changed our world in a flash.

To easily make this wonderful green sauce, try this: Harvest fresh basil by snipping the tops and pinching the biggest basil leaves from your plants (the tiny leaves will produce more for harvest in no time). Rinse quickly and pat dry between paper towels. For 1½ cups gently packed basil leaves, add 1 cup extra virgin olive oil, 1 tablespoon salt (this will keep the leaves green), 1 garlic clove (optional), and 3 tablespoons pine nuts (walnuts work well too), and ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese. Use an immersion blender and pulse until all is mixed into a creamy sauce. Pour what you don't use into a glass jar and cover with a film of oil to keep the air from oxidizing the leaves and turning them brown. This will keep in the fridge for at least two weeks.

SPAGHETTI CON PESTO

Cook the spaghetti (or any other pasta of choice) in salted boiling water* until 'al dente'. While it is cooking, place 1 tablespoon of pesto per person in a bowl with a little extra virgin olive oil, a spoon of butter, and some grated Parmesan cheese. Add enough hot pasta water to soften to a yogurt-like consistency. Drain the pasta and toss in the sauce. Serve with freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

*A secret for a very special pesto can be made by putting 1 peeled medium potato, diced into ½" cubes, into the cold salted pasta water. Bring to a boil, add the pasta and cook as usual, until it's 'al dente'. The potato turns the dish into a mystical-magical super treat.

BRUSCHETTA CON PESTO

Broil or grill rustic Italian bread. Rub each piece of hot bread with garlic, cover with chopped fresh tomatoes, add a sprinkle of salt, a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil, and dot with pesto. This indeed is a treat for royalty!

BUON APPETITO!!!



And What is So Rare as a Day in June?

And what is so rare as a day in June?

Then, if ever, come perfect days;

Then Heaven tries earth if it be in tune,

And over it softly her warm ear lays:

Whether we look, or whether we listen,

We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;

Every clod feels a stir of might,

An instinct within it that reaches and towers,

And grasping blindly above it for light,

Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers . . .

James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)



If you have an event, article, recipe, books, etc. that you feel members might be interested, please send to Diane Kescenovitz to put it in the next issue of *Sage Leaves*, if there is room.

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