



## Happy Herbal Greetings to All!!

We have so much to be thankful for this season. Officers and committee chairs were installed at the May 1 meeting. Our wonderful Treasurer, Richard Miller, was inadvertently left out of the line up. Profuse apologies, Richard. Richard is a wonderful treasurer and person. Please make a point of thanking him personally when you see him. Jane Gilley has stepped up to fill the Badge Maker job, and Membership has a new helper in Laurel Burnett.

We had a delightful last Study Group May 9 at the Smith & Hawken store. Store manager Zachary Griffith gave us an interesting talk and even made herbal cookies for our refreshment. Andra Millian won the door prize, a lovely garden bench. Smith & Hawken gives a 10% discount to members of any garden club, so be sure to mention us when you shop there.

At the May AHS Board meeting we voted to purchase a "Walk of Friends" brick in honor of Mary Albrecht, recently deceased member and the artist who provided us with our Rosemary sculpture in the Zilker Herb Garden. We also voted to donate \$500 to the AAGC to go toward purchase of PowerPoint equipment for the garden center.

We've had a wet spring, causing a riot of color in the Hill Country. Many of those spring herbs and wildflowers are now creating tons of seeds, most of which are not viable unless matured on the plant. A good strategy with wildflowers is to let some plants naturally reseed, and to harvest some seed to share and to fill in bare spots in the fall.

Use your summer herbs in drinks made with juices, teas, lemon herbs or mints, and a spritz of sparkling water, or a light rosemary syrup in lemonade. Put edible flowers in your salads and punches, and fresh chopped herbs in your fruit and vegetable salads. Garnish fish with fresh dill in yogurt, tomatoes with basil. Spice up gazpacho or other chilled soups with herbs.

Make sure your garden gets enough water to survive and thrive, keeping in mind that we are always in danger of a drought. And take time to smell the flowers, eat the tomatoes, share picnics in your favorite hideaways, and relax.

"Spring being a tough act to follow, God created June". (Al Bernstein)

Happy herbs to you!

Cindy Phillips and Andra Millian  
Co-Presidents AHS

**Tuesday, June 5, Monthly Meeting, 9:30am-12:00 at Zilker Garden Center**

### **Harmonizing through Herbs Gabrielle Mathieu**

In this presentation, we will cover the ingredients of a Chinese pharmacy, the composition of formulations, and the historical applications of the herbs. Gabrielle will discuss how herbs can be prescribed to harmonize or strengthen the body to treat some conditions for which Western medicine is not effective. While herbs are not as strong as pharmaceutical prescriptions, they are gentler and more in tune with an ecological approach to health.

### **No Study Group**

Just a reminder that we will not be having regular study group meetings in future. Members are encouraged to form small study groups on their own, attend upcoming field trips, or to join the culinary group which meets monthly and discusses the herbs used in the recipes the group makes.

**Friday, May 15, Culinary Group will meet from 10am until 12 at the American Botanical Council, 6200 Manor Road.**

Join us for iced herbal tea and light herbal snacks and have a question and answer session about herbs, stroll through the ABC gardens and then lunch at Eastside Cafe. Do you have a new recipe, a nifty kitchen gadget, or a great cookbook? Please bring it or tell us about it and don't forget your utensils.

**Zilker Park Herb Gardening Day.** Call Judith at 944-2787 or Michelle at 343-7677 to volunteer to help out in the Zilker Herb Garden or the Vee Fowler Native Texas Herb Garden. Just because it's summer doesn't mean there's no work to do in the garden. You just do it earlier in the day!

**Mayfield Park Gardening Day.** Call Julie Crouch at 339-0193 to find out when she'll be working at Mayfield. This is a nice shady place to help out and get a little exercise in the bargain.

## AHS Business, Updates and Related Announcements

### Thank You!

Thanks to Shanti Dechen for a great presentation in May on aromatherapy. What a wonderful handout she put together for us too! Thank you also to Robin Carter and Michele Lofstrom for being the first of our members to volunteer to provide the group with a Ten Minute Herbal Tip at the monthly meeting. Robin told us about Herbal Soup Rings, a fun way to flavor soups, juice, punch or tea – or even to perfume a bath. Michele spoke to us about *Monarda*, also called bee balm or bergamot (but not to be confused with true bergamot, *Citrus bergamia*.) The monardas are lovely late spring or early summer bloomers that are wonderful perennial herbs in the garden and can be used in a number of ways. If you have something you would like to share with the group, be sure to corner Gayle Engels at a meeting and let her know you'd like to do a Ten Minute Herbal Tip.

### Culinary Group Planning for Next Year

The Culinary Group May meeting was the epitome of refreshing. It was all about salads and salad dressings and there were some great things to taste and talk about. One of the things discussed was what the group is going to eat and talk about in future. Topics for next year (September 2007 through May 2008) include lemon balm (International Herb of the Year 2007, if you haven't heard), chocolate, edible flowers, herbal soups, breads, sorbets, oils, vinegars and condiments. Plans for a holiday tea in conjunction with our December Holiday Bazaar, complete with china and sweet and savory herbal finger foods are also being discussed. The culinary group is also thinking about putting together a cookbook of some of their favorite recipes from past meetings to raise money for the group. There will be no regular meetings in July and August, but watch this space for special announcements of planning meetings or possible restaurant visits.

### Your Book Corner

Teatime, any time! We have two charming books on tea for your reading pleasure this month. *The Pleasures of Tea* includes recipes for tea treats and tea blends, a discussion of tea cups, marvelous photos, and an interview with a tea blender, a tea salon owner, and a tea grower. *The Charms of Tea* also includes recipes for tea treats and tea blends, as well as writings by Henry James, Marcel Proust, Daphne du Maurier, and others on tea rituals. Either of these books would be an asset for planning your next tea party or just pleasant summer reading. And now that the weather is turning warmer (hotter!), we can all benefit from a few great tasting, easy, no fuss recipes. *More of What's Cooking* provides just

that, along with tips for how to make your favorite recipes healthier. You can add your own home grown herbs to these recipes for a unique creation. Check out your book corner and remember AHS members receive substantial discounts on the purchase of books.

### More on Books: Reviews

For your summer reading pleasure, here are a few reviews of books our members have enjoyed. If the AHS Book Corner doesn't have these books, please ask them if they can order them or consider supporting a local, independently-owned bookstore before ordering them online or purchasing them from one of the big chains. BookWoman at 12th and Lamar and BookPeople at 6th and Lamar are a couple of this editor's favorites. And don't forget Half Price Books. (Okay, they started in Dallas but that's still pretty homegrown and they are independent.) Each of these businesses has been bringing good books to Austin for more than 30 years. And if BW and BP don't have it, they will order it for you. *Where you spend your dollars does matter and if we don't support local businesses, soon all the places that make our hometowns unique will be gone.*

*A Blessing of Toads* by Sharon Lovejoy (Hearst Books, 2004, ISBN: 1588163792). If you've ever wondered about the 'critters' that inhabit your garden from bird to snail, or are seeking to entice them to your nature preserve then this book is for you. It's informative, but above all, reading it will bring you joy. It's filled with humor, wisdom and a look inside our gardens. This book is just lovely for a pleasant read and is hard to put down. I've found it hard to get away from and eagerly picked back up to read again. (Michelle Chaput)

Also by Sharon Lovejoy, *Trowel and Error: Over 700 Shortcuts, Tips & Remedies for the Gardener* (Workman Publishing, 2003, ISBN: 0-7611-2632-5) is a great little pick-it-up-put-it-down book that you can open to any page and begin reading. Of course, once you do this, you'll want to go back and start from the beginning and read it straight through. From tips for making your own homebrew for repelling bugs or fertilizing your plants to new tool uses for everyday objects to "found art", there is something for everybody in this fun little book. Sharon has been gardening all her life (sound familiar?) and she's been writing down her successes and challenges the whole time. This is a book that every ecologically-oriented, recycling gardener or wannabe should have on their shelf. You'll go back to it again and again. (Gayle Engels)

*What Wilderness is This: Women Write about the Southwest* edited by Susan Wittig Albert, Susan Hanson,

Jan Seale and Paula Yost (University of Texas Press, 2007, ISBN: 0292716303) is one of the most compelling reads that I have found in several years. If you want to experience the beauty and pleasure of walking through those gorgeous places of our beloved Southwest, then this is the book for you. It takes you by the hand on personal journeys of many women through the use of poem, prose and stories. I really can't tell you how wonderful I've found this book to be. I could go on forever. I've given this book as presents as often as possible and keep a copy by my bed. It is lovingly written and edited and beautifully presented. Don't miss this one. (Michelle Chaput)

Pomegranates have been in the news for a while due to their potential for fighting heart disease and cancer, and new pomegranate products seem to appear on the market shelves weekly. You won't need them if you have Ann Kleingerg's *Pomegranates* (Ten Speed Press, 2004, ISBN: 1-58008-631-4) on your cookbook shelf. Kleinberg offers a little history and a lot of recipes along with tips on how to select and store, juice, and seed pomegranates. For those who just don't want to deal with the mess or take the time, you can find fresh, peeled pomegranate fruit in season (yes, with the edible seeds intact) at many grocery stores. Whether you do the work yourself or buy them ready to use, this book offers recipes for syrup, juice, salad dressings, condiments, soups, salads, side dishes, main courses, desserts and drinks. I'm in charge of the cranberry relish at Thanksgiving and all my friends expect something new each year so here's what they're getting this year. (Gayle Engels)

### **Kumquat, Cranberry and Pomegranate Relish**

3 kumquats  
½ cup water  
½ cup pomegranate juice  
1 ¼ cups sugar  
1 Tbsp. peeled and grated fresh ginger (I know I'll use more!)  
½ tsp. salt  
1 lb. fresh or frozen cranberries  
½ cup golden raisins  
¼ cup pomegranate seeds

Slice or quarter the kumquats and remove the pits. Combine the kumquats, water, pomegranate juice, sugar, ginger, and salt in a saucepan over medium heat and bring to a boil. Decrease the heat to low and simmer for 5 minutes.

Add the cranberries, increase the heat, and bring to a boil again. Decrease the heat and continue simmering. Once the cranberries burst, scoop out ¾ of the mixture and set aside.

Continue simmering the remaining mixture until it is reduced by half. Add the raisins and the reserved mixture to the reduction and continue cooking a bit longer.

The entire cooling process should take 30 to 60 minutes. The longer it cooks, the further it reduces and the thicker it gets.

Remove from the heat, let it cool, and then fold in the pomegranate seeds. Cover and refrigerate to chill. The relish will keep for one month in the refrigerator.

For the serious reader who wants more than recipes, there's *Pomegranates: Ancient Roots to Modern Medicine* (Taylor and Francis, 2006, ISBN: 0-8493-9812-6) edited by Navindra P. Seeram, et al. This science-based compendium covers the biochemistry, health effects, commercialization and culture of this amazing fruit. While by no means an easy read, this compilation of articles by experts in their fields provides just about everything you could possibly want to know about the healthy phytochemicals and the research on cardiovascular, cancer prevention, antimicrobial activities and gynecological potential of pomegranate. All the research was instigated by the traditional use of the fruit over its thousands of years of history and these uses and history are addressed as well. For those who just can't get enough information on pomegranates, botany and genetic diversity are covered as well. (Gayle Engels)

### **What's happening in the Zilker Herb Garden?**

The herb garden is becoming more diverse and rich. Our poppies and calendula have gone through their bloom stage and we're saving the seeds of poppy to shake into the soil in the fall. The betony and 'Indigo Spires' salvia that are growing by the 'Cattails' sculpture are a riot of color and are huge this year. We are constantly adding herbs, including more lavender and unusual oreganos. New plants are added to the Vee Fowler Native Texas Herb Garden all the time and you'll find mountain mint, prairie verbena, boneset, yellow columbine, red salvia and a swamp rose that is native to east Texas.

We've also changed the water feature. Judith and Michelle purchased a large urn in neutral colors of pale green/yellow/gray and Michelle and her husband, Jim, plumbed it so that the water comes up through the center and over stones and then down the sides going back into the reservoir under it. We're hoping that now it's basically 'one-piece' we won't have anyone try to take it apart anymore. We partially filled the urn with cement and then small rock so that it weights about 100 lbs. The park employees were good enough to help us lift it into

place. The fountain is functioning just fine every time the sun comes out to play, just like it should since it's solar.

We do hope to see you some Tuesday morning since we can always use another pair of hands to help keep it gorgeous and cared for. Contact Judith at 944-2787 or Michelle at 343-7677 if you'd like to help out. Happy Gardening! Michelle & Judith

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