



Spring is Great for Gardens and Gardening!!

Thanks to the American Botanical Council, Lucinda Hutson, Pam Bell, and Ellen Zimmermann for opening their wonderful gardens for our Garden Tour. It was great fun and a great learning experience to see these varied and interesting gardens. A big thanks to everyone who brought food, too.

The wildflowers are spectacular this year too. It is a great time to learn the names and uses of our natives, or just to look and enjoy. Take care photographing your little ones in the wildflowers, though. A friend recently sent out photos of a 6 foot rattlesnake lurking in bluebonnets. No need for undue alarm, just look before you step into dense flowers and if you see a snake, back off.

Spring gardening is really exciting, but the pests that were dormant during the winter are now nibbling away. Please think twice about using poisonous chemicals to get rid of them. You may be poisoning useful garden creatures or even yourself. Often simple remedies such as hand picking of bugs, a strong spray of water, garlic or pepper spray or orange oil is all that is needed. A good reference is *Texas Bug Book* by Malcolm Beck and John Howard Garrett.

Many caterpillars will be beautiful butterflies if left to mature. Native plants that attract butterflies include these larval foods: passion flower, fragrant eupatorium, lantana, black or bearded daleas, senna, thoroughwort, spicebush, yuccas, and milkweeds. Nectar plants include buddleia, agarita, kidneywood, cherry sage, asters, alliums, borage, fennel, dill, marjoram, and bergamot. These are only a few of the butterfly friendly plants. Most plants host specific butterflies. A little extra care and organic practices will reward you with a butterfly full landscape. *Butterfly Gardening for the South* by Geyata Ajilvsgi is a good comprehensive guide for those interested.

Thanks to everyone for responding to our call for new officers and committee chairs. Molly Ogorzaly volunteered to be Education Chair, Jane Clark and Connie Matusek volunteered to become Librarians, Robin Carter will coordinate field trips and help with book sales, and Vee Fowler offered to reinstate the December Chocolate and Book Sale Party. Members who considered resigning decided to stay on. We still need a volunteer to make member badges. Contact the AHS Presidents at president@austinherbsociety.org to volunteer.

May all your weeds be wildflowers!

Cindy Phillips and Andra Millian
Co-Presidents AHS

Tuesday, May 1, Monthly Meeting, 9:30am-12:00 at Zilker Garden Center

Aromatherapy Applications

Shanti Dechen, aromatherapist and owner of Aroma Apothecary Healing Arts Academy will introduce us to the basics of choosing which essential oils to use for various conditions. Come learn fragrant ways to make yourself and others feel good.

Thursday May 9, Study Group, 7 to 9 PM at Smith and Hawken in the Gateway Shopping Center

The study groups have not been attracting many attendees so this will be our last formal study group meeting for the foreseeable future. We will have refreshments, a program, and Smith & Hawken will stay open and offer AHS members 10% discount on shopping.

Friday, May 25, Culinary Group will meet from 10am until 12 at the American Botanical Council, 6200 Manor Road.

It's starting to heat up so let's get ready for summer by sharing and discussing salads and salad dressings. We'll also discuss what topics we want to cover over the next year. Call Sandra at 258-4643 for more information.

Zilker Park Herb Gardening Day may be changing so call Judith at 944-2787 for more information. We have two gardens to maintain and we could use your help.



Tuesday, May 22, Mayfield Park Gardening Day is the 4th Tuesday of each month starting at 9:30am.

Julie Crouch maintains the Mayfield Herb Garden pretty much all on her own so give her a call at 339-0193 to see about helping out.

AHS Business, Updates and Related Announcements

Thank You!

Thanks to Henry Flowers for a wonderful presentation in April on the lemon herbs including the international herb of the year, lemon balm. There are so many you could plan a whole garden just around the lemon herbs. Hmmm!



AHS Members Garden Tour a Huge Success

The garden tour on Saturday, April 28 was spectacular. We started with an early breakfast and stroll around the American Botanical Council then moved on to Lucinda Hutson's lovely little eclectic purple cottage with its surprises around every corner. We then headed out to the country to Ellen Zimmermann's where all the roses were in bloom and we got to see her great new workshop. We finished up with an outstanding lunch at Pam Bell's. There were so many fantastic, herb-filled dishes made all the better by good company and a lovely setting. We'll put photos up on the AHS website for those of you who were unable to attend.

Books for Sale

Although most of us don't have lazy summer days anymore like we did when we were kids, we thought it would be fun to introduce you to a few books over the next few months for your summer – or anytime – reading. Stop by the book table during the monthly meeting and discover the great selection of books available at less than retail prices for members. Sorry, but we cannot process credit cards, so bring your cash or checkbook.

The Aromatherapy Book by Jeanne Rose is a comprehensive guide to everything from descriptions of various essential oils to making your own home still for extracting oils. Ms. Rose has packed her book with information, including charts and tables, source lists, and recipes for healing, all set forth in warm-hearted storyteller style. This book is sure to complement our May speaker's talk on aromatherapy.

Southern Herb Growing by Madalene Hill and Gwen Barclay is a must have book for any Texas herb grower

and cook. Gwen and Madalene write from years of experience in our climate. They inspire us with information on over 130 herbs for our Texas gardens. The book is filled with beautiful photographs and the delightful herbal recipes don't require a lot of special ingredients – except for your herbs of course.

It's About Thyme Spring Festival

AHS will be participating in It's About Thyme's Spring Festival on May 5, from 12 til 6. Volunteers are needed so we will send a sign up sheet around at the meeting. If you can't come to the meeting, you can sign up online.

Soapwort

Saponaria officinalis

One of the plants that we've added to the Vee Fowler Native Texas herb garden is soapwort or Bouncing Bet. You'll see this plant by the roadside or at old homesteads growing in full sun or semi-shade. It loves our Austin soil but you have to watch it as it can become invasive. Soapwort has a long blooming period of pink flowers. This ornamental perennial makes a lovely addition to the native herb garden.

Soapwort is toxic; it destroys red blood cells and causes paralysis of the vasomotor center so don't eat it or use it internally! That said, it is a native herb that has been used in the past as a mild diuretic, expectorant, purgative and tonic. A decoction of the herb has been used externally to treat itchy skin. Soap can be obtained by boiling the whole plant (but especially the root) in water. The root is harvested in the spring and can be dried for later use. It is a gentle effective cleaner, used on delicate fabrics that can be harmed by synthetic soaps. Soapwort is sometimes recommended as a hair shampoo, but be aware that it can cause eye irritations. Flowers and leaves can be used fresh as body soap. (Always test an herb use like this one on a small area of your body like the inside of your forearm before using it on a large area.) One of the chemical components of soapwort, the saponins or glycoside compounds, is being tested for possible antitumor effects. For the time being, it is probably best just to grow this little plant for its lovely pink flowers and its use as a sunny groundcover.

Michelle Chaput
Co-chair VFNTGH

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