

POTPOURRI



The Austin Herb Society Newsletter

March, 2010

All About Herbs 2010

The seminar presented by the Austin Herb Society and The Herb Association of Texas provided a wealth of information about culinary, medicinal and aesthetic uses of herbs. Participants could sample herbal treats and shop for plants, books and herbal products. A portion of proceeds were to be donated to the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department. This was an opportunity to meet and learn from local and statewide herbal enthusiasts and discover the benefits of membership in the Austin Herb Society (www.austinherbsociety.org) and the Herb Association of Texas (www.texasherbs.org).

Here are some highlights:



Cindy Burrows, AHS co-president, demonstrated applying herbal poultices and compresses. She described the benefits of many herbal remedies.



Ellen Zimmerman, of EZ Herbs, discussed the cosmetic benefits of many herbs and demonstrated the application of cleansing and stimulating herbal cosmetics.

She discussed how she prepares and teaches interested people how to gather, prepare and apply these herbs. Ellen had many prepared cosmetics for sale.

And of course we had samples of herbal treats:



Marianne Simmons of Onion Creek Farm, told us of the interesting history, uses and lore associated with a very useful herb- the dill.



Cathy Slaughter of Gabriel Valley Farms, demonstrated how to prune plants that look stressed or dead after a severe winter. She encouraged us to look to the base of plants for green growth and not to be afraid to prune down to the new leaves hiding near the ground. She also brought a wonderful selection of her 4" potted herbs for sale.



Barbara Broering, Cook and Teacher, discussed culinary herbs, especially poppy seeds. She had a poppyseed cake for us to sample and the recipe is included in this potpourri.

And we selected from the books for sale.

Learning about herbs-- here were wonderful reasons to join the Austin Herb Society and the Herb Association of Texas!



WOW....and wonderful!

The Green Corn Project

submitted by Mary Mills

Some of us have heard our parents or grandparents tell of "Victory Gardens" that supplemented food shortages during World War II. We have lost so much of the knowledge our parents and grandparents learned in providing food for their families. We live isolated from the sources of our food. Could we help ourselves today?

The Green Corn Project brings information about becoming a little more self sufficient in our digital age with the support of enthusiastic and energetic volunteers. Mitch



Mills, on the Board of Directors of The Green Corn Project, was the Austin Herb Society's February speaker. He presented us with the goals and methods of this organization. They create and teach how to create low cost and low input gardens using traditional garden tools and volunteer muscle and know-how. In a few hours these volunteers can begin the

process of turning unproductive backyard soils into rich organic garden soils that will support the production of year - round fresh food for a family. To date they have created 130 gardens and counting in Austin.

A little background on "Ecology in Action".

There are a number of formal organic gardening and farming systems that prescribe specific techniques for soil fertility management.

You probably have seen the catch words in gardening articles and books. Here are definitions of some of those terms.

In 1978 the staff of the Organic Gardening magazine published The Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening. This guide to the principles and practices of organic gardening has been my constant reference work since that time. There have been many other magazines and books that explore these principles of soil building, conservation, pest management and heirloom variety preservation in the intervening years. Knowledge and techniques of earth friendly farming were present in the agricultural practices of ancient Chinese, Greek, Mayan and Early Modern periods of Europe. These techniques evolved over thousands of years and were rediscovered, studied and copied by organic garden practitioners.

French Intensive "double dig" gardening consists of raised beds worked to a depth of 24 inches with added compost. This treatment promotes fantastic root growth and subsequent high yields in the gardens. Although turning the

soil is labor intensive, once these gardens are established, they require very little additional work on the soil. Deep watering to reach the 2 foot depth of the beds is mandatory to encourage the plant roots to penetrate into the deep loosened soil.

Biointensive gardening is a method focusing on maximum yields from the minimum area of land while improving the soil at the same time.

Other methods have developed with similar goals of high yield gardens in small spaces. They are variously called **biodynamic gardening, permaculture, square foot gardening** and sometimes referred to simply as "**the method**". Some other techniques are included in these methods.

Inter-cropping - planting quick maturing crops within or between rows of a slower growing crop to maximize the garden's yield.

Planting a new, different crop in the same space as a crop that is about to mature, giving the new crop a head start while the original crop matures.

Green manure crops planted and plowed under before maturing to add organic material to the soil.

Organic practices may take extended periods of time to develop chemical free and earth friendly gardens and the Green Corn Project is there to get the process started and work with the gardeners to develop their confidence and abilities to have sustainable gardens and fresh produce. This organizations represents the best Austin has to offer. The Green Corn Project translates catch words like **Bio-intensive, organic, and sustainable** into meaningful, food producing gardens. The website tells their on-going story and is a must to add to your list of favorite websites. www.greencornproject.org.



Bud and I prepared the soil in our new passive solar greenhouse by "double digging" and enriching with compost. When the weather outside the greenhouse was 6 degrees our plants were in a comfortable 53 degrees ground temperature.

On Thu, 2/18/10, Bonnie Martin
<bonnielaurie@austin.rr.com> wrote:

4th Annual A Passion for Plants: An East Austin Garden Fair 2010

Saturday, March 20, 2010
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Govalle Park , 5200 Bolm Road , just East of Airport Blvd.
Call the Texas AgriLife Extension Service at 854-9600 for more information

Govalle Park will once again be the site of A Passion for Plants: An East Austin Garden Fair on the last weekend of Spring Break. The theme of the fourth annual fair is "Gardening the Earth-Kind Way".

This FREE public gardening event will feature hands-on demonstrations of how to dig a garden bed, harvest rain water, grow fruits and vegetables organically, create wildlife food and shelter, start plants from cuttings and seeds, and how to cut back on chemicals that harm our environment and ourselves. Come for the free advice from our on-site experts to answer all of your gardening questions, for tips on living healthier and happier, and for fun educational activities for kids to get them out in nature in your own back yard! Visit our booths and get a free plant! Get ready for Spring with all the free information you need to start your own Earth-Kind garden, whether it's one plant in a pot or a whole yard full, and then relax with a free massage!

Hosted by Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Travis County Master Gardeners Association, the Sustainable Food Center , the Green Corn Project, and the Holistic Education and Health Network.

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### Your Best shots

Submit your favorite AHS Event, herb or garden photo to share with the AHS society members. I will include as many photos as I have room for in each issue. **email them to [pgherbfarm@aol.com](mailto:pgherbfarm@aol.com)**



Snow at the Purple Gate Herb Farm Feb-2010  
Submitted by Leonard (Bud) Mills

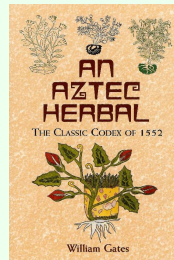
## Treasure Hunting

submitted by Mary H. Mills

When the weather is wet and cold I like to surf the web for interesting stuff. One of my favorite sites is Amazon.com. I find surprises nearly every time I search through this site. Here is my current treasure.

An Aztec Herbal, The Classic Codex of 1552. William Gates.

[Amazon price-Subtotal of Items: \$9.31 Shipping & Handling: \$3.99 ----- Total for this Order: \$13.30 ]



Bud and I loved reading the history of native American Indians in North, South and Central America through the years. I never thought I would be able to read or own a copy of this Codex. It was originally written in the Aztec language, Nahuatl, in 1552 by an Aztec physician. The book has been translated into Latin, Spanish, and

English through the centuries and finally found it's way into my library!

Aztecs suffered from some the same complaints we have today: boils, hair loss, cataracts, insomnia, sore throats, gout, lesion, joint problems and many other common ailments in our list of ailments. This little herbal has over 180 black and white drawings of plants, text describing remedies made with them and an analytical index of the plants. There is even a discussion of the Mexican botanical system.

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New Event Announcement from the Travis County Master Gardeners Association:

<bonnielaurie@austin.rr.com> wrote:

Cool Plants for the Shade Garden

Friday, April 9, 9-11am

Demonstration Garden at AgriLife Extension Office of Travis County

1600B Smith Rd. , Austin TX 78721

Cool Plants for the Shade Garden is a free in-the-garden discussion. See some of the shade loving plants growing and learn about other perennials and annuals which require limited sun. This seminar is free and open to the public. It is presented by the Travis County Master Gardeners Association, a volunteer arm of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Travis County . For information, see <http://www.tcmastergardeners.org> or call the Travis County Master Gardener's help desk at (512) 854-9600.

Annual Soup Social a Success!

Submitted by Mary Miller

On a cold and rainy Friday morning in January the Culinary Group gathered around four steaming crocks of soup: Sandra Holland's Provençal Vegetable with Pistou, Judy Schlotzhauer's Winter Grain and Bean Soup with Tomatoes and Rosemary, Michelle Chaput's Italian Wedding Soup and Gwen Sederholm's Thai Chicken Coconut Soup for their annual Soup Social.

Adding to the luncheon spread was Lucinda Rudin's Apple Rice Salad, Mary Miller's Cheese Muffins, Betty Williamson's Crostini, Barbara Broering's Rosemary Foccacia, Shirley Brinkman's Pumpkin Muffins and Gail Smith's Mexican Chocolate Brownies.

Before diving into the smorgasbord of yummy looking crocks and other dishes each member briefly discussed the recipes they'd prepared. First up was Sandra Holland to talk about her Provençal Vegetable soup garnished with Pistou and Parmesan cheese. Her recipe and a tip about canned tomatoes were taken from the Cook's Illustrated Magazine 2009, "Soups and Stews" publication. Pistou is the French version of pesto but without the pine nuts. (See this Wikipedia link for a more thorough description: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pesto>.)

Sandra recommended in a different season using or adding vegetables growing in your garden. Instead of fresh haricots verts she used frozen green beans. When using whole canned tomatoes in soup, drain, take out seeds and rinse them so the soup won't be murky. Sandra also prefers serving the cheese on the side with the pistou so guests may add their own quantities.

Provençal Vegetable Soup with Pistou

2 Tbsp. olive oil
1 large leek, cut lengthwise, cleaned, white & green parts cut into 1/2 pieces
2 celery ribs cut into 1/2 pieces
2 medium carrots, peeled & cut 1/4 inch
2-4 garlic cloves, minced to equal about 4 tsp.
6 cups of low-sodium vegetable broth
6 cups water
1 cup pasta or pasta broken into 1 inch pieces
1 lb. haricots verts, trimmed & cut into 1/2 inch pieces OR green beans
(If using frozen beans, thaw before adding to soup)
1 medium zucchini, quartered lengthwise & cut into 1/4 inch pieces
1 (16oz.) can cannellini or navy beans, drained & rinsed
1 (14.5 oz.) can whole tomatoes, drained, seeded, chopped, rinsed or 1 lb. fresh tomatoes
blanched, chopped and seeded
1 bay leaf & sprig of thyme
salt & pepper
Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven. Add leek, celery, carrots, and cook over medium heat until vegetables are

softened, about 8-10 minutes. Stir in garlic & cook for about 30 seconds. Add broth and water. Bring to a boil. Stir in haricots verts, zucchini, cannellini beans & tomatoes. Simmer until vegetables are tender, but still crunchy, about 3-5 minutes or longer. Season with salt and pepper. Serve in individual bowls. Garnish with pistou and grated Parmesan cheese.

Pistou:

3/4 -1 cup packed fresh basil leaves
1/2 cup olive oil
2 cloves finely minced garlic, about 2 tsp.
1/8 tsp. black pepper
Process in a food processor until pureed and smooth.
To keep the pistou from turning dark, do not prepare more than a couple of hours ahead of serving.
Recipe adapted from Cook's Illustrated, Soups & Stews, Winter '09

Judy prepared the favorite soup, **Winter Grain and Bean Soup with Tomatoes and Rosemary**, from the October meeting on the Mediterranean Diet. Everyone enjoyed sampling this hearty and tasty soup again. You may find this recipe in the December 2009 Potpourri or in the book *The Provence Cookbook*, by Patricia Wells.

Michelle likes Ina Garten, the Food Network's Barefoot Contessa, so she selected a recipe in honor of her, **Italian Wedding Soup**. This tasty meat based soup calls for making meatballs. Michelle likes to use ground turkey and turkey sausage. She shapes the meatballs using 2 small spoons and bakes them in the oven on parchment. She prefers to use tiny pasta pasta pieces, like tiny egg noodles. Adding a big bag of baby spinach makes this soup extra nutritious. Note that dill is an optional ingredient and serve with sour dough bread on the side.

Barbara later emailed the group some Wikipedia information on the origins of "wedding soup". It is believed to be a mistranslation of the Italian language, *minestra maritata* ("married soup"), which is a reference to the fact that green vegetables and meats go well together. Some form of minestra maritata was long popular in Toledo, Spain before pasta became an affordable commodity to most Spaniards, though the modern wedding soup is quite a bit lighter than the old Spanish form, which contained quite a few more meats than just the meatballs of modern Italian-American versions.

Italian Wedding Soup

Serves: 8 servings

Meatballs

1/2 pound ground turkey or chicken
1/2 pound Italian turkey sausage, casings removed
2/3 cup fresh whole wheat or white bread crumbs*
2 teaspoons minced garlic (2 cloves)

3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley leaves
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan, plus extra for serving
3 tablespoons milk
1 extra-large egg, lightly beaten
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Soup

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup minced onion
1 cup diced carrots (3 carrots), cut into 1/4 inch pieces
3/4 cup diced celery (2 stalks), cut into 1/4 inch pieces
10 cups chicken stock
1/2 cup dry white wine
1 cup small pasta such as stars
1/4 cup minced fresh dill (optional)
12 ounces baby spinach, washed and trimmed

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

For the meatballs, place the ground chicken, sausage, bread crumbs, garlic, parsley, parmesan cheese, milk, egg, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1/2 teaspoon pepper in a bowl and combine gently with a fork. With a teaspoon, drop 1 to 1 1/4-inch meatballs onto a sheet pan lined with parchment paper. (You should have about 40 meatballs. They don't have to be perfectly round.) Bake for 30 minutes, until cooked through and lightly browned. Set aside.

For the soup, heat the olive oil over medium-low heat in a large heavy-bottomed soup pot. Add the onion, carrots, and celery and saute until softened, 5 to 6 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the chicken stock and wine and bring to a boil. Add the pasta to the simmering broth and cook for 6 to 8 minutes, until the pasta is tender. Add the fresh dill and then the meatballs to the soup and simmer for 1 minute. Taste for salt and pepper. Stir in the fresh spinach and cook for 1 minute, until the spinach is just wilted. Ladle into soup bowls and sprinkle each serving with extra grated Parmesan.

*To make fresh bread crumbs just tear a piece of bread into chunks and put into a food processor and mince – presto – fresh bread crumbs!

Gwen modified her recipe, **Chicken in Coconut Soup** and used fresh kaffir lime leaves instead of dried. This dish led to some interesting discussion about kaffir trees and straw mushrooms. Straw mushrooms are an Asian mushroom that gets its name from being cultivated on straw that has been used on a paddy. These grayish brown fungi are long with a conical cap over a bulbous stem, and have a mild flavor that makes a nice addition to Chinese dishes. They can sometimes be found fresh in specialty produce markets but

are more readily available canned.

(http://www.chinesefood-recipes.com/cooking_guide_tips/mushrooms_chinese_cooking.php)

The group wondered if Kaffir limes are edible. Jam Santichat, (the owner and chef of Thai Fresh in South Austin) in a recent Edible Austin article (<http://www.edibleaustin.com/content/component/content/article/39-winter-2009/512-in-your-own-backyard-thai-from-plot-to-plate>) says about the fruit of the Kaffir lime tree :”*The fruit of the tree is small with bumpy skin-the zest of which is used mainly in curry pastes. Kaffir limes are sour and bitter and are not used in today’s cooking, though the juice can be used to clean silver and copper.*” Other Herb Society members commented that they have grown Kaffir lime trees and used the leaves for curries, dressings, marinades and the limes for killer margaritas.

Chicken in Coconut Soup (Tom Kah Gai)

Gwen’s cooking notes are in parenthesis

2 T. oil (olive)
4 cloves garlic - crushed
4 T. green onion- chopped
1 stalk lemon grass - cut into 2" lengths
1 t. red curry paste (often available in Asian section)
2 green chilies chopped (or a small can of chopped chilies)
4 kaffir lime leaves (Gwen has her own plants and you can have some of my leaves!)
1 one-inch piece dried galangal (Kha) (used galangal powder.)
3 cups water (or chicken broth)
1 can coconut milk 14oz. (may use 2)
1 can straw mushrooms (in Asian aisle)
1/4 cup fish sauce " "
1/8 cup fresh lime juice
6 T. cilantro chopped.
2 or 3 chicken breasts chopped.

Stir-fry garlic, onion, lemon grass, curry paste, green chilies, lime leaves and galangal for 2 min. Add broth and bring to boil. Add chicken, cook 4 min.

Add coconut milk, mushrooms, fish sauce, lime juice and simmer for 2 more min.

Garnish with fresh cilantro. As with most soups these ingredients can be varied to your taste. Try adding chopped celery and top off with some fresh ground pepper.

Lucinda’s Apple Rice Salad was a big hit. She offered a suggestion for shortening the brown rice’s cooking time. Soak the rice overnight in water to cook in 1/2 the time, then use whatever water is remaining to adding to the cooking water.



Apple-Rice Salad

1 cup brown rice
 2 cups chopped apple (sprinkle with lemon or lime juice to prevent browning)

1 cup thinly sliced celery
 ¼ cup toasted pistachio nuts
 ¼ cup raisins (can also use currants or dried cranberries)
 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
 2 Tbsp olive oil
 2 tsp honey
 2 tsp Dijon mustard (can use brown mustard)
 2 tsp finely shredded orange peel (I used clementine peel as it is thinner)
 1 glove garlic, finely minced
 ¼ tsp salt

Cook rice in 2 ½ cups water. If you pre-soak the rice overnight, it will cook in about 25 minutes. Use the soaking water for cooking. Chill rice for a couple of hours.

Add apple, celery, nuts and raisins to rice and mix.

For dressing, combine vinegar, honey, oil, mustard, orange peel garlic and salt in a jar, and mix well. Add to rice mixture. Serve alone, or over lettuce leaves.

Serves about 12-15 people as a side dish.

The bread makers were next to discuss their dishes.

Crostini means “baby toast”, Betty explained to the group. She likes to use Ciabatta bread. For this recipe she sliced the bread, brushed it with butter, sprinkled with dill and topped with parmesan cheese. For variety, on some, she substituted pesto before broiling. She cautioned to watch carefully so it doesn’t burn. There is nothing like a cheesy piece of toast to warm the tummy... with or without soup!

For Barbara’s **Rosemary Focaccia** bread she used a basic recipe of oil, water, salt, yeast, flour (she uses 1/3 wheat). She held the dough over 1 day (she has held dough over for as many as 5 days). She brushed with oil and for this version sprinkled the dough with sea salt and rosemary. Barbara brought her bread just out of the oven and it’s rosemary fragrance filled the room! If you would like her recipe it is available from Judy (our chairperson). See her email address at the end of this article.

Gail’s **Mexican Chocolate Brownies** call for brown sugar, Ibarra Chocolate and cinnamon, as well as the usual standard brownie ingredients. She is in the process of perfecting her recipe tweaking the butter, chocolate and flour quantities to yield a brownie that has the perfect blend of moisture and chocolate. Our group thought she had already reached perfection!

Mexican Chocolate Brownies

(3) 1oz squares of unsweetened chocolate, chopped
 1 tablet Mexican chocolate (Ibarra brand), chopped
 1 Cup brown sugar
 1/4 Cup sugar
 3/4 Cup butter
 2 Large eggs
 1 tsp. vanilla
 1/2 tsp salt
 1/2 tsp cinnamon
 1 1/4 Cups all-purpose flour



Preheat oven to 350. Lightly grease a 9-inch square pan and set aside.

In a heavy bottomed saucepan, heat both chocolates with the butter and sugars, stirring often, until melted and combined. Remove from heat and allow to cool for at least 5 minutes. In a medium bowl combine the eggs, salt and vanilla and whisk well. Slowly add the chocolate mixture, stirring until combined. Add the cinnamon and flour and stir until just combined. Do not over mix. Pour into prepared pan and bake for 15-20 minutes. Let cool, and cut into 1 inch squares.

The Culinary Group is open to any Austin Herb Society member and meets at the Austin Botanical Council from 10 AM- 12 PM, the 3rd Friday of every month September-May, except for the month of December. Contact Judy Schlotzhauer, johnandjudy@austin.rr.com for more information

Upcoming Culinary Group Programs

March 19th- Herbs for Dye
 April 16th -Undetermined
 May 21- Salt

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### Tip

**In addition to being an important culinary herb, Garlic will help in the garden.**

Plant one or two garlic cloves among rose bushes and they will remain aphid-free. An infusion of garlic crushed into water and sprayed over affected plants will ward off aphids.

Schofield, Bernard. A miscellany of Garden Wisdom. Running Book Press Book Publishers. Philadelphia, PA. 1990.

## **An interesting and honest account of one early pioneer doctor's use of herbal medicine:**

In about 1893 a female physician, on her way to treat a child that is having difficulty breathing is reviewing what she must do:

``If the child is strangling when it inhales, as if it were breathing through a sponge, then give it spongia; but if it is strangling when it breathes out, give it aconite."

When I reached the baby I listened, but could not tell which way it was strangling. However, I happened to have both medicines with me, so I called for two glasses and mixed the two remedies, each in its own glass.

I gave them both to the mother, and told her to use them alternately, every fifteen minutes, until the baby was better. The baby got well; but whether its recovery was due to the spongia or to the aconite I never knew.

THE STORY OF A PIONEER  
BY ANNA HOWARD SHAW, D.D., M.D.

## **Herbs were used in sacred ceremonies:**

Black Elk, Ogala Souix  
[ceremonial] Maidens wore buckskin dresses dyed scarlet, and their faces were scarlet too. Their hair was braided, and they had wreath of the sweet and cleansing sage. The sacred sage, around their heads, and from the wreath of each in front a single eagle feather hung.

Neihardt John G., (Flaming Rainbow). Black Elk Speaks. University of Nebraska Press: William Morrow & Company. 1961

## **Here is the recipe Barbara promised for the poppy-seed cake she demonstrated at the All About Herbs 2010 event:**

### **Barbara Broering's Poppy seed Cake from Deborah Madison's "Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone"**

Serves 10-12

1 c poppy seeds, soak in ½ c hot milk (I have used less, even ¼ c and it was good)

2 c flour  
1 t baking powder  
1 t baking soda  
3/8 t salt

3 eggs, separated

½ c unsalted butter  
1 c sugar  
2 t vanilla  
1 c buttermilk or sour cream

Set poppy seeds aside to soak for several hours. Or if only for a few minutes, pour off the unabsorbed milk.

Preheat oven to 375° and grease and flour a 9" springform pan.

Mix dry ingredients.

Beat egg whites until firm, but moist.

In another bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in egg yolks one by one. Add vanilla. Scrape down bowl. Stir in buttermilk and drained poppy seeds.

Add dry ingredients by thirds. Be sure it is well mixed. Begin folding in egg whites. Smooth batter into pan. Bake until golden, firm, and beginning to pull away from sides of pan, about 50 minutes. Remove from oven, set on rack to cool. After 10 minutes, gently remove rim to cool the cake.

Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve with strawberries or plain.

### **Austin Herb Society Sponsors**

We appreciate the support of our generous sponsors, many of whom offer discounts to AHS members. You will find more information on our sponsors at [www.austinherbsociety.org](http://www.austinherbsociety.org).

\* indicates a 10% discount\*\* indicates a 15% discount

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453-0639

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#### **Wild Spirit Botanicals and Bodywork, The Wildflower School**

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### **Best Shots from Mary Mills**



**Snow in South Central Texas-Feb2010**