

“An addiction to gardening is not all bad when you consider all the other choices in life. ... Cora Lea Bell

SAGE LEAVES

The Herb Society of America – Wisconsin Unit

May/June 2021 – Vol XXXII #3

Unit Meetings

Tuesday, May 18 – 9:30 Setup and Greet, 10:00 Meeting (both at St Christopher’s Church & Zoom), 11:00 program

Program: Herb of the Month (Pineapple Mint), Notable Native Herb (Blood Root), and Planning for Herb Day

Saturday, June 19, 10 a.m. Meeting

Program: 45th Anniversary and Wrap-up Meeting
Events and Highlights of the 2020-2021 Year

Location: St Christopher’s Church and Zoom for the Business Meeting
Weather permitting we go outdoors for bring-your-own picnic
brunch/drink and chair

Future Events

Virtual HSA Central District Gathering from Green Bay, WI – Save the Date May 15

Virtual HSA EdCon (Educational Conference) June 10-11

Herb Day at Boerner Botanical Gardens, July 18

Please mark your calendars for the above dates and locations

Editor: Diane Kescenovitz, kescenovitz.diane@att.net – 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) Member Area: HSA-WI@76

Herb Society of America office: Herbs@HerbSociety.org

Herb Society of America web: www.herbsociety.org

NEWSBUDS...

Notes from Melody

We have adapted again, having our meeting with both Zoom and In-Person. We're having some growing pains with the technology, connection with computer, and audio, but we will bloom. Our May meeting will include information on the HOTM (Herb of the Month) and Notable Native Plant (Bloodroot) and planning for our Herb Day at Boerner. Hopefully you will sign up for several herbs to research for the binder that will be on display at Boerner. We will use the information to talk about the herbs for public visitors that day.

Our calendar year ends with our June 19th meeting. We will make our 45th Anniversary fun; surprises planned. Hopefully, you can join us for some optional summer activities to continue our connections for delight in herbs.

Plant happiness,

Melody

Election: Thank you for your support as the M & M Team of Melody & Marlene will continue for the next Term: 2021-2023

Congratulations Nino – Certificate of Achievement

Remember at the **HSA Virtual EdCon**, June 10-11, we will not only hear great speakers, but on the 11th, Nino will, along with a few other very notable volunteers, be honored starting around 1:30. Please be sure to join this meeting to help celebrate Nino.

National Pollinator Week, held June 21-27, 2021, is an annual celebration of the many animals that move pollen to help plants make fruit or seeds. Many understand the importance of bees, but are you aware of the many ecosystem benefits of flies, bats, hummingbirds, beetles, and so many more? I'm participating in WIBee – bees are important pollinators. Many nature centers will have events that week.

Thank you to Melody and Marlene for doing a terrific job these past two years . In spite of challenging times they made us feel connected. Many of us are now very familiar with Zoom and appreciate the technology.

Congratulations to both for returning to another term as Chair and Vice Chair. We look forward to being together. Again thank you for your willingness to serve.

Nominating Committee

Unit Membership Renewals are due May 18, 2021

We appreciate your support of The Herb Society of America during these tough times. HSA-WI Unit has been meeting for almost 45 years. We may need to be apart for a few months, but with electronic communication we can be in contact with each other through the newsletter, emails, the webpage and Facebook. Please reach out to a member you don't know from our directory, visit by phone and make a new friend!

My thanks to so many of you for already mailing in your membership renewals. If you have not done so yet, please send your renewal fees for the 2021-2022 business year to me by May 18th. You should have received a renewal form with the amount due for your type of membership (individual, joint or business) in the March newsletter. 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

Out and About

Suggestions for O&A activities can come from any of us and some of you have already done so, which I truly like. Suggestions already on board - Shop Hops; small group luncheons in each other's homes; garden walk; day in the country; Mad Hatter Luncheon for our next birthday gathering. This list could go on and on, and I hope it will. Let me hear from you if you have an idea you'd like to explore and hopefully we can work together to make it happen. The Pandemic is making things iffy, but if we all have our shots I think we can venture out in small groups, washing hands and distancing as we can.

Book Discussion: July 7th - **Thyme of Death** (mystery) by - Susan Wittig Albert

Be well. Joanne

May 2021 Herb of the Month: Pineapple mint (*Mentha suaveolens variegata*)

(Nino Ridgway)

Pineapple Mint is a strain of apple mint that is variegated and is native to Southern Europe. If you use your imagination, you may detect a very faint fragrance of pineapple. It is inferior to apple mint as a culinary herb but is frequently used as an attractive herbal filler for herb or flower containers. Pineapple mint will add a mildly minty taste to tea. It can be used as a fragrant filler in fresh bouquets, such as tussy mussies.

Like other mints, pineapple mint is easy to grow, although it is not reliably winter hardy in Wisconsin. In warmer climates it can be grown as a ground cover, but it is aggressive and will likely invade areas where it is not wanted. It will grow in any soil type but prefers some moisture and protection from the hottest sun. If it gets too hot or dry, it becomes unattractive, with the white portions of the leaves turning brown. Any stems that are all green or all white should be removed. White stems will die (no chlorophyll) and green stems will take over.

June 2021 Herb of the Month: Green tea (*Camellia sinensis*)

(Nino Ridgway)

Camellia sinensis is a perennial evergreen, subtropical, broadleaved shrub (think bay trees, Azalea, and Rhododendron). It is native to China and hardy to zone 8. Whether we get green tea or black tea from this plant, as well as the quality of the final product, depends on how it is picked and processed, and to a lesser degree, on how it is grown. Green tea is made by quickly drying the very freshly picked leaves while they are still green, before they turn brown. The best green teas today are produced in China and Japan.

Green tea has been touted for centuries to have a variety of health benefits such as lowering blood pressure; prevention and/or treatment of cancer, heart disease, and strokes; weight loss; and reduction of inflammation. Many scientific studies over multiple decades have failed to show any significant health benefit to consuming green tea, other than an increased mental alertness due to the caffeine content. Nevertheless, green tea is hugely popular in the world of dietary supplements and may indeed have unproved health benefits.

Growing tea plants in Wisconsin is only possible with a greenhouse. It is not an undertaking for the faint of heart. Tea plants require heat and humidity throughout a 6 month growing season, with plenty of water. Temperatures below 25 degrees F or above 95 degrees F may be harmful. Tea shrubs can be grown in large containers (a 5 gallon pot for each plant) using an acidic, sandy soil and regular fertilizing. Plants prefer dappled sun during the hottest part of the growing season. Harvest may begin after 3 years. If all goes well, one mature tea plant (5+ years old) will produce ½ pound of fresh leaves, or about 2-3 ounces of dried leaves, per year!

Recipes

OLIVE ASCOLANI

By Helene Pizzi

One of Italy's almost-best-kept-culinary-secrets, stuffed fried olives, a finger food, served as an *antipasto*, to begin the meal, was invented in Le Marche region in the 1800s, in the city of Ascoli Piceno, in the province of Teramo. This area is known for their large meaty tender olives that were preserved in brine, sometimes with fennel seeds.

The cooks of wealthy families prepared stuffed olives for special occasions or important guests. Expensive to make and laborious to prepare, now in Italy, they can be purchased, ready to deep fry, in food shops, supermarkets, and even frozen, ready to fry. They can be made in larger quantities than you need, and then frozen until you want to serve them. Once eaten, you will know they are well worth the expense and work to prepare.

For this recipe you will need about 2 or 3 large jars of the largest pitted olives you can find. (If they have pits, you can spiral cut them to remove the pit, and then spiral wrap the filling up.)

Make a *soffritto* by sautéing ¼ cup each of chopped onions, carrots, and celery, in 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil. When beginning to be blonde, add ½ cup of chopped pork, ½ cup chopped chicken breast, ½ cup chopped lean beef, and 1 garlic clove. Season with salt, pepper and a dash of nutmeg, stirring occasionally. When beginning to brown, add 1/3 cup dry white wine, partially cover and cook until the meat is done, adding a bit of broth if needed. Cool. Add 1 ½ ounces of mortadella (sold in Italian food stores). Place all in a blender and pulse until a smooth paste.

Add 2 egg yolks, and enough freshly finely grated Parmesan cheese to make the mixture thick enough to roll into tiny balls.

Cut each olive down the side, open enough to add a tiny ball of filling. Press to close. One by one, roll each olive in flour, then in beaten eggs, then roll and press into plain bread crumbs.

Some bread them once, some prefer to let the breaded olives sit for a half hour, then dip them again into beaten egg and bread crumbs, making a thicker crust.

Use a wok for easy frying. Heat peanut oil (or your favorite oil to fry) to 350 F. Fry a few olives at a time, removing them with a slotted spoon when golden brown (about a minute should be right). Drain on a paper towel, and serve hot. ENJOY!!!!!!

NOTE: There are no 'rules' in the kitchen. You can vary the meats as you wish. If you can't find the *mortadella*, patience... Experiment and create your own personal 'secret' filling.

To make these olives HERBAL, why not serve them piping hot with a salad made of rocket, endive, etc...or sliced tomatoes buried in fresh basil leaves with a hint of garlic?



Chilled Cucumber Mint Soup (with Yogurt or Sour Cream)

(Marlene Mravik – Symposium Tasting Room - 2019)

Everything about this dish is summery and fresh—including the cook, who hasn't had to hover over a steamy stovetop to achieve this surprisingly intense blend of flavors. A little finely chopped fresh dill would be a pretty garnish. Serves 4-6.

4 cucumbers, peeled, seeded and chopped (about 4c)

1-2 c water

2 c plain yogurt (or 1 c plain yogurt + 1 c sour cream)

1 clove garlic, peeled and smashed

Several fresh mint leaves

1 T fresh dill or 1 t dried dill

1 T honey

1-2 t salt

2 scallions, finely chopped (about 1/3 c)

Combine the cucumber, 1 c water, yogurt, garlic, mint, dill, honey and 1 t salt in a blender or food processor – puree – adding more water until the soup is a consistency you like. Season with more salt to taste.

Transfer soup to a large bowl and chill for several hours. Garnish each serving with chopped scallions.

Wonderful Witch Hazel (Hamamelis virginiana and H. vernalis)

(Peggy Gibbs-Zautke – 4/21)

Are you lucky to have a good sense of smell? If so, seek out a witch hazel, either species will do, and enjoy the crisp clean scent of the flowers. It reminds me of the smell of laundry hung out to dry.

There are so many reasons to grow this plant it was hard for me to decide where to begin, so I'll start at the beginning. Hamamelis virginiana was the first shrub I purchased for my home. It had all the qualities I was looking for: native, small tree or large shrub and flowers at an unusual time of year. It also had the bonus of being an herb. The extract from leaves, twigs and bark is used as an astringent and in lotions. Folklore held that a forked branch of witch hazel could be used to locate ground water. Since that first purchase, I have grown to appreciate witch hazel even more. They are what I call "gap" plants. Hamamelis virginiana blooms in October and November and H. vernalis blooms in very early spring or late winter. This is when very few other plants are in bloom. This can make the difference between life and death for native pollinators. One February a few years ago, we had a very long spell of warm weather that resulted in many different species of bees seeking food. The only plant at Boerner Botanical Gardens that could supply this was the vernal witch hazel that had come into bloom.

Some of my favorite places to see witch hazels are: Harrington State Park (H. virginiana) growing among the Cedars along the path and Boerner Botanical Gardens Herb Garden (H. virginiana) along the path to the Bog and (H. vernalis) on the NW corner of the Visitor Center.

Parsley: It's More Than Just a Garnish

(Sue Veed)



It's time to stop loving parsley for its looks alone. True, even if you've done nothing else to make a dish look attractive, sprinkling a smattering of finely chopped parsley over the plate can make it instantly pop. But pigeonholing it as a passive, for-color-only garnish—a sprig to be cast away to the side of the plate—feels a little fusty.

Parsley's got personality, too—namely, a clean bright flavor and a lettuce-like crunch. So how about we start treating it like what it is: an herb.

Ubiquity is almost reason enough: Parsley is one of few herbs you can find fresh at any time of year in most supermarkets, and it usually comes in generous bundles. There are even two types: **flat leaf** (also called Italian parsley) and **curly leaf**. In a pinch, either is fine, but note the differences between them.

Flat Leaf vs. Curly Leaf Parsley



Whereas curly parsley can be less tough and thus better suited to fine-chopping, flat parsley has a robust taste that's more ideal for flavoring. Treat it like a seasoning—baked into meatballs, chopped into starches, or kneaded into bread dough—or even as a vegetable snipped into sandwiches, deep-fried and salted as a side dish, or dressed like salad leaves and mixed with toppings like fennel, nuts and seeds or tomatoes.

Long cooking times tend to dilute leaf flavor, though, so if you're adding fresh leaves to hot food, be sure to do it at the very end. And skip the dried version for most purposes. It tastes overly grassy and hay-like—not much like the fresh flavor at all.

Parsley Stems

Parsley stems (from either plant type) can be used as well. Since they're sharper in flavor and less delicate than the leaves, they hold up better in long-cooked stocks, stews and braised dishes.

For easy removal after the fact, take a hint from classic French *sachet d'epices*: Wrap a few in cheesecloth and/or secure with twine before adding them to a liquid.

A Good Rinse

However you use parsley, be sure to wash off any sand or dirt (swish it around in a bowl of cold water, then rinse and repeat until clean) and rid the leaves of excess moisture in a salad spinner or clean towel before chopping. Otherwise, the leaves will darken and bruise, and you won't achieve the beloved sprinkling effect.

Grow Herbal Microgreens

(Herb'N Cowgirl – 10/4/18)

Recently I've seen some interesting posts about growing something called "microgreens." This is created by thickly sowing the seeds of edible plants on a growing medium, allowing it to germinate and grow for a week or two, depending on how quickly it grows, and then harvest and eating immediately. I think of it as creating sprouts but on a soil medium.

So how do you set up your own microgreens farm? First you need a tray with sides at least two inches high. If you just want to create a small plot use a 9×13 inch baking pan (glass so it won't rust). Fill with damp – not soggy – potting soil. Then thickly sow your seeds over the top, tamp down with your fingers and cover with plastic wrap to hold in the moisture and encourage the seeds to germinate. Pick edible seeds that have a short germination, usually 7-10 days. Once you see the first green shoots, remove the plastic wrap, move to a place where it will get indirect light and mist daily to keep the soil moist.

After about 10 days, your sprouted microgreens are ready to harvest. Clip them with a sharp pair of scissors, rinse, and use immediately. The remaining roots will die once the young plant is harvested. When you're all done the potted medium can be mixed and re-used for the next batch. Microgreens, can be added to anything where you want the fresh flavor of herbs. Add them to a whole grain bread, turkey, and avocado sandwich. Finely mince them to add to cream cheese for a cracker spread. Sprinkle on top of soup for a crunchy finish. There's no end to the possibilities.



“In the days when Roses were valued more for their fragrance, sweet flavour, and medicinal virtues than for their beauty, the petals were used in countless ways.”

--- Eleanour Sinclair Rhode, Rose Recipes from Olden Times

Grow Beautiful and Healthy Roses

(Melinda Myers - Ebert's Village Gardener Express 6/28/18)

Celebrate summer by adding a few new roses to your landscape. Then keep these and your existing roses looking their best and blooming throughout the summer with proper care.

Water thoroughly whenever the top few inches of soil are crumbly and moist. Use soaker hoses or drip irrigation to apply the water directly to the soil where it is needed. You'll lose less water to evaporation and reduce the risk of disease by avoiding overhead irrigation.

Mulch the soil surface with shredded leaves, evergreen needles or other organic matter. This helps to conserve moisture, suppress weeds and improve the soil as they decompose.

Proper fertilization will help keep roses healthy and producing lots of flowers. Roses growing in healthy soil mulched with organic materials usually need less fertilization. A soil test is the best way to determine how much and what type of fertilizer is best for roses growing in your landscape. Most roses benefit from early spring fertilization. If you feel your roses need a nutrient boost you may want to provide additional fertilizer. You can give repeat blooming roses a second dose of fertilizer after their first flush of flowers fade. Hybrid teas are heavy feeders and may benefit from a June and July application. Check the label directions for rates and timing and do not fertilize after August 1st. Keep in mind, too much fertilizer can result in lush green foliage and no flowers.

Check your plants throughout the season for signs of insects and disease. Early detection makes control easier. Remove insects or infested plant parts when discovered. Look for the most eco-friendly control options like insecticidal soap, neem and horticulture oil when intervention is needed. Knock Japanese beetles in a can of soapy water as soon as they are found. Removing them quickly helps reduce further infestations. Look for the most bee friendly product if you decide to treat. As always be sure to read and follow label directions when using any garden chemical.

Improve your roses' appearance by harvesting a few rosebuds to enjoy indoors. Prune flowering stems back to the first 5-leaflet leaf. You can prune back farther on established plants, but be sure to always leave at least two 5-leaflet leaves behind on the plant's stem.

Stop deadheading roses toward the end of the season. Allow the plants to develop rose hips. This helps the plants prepare for the cold weather ahead and increases hardiness. Plus, these red to orange fruits provide winter food for birds and attractive winter interest in the garden.

Most importantly - be sure to take time to smell and enjoy your roses!



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



The Everlasting Garden

*A garden awoke calling shoots to stand tall
Teased by the warmth of an orange red ball.
Dew drops had dried at dawn's first kiss
The garden awoke in mystical bliss.
The newest seedings set in the row
Cried "what shall we do, how can we grow?"
So the greatest gardener opened up their pod
Straightened the stems and patted the sod.
Beauty and love start thus from a seed
Tended by God as He sees the need.
He waters with goodness and helps it to flow
To creatures growing in weakness or woe.
Whose growth is enhanced by every good deed
Who flourish together, both plant and weed.*

Jejanssen, "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 7/1/21 and 9/1/21.