



# PIONEER PATHS

Newsletter of the Herb Society of America  
Pioneer Unit

February 2019

Volume 26, Number 6

## MONTHLY UNIT MEETING

- Date: February 14, 2019
- Time: 9:30 a.m. Meet and Greet  
10:00 a.m. Program followed by Meeting
- Location: St. John's United Church of Christ  
516 North Colorado Street, Burton
- Directions: From Highway 290, take 125 north into Burton. At North Brazos Street, turn right (north) to East Texas Street. Turn right and drive one block to North Colorado Street. The church will be on your left.
- Program: Growing with Aquaponics
- Speaker: Carrie and Roger Grissom  
Ives Creek Organics
- Angel: Jane Press
- Hosts: Belinda Weatherly, Mary Doebbeling, Royceanna Kendall,  
Mary Ann and Oscar Hillegist, and Kay Von Minden
- Lunch: Apples and Pears and Greens. Oh My!

February 14  
Valentine's Day



February 18  
Presidents' Day

February 19  
Snow Full Moon



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Hello, everybody!

Welcome to a new year! But I am more than ready for spring! We have had too many wet, cloudy days for my taste. The weeds seem to be doing well enough, but the gardens are looking a bit ratty. Even so, my thyme still survives and my bronze fennel is starting to look like a hedge! I hope your gardens have survived as well.

Your Pioneer Unit Board held a meeting near the end of January, and we are ramping up for Forum. There is a summary of information in this month's newsletter. In the meantime, if you happen to be stuck inside, I hope you are working on something for the Thyme Well Spent Shop (TWSS) or the Gazebo. As always, every one of you has something he or she can do to make the Herbal Forum yet another special event. There are lots of opportunities to be involved BEFORE Forum, such as gathering and packaging seeds, gathering and drying herbs, participating in condiment preparation workshops, crafting, sewing and embroidering, and donating items for the Silent (National Intern) Auction, just to name a few. Also, please be saving the following items: (1) books and magazines for the Scholarship Table and (2) flats for use at the Plant Sale. You can bring books and magazines to the February meeting or drop them off at Festival Hill along with any cardboard flats you might have gathered. Also, Linda Rowlett is looking for an assistant to help her with the Silent Auction. After many years, she would like to share the experience with others. This will be an excellent opportunity to earn volunteer hours while learning about this important unit activity. Auction items have already begun to be identified so we have a head start. Contact Linda if you would like to help.

As a short add-on to the February meeting, we will have a very brief tutorial on all things Plant Sale. It will be an excellent opportunity to find out how it all works. Even if you have already participated in pre-Forum activities, think about where you might like to help in March.

Also, stay tuned for more information about EdCon in Madison, Wisconsin, June 13-15. I understand that we will get an update when registration information is available on the HSA website, sometime in late January or early February.

Have a wonderful, happy Valentine's Day with your sweetheart, friends, and family!

Karen Cornwell  
Unit Chair



## FROM THE PROGRAM CHAIR

I'm sitting inside this late Sunday morning wishing for more sun. It's a bit chilly outside. Yesterday though I repotted and planted and took all or most of my indoor plants out to bathe on the porch for sun and to be watered.

I am excited this month to welcome guests Carrie and Roger Grissom, owners of Ives Creek Organics near Bellville. They will teach us about Aquaponics, replacing soil with water to grow plants. One of the herbs they grow is basil! They will bring along produce for us to taste too.

Here is a picture of baby plants growing in the water:



February's food theme – Apples and Pears and Greens!!!

Looking forward to seeing you.

Kathe Forrest

Programs Chair

### IMPORTANT NOTE

- At the February meeting, we will be signing up for the special lunch offered at Festival Hill during our work day at the March meeting. Active members pay \$5 and others pay \$25. If you are missing the February meeting but want to reserve lunch on March 7, please mail your check to:

- Lori Yeats
- 7442 FM 2981
- Fayetteville, Texas 78940

**MINUTES OF UNIT MEETING**  
**HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA PIONEER UNIT**  
January 10, 2019

Karen Cornwell, Chair, welcomed members, and Kathe Forrest, Vice Chair Programs, introduced speaker Linda Gay with a program about the Best Flowers for Texas Winters.

Kathe let members know about a presentation on growing fruit trees to be held at Winedale on January 11. The fee is \$20.00.

The February meeting will be at St. John's Church in Burton with a program on Growing with Aquaponics.

Kathe thanked the hostess team. Belinda Weatherly encouraged members to take home the table decorations. Cheryl Easley won the drawing.

Karen Cornwell expressed appreciation to the Forum Steering Committee – Kathe Forrest, Linda Rowlett, Pat Cox, and Henry Flowers. Forum 2019 flyers will be available at the February meeting and Henry will send them out on the group email. Forum will be only one day this year instead of two, but the plant sale and gift shop will be open Friday and Saturday as usual. The March meeting will be a workday at Festival Hill to finish packaging and labeling the gift shop items and to clean up the plant sale areas.

Karen announced a short orientation meeting to be held after lunch to which old as well as new members are welcomed.

Georgia Sowers, Vice Chair Programs, welcomed visitors Jean Bachofner, with Beverly Elam; Elisa Smith, who has previously attended Forum; Myra Simmons, with Betty Pior; Ann Lugg and Leona Marshall, with Linda Rowlett; Helen Foster, with Sherrie Tolbert; and Jasmine Lucero with her daughter Hannah, both of whom have attended the plant sale.

Cathy Comiskey asked members to send good thoughts and wishes to Carla Lessard who was not at the meeting as she was having stem cells injected for her back issues.

Kay Von Minden reminded members that a field trip is being organized to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center for April 26.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pat Cox, Secretary



## PIONEER UNIT BOARD MEETING January 16, 2019, Menke House, Festival Hill

Present: Karen Cornwell, Kathe Forrest, Georgia Sowers, Beverly Elam, Henry Flowers, Lori Yeats, Lynn Ehler, Joyce Caddell, Johnnie Pitts, Marcella Ausmus, Cathy Nitsch, Kay Von Minden, Mary Reeves and Pat Cox. Carolyn Thomas and Sara Holland were present as representatives of the Botany Study Group.

**Programs:** Kathe Forrest, Vice Chair Programs, said all programs for Forum are confirmed. Hospitality Chair Lori Yeats was asked to assume the responsibility of coordinating with Festival Hill for Unit lunches, specifically the March working lunch and the December Christmas lunch.

**Membership:** Georgia Sowers, Vice Chair Membership, made a motion to ratify out of committee new member Linda Yochim.

**Motion:** A motion was made and approved out of committee to ratify new member Linda Yochim.

**Treasurer:** Beverly Elam, Treasurer, emailed the Board copies of the PU Budget Summary Report and Quarterly Income Statement for Three Months Ending December 31, 2018. Henry Flowers, Past Chair, distributed copies of the plant sale budget for Forum 2019.

**Motion:** Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Board voted unanimously to approve the plant sale budget for Forum 2019.

### **Standing Committee Reports**

*Archives and Rosemary* – Lynn Ehler thanked those who have given her cards.

*Education/Special Events* – Kay Von Minden and Mary Reeves have organized a trip to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the Natural Gardener in Austin for April 26. Details at the February meeting.

*Scholarships* – Joyce Caddell reported the two Unit scholarship recipients have received their checks.

*Communications* – Cathy Nitsch distributed copies of proposed ads for Forum and the total is within her budget. Susan Lake is still looking for a back-up person for the website.

*Gardens* – Johnnie Pitts reported that Saturday's workday at the Sensory Garden has been rescheduled for January 26 due to weather. Johnnie will be resigning as Chair of the Sensory Garden at the end of the school year. Henry and the nominating committee will look for another chair.

*Plant Sale/Gazebo* – Karen will have sign-up sheets at the February meeting for work at Forum. Susan Yancey has agreed to be plant sale co-chair.

**Motion:** Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Board voted unanimously to approve the appointment of Susan Yancey as co-chair of the plant sale.

*Thyme Well Spent Shop* – Pat Cox reported that Thyme Well Spent Shop planning is ongoing.

### **New Business**

a) Brenham Presbyterian Church has asked if the Unit's donation for meeting at the church can be earmarked for their Galilee Garden fund instead of their general fund.

**Motion:** Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Board voted unanimously that Brenham Presbyterian Church can earmark the Unit's donation money for their Galilee Garden.

b) Carolyn Thomas and Sara Holland reported that the Botany Study Group will be discontinued after their next meeting. Without Henry, the group is not able to maintain the Pharmacy Garden adequately. The Group can be restarted if there is a change at Festival Hill.

Respectfully submitted, Pat Cox, Secretary

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Our Pioneer Unit enjoyed a good program about flowers presented by Linda Gay, and it was appropriate because now is the time to plan for planting flowers of many varied types.

Our visitors last week were all repeats, with the exception of Jasmine Lucero and her daughter Hannah from Brenham who signed up at the Plant Sale last year (she has been following us on Facebook!). Both Ann Lugg from Industry and Leona Marshall from New Ulm were here for their fourth visits, with Linda Rowlett. Myra Simmons from La Grange was here for her third visit, previously with Betty Pior. Helen Foster and Jean Bachofner, both from Round Top, were visiting for their second times, previous guests of Sherrie Tolbert and Bev Elam, respectively. Elisa Smith from Bellville was here for her second visit after attending our December meeting. With the exception of Myra Simmons who had to leave before lunch, all of these guests attended our Orientation and were able to gain a great deal of information about how we operate as a fun-filled and herb-loving Unit.

We have begun serious planning for this year's Plant Sale and Thyme Well Spent Shoppe, and several workshops will begin now for Forum preparations. As well as workshops, both of the gardens, Festival Hill at Round Top and the Sensory Garden on Blue Bell Road in Brenham, will require a good deal of maintenance as we approach March and beyond. These are excellent ways to earn the required 20 hours volunteer time for the year and enjoy great interaction and communications with our friends and other members.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about Membership, please contact me at [gzsowers@att.net](mailto:gzsowers@att.net) or call 979-836-8228 or contact Co-Chair Terry Ross at [terryr@cvctx.com](mailto:terryr@cvctx.com) or call 979-966-7133 so we can help you. As well, many of our members will be more than happy to help if you ask them. Thank you to all of you who are diligently reporting your hours. I am catching up recording almost all of them. I email each of you a copy of your updated record only when the hours are added, which will also include your record of attendance.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our meeting on St Valentine's Day, the 14th of February, in Burton. Wishing all of you a wonderfully romantic time with your special Valentine!

Herbal Hearts,  
Georgia Sowers  
Membership Chair







## February Birthdays

February 3 — Tony Scanapico

February 20 — Bonnie Lout

February 21 — Janie Cornelius and Mary Sockwell

February 22 — Sara Holland

February 23 — Karen Cornwell

February 25 — Susan Lake

## BOTANY STUDY GROUP — FINAL MEETING

Botany Study Group will meet at 9 am on February 21 in the Pharmacy Garden to do a final clean up and mulching where needed.

At 10:00 or so we will meet in the Menke House parlor to hear the remaining reports on Africa. Pat Garrett will do one on coffee, Mary Reeves on luffa, and Phoebe Lake on bitter root.

Everyone is invited to participate in the garden work and the meeting.

Carolyn Thomas 979-251-8386 or email [cthomas1138@aol.com](mailto:cthomas1138@aol.com)

### FIELD TRIP SCHEDULED

We are planning a trip to the LBJ wildflower center. The date is April 26th, 2019.

We will have a 51 passenger bus.

Price is \$25.00 per member and \$50.00 non-member

Cash or check only

A refund will only be issued IF you have a replacement

Lunch is included

Entrance fee is free with HSA badge

After the wildflower center, we will visit the Natural Gardener in Austin.

Kay Von Minden

## Herbal Forum 2019

### Festival Hill Herbal Forum and Pioneer Unit Plant Sale, Gazebo, and Thyme Well Spent Shop

Herbal Forum is our only annual fundraiser, and we count on all of you to make it a success. By volunteering, you earn hours toward your annual requirement, have fun learning about the plants and products we sell, and work more closely with other members. Many of you may want to work in more than one area to familiarize yourself with all aspects of Forum. It will be held March 15-16 at Festival Hill, with setup starting Monday, March 11th. Forum contacts are:

Forum Master of Ceremonies: Tony Scanapico will oversee Forum activities and speaker introductions. (actual Forum is on Saturday only this year)

Forum Program Chair: Kathe Forrest is the primary contact for setting up Forum program and speakers. Festival Hill is responsible for the publicity for Forum, but not for our sales.

*Pioneer Unit members provide support for Forum, including set up, speaker angels, and registration at the event, but not Forum pre-registration which is through the Festival Hill office.*

#### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND CONTACTS:

Festival Hill Forum Registration: Ann Allen – Register Forum attendees as they arrive.

Festival Hill Forum set-up: Lynn and Alton Ehler – Set-up Forum programs (separate from Pioneer Unit's plant and gift sales)

Festival Hill Forum Speaker's Angels: Kathe Forrest

PLANT SALE and THYME WELL SPENT SHOP (TWSS) will be two days (March 15-16)

Thyme Well Spent Shop: Pat Cox and Jane Press, co-chairs for TWSS — covers the year-long preparation of sale items, set-up and design of the shop, cashiers and sales during Forum, and takedown at end.

Plant Sale: Karen Cornwell and Susan Yancey, co-chairs — for the overall plant sale including set up, plant sales area and the holding area, cashiers, sales and maintenance during Forum, and takedown at the end.

Gazebo: Barbara Hemmer — prepares items for the Gazebo, manages design and set up, sales within the Gazebo, and takedown at the end.

Finance Chair: Beverly Elam, PU Treasurer — obtains start-up money for cashiers for TWSS and plant sales areas; also banking associated with the sales.

Publicity: Cathy Nitsch — publicity for the Herbal Forum plant sale and Thyme Well Spent Shop, including newspaper contacts and distribution of flyers. Everyone can help by contacting gardening friends and members of garden-interested organizations to remind them how special our plant and gift sales are. Cathy will have flyers and posters at the next meeting in February so please help distribute to local area libraries, etc. The flyers and Festival Hill Herbal Forum information will be posted on our web site.

Talk with the coordinators for the area or areas where you would like to work.

Karen Cornwell will maintain the complete list of who is working and where they will be working during set-up, the Forum itself, and takedown.

If you have questions, please contact the committee chair for your area of interest.



## MORE FORUM NOTES

We need lots of soda/beer cardboard flat boxes for the plant sale so save any you come across and bring them to the February or March meetings or bring them directly to the Plant Sale during the Herbal Forum.

Garden/Plant/Cooking related books and magazines are needed for the scholarship table in the Thyme Well Spent Shop during the Herbal Forum. These can also be handed in at the February or March meeting or you can drop them by Festival Hill at any time. We need them by the March meeting at the latest because they will need to be sorted and priced before the event.

### SILENT AUCTION

As many of you know, we have conducted a silent auction at each year's Forum, and for the past few years we have raised over \$800 for the National Intern. We hope to have an equally successful Silent Auction this year. The Silent Auction will be situated on a table or two in the main building at Festival Hill, where there is room for a few select items. These items need to be pretty special to realize as much funding as possible for the National Intern. If you have a special herbal item that you think would be of interest to others, please bring it to me at the February or March meeting, or contact me, and I will make arrangements to collect it from you.

**And please note: Pioneer Unit members are invited to bid on the Silent Auction items! Don't miss out!**

**Important note: Please let me know if you are willing to work on the Silent Auction with me. I am looking for someone to take over this job for future years.**

Linda Rowlett — lrowlett@gmail.com or 281-757-1988

## The Magic and Mystery of Herbs - Calabar Bean

I love to read a good book and years ago our affiliate member Susan Wood recommended a fabulous book by Alan Bradley which in turn had been recommended to her by Dr. Art Tucker, another long-time member of the Herb Society of America. This book, The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie, features as its main character an 11 year-old girl named Flavia De Luce. The setting is her fictional country home of Buckshore near the equally fictional town of Bishop's Lacey in post-war 1950's England. Flavia is a chemistry prodigy and has her own chemical laboratory, originally set up by her great uncle Tarquin de Luce, a world-renowned chemist. She uses her knowledge to explore the world around her and inevitably, as this and subsequent books in the series are murder mysteries, to solve or thwart murders.

Just recently the 10th book in the series, The Golden Tresses of the Dead, was released. and I listened to it (I do love audiobooks!) as soon as I could.

This book is equally as good as all the previous books, but what I want to write about here is a plant that plays a pivotal role in the story. This plant is commonly known as the Calabar bean and it is from tropical equatorial regions of Africa. Its botanical name is *Pysostigma venenosum*, and it is a member of the family Fabaceae, also known as the legume or bean family. In growth habit it is a vining plant and appears very much like the scarlet runner bean. In the tropics it can reach about 50 feet in length (or height if growing vertically). Its seeds are about the size of a fava bean, but are a bit broader and when mature turn a rich chocolatey brown color. In fact, they generally look like a roasted coffee bean, but don't have that bean's rich aroma.

The most notable thing about these beans is that they contain some potent alkaloids: calabarine, which has atropine-like effects, and physostigmine, which has an opposite effect. Both of these chemicals are medicinal in the right amount, but toxic in higher doses (much like most medicinal chemicals). Physostigmine is a cholinesterase inhibitor and acts by inhibiting communication between the nerves and muscles. This results in seizures, salivation and loss of control of the bladder and bowels, which eventually leads to respiratory failure and death by asphyxiation. The antidote is a proper amount of atropine, another alkaloid most notably found in the plant belladonna (*Atropa belladonna*), a member of the nightshade (Solanaceae) family and historically used for the dilation of the pupils (dilating the pupils is used for checking the eyes for potential problems, but historically was also used by women to cosmetically enhance the beauty of their eyes – hence the name “bella donna” – pretty woman). It is notable that for the nullification of one of these by the other, they have to be in a nearly perfect ratio. If not in that balance they actually enhance each other's effects and can speed death. Thus the calabarine, an alkaloid very similar to atropine, in the Calabar bean doesn't nullify, but enhances the action of the physostigmine, making the beans a potent poison.

Historically the peoples of Calabar, the region in the "bend" of West Africa along the Gulf of Guinea and around the city of Calabar, now in southeastern Nigeria, used these beans as an "ordeal bean." They would administer it to someone accused of witchcraft. If the person was guilty they would die from the poison and if not guilty they would vomit it back up and be saved (perhaps this is a better method than the ordeal by drowning favored in Europe?). If they did not vomit and survived they were deemed "guilty to a lesser degree" and were sold into slavery. Physostigmine has also had a variety of uses in modern medicine, but being so tricky its uses have waned in favor of more modern medicines.

I strongly suggest that you give the Flavia stories a try and when you get to this 10th volume you'll already know a bit about the Calabar bean. The botanical world around is full of wonder and mystery and never ceases to amaze!

Henry Flowers





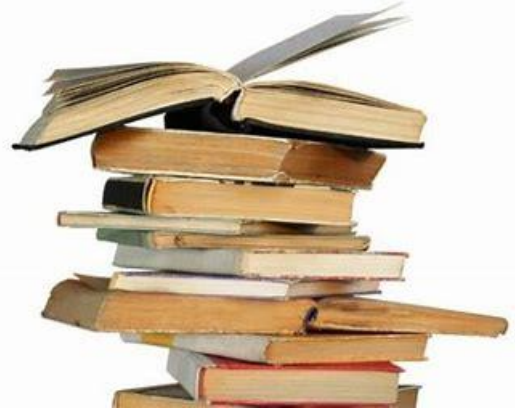
**EdCon:** We are headed to beautiful Madison, Wisconsin. This youthful city has a strong interest in gardening, herbs, permaculture, and living a healthy lifestyle. Money Magazine rated Madison the "Best Place to Live in Wisconsin" while Cheatsheet.com rates it the "#1 Nicest City in America." No doubt Madison will satisfy our insatiable quest for interesting plant knowledge and garden experiences.

For more information including host hotel location and rates, a list of speakers, schedule of events, and ideas of places to visit, visit [herbsociety.org](http://herbsociety.org). Printable schedules and registration forms are also available on the website.

### Contact Information

Herb Society of America  
9019 Kirtland Chardon Road  
Kirtland, OH 44094  
440.256.0514  
[www.herbsociety.org](http://www.herbsociety.org)

BOOK REVIEW:  
The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane  
by Lisa See



If you want to learn some interesting facts about growing and marketing tea, our herb of focus for the Herbal Forum, while also reading an engaging story about the ethnic minority Akha people of China, I recommend The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane. The novel opens in the 20th Century in a remote mountain village where tea is grown and harvested by hand. We follow the life of Li-Yan as she participates in her traditional family life and work. However, Li-Yan becomes more educated than most women of her time, and she gradually rejects some of the traditions of her people. After Li-Yan has a child outside of marriage and secretly gives her up for adoption, rather than allowing the child to be killed as the Akha beliefs required, Li-Yan moves away from her village, and the scope of the story broadens to include the international market in fine teas. This contrast between the insular lives of the Akha and the world of the larger cities in China is striking.

The novel also follows the life of Li-Yan's child, who was adopted by American parents and named Haley. Li-Yan knows nothing of her daughter or where she is living, but ironically Li-Yan moves to America to a location not far from her daughter. Haley lives a privileged life, but wonders about her origins and her birth mother. The only clue she has to her origins is a special cake of tea that her mother tucked into her blanket when she abandoned her outside an orphanage in China.

Even in America, Li-Yan is involved in the business of fine teas. The novel provides details about the cultivation and processing of Pu'er, the rare tea grown and fermented by the Akha, as well as matcha, the finely ground powder of specially grown tea leaves. Li-Yan is heir to a hidden grove of tea plants that has been handed down through the women in her family. This grove is not part of the family's traditional harvest, but is emblematic of the bond between Li-Yan and her mother and is the setting for important events in the novel.

The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane provides insight to the lives of those who grew and processed tea manually during fairly contemporary times. The novel is about much more, however, including the relationships between mothers and daughters, the clash of cultures, and the bonds of tradition. Lisa See is known for providing plenty of detail and for developing complex characters, and this novel is no exception!

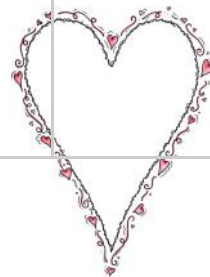
Linda L. Rowlett

(Reviewer's Note: Like Henry, I enjoy audio books, and this was one of the books I "read" by listening. The audio version had a number of narrators, which enhanced the listening experience.)


# February 2019



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
BSG = Botany Study Group CG = Culinary Group	FH = Festival Hill SG = Sensory Garden				1 SG Students in the garden	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 Pioneer Unit Meeting	15	16
17 Newsletter Deadline lrowlett@gmail.com	18	19	20	21 BSG at 9:00 FH HSA Webinar	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		



# March 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
BSG = Botany Study Group CG = Culinary Group	FH = Festival Hill SG = Sensory Garden				1	2
3	4	5	6 CG at 11:00 Menke House	7 Pioneer Unit Meeting	8	9
10	11	12	13	14x	15 Plant Sale and TWSS	16 Herbal Forum Plant Sale and TWSS
17 	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 Newsletter Deadline lrowlett@gmail.com	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						





## PIONEER PATHS

Volume 26

Editor: Linda L. Rowlett, Ph.D.

Pioneer Paths is a publication of The Herb Society of America, Pioneer Unit. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$10.00 per year.

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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Chair—Karen Cornwall

Vice Chair Programs—Kathe Forrest  
Secretary—Pat Cox

Vice Chair Membership—Georgia Sowers  
Treasurer—Beverly Elam

Pioneer Unit  
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Post Office Box 23  
Round Top, Texas 78954