



PIONEER PATHS

Newsletter of the Herb Society of America
Pioneer Unit

September 3

Labor Day

—

September 9

Grandparents' Day

—

September 22

Autumnal Equinox
(First Day of Fall)

—

September 29

Harvest Full Moon



September 2012

Volume 20, Number 1

MONTHLY UNIT MEETING

Date: September 13, 2012

Time: 9:30 a.m. Meet and Greet
10:00 a.m. Presentation and Meeting

Location: Brenham Presbyterian Church

Directions: From Highway 290, take Business 36 north, go west on Highway 389, then one block south on Green Street.

Program: The Soil Food Web

Speaker: John Ferguson

Angel: June Smith

Hosts: Cindy Rollins, Dolores Rowlett, and Lucy Nehrkorn

Lunch: Favorite Herbal or Floral Dish

Book Club: American Grown (Michelle Obama)



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I hope that everyone is looking forward to a new year with the Pioneer Unit as much as I am. Diana Reed has put together an impressive list of programs, and we should be educated and entertained every month. Georgia Sowers has been working on our membership information; we have a new Yearbook to peruse. Janie Plummer has developed a new budget to keep our finances on track, and Karen Cornwell will provide a refreshing take on our minutes each month. In addition, all of the committee chairs are working hard to get our whole enterprise off to a good start.

My thanks to everyone who has assisted with getting this new year off and running. We could not have this organization without all of you who are willing to volunteer your time and talents. Let's work together, and let's have some fun too.

As I work in my garden every weekend, I am reminded about the cyclical nature of life. I believe I pull up the same weeds every week, but more importantly the cycle continues for the plants, as my basil and other herbs and flowers are now setting the seeds that will be next year's plants. I have been harvesting figs and making preserves. Now the pears are ready for preserving, and I better get some pesto in the freezer so that I can add that summer zing to my pasta sauces through the winter.

We repeat all of the tasks for our herb gardens, our flowers, our trees, and even ourselves every year. But with that repetition also comes change. Some of the trees get bigger. Some of the rosemary plants might not make it through the winter. Some new vine might appear in my garden, planted by a passing bird or other creature that visits to taste a plant or dig a hole.

Repetition and change, the cycle continues.

So, too, our cycle of events for the Pioneer Unit continues, repeating meeting places and events, but always with something new as well. I look forward to sharing the traditions with you and to experiencing some new events as well.

Take care. See you in September.

Linda L. Rowlett
Unit Chair



FROM THE PROGRAMS CHAIR

I am sorry to announce that Bird Mangels will not be able to join us at our September meeting. She will be having surgery at the end of August followed by a lengthy recovery. Please keep her in your thoughts. We hope to have her presentation at a later date.

Therefore....

John Ferguson, the founder of Nature's Way Resources, a Houston-based composting, mulch, and recycling company specializing in high quality compost, mulch, and soil mixes, will be presenting the Soil Food Web. He will explain how biological (organic) methods work and how they save time and money in our gardening and landscaping projects. His methods are sustainable, greatly reduce water requirements and other problems, eliminate air and water pollution, and lower total management costs. He will give a non-technical talk with slides designed to give us a better understanding of landscaping and gardening. He will also give us an introduction to the link between soil care and human health and well being.

Mr. Ferguson holds an MS degree in Physics and Geology and is a licensed Soil Scientist in Texas. His personal garden has been featured in several gardening books and Better Homes and Gardens magazine. He recently won the Houston Chronicle's Ultimate Award for the finest quality compost in the Houston region made from recycled materials. In 2007, he won a Keep Houston Beautiful-Mayors Proud Partner Award for Environmental Education, as well as many other awards.

This will be an interesting and informative morning! See you then!

Diana Reed
Programs Chair

PIONEER UNIT WEBSITE

Have you been to our website lately? Ever? It's really well done. In case you haven't, the address is <http://herbsocietypioneer.org/>

Henry Flowers has been keeping it up much like one tends a garden, adding a few new plants here and there and removing those not needed. But like any garden, sometimes we realize that it's more than we have time for. As a result, Henry has handed off the "weeding" to me. I've done quite a bit of web work in the past, so I at least know when to mulch and when to water.

What I need from you, however, is a bit of help in providing me with plants to add to our web "garden." That means I need information from you, articles that you think are interesting to share with others and links that might be of value to other herbal gardeners. You can send me this material as you encounter it at my email gardener@susanlake.net. I can add it at any point that it arrives – no deadline.

Something else that would be of help is feedback. I know many of you are on dialup which makes web pages sometimes slow or impossible to load if there are photographs. When you get a chance, could you go to the site and see if you encounter any problems. If you do, let me know. I can make it easier for you and others if you tell me.

It goes without saying that I'd love any suggestions you might have. Feel free to share them whenever you want. Meanwhile, I'm delighted to serve the unit in this way.

Susan Lake, Web Committee Chair

MINUTES OF UNIT MEETING
HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
PIONEER UNIT
July 12, 2012

Linda Rowlett, Chair, opened the meeting.

Linda introduced members of the West Side Culinary Group: Betty Gasaway, Ann Allen, Alice Kyle, Marijane Lipscomb, and Nell Richards.

The Group's program included the history, personal memories, recipes, and samples of the ice creams and sorbets.. After the program, Linda thanked the participants, angel, and hostesses for the meeting.

Linda reminded members that there would be no meeting in August and that the September topic is Herbs and Flowers for Breakfast.

Georgia Sowers, Membership, noted that she has new sign-in sheets available. She also reminded everyone to check the accuracy of their contact information for the new Yearbook.

Sandy Brown, Hospitality, thanked everyone who signed up for 2012 angels and hostesses. She also reported outstanding needs for the October 2012 and January and May 2013 meetings. She noted that the deadline for printing the Yearbook is mid August. She asked that anyone willing to tentatively agree to assist with meetings contact her as soon as possible.

Sandy also noted that she would be chairing the Book Club until June's return from Cape Cod.

Kay Von Minden, Thyme Well Spent, requested volunteers to help with embroidery projects for the Thyme Well Spent Shoppe.

Finally, Henry Flowers reported that Verena Aeschbacher will be garden coordinator for the Sensory Garden and suggested that anyone available to assist contact him or Verena. He also announced that he brought some ginger plants that were available for members to take home with them.

The meeting was then adjourned for lunch.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Cornwell, Secretary



SENSORY GARDEN

The Brenham ISD Sensory Garden is a very exciting project, introducing children to the enjoyment and the pleasures of nature. But it requires all our input and creative work, so please sign up and be part of this great endeavor! Basically we plan to divide up our responsibilities, maintaining the Garden and working with the children. Without the contacts with the school, the garden would become a lost project. I have contacted Deborah Lansley and the school and some garden sessions are in the plans.

At the meeting in September I will have some sign-up sheets for participation in the garden, or if you have good ideas and/or preferences, please send me an e-mail at cashback@hal-pc.org or telephone 979-865-8814.

Verena Aeschbacher, Coordinator

September Birthdays

September 2 — Kay Scanapico

September 13 — Janie Plummer

September 15 — Pat Cox and Sue Edmundson

September 17 — Lucia Bettler

September 22 — Linda Hartson

September 25 — Charlotte Land

September 30 — Georgetta Welch



MEMBER INFORMATION

New membership cards have arrived and will be at the sign-in table at the September meeting. The new yearbook and membership directory for 2012-2013 should also be at the meeting for members to pick up. Please remember that cards and the yearbook will no longer be mailed so we're looking forward to a great turnout at the meeting in September.

Any questions may be emailed to Georgia at gzsowers@att.net or telephoned to Georgia at [281-486-6006](tel:281-486-6006). Wishing you a great transition to the fall season.

Georgia Sowers
Membership Chair

From the Horticulturist at The Hill

I hope that you have all had a great summer and have enjoyed having a bit more rain to keep the landscape greener than last year. It has been another hot summer, but thankfully not nearly as bad as last year.

The gardens here at Festival Hill are doing very well, but we've still got a lot of dead trees to remove in various areas of the campus and more that are dying – mainly pines due to the combined stress of pine borers and the drought.

One plant that I particularly wanted to mention at the moment is porter weed – *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*. We planted a good-sized patch of it near Ann's Arbor in the late spring and now it is about 5-6 feet tall, blooming beautifully, and it is aflutter with all sorts of butterflies. It is one of my favorite butterfly plants and grows beautifully through the heat of the summer if given adequate water. I know of five different types, but we only presently are growing three. The different types are basically different flower colors, but each of the plants also has a slightly different growth habit. My favorite is the purple one. It grows tall and upright with good-sized leaves. It is the one I mentioned above that is causing such a stir with the butterfly population. There is also a coral pink one that is bigger in stature, but a bit more sparing with its flowers. The other one we have growing is called blue, but it is really more of a blue-purple. It normally only gets 3-4 feet tall and is more compact and seems to have more bloom stalks. You may also come across a red-flowered variety that is much more compact and suitable for container growth. There is also a white-flowered variety that we have grown, but it has small flowers and not much visual impact. I find the red one to be the most cold sensitive and hard to propagate, so we don't grow it any more. The other three do well, but the purple and pink ones are the most likely to survive the winter. This plant is native to the Caribbean, so naturally it loves heat and moisture and disdains the cold. We normally have some of these available for sale at the Herbal Forum.



Thankfully fall is just around the corner and we will hopefully receive blessedly cooler weather, so here are some gardening tips for fall:

September is a great month to begin to sow seeds for fall and winter plants. It's time to start vegetables such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, beets, turnips, and such. We usually start vegetables such as lettuce, kale, and chard in October or November, but if you love them you may want to try them earlier. You never know. If you act quickly you may even be able to get some new tomato plants for fall – but don't procrastinate – do it now.

Herbs such as parsley, cilantro, and fennel can also be started now. Remember that the fall is also a great time to plant perennial herbs such as thyme, lavender, rosemary, and oregano. They'll establish good root systems over the winter and be ready for the heat of next summer.

Another project that is good for September is to give all of your roses a light pruning (not harder pruning as in spring) so that the plants will have a nice shape. This will also induce new growth and a good flush of blooms later in the spring. Remember that this recommendation is also for spring blooming roses. Shaping them now will make them look nice in the spring – when you don't want to prune them. The flower buds on these roses must go through the cold of winter in order to bloom. If you cut them off in the spring then you know what happens – no blooms!

In the gardens we will continue to clean and plant and get the container plants ready to be moved into the greenhouse in early November. We hope cooler weather will give us more drive to get out there and work.

Great Fall Gardening!

Henry Flowers
Horticulturist at The Hill

The Herb Society of America, Pioneer Unit Botany Study Group Data Sheet

Botanical Name: *Sambucus nigra* **Family Name:** Caprifoliaceae

Common Name(s) –Elderberry, elder, European elder, black elder, common elder, elder bush, pipe tree, bore tree, and "Medicine Chest of the People." Botanical name comes from the Greek word "sambuke" meaning "a musical pipe" in reference to the hollowed shoots which are used to make pipes. The common name of "elder" from the Anglo-Saxon word *aeld*, meaning "fire," as the stems were commonly used as kindling.



Origin – Europe, from southern Scandinavia in the north to the Mediterranean from Greece in the east to Portugal in the west and across the sea into Morocco and Algeria. Also native to some regions of western and central Asia. Naturalized in areas of North America – especially the northeast.

Growth Habit – Large, deciduous perennial shrub or small tree to 30 feet tall, but usually shorter. Small creamy white flowers in large corymbs in the spring. Ripe fruits are shiny black when ripe and held on red stalks. Leaves are compound, opposite, and normally with five (sometimes seven) leaflets having toothed margins, and oval to lanceolate. Stems are pithy and dull-green with swollen joints and prominent lenticels on the older stems. The roots, stems, leaves, and unripe fruits contain a poisonous alkaloid and cyanogenic glycoside, which is moderately toxic.

Growth (Cultural) Requirements – Full to partial sun with moist, fertile soil. It normally grows along edges of roads or woods with soils from wet to relatively dry. Commonly found in waste places.

Propagation – Seed, root division, or cuttings. Root suckers can be dug for propagation as well.

Plant Part(s) Used – Ripe berries and flowers, but roots and leaves are used in traditional medicine

Time of Harvest – Flowers – when open, and fruits – when ripe

Medicinal Uses – In the past elder was credited with being a cure for almost every ailment - a panacea. It was commonly used to stimulate sweating in dry fevers. The flowers are can be used to make a tea which can be used to treat even small children in order to break fevers, sooth coughs, and reduce the inflammation of mucous membranes. Flowers can also be used to make ointments and tinctures for soothing chapped or irritated skin. The berries have traditionally been used as a laxative and diuretic. The anthocyanin content of the berries gives them an antioxidant effect. Due to scientifically substantiated antiviral and immune-stimulating activity, elder is becoming more popular in present times as a flu and cold remedy. It is also prescribed for allergies, congestion, burns, irritated skin, and arthritis and rheumatism.

Culinary Uses - Flowers are commonly used to make cordials, teas, elderflower water, and alcoholic beverages such as St. Germain. They can also be fried as fritters or used to flavor desserts and jams. Berries are baked into pies and tarts, cooked into jams, jellies, chutneys, and preserves, and fermented into elderberry wine. The juice has often been used to add color to port and red wines - either a form of adulteration or enhancement depending upon how you view it.

Other Uses – The fruits, stems, and leaves can be used to make a variety of natural dyes, including hair dye. Children have long used the hollow stems to make popguns – the stem is cut, dried and cleared of debris and then a plunger is made of an oak stem with China berry seeds being used as ammunition. Similarly the stems can be used to make blow pipes and simple musical instruments. The wood has a fine grain and is easily cut, making it suitable for making items such as needles, pegs, mathematical instruments, toys, and fences. Elderflower water can be used to make a facial conditioner.

Folklore - Elder is a plant that is historically steeped with much superstition and folklore. A common belief was that elder trees were inhabited by spirits known as an "Elder Tree Mother." Before one cut any wood from the tree, it was necessary to kneel and ask for permission or forgiveness or misfortune may ensue. As a result, there was a common belief that this spirit would haunt the owner of furniture made from elder wood.

Caution: Leaves and unripe or raw berries can be harmful if they are consumed.

(It is the policy of The Herb Society of America not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal or health use. This information is intended for educational purposes only and should not be considered as a recommendation or an endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment.)

Henry Flowers, Garden Chair (Email me if you would like an expanded version of this report.)

WORKSHOPS

Sign up now for the Hypertufa Workshop on September 25 at 10 am at Festival Hill.

Henry Flowers, Carolyn Thomas, and Barbara Hemmer will work with 8 participants to create one container and one or two mushrooms each to take home. You will also learn the process and techniques for hand molding and sand casting hypertufa material. Refreshments will be served.

To sign up for this workshop, please contact Carolyn Thomas at cthomas1138@aol.com or 979-251-8386. Participation will be first come, first served, but there will be a back-up list in case someone drops out. Please send your request with phone and email address.

Sign up now for the Propagation Workshop on October 25.

Have you ever wanted to know more about how to propagate a tree/shrub/perennial etc. that has always interested you?

We're planning a **Propagation Workshop for October 25th, 2012 at 10:00 am in Ann's Arbor at Festival Hill**, the new grape arbor near the pond, taught by Cynthia Mueller (who wrote the chapter on propagation in Bill Welch/Greg Grant's new book on heirloom plants [Heirloom Gardening in the South](#)).

With Henry's blessing, we could take cuttings of a favorite rosemary – out of the many Madalene Hill had gathered – scented geranium – decorative myrtle (some of which at Festival Hill Madalene grew from seed) – or the interesting heirloom fig that Carolyn Thomas' neighbor has growing - prepare these and then take them home to finish off the growing process. Or, if you have a specific favorite of your own that you'd like to multiply to pass along, bring some cuttings. We expect to do three cuttings per person.

There will be a sign-up sheet at the September 13th meeting. If you have questions, please email or call Carolyn Thomas at cthomas1138@aol.com or 979-252-8386.

There are plans in the works for two more workshops, one on tool maintenance and a culinary workshop later in the year.

Carolyn Thomas





September 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
BSG = Botany Study Group CG = Culinary Group	FH = Festival Hill HD= Herbal Delights SG = Sensory Garden					1
2	3 Labor Day Holiday	4 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	5	6 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	7	8
9	10	11 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	12	13 Pioneer Unit Meeting	14	15
16	17	18 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	19	20 BSG	21	22 BISD SG Workday 8:00 a.m.
23	24	25 FH Workday 8:30 to noon Hypertufa 10:00 am	26	27 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	28	29
30						

October 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	3	4 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	5	6
7	8	9 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	10	11 Pioneer Unit Meeting	12	13
14	15	16 Board Meeting 9:00 a.m.	17	18 BSG	19	20
21	22	23 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	24	25 FH Workday 8:30 to noon Propagation 10:00	26	27
28	29	30 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	31		BSG = Botany Study Group CG = Culinary Group	FH = Festival Hill HD= Herbal Delights SG = Sensory Garden





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Volume 20

Editor: Linda L. Rowlett, Ph.D.

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The Mission Statement of The Herb Society of America: "To promote the knowledge, use, and delight of herbs through educational programs, research, and sharing the experience of its members with the community."

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