



PIONEER PATHS

Newsletter of the Herb Society of America
Pioneer Unit

January 20166

Volume 22 Number 5

January 1
New Year's Day

January 5
Twelfth Night

January 20
Board Meeting
Menke House Parlor
Festival Hill
(9:00 a.m.)

January 23
Wolf Full Moon



MONTHLY UNIT MEETING

- Date: January 14, 2016
- Time: 9:30 a.m. Meet and Greet
10:00 a.m. Program followed by Meeting
- Location: Brenham Presbyterian Church
900 South Jackson Street, Brenham, Texas
- Directions: From Highway 290 in Brenham, take Business 36 north, turn west on College Avenue, and then south on Jackson Street.
- Program: The Foods and Spices of Northern and Western Africa
- Speaker: Dr. Lois Sutton
- Angel: Mary Doebbling
- Hosts: Susan Lake, Joyce Lane, Ronda Herzog, Lucy Nehrkorn, Karen Springer, and Pam Traylor
- Lunch: Mediterranean or Moroccan Inspirations
- After: New Member Orientation



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to 2016! This will undoubtedly be another great year with the chile pepper as the herb of the year. I hope you all learned something from my presentation about the chile pepper at the December meeting. It was a fun program to put together, and I know that I personally learned a great deal by doing so. If you had to miss the program and want a copy of the handout, just let me know and I can mail or email you a copy.

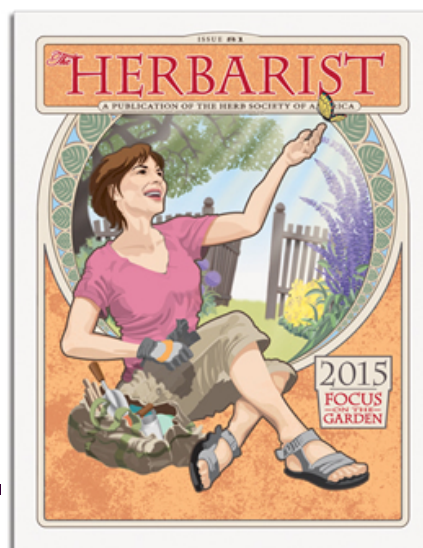
If you are ever wanting to learn more about a plant or garden related subject, a great way to make sure that you do is to commit to doing a program or report about it and that will be an impetus to do the work. We are always in need of some good member-presented programs or written reports for the newsletter. If you have an idea for one, then consider applying for a member scholarship later this summer as the funds can be used to support research activities.

Another great way to learn more about plants is to get involved with our Botany Study Group. This group meets once a month (except for March) and works for a short while, usually around an hour, to maintain the Pharmacy Garden. They then have a meeting at which some members present research reports about plants. Presently the group is studying the useful plants of South America, which just happens to be the origin of chile peppers. It is a fun group, and interesting snacks involving a researched plant often are great additions. There is often one of the reports presented to our whole unit every month in the unit newsletter. If you'd like to learn more about this group, just ask me or one of the current members, or you can read about it and the Pharmacy Garden in an article I wrote for the recently published edition of The Herbarist.

The Herbal Forum is just a few months away, and as we get closer to March we'll start to swing into full gear. There will be many workshop opportunities in the next couple of months to help put together items for the gift shop, and if you'd like to do some work at home, especially in the needlework department, I'm sure that our Thyme Well Spent chairs can get you set up with some projects. I'm looking forward to seeing more chile pepper-related products this year, and I'm sure that our customers will be too.

I wish you all the best in this new year—may it be a bright and blessed one,

Henry Flowers, Pioneer Unit Chair



FROM THE PROGRAMS CHAIR

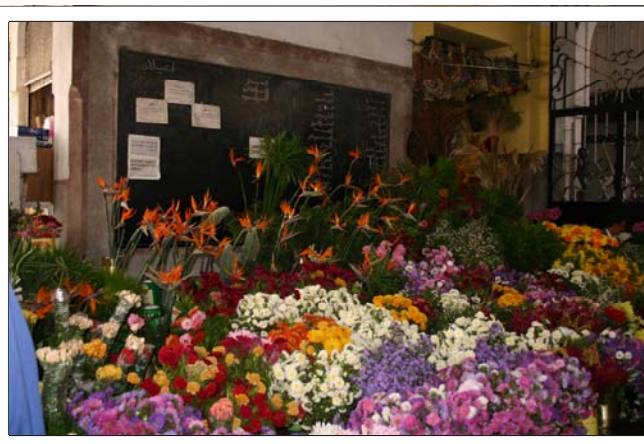
With all that's gone on this past December since our last meeting, it's hard to play catch-up. Our meeting went extremely well with Henry Flowers giving us an excellent introduction to the pepper world. As the theme for the 2016 Round Top Herbal Forum says, "Some Like It Hot, Some Don't." The luncheon at the Menke House Dining Room went off without a hitch, and it was enjoyed by all especially that chocolate cake with its hint of pepper. The luncheon was mostly underwritten by the Unit as a "Thank You" to the members for all the work you do to make the Unit such a success. We also need to thank Henry for making the luncheon a success because of the way he worked with the kitchen staff, got the menu together and researched the recipes. One aspect of December that helped me get through it was the warm weather. As I've mentioned to many of you in the past, I spent a life time, one winter in South Dakota. And so I don't complain about the heat, just the cold. Though many folks like the seasons, I have to tell them I do too. It's just that I would like for winter to come one day in February and THEN BE GONE!!! Some folks said to me we need the cold to get rid of the insects. When I heard that, all I could think of is summers in the northern states and Alaska with their huge biting flies and mosquitoes.

But, moving on to our January meeting: it'll be on the 14th. We'll be meeting at the Brenham Presbyterian Church, 900 South Jackson Street. Our speaker, Dr. Lois Sutton, is an active member of our Pioneer Unit. Her topic, "The Foods and Spices of Northern and Western Africa," is going to be a lot of fun and, by the way, very educational. Here's how she is looking at her program: "Who among us has not seen a picture of the spice shops in African and Arabian souks? So colorful, so exotic – hinting at ancient mysteries of caravans and spice traders! Our usual studies of the spice routes follow these exotic flavors from Mesopotamia into Europe or take us along with the Portuguese, English and Dutch to the Maluccas (Spice Islands). Instead, travel the coastal routes of the Phoenicians, the overland northern African caravans and much later, the short but treacherous sailing routes across the narrow Straits of Gibraltar. What was traded? What still is traded? Morocco, both ancient and modern, will tell us some of these stories." She has my interest.

And remember: the luncheon theme is "Mediterranean or Moroccan Inspirations." Wow, let's experiment.

See you at the meeting.

Tony Scanapico, Programs Chair



MINUTES OF UNIT MEETING
HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
PIONEER UNIT
DECEMBER 10, 2015

Henry Flowers, Chair, welcomed members to the December meeting.

Tony Scanapico, Vice Chair-Programs, introduced today's speaker, Henry Flowers, and told members about Henry's article about Festival Hill's Pharmacy Garden in the current issue of The Herbarist. Unit member and HSA past president Lois Sutton is editor of The Herbarist. She will present the January program on Foods and Spices of Northern and Western Africa.

Henry presented a program on chile peppers, the 2016 herb of the year, with colorful slides, lots of fascinating information, and a delicious snack of bittersweet chocolate and chipotle bark with salted pistachios.

Betty Pior, Hospitality, thanked Henry for the program and thanked today's hostesses who included Kay Scanapico, Cheryl Easley, and Carolyn Hayes.

Georgia Sowers, Vice Chair-Membership, announced the visitors: Royceanna Kendall with Cathy Comiskey, John Pittman with his wife Frances, Ray Hayes with his wife Carolyn, Robert Lake with his wife Phoebe, and Mary Sockwell and Carolyn McNellie with Euphanel Goad.

Henry welcomed new member Susan Yancey.

Susan Wood passed out free samples of flower seeds, and Henry encouraged members to take more from the boxes Susan brought.

There were several door prizes which were won by Jean Zavoda, Karen Cornwell, Janie Plummer, Bob Sowers, Cindy Nash, Susan Lake, Euphanel Goad, and Frances Pittman. Henry thanked all the prize donors.

Henry invited members to go up on the stage to see the chile program display, and then the meeting was adjourned for lunch at the Menke House.

Respectfully submitted,
Pat Cox
Secretary



MEMBER INFORMATION

Welcome to 2016, and it seems that 2015 just flew right past us! Great interest has been expressed by several of our guests last year to become new active members! In December we enjoyed a large number of guests and visitors, as well as husbands with their member wives. Prospective members present included Royceanna Kendall with Cathy Comiskey for her second visit and Ray Hayes with his wife Carolyn Hayes for his third visit. Frances Pittman's husband John was with her, and Robert Lake was with his wife Phoebe Lake, who is one of our newer members. And Euphanel Goad brought her two friends Mary Sockwell and Carolyn McNellie, who have been with us before. Our newest member Susan Yancey was introduced and welcomed to the Unit by Henry Flowers during the meeting that he presented on Chili Peppers. Susan's new membership bio was in our December newsletter so you may update your current yearbooks if you haven't already done so. And our affiliate member Peggy Cook was also with us. Welcome to all of you, and we will look forward to seeing you again in this year!

Our longtime active members Lynn Ehler and Alton Ehler now have email! Please update your current yearbooks to include their email address of ehler3138@gmail.com, and this information will be forwarded to HSA National and our Discussion Forum listserv.

We're now at the halfway point of our membership year, and there will be several areas where members may attain their required hours. These include workdays at the two gardens, Festival Hill in Round Top and the Sensory Garden at Brenham Elementary School on Blue Bell Rd (FM 577) in Brenham. Workshops are also being discussed and scheduled to prepare for our annual Forum and Plant Sale in March, which of course will be upon us before we know it.

For all your new members, or anyone who needs a refresher: there will be an orientation session after the January meeting and luncheon.

If anyone has questions or concerns about membership, please email me at gzsowers@att.net or call [979-836-8228](tel:979-836-8228). I'm happy to help. Others of our members are always glad to guide you also. Thank you all. I look forward to seeing you at our January meeting.

Enjoy a Herbal New Year!
Georgia Sowers
Membership Chair

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- January 1 — Carolyn Thomas
- January 7 — Mary Doebbeling
- January 9 — Erica Menconi
- January 18 — Verena Aeschbacher
- January 19 — Oscar Hillegeist
- January 26 — Georgia Sowers
- January 27 — Cindy Nash
- January 28 — Euphanel Goad



Volunteer of the Month

This month, we recognize our active member Pat Garrett as Volunteer of the Month for January 2016! Pat was brought to our Unit by her friend and family member Wanda Hubbard, and she promptly brought her daughter-in-law Erica Menconi to us as another new member. She is a great asset to our Unit with her help in the gardens, as well as participating in workshops for Forum. Pat also has been very active helping out at Forum and the Plant Sale in March as she communicates well with our visitors there. We appreciate your efforts, Pat, and thank you for being a member of the Pioneer Unit!



In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we report that our dear friend, former longtime active member and affiliate member, Nell Richards, passed away on December 29, 2015, at 3:30 a.m. Nell was one of our very early members soon after the Pioneer Unit was founded. She was a loyal and faithful member and active in various positions on the Board and Committees, as well as helping with different presentations and programs for our Unit meetings. Nell was a dear friend to so many of us and will be missed greatly. We wish her family and friends peace in their loss and bereavement.



Thyme Well Spent Shop

We are looking for some members who are interested in making Henry's Bittersweet Chipotle Chocolate Bark with Pistachios to sell in the Shop at Forum. If this is something that interests you, please contact Pat Cox or Louise Rice.

Cathy Comiskey will be making the herbal teas soon, and the January meeting will be the last opportunity for you to give her any dried herbs you may have. The herbs she needs for the herbal teas are elderberries, rosella, lemon balm, chamomile, lavender, peppermint, rose hips, and spearmint.

As always, be on the lookout and let us know if you see something unique that we can make and sell in the shop.

Thanks so much for all your efforts!
Pat Cox and Louise Rice
Thyme Well Spent Co-Chairs

Herb of January—*Capsicum* or Chile Peppers

The Genus *Capsicum* – 5 Major Species

There are five major cultivated species in the genus *Capsicum*. The following paragraphs contain information about each species and how to tell them apart.

Here is a simple key to differentiating them on a botanical level (DeWitt and Bosland):

1-Seeds black, corolla purple	<i>C. pubescens</i>
1-Seeds tan	2
2-Corolla with spots	<i>C. baccatum</i>
2-Corolla without spots	3
3-Corolla white	4
3-Corolla greenish	5
4-Flowers solitary and filament nonpurple	<i>C. annuum</i>
4-Flowers two or more per node and filament purple	<i>C. chinense</i>
5-Flowers solitary	<i>C. frutescens</i>
5-Flowers two or more per node	<i>C. chinense</i>

Capsicum annuum is the most important of all in an economic sense and for the sheer number of varieties available. This species contains mild varieties such as the bell pepper (Scoville Heat Units [SHU] = 0) and the venerable jalapeño of Mexico (SHU = 3,500-8,000). It is believed to be native to Central America from Panama in the south to Mexico and southern Texas in the north.

Here is a list of some of the other well-known varieties in this species: Alma Paprika, Banana, Cascabel, Cayenne (SHU 30,000-50,000), Cherry, Fresno, Guajillo, Hungarian Wax, New Mexico, Peter Pepper, Pepperoncini, Poblano, and Serrano.

The **chiltepin or chile piquin** (*C. annuum aviculare*), also commonly known as the bird pepper, is a wild variety of this species. For us in central Texas, it acts as a woody perennial and will become very shrubby when mature. Its fruits mature to red and can either be pointed or rounded. The pointed ones tend to be a bit larger and are more common in the southern United States. In Mexico the smaller, rounded variety is preferred and is harvested commercially. Despite efforts to domesticate it, the chiltepin has proven difficult and is still grown in uncultivated areas. It is harvested, dried, and ground into a powder which is said to be second only to saffron in value — about \$128 per pound (DeWitt and Bosland) — as a spice due to the small size of the fruit and inability to domesticate it.

The Cayenne variety is the most important medicinal plant in the genus. Chili pepper extracts are commonly used as counter-irritants, which help to alleviate the symptoms of rheumatism, nerve pain, and other problems affecting the joints and muscles.

Capsicum baccatum, commonly known as ají, is native to the central portion of South America from Peru to northern Chile and Argentina, south of the Amazon basin.

Plants of this species are generally tall, erect, have multiple stems, and can sometimes sprawl. They have a long growing season of 120 days or more.

Pod shape can vary from long and thin like a Serrano or Cayenne, rounded like a Cherry pepper, to a more flattened shape like the Scotch Bonnet. The flesh of the pods has a distinct and prized fruity flavor and is commonly used fresh in ceviche in South America. Most pods measure from 30,000-50,000 SHU.

Two well-known varieties are the 'Ají Limón' and 'Peri-Peri' — which is a mild pepper we normally refer to as the 'Orchid' pepper.



Capsicum chinense is native to the northern half of South America, southern parts of Central America, and the Caribbean. It generally has the highest capsaicin content of all these five species.

The species was misnamed *C. chinense* by botanist Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin, an Austrian physician who collected plants in the Caribbean in the mid-1700s. He never travelled to Asia, so why he thought the plant had ties to China is still not understood to this day.

Botanical evidence shows that it has been cultivated in Peru for over 6500 years.

Pod size can vary from very small to medium. Color can vary from green to yellow, orange, and red. Shape can vary from rounded to elongated, but most pods tend to have characteristic indentations. SHU range is from 0 to 500,000 or more.

Perhaps the single most popular type in the species is the **habanero** (SHU=100,000-350,000), which originated in the Yucatan peninsula and is named after Havana, Cuba. Today the habanero is produced commercially in the Yucatan, where about 1500 tons a year are harvested (DeWitt and Bosland).

Another popular variety is the '**Scotch Bonnet**' (SHU=150,000-325,000) which originated in Jamaica and got its name due to its resemblance to a tam o'shanter – a Scottish bonnet. Currently one of the hottest of all peppers is the '**Bhut Jolokia**' or '**Naga Jolokia**' pepper which originated in Northeast India. It has some *C. frutescens* genes and SHU of 855,000-1,050,000. It is also commonly called the "Ghost" pepper.

Capsicum frutescens is believed to be native to the same region as that of *C. chinense*.

The best known variety in this species is the Tabasco pepper (SHU=30,000-50,000). It was cultivated near Tabasco, Mexico, by the early 1840s, at which time it was transported to Avery Island, Louisiana (1848), and used to produce the famous Tabasco sauce of McHenry and Sons. Demand far exceeds production capability in Louisiana so it is also commercially grown in Central America and Colombia and sent in mash form to Louisiana.

As the pods of this species are generally small, it has become the most common chili pepper used to make hot sauces and pepper vinegars. To make a hot sauce, the pods are crushed, salted, fermented and combined with vinegar.

Capsicum pubescens is the least well-known of these five major species and is native to the eastern slope of the Andes from Bolivia into southern Venezuela. As its name implies, its leaves are pubescent (covered with fine hairs). It was the chili pepper most commonly utilized by the Incas. It prefers to grow in an area that does not have extremely hot summers and can sometimes behave as a vine if given support.

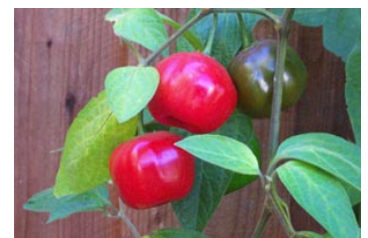
The common name for this species in South America is **rocoto** or **locoto**, while in Mexico it is known as the chile **manzano** (apple pepper) or chile **perón** (pear pepper) due to the shape of its fruits. Fruit shape in this species is lacking in variety, but color can vary from immature green to mature red or yellow. Yellow fruit are commonly called **canarios**.

One highly distinct characteristic of the fruit are the black seeds which sets this species apart from the other four. The SHU varies from 50,000 to 250,00 (hot!!!).

To cultivate this species one needs a long growing season of 120 days or more and many plants must be grown due to potential self incompatibility. Bee or hand pollination is necessary. This species grows best if given some shade as the foliage has a tendency to burn in full sun. It can prove difficult to grow in a very hot region.

The pods are thick walled so they are rarely dried. Instead they are used fresh in salsas and can be stuffed with meat or cheese and baked.

Henry Flowers



THIS 'N THAT HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA

The Winter Newsletter from HSA is currently available on the HSA website (herbsociety.org). Click on What's New on the banner menu, and then you will have to enter your password to gain access to the newsletter and other Members Only materials.

2016 Annual Meeting of Members

Explore Asheville!

Next year, our format changes, and we experience our Annual Meeting in a new way. A simplified format, without the educational conference component of our past annual meetings, will not only give members a more focused experience on connecting with other HSA members, but new opportunities to explore the stunning Biltmore grounds, the Asheville Herb Festival at the Western North Carolina Farmers Market, and the captivating beauty of the Asheville area.

The Herb Society of America's
2016 Annual Meeting of Members and More
Asheville, North Carolina
April 29, 2016


The HSA website provides the following information about the Asheville Herb Festival:

Western North Carolina is a southeastern mecca for high-quality, often organically grown herbs, vegetables, and other produce. Conservation easements help farmers preserve existing farms and establish new ones, and many farms are dedicated to organic agriculture practices such as producing heirloom vegetables and range-fed livestock. Among the area's many growers of herbs and other traditional plants, the Asheville Herb Festival has become an annual opportunity for old and new friends to show off their latest plants and products and share their knowledge. "The herb festival is sort of like a family reunion," remarked Rick Morgan, who founded the festival 25 years ago. "When we get together in the spring, everyone has news to share. It's a very friendly atmosphere."

Since its founding by a small group of dedicated herb farmers, the three-day festival, sponsored by the WNC chapter of the NC Herb Association, has grown into one of the Southeast's most important annual events for herb lovers of all stripes. The festival is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday – with a closeout sale from 3 to 4 p.m. Sunday!

January 2016



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

February 2016

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 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	17	18 FH Workday BSG 8:30 to noon	19	20
21	22	23 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	24	25 FH Workday 8:30 to noon	26	27
28	29				BSG = Botany Study Group	FH = Festival Hill SG = Sensory Garden



PIONEER PATHS

Volume 22

Editor: Linda L. Rowlett, Ph.D.

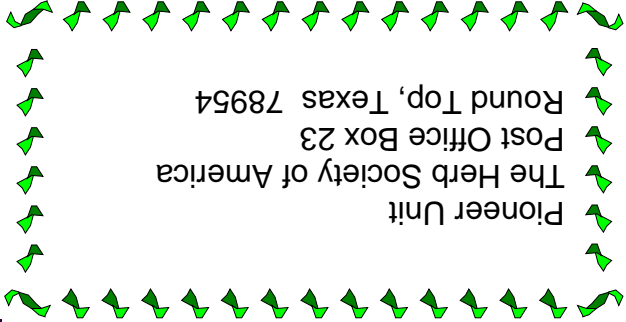
Pioneer Paths is a publication of The Herb Society of America, Pioneer Unit. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$10.00 per year.

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."

Chair—Henry Flowers

Vice Chair Programs—Tony Scanapico
Secretary—Pat Cox

Vice Chair Membership—Georgia Sowers
Treasurer—Janie Plummer



Pioneer Unit
The Herb Society of America
Post Office Box 23
Round Top, Texas 78954