

*Every gardener knows that
under the cloak of winter lies a miracle ...
a seed waiting to sprout,
a bulb opening to the light,
a bud straining to unfurl.
And the anticipation nurtures our dream."
- Barbara Winkler*

SAGE LEAVES

The Herb Society of America – Wisconsin Unit

Mar/Apr 2021 – Vol XXXII #2

Unit Meetings

Saturday, March 20, 10 am Meeting

*(please note that this is a **Saturday** meeting)*

Program: Carrie Hennessey, "2021 New Flowers, Plants and Herbs of the Year"

Location: Zoom

Tuesday, April 20, 10 am Meeting

Program: Erin Dentice, Milwaukee School of Arts

Location: St. Christopher's - Choice In-Person or Zoom on your device

PLEASE NOTE – Symposium Rescheduled to March 2022

Please mark your calendars for the above dates and locations

Editor: Diane Kescenovitz, kescenovitz.diane@groupon.com – if you will be going out of town for an extended period of time, please notify Diane of change of address or request e-mail copy – thanks!

Subscription Rate: \$6 for 6 issues

Wisconsin Unit Web: Herb-Society-Wisconsin.org (Editor: Diane Kescenovitz), password for members: **HSA-WI@76**

Herb Society Office: herbs@herbsociety.org

Herb Society of America web: www.herbsociety.org

NEWSBUDS...

With this newsletter, I'll share I have SPRING FEVER. I "pet" my basil and rosemary plants that were recently purchased at the grocery store. The plants I brought indoors last fall: coleus, scented geraniums, mezzos, and asparagus fern are "waiting in my basement" for warm weather to be planted outdoors again. Milk jugs for winter sowing, are in trays on my lower patio, waiting for the right temperature for germination. I've made another visit to the Domes to see their Train Show and to enjoy the greenhouse atmosphere of rich soil and the waterfall in the tropical dome. I am creating my wish list for seeds & plants for this coming spring.

Club Events: Our Herb Symposium will be rescheduled for March 2022. Herb Fair planning is in the works. The Herb Fair may look very different this year with probably no Tea Room and no Ladies Heirlooms, and currently vendors and speakers are being arranged. Our April Election will be by absentee ballot like last year. The April 20th Unit Meeting is planned to be our first in-person meeting, but we will also set up a zoom session live from church. So if you prefer a virtual format, you can use your device at home. The choice of in person and Zoom Invitation will be sent out in mid-April. I look forward to the Out & About Mar. 2nd first birthday celebration and next Herb Book Club session on Apr. 7th by Zoom. Our 45th Anniversary will be celebrated at our meeting on June 19th at the church; special plans are being arranged to make it fun!

Sincerely with spring anticipation, Melody

Herb & Artisan Fair

While writing this, at the end of February, the plans for the Herb and Artisan Fair are still dependent on the impact of Covid. If we are able to keep our May 22nd date, we might have vendors on the lawn at the circle entrance and patio area. We can set up a tent for a display of herbs and have a member(s) talk about them. Under discussion is a possible additional event: "A Sunday Walk in the Herb Garden" in July or August. There would be a Boerner admission charge for participants; our HSA membership gives us free admission to the gardens.

HSA Webinars and New Demonstration

Mar 23rd at 1pm EDT - The Virtues of Violets (Free to members webinar)

Mar 30th at 2pm-3pm EDT - Registration Fee TBD - Culinary Demonstration - A Feast of Spring Herbs and Vegetables Registration opens Mar. 9th

Apr 13th at 1pm-2pm EDT - Shedding Light on the Solanaceae: An Exploration of Our Relationship with Nightshades (Free to members webinar)

Old World Wisconsin Virtual Tea \$15 Event Calendar For Old World Foundation and Old World Wisconsin Sun., April 25, 2021 | 3- 4 pm. Please call the Old World Foundation office at **262-594-2922** to register. You will be emailed the link to confirm your registration.

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 are greatly appreciated.

At the end of this newsletter, 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. Checks should be mailed to me at: W72N904 London Court, Cedarburg, WI 52012.

Grants & Scholarship News

Although the Unit was unable to hold its annual fundraiser, the Herb and Artisan Fair, at Boerner Botanical Gardens in May 2020 due to Covid-19, the Executive Committee magnanimously voted to budget \$3,000 for the awarding of grants in 2021 as we continue to support Milwaukee area public gardens. The Grants and Scholarship Committee received three grant proposals, which members carefully reviewed, and then made recommendations to the Board and the Unit. At its January Zoom meeting, the Unit unanimously voted to award 2021 grants as follows:

Boerner Botanical Gardens – the Herb Garden \$1,000 to help cover the expenses incurred by the Herb garden to include the purchase of plants and seeds (\$800), membership in the Herb society (\$60), purchase of the Herb Quarterly (\$20), and theme bed signage (\$120). The Herb Garden theme for 2021 is "Herbs and Plants of the African Diaspora".

Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens \$1,000 to support their decades-long K12 student in-nature learning initiatives. 30+ Milwaukee-area students will participate in four consecutive lessons throughout the 2021 school year. Students will learn, interactively,

about plant biology, soil, vermiculture, healthy nutrition choices, how to plant and harvest vegetables, and small space container and vertical gardening. Funds will support expenses for curriculum planning, student transportation to and from Boerner, and class materials. Students will be taught by Wisconsin certified educators.

Old World Wisconsin \$900 to be used to enhance the garden at the 1860s Norwegian Farm and Old World Wisconsin. The enhancement will consist of adding herbs, perennials and shrubs that can be used for dying in the garden area. Possible dye plants might include parsley, purple basil calendula, aronia, helianthus, achille, woad, marigolds, hypericum, anthemis and humulus. Specifically \$450 will be designated for plant material, \$150 for soil enhancements, and \$300 for associated administrative costs such as research, design and creation of the garden addition. Members of the "sheep to shawl" program will explore additional programming on dye plants and dyeing of wool because of this grant.

The Grants and Scholarship Committee members are Nancy Kelly, Karen Klimczak, Denise Nelson, Nell Schneider, Susan Williams and Lore Borth (Chair), who thank the members for their careful consideration and wise decisions!

Elections

Again this year, we will be voting by absentee ballot to fill the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair. An absentee ballot will be sent out to all members from Diane Kescenovitz (kescenovitz.diane@att.net) via email and must be returned to her by ten days before the April 20, 2021 meeting. The ballots will be opened and counted by the Nominating Committee and announced at the April meeting. The officers shall be elected by a majority vote on the absentee ballots. Please see below the bios of the two candidates. Following the bylaw requirements of attendance of 70% at the past 9 meetings and at the Symposium and Herb Fair, the nomination committee prepares the slate as Melody Orban for Chair and Marlene Mravik for Vice-Chair.

Submitted by the Nominating Committee, Chair Melody Orban, Diane Kescenovitz, and Joanne Ruggieri

Chair Candidate

Melody Orban has been the Chair for 2019-2021. Her term began with the Annual Meeting in September 2019 with the lovely Downton Abbey Tea and in March 2020 the start of zooming all our meetings. Previous to the chair, she was on the Grants & Scholarship Committee, and presented Growing Gourds. She has attended the HSA Annual Meetings in Tarrytown and Madison. She serves on the HSA Samull Classroom Grant selection committee. She is a member of the Burlington Area Garden Club and the Kenosha-Racine Master Gardener Association.

Vice Chair Candidate

Marlene Mravik has been vice chair since elected in 2019. She joined Herb Society in 2017 and has been actively involved with the Symposium (Tasting Room), Herb & Artisan Fair (Artisan Café), and providing refreshments for all Unit Meetings. As Vice Chair she arranges programs for all Unit Meetings. She is involved with her community and enjoys cooking, shopping and entertaining.

OUT & ABOUT

Hello again,

After reading Helene's description of things Italian I think we should book "a cooking Out & About" to Italy asap. Ah well, back to reality - Marlene has been giving us programs to enjoy in the comfort of our homes during our unit meetings, but a little tea gathering now and then would also be nice, with maybe a poetry reading followed by a concert to bring us a feeling of calm and enrichment - just sitting back, sipping and munching in our finest clothes, with hats and gloves!!!! The whole feel-good thing. I'm pondering a May event (via zoom as things stand now). Let me know what you think, especially if you have ideas to share and want to read a particular poem or hear a special concert. (or even something a little nutsy)

Thanks. Joanne (414-281-0051)

Reminder: March 2nd (Zoom at 1 pm) - birthday get-together (joke, food, costume) for the following people:

Shelly Culea January 5 Sandy Je T'aime January 9 Kim Paulus January 16 Janet Leach January 31 Mary Alta Moore February 8 Eva Boldt February 9 Hattie Purtell February 12 Karen Klimczak February 14 Valerie Brumder February 28 Susan Obry February 28 Louise Block March 12	Diane Kescenovitz March 13 Nino Ridgway March 14 Joanne Ruggieri March 18 Peggy Gibbs Zautke March 27 Diane Kescenovitz March 13 Nino Ridgway March 14 Joanne Ruggieri March 18 Peggy Gibbs Zautke March 27 Jane Hawley Stevens April 4 Cindy Binkowski April 5 Elaine Wilhelm April 6	Paula Peters April 13 Tricia Hallam April 21 Kathy Laurent April 28 Rory Petry May 4 Susan Steinhafel May 12 Mary Bellis Williams May 18 Gerry Kovatch May 18 Joan Amundson May 26 Connie Taagen May 29 Helene Pizzi June 4 Marji Bell June 18 Nell Schneider June 1
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April 7th - Book discussion of "Putting Down Roots" by Marcia Carmichael.

Herb of the Month

March - Heartsease

(Nino Ridgway)

Heartsease, Three Faces in a Hood, Johnny Jump-up...these are all fond common names for a much-loved flower and herb, *Viola tricolor*. This member of the violet family is an old time medicinal herb used for skin ailments, asthma, and as an anti-inflammatory. It is called heartsease, not because it helps with cardiac ailments, but because it was used in love potions and to ease heartache of the lovelorn. Heartsease is the parent plant from which modern pansies were developed.

Today, heartsease is used primarily as an edible flower and garnish in salads, on cake frostings, frozen into ice cubes, or dropped into cold drinks such as lemonade, ice tea, and alcoholic beverages. Candied violets can be made by brushing a sugar solution on the petals in multiple layers and letting each one dry. The young leaves can also be used as salad greens and to make tea. Remember, this is a medicinal herb (containing saponins, alkaloids, and more) so use sparingly and with caution.

Heartsease is an easy to grow, short-lived perennial, native to Europe. Not all individual plants will survive Wisconsin's cold winters, but they are aggressive self seeders and will come up anywhere nearby where there is open soil in full sun or part shade. Plant seeds in fall or early spring. Harvesting young leaves and flowers in spring and early summer, will promote new growth and flowering. Once the plants set seed, or if it becomes too hot, they will stop blooming.

Heartsease flowers are visited by a number of bees and parasitic flies. It is also a host plant for caterpillars of fritillary butterflies.

April - Chervil

(Nino Ridgway)

Chervil, *Anthriscus cerefolium*, is a member of the huge botanical family Apiaceae, containing many popular herbs (parsley, cilantro, caraway, dill) and vegetables (carrots, fennel, parsnips). The flavor of chervil is a mix of mild parsley, mild anise, and a touch of mint. The foliage is thin and delicate, somewhat like cilantro, though it looks more like a very finely divided, thin-leafed Italian parsley.

Chervil is native to Eastern Europe and is widely grown in Europe, where it is sometimes called French parsley, in reference to its role in French cuisine. It is best known as one of the 4 ingredients of "fines herbes", which also contains parsley, chives, and tarragon. Chervil is best used fresh and added at the last moment to mild tasting foods such as fish, potatoes, butter, and eggs. Chervil leaves can also be added to fresh salads. Dried chervil quickly loses its flavor, but it can be frozen with some success. Fresh is definitely best!

Chervil, like cilantro, is easy to grow (but can be hard to keep going!). Sow seed directly in the ground in a cool, moist location protected from hot afternoon sun. It will bloom and set seed quickly as temperatures rise in summer, so make use of it in spring and fall. Chervil is an annual that self seeds aggressively in the right location. Like other members of its family, chervil's delicate white flowers are visited by a variety of bees, predatory flies, and parasitic wasps, so leave the blooming plants alone to help these beneficial insects. The brown seeds will drop to the ground and start the next crop.



*Daffodils come before the swallow dares,
and take the winds of March with beauty.*

... William Shakespeare

Hi Ladies – You recently received an email from Melody regarding CNN Sunday series "Searching for Italy" with Stanley Tucci. Our Unit is very fortunate to have a member who is just as qualified and talented. Helene Pizzi has volunteered the following articles for our enjoyment – and how delightful they are!

INVESTIGATING ITALIAN CULINARY DELIGHTS

BY Helene Pizzi

Many of us have been glued to the TV watching Stanley Tucci's program, 'Searching for Italy'. Yes, Italy is a unique place, a famous world where one can continue to search out and discover amazingly delicious regional foods and dishes. Food is a very important part of this historical culture, with differences in taste and ingredients from north to south of this boot shaped peninsula in the Mediterranean Sea.

People there have in the past, and still do gather together over slow meals of many courses. Meals with food of extraordinary textures and flavors...some recipes were passed down for generations, some are shockingly new and inventive. Each dish is observed, considered and eaten with scrutiny. Each dish has a history; a story; a reason to have been created. Conversations flow, relationships are enriched, and good food is the 'glue'.

My journey into this exciting and amazing part of the world began in 'the stone age'...long ago, when I was in Italy studying Art History with the University of Minnesota. Except for one year back here, my life became an extraordinary adventure next to my brilliant, knowledgeable, and quick-silver Roman husband, Ezio Pizzi. This is the world that recently Tucci went searching for; for all my adult life it had become my world. I had found myself totally submerged in a new-for-me antique culture, and food, I discovered, was a very important aspect of Italian life.

Many dishes that were unknown outside of Italy in the early '60s, now are familiar all over the world (pesto, bruschetta, caprese, what foreigners call 'Alfredo' pasta...and more...). There are many that need to be 'discovered' and enjoyed. Let me be like Tucci, and share some with you.

PANNA COTTA.

This means 'cooked cream'. The first time I enjoyed it was at Rome's Polo Club. Their chef prided himself in this elegant desert. It is surprisingly easy to make. Prepare 8 small ramekins. Soak 1 packet of unflavored gelatin in 2 tablespoons of cold water and set aside to soften. In a large saucepan place a pint of heavy whipping cream and a cup of whole milk, together with 1/3 cup granulated sugar. Heat it until it is just about to boil. Remove from heat and stir the gelatin in thoroughly with a wire whisk. Add 1 teaspoon vanilla essence (that makes it 'herbal'!!!). Pour into the ramekins and cool at least 6 hours, or overnight.

To serve, dip the ramekin in hot water, run a knife around the edge, then tip onto an individual serving dish; I like a plain white dinner plate best as it lends itself to be elegantly decorated. There are two favorite ways to complete the desert: - use assorted fresh berries, and a dash of homemade jam, and create a visual masterpiece. - use chopped chocolate to sprinkle on the top of the Panna Cotta and drizzle a design of chocolate sauce around.

ENJOY...BUON APPETITO!

INVESTIGATING ITALIAN CULINARY DELIGHTS AGAIN

BY Helene Pizzi

'Searching for Italy'? Yes, Italy is a 'foodie' place. Watching Stanley Tucci's program, one can (whether in person or at least in imagination) discover amazingly delicious regional foods and dishes, those exciting traditional foods made from north to south in this boot shaped peninsula in the Mediterranean Sea. It is almost hard to believe, as there is so much variety, that Italy is only slightly bigger, square mile wise, than the State of Wisconsin!

What we have known here as 'Italian food', is an Italo-American variation. If Tucci, or you, try to find the classic 'spaghetti and meatballs' on any menu in Italy...you won't! American-Italian cuisine is different, and has evolved here. Pizza, for example, was a Neapolitan creation that was introduced into the USA by returning World War II soldiers. It was almost unknown in Italy too, and from the late '40s on, it 'evolved' in both countries. Pizza in Italy is a food you can feed to babies, and available in more types than you could ever imagine - worth a trip there, just to 'discover' their variations of pizza!

One of the exquisite dishes, still not known here, is perfect for this season as you need garden fresh spinach (let's consider it an herb!) to make this first course dish. It is called **Gnocchi di Spinaci**, and in the Region of Emilia Romagna, they call it **Bombolotti di Spinaci**. It will rarely appear on a menu, is very expensive and a very special treat. 3 *Gnocchi* are often served as a portion...in the Pizzi family, when Nonna Stella made them, she calculated 8 per person. This is a very rich, expensive to make, festive dish, served for special occasions.

The ingredients are the same as for the filling of filled pasta (*tortellini magri/cappelletti*). You serve the rich filling without the pasta wrap! No starch here!!! To make 6 to 8 servings:

Cook 8oz to 12oz fresh spinach, then squeeze out the water. Match the volume of the ball of spinach with whole milk ricotta cheese (about 8oz). Chop the spinach finely, mix with the ricotta, 1 egg and 1 yolk, 1/2 tsp salt, 1/4 tsp freshly grated nutmeg, 2 T lemon juice, then about 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese, adding more, if necessary, to make the mixture thick (like when you make meat balls). Make walnut sized balls, roll to make them oval, like a short cigar. Roll, one by one, in flour and set, not touching, on a floured towel laid over a cookie sheet. They should be refrigerated until cooked.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Drop the *gnocchi*, one by one, quickly onto the water. In a minute or two they will pop up to the top, and are ready. Carefully remove with a slotted spoon and arrange single spaced on a large platter. Pour 1 ¼ sticks melted butter over them, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and SERVE IMMEDIATELY.

ENJOY VICEFULLY...BUON APPETITO!

5 Vegetable and Herb Seeds to Start Indoors

(Southwest Gardening - Posted on: February 19, 2019 by: Teresa Odle



Growing food is one of the most rewarding activities we can do for—and even with—our family. You can get a jump start on your growing season by starting some seeds indoors a few months before normal planting time. Here are 5 of my favorites that are easy to start from seed indoors:

Tomatoes

Start tomatoes indoors for best success. With smaller varieties, you can get a good crop of tomatoes even in a short growing season.

The date on which you start your tomato seeds depends on the variety and your season. Typically, it is best to give tomatoes six to eight weeks to mature. Pot the seedling up into a larger pot once it develops a fairly strong stem. Be sure to plant the seedlings deep in the ground.

Peppers

Peppers make such pretty seedlings. Start green chile, cayenne and bell peppers indoors, so when exposed to outdoor sun, they grow and ripen.

Peppers also love heat. And that goes for jalapenos, green chile or sweet bell peppers. Peppers are related to tomatoes and have many of the same requirements. In fact, peppers need warm soil to begin growing, and often go in the ground a week or so after your tomatoes.

Basil

Basil grows so well from indoor seedlings. This is my favorite annual herb by far. Start basil seeds about 6 weeks before planting time and watch them grow. Basil seeds germinate easily, so the hardest part is pinching out a few seedlings to avoid overcrowding (they already taste yummy).

Lettuces and Kale

I love loose-leaf lettuces you can cut more than once through a season.

I typically start lettuce in the ground because it matures faster than other edibles. But head lettuces, such as romaine or butter crunch, take a little longer from seed to harvest. So, you can start the lettuces and kale indoors first and then transplant. These plants prefer cooler temperatures than many other vegetables.

Okra

Okra flowers are so pretty, and I love this red variety called Candle Fire, a 2017 AAS winner.

Another heat lover, okra is a fun plant to grow and harvest, and the flowers are among the most attractive. We have some trouble growing okra in our short season with cool nights, so we often grow a few as ornamental plants. Start the seeds 4 to 6 weeks before planting time and for best success, soak the seeds in water overnight before starting.

Timing of seed starts matters. You generally need to choose your typical start date for a plant (usually either after no danger of frost or when the soil has warmed). Check with master gardeners, nurseries and landscape consultants if you're unsure. Once you know the start date, back up about six weeks to give you time to start seeds and harden them off before planting.

Your starts need some warmth from a heat mat if possible, plenty of daylight (or 8 to 10 hours of grow lights), water and air circulation. Warmth and consistent moisture help the seeds germinate. Light gives them energy to grow and air circulation keeps them healthy and the main stems strong.

Other edibles you can start indoors are cool season plants like broccoli, radicchio and Brussels sprouts. Eggplants also transplant well from your seedlings or store-bought stock. Watermelon needs heat for a longer period of time to ripen and starting it indoors will lengthen its season.

Spring is nature's way of saying, "Let's party!"

– Robin Williams

2021-22 Membership Dues Statement

****Reminder: Deadline is May 18, 2021**

Dear Member,

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

Membership Categories (the \$10 WI-Unit Fee is included)

- \$ 65.00 Individual member (\$42.50 is tax deductible)
- \$ 45.00 Student member [Photo ID] (\$22.50 tax deductible)
- \$ 90.00 Joint members/Spouses (\$67.50 is tax deductible)
- \$ 100.00 Business member (\$77.50 is tax deductible)

All checks are payable to: Herb Society of America-WI Unit

Please fill out this form and send it *with your check* to:

Denise Nelson, Herb Society Treasurer, W72N904 London Ct., Cedarburg, WI 53012

If you have any questions, please call me at (262)376-0482.

The Executive Board would also like to take this opportunity to ask for your help with our Unit committees. Please let us know if you are willing to share your skills:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spring Symposium | <input type="checkbox"/> Herb Fair (Boerner) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Speakers Bureau |

Indicate your interest in these group activities:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crafting projects | <input type="checkbox"/> Book Club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Culinary outings | <input type="checkbox"/> View H.S.A. Webinars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping trips | <input type="checkbox"/> Tour Gardens or Commercial Greenhouses |

Comments/Ideas for activities: _____

I wish to renew my membership with HSA-WI Unit:

Signed: _____ Check Amount \$ _____

(Member's Name)

Diane Kescenovitz
2427 W Plum Tree Court
Mequon, WI 53092
(Return Service Requested)



SPRING FOR SURE

*Surely spring is imminent
This has to be the time
When the lilac buds are peeking out
This is a certain sign.
It's time to hear the fairy folks
In plants along the walk
As they critique new flowers
And exchange fairy talk.
If you notice green dainty tips
In the plot along the wall.
Hang the pansy basket
Invite your friends to call.*

(Joan Janssen "Under the Leaf")



If you have an event, article, recipe, etc. in which you feel members might be interested, please send to Diane at kescenovitz.diane@att.net 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 5/1/21 and 7/1/21.
