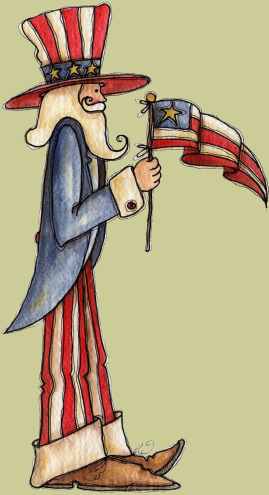


# PIONEER PATHS

Newsletter of the Herb Society of America  
Pioneer Unit

July 4  
Independence Day



—  
July 18  
9:00 a.m.  
Pioneer Unit  
Board Meeting  
Festival Hill

—  
July 27  
Thunder Full Moon

July 2018

Volume 25, Number 11

## MONTHLY UNIT MEETING

- Date:** July 12, 2018
- Time:** 9:30 a.m. Meet and Greet  
10:00 a.m. Presentation and Meeting
- Location:** St. John's United Church of Christ  
516 North Colorado Street, Burton, Texas
- Directions:** From Highway 290, take 390 northeast into Burton. At the intersection of 390 (Washington Street) and Main Street, continue on East Washington Street. At North Colorado Street, the church will be on your right.
- Program:** Homeopathy — from Flowers to Bees to Snakes and Beyond
- Speakers:** Kathe Forrest
- Angel:** Mary Doebbeling  
**Hosts:** Sherrie Tolbert, Susan Bame, Beverly Elam, Leah Pearce, Diana Reed, and Jana Richardson
- Lunch:** Healthy and Fit



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings!

Ah, summer in Texas! What can I say: it's a bit hot and dry for my taste, but it is what it is. My herbs always struggle this time of year, but my vote for the "summer survivor" winner this year is a thyme that I got Forum year before last, a couple of oreganos that I got this year, and my usual garlic chives, which seem to be the most hardy of them all. They were a donation from a friend, and they have been thriving for years, as has the friendship. I hope that all of your gardens have come through the dry and hot weather okay and that you have many surviving treasures when we finally return to some more reasonable weather.

Working on Thyme Well Spent projects is a great way to keep involved in the Unit and build up your volunteer hours over the summer, and I urge you to contact either Pat Cox or Jane Press, co-chairs, if you would like to help out in some way. We need to be collecting fruits for making jams and jellies, collecting seeds, collecting and drying herbs to make dried herb blends, and we should also begin to work on sewing and knitting projects—something nice to do when it is too hot outside to work in the garden.

However, if you can get to one of our gardens early in the morning, I know that Pat Garrett, Festival Hill Garden Chair, needs a lot of help keeping the gardens watered during July and August. Contact her about any time you can allot us from your busy schedules.

Welcome, Beverly Elam and Kathe Forrest, our new Officers this year. I am also pleased that our Hospitality Chair for the next term is Lori Yeats; Joyce Caddell is our new Scholarship Chair; and Cathy Nitsch is our Communications Chair. Georgia Sowers, Pat Cox, and I remain on the Executive Board, and Terry Ross, Henry Flowers, Lynn Ehler, Linda Rowlett, Susan Lake, Barbara Hemmer, Mary Reeves, Kay Von Minden, and Jane Press still continue with us: thanks to each of you. Welcome to all of our new and returning Officers and Working Committee Chairs. Remember that all members may be asked to participate in one of their efforts, and this is a great chance to help. Be sure to contact any Chair in an area that may peak your interest. Get ahead of the game!

July is our last monthly meeting until September. There will be no August meeting, but I hope you can join us in Burton on July 12th to explore homeopathy from bees to snakes and beyond!

See you there and have a great summer!

Karen Cornwell  
Unit Chair



## FROM THE PROGRAMS CHAIR(S)

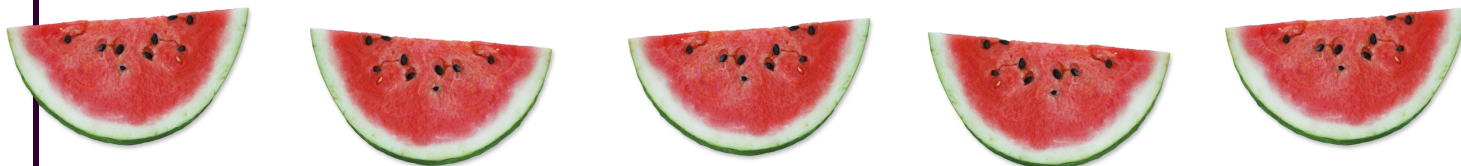
So, I'm sitting in sunny California as I write this! We've come out to attend a wedding which was held in the beautiful Sonoma hills. The gardens of this outdoor ceremony were just stunning, and I was reminded how often plant varieties and their time of bloom change from one area of the country to another. The expansive gardens were full of old fashioned hollyhocks, fuchsias, white agapanthus, nasturtiums and roses (not a black spot in sight!), to name just a few.

I hope you have enjoyed the programs of the last two years. I'm handing the mantle of programs chair over to Kathe Forrest. She has already been hard at work planning programs for next year, and they look great.

Kathe is also our speaker for next week. Her talk is sure to be an interesting one on homeopathy. A new subject for this unit, and it's certain to be informative as Kathe is so knowledgeable on the subject.

See you then!

Phoebe Lake  
Out Going Programs Chair



I learned so much about the flower industry at Jay White's herbal bouquet presentation, and it was really fun listening to him. He is very passionate about flowers and herbs and everything in the earth and will make a good editor and new owner of Texas Gardner magazine.

Thanks also to those who made food at the June meeting. It was scrumptious and delicious.

I am the speaker this month. I hope you join me for an in-depth look at an alternative healing method. Homeopathy was developed into a usable system of medicine in the 1800s and uses plants, animals, and minerals. The meeting will be in Burton at St. John's on July 12.

Your new Programs Chair,  
Kathe Forrest

MINUTES OF UNIT MEETING  
HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
PIONEER UNIT  
June 14, 2018

Phoebe Lake, Vice Chair Programs, welcomed speaker Jay White who presented a program entitled "Saving the World One Herbal Bouquet at a Time."

Karen Cornwell, Chair, opened the annual business meeting by thanking outgoing Board members and then introduced the proposed new Board - Chair Karen Cornwell, Vice-Chair Programs Kathe Forrest, Vice-Chair Membership Georgia Sowers, Treasurer Beverly Elam (not present), Secretary Pat Cox, and Past Chair Henry Flowers. Karen asked for nominations from the floor. Hearing none, she called for a motion and vote on the proposed Board. The motion passed with no nays.

Georgia welcomed visitor Leah Pearce (guest of Sherrie Tolbert) and new active members Jerald Mize, Sherrie Tolbert, and Jana Rinehart. She asked for all volunteer hours by June 30.

Karen announced the formation of a Steering Committee to meet monthly to work on plans for next year's Herbal Forum and Plant Sale. Henry will attend meetings when able to help with planning. Annual Reports were available at the meeting and on the website.

Lucy Nehrkorn, Treasurer, announced net plant sale income for Forum 2018 of \$23,280.14, TWSS \$6,308.10, and Gazebo \$2,220.00, a very good result. The total of all Unit bank accounts and CDs is over \$113,000.00, and the Board is looking at ideas for using some of the money. Suggestions from members are welcomed. Karen is looking into renting more storage space.

Mary Reeves and Kay von Minden are planning a trip to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Carolyn Thomas invited members to attend the Botany Study Group meeting on June 21 at 8:00 a.m. Sara Holland will talk about the structure of flowers and each attendee should bring one. The Pharmacy Garden needs help, and there are plans to improve the watering system.

Sara Holland and the Culinary Group are meeting with herbal picnic fare on July 11 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Menke House to talk about programming for the coming year.

Mary Doebbeling invited members to the South Central District Meeting in Cleburne, Texas, on September 28/29. There will be talks on native plants, making shrubs, and Green Bridges, an HSA program encouraging people to plant pollinators.

Pat Garrett, coordinator for Festival Hill gardens, needs more watering volunteers.

Lori Yeats thanked the lunch hostesses and asked members to sign up for hostessing next year.

Next month's program will be on homeopathy by member Kathe Forrest.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pat Cox, Secretary



## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

We enjoyed a great meeting last month with the talk on "Saving the World One Herbal Bouquet at a Time" by Jay White of Texas Gardener magazine. Joyce Caddell's friend Leah Pearce visited for her second time with new member Sherrie Tolbert, and she hopes to be a member this month. We introduced and welcomed our newest active members effective June 2018: Sherrie Tolbert and Jana Rinehart, also referred by Joyce Caddell. New member Jerald Mize visited us briefly and left early. The contact information for Sherrie and Jana was posted on the listserv mid June 2018.

Past Chair and Head of Nominating Committee Henry Flowers presented the new slate of Board of Directors Executive Committee for 2018-2020 for approval of members. Karen Cornwell is continuing as Chair, Kathe Forrest is new Programs 1st Vice Chair, yours truly Georgia Sowers is continuing as Membership 2nd Vice Chair, Pat Cox is continuing as Secretary, Bev Elam is the new Treasurer, and Henry Flowers is continuing as Past Chair and Head of Nominating Committee. Chair Karen Cornwell will advise us of Standing Committees Chairs and Co-Chairs. I am very happy with my new term on the Board and Committees and looking forward to helping all the Chairs and Committees however I can.

We begin our new fiscal year July 2018-June 2019 with new sign-in sheets at Registration. At this point, I congratulate all of our dedicated members, active and affiliate, spouses and non-members, all who help with your volunteer efforts and reporting hours to make the Unit a great organization. Thank you all! We had a stellar year ended June 30, 2018, with 12 new members (one a renewal)! Thank you to all the members who have referred them. As always, if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions please feel free to call me at 979-836-8228 or email at [gzsowers@att.net](mailto:gzsowers@att.net). I'm happy to help. Enjoy the rest of the summer and stay as cool as you can.

Herbally,  
Georgia Sowers  
Membership Chair



**JULY BIRTHDAYS**

July 3 — Mary Reeves

July 8 — Porter Versfelt

July 9 — Marcella Ausmus

July 26 — Wanda Hubbard

July 29 — Royceanna Kendall



In her own words, we welcome new member Sherrie Tolbert!

Short bio: Retired teacher of 32 years. Currently working in Flatonia teaching English. Single with a spoiled calico-Sophie. Designed and renovated my home in Fayetteville. Love to quilt, garden, entertain (lead book studies), cook and laugh!

In her own words, we welcome new member Jana Rinehart!

I was born and raised in the Houston area. I was a patrolman for the Harris County Sheriff's Office for 30 years in the North district. I retired in 2007 when I became a caregiver for my father for the next 7 years. My husband and I moved up to the Walhalla area and built our forever home. Since moving to the area, we became beekeepers and I joined the Bluebonnet Master Gardeners Association. I am a breast cancer survivor of 4 years who loves antiques, gardening and cooking. We have one daughter, Megan, who lives with her husband and two young children in Cypress.

### SENSORY GARDEN

From the new contact for the Sensory Garden: Johnnie Pitts, 512-940-7035, [johnniepitts45@gmail.com](mailto:johnniepitts45@gmail.com).

Our watering schedule for the Sensory Garden will continue as Susan Bame planned it at the beginning of the summer. If anyone is unable to water according to the times you set up, please contact me. Kudos to all those who have watered and will water the rest of the summer! Later I will be scheduling work days and discussing ideas for the garden.

I am also looking for a co-chair if anyone is interested. The co-chair would be someone to share ideas with and help them come to fruition and also to fill in for me in case I can't make a work day or meeting. I look forward to working with everyone and would like to thank Susan for her years of caring for the Sensory Garden. She has done a wonderful job, and her knowledge will be helpful to me as I take over her duties.

Johnnie Pitts  
Sensory Garden Chair

### CULINARY INTEREST GROUP

The group will meet July 11 to plan programs for the next year.

PLACE: Menke Parlor

TIME: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Bring picnic fare and recommendations for future discussion topics.

Sara Holland

.....  
: The jam and jelly makers of Thyme Well Spent Shop need the following :  
: fruit for next year's Forum: peaches, figs, blackberries, mustang grapes, :  
: pears, lemons, and boysenberries. The fruit/juice can be given to Carla :  
: Lessard.  
:

: Thank you all for your help,  
:

: Pat Cox  
: Jane Press  
: TWSS Co-Chairs  
:.....

## The History and Mystery of Herbs

### Wormwood – The Herb of Absence



Botanical Name: *Artemisia absinthium*

Common Name(s): wormwood, absinthe, St. John's herb, St. John's girdle

Family: Asteraceae

"Tea should be bitter as wormwood and as sharp as a two-edged sword."

— Lemony Snicket, *The Penultimate Peril*

Wormwood is a plant with a fascinating history and a shroud of controversy. One controversy seems to be the common name of wormwood. Some say that it comes from the historical use of the plant as a means of ridding the body of intestinal parasites (worms), especially helminths (thus it is antihelminthic). It does certainly do this, so this name makes sense. Others say that the name comes from the German word *Vermut*, which means "preserver of the mind" and comes from the use of this herb to enhance mental function. It certainly has been shown to have an effect on the mind, so this origin makes sense as well. Whichever is the proper origin, both stories are quite fascinating.

Wormwood is bitter tasting and pungent smelling and relatively easy to grow given full sun and good drainage. It will tolerate the coldest of our winters and the heat of our summers if it is not overwatered. It has finely cut silver foliage and is a great foliage plant for the garden and floral arrangements. Most find that it is too bitter for use in the kitchen (its cousin tarragon is the best culinary herb of the group), so its uses there are limited. On the other hand, it has a long and storied history of medicinal use. It is often used to make a tisane (herbal tea) that can be drunk in order to stimulate the digestion, especially in regard to liver and gall bladder function. As mentioned earlier, it has been used to rid the body of intestinal parasites, and it can also be used topically as an antiseptic, local anesthetic and as an insect repellent. **Note:** it should never be used during pregnancy or while breastfeeding!

In origin wormwood comes from Europe, but has naturalized in northern Africa, parts of Asia and a few regions of the United States. The genus name *Artemisia* comes from the Greek goddess Artemis, the sister of Apollo and the goddess of the hunt, chastity, and childbirth. She is associated with the moon (her brother Apollo is linked with the sun) and thus it is quite appropriate that the silver leaves of *Artemisia* plants glow in the light of the moon. The species name *absinthium* means "without sweetness," which is certainly true of this bitter herb.

Perhaps you may be familiar with the *Artemisia* known as "Powis Castle." This variety is a cross between wormwood and *Artemisia abrotanum*, commonly known as "tree wormwood" due to its upright growth habit. It has finer silvery foliage than wormwood and has been the most popular member of its genus for use in the landscape trade and as sold by retail nurseries. Its parents both have different ploidy levels (meaning that they have different numbers of chromosomes) and thus this hybrid of the two is rendered with an uneven number of chromosomes which results in sterility. Thus 'Powis Castle' never blooms or sets seed and tends not to get "rank" in growth as do most other *Artemisia* plants, wormwood included. Some other results of this phenomenon are "hybrid vigor," meaning that this variety grows with more vigor and stamina than most others (such as does a mule, which is a cross between a horse and donkey and is also sterile), and since it does not produce seed, it must be propagated by cuttings. Wormwood is also best propagated this way, but technically it can be grown from seed since it is fertile.



Wormwood is mentioned in the Bible. It is one of seven herbs that are traditionally gathered on St. John's Eve and woven into a garland that is used to drive away evil demons and spirits (the other herbs can be vervain, elderberry, lavender, mint, rosemary, garlic / onion and, of course, St. John's wort). In his Herball, John Gerard noted that "wormwood voideth away the worms of the guts, not only taken inwardly, but applied outwardly ... it keepeth garments also from the Mothes; it driveth away gnats; the bodie being anointed with the oyle thereof." In addition to its internal uses it has been historically used in topical concoctions as an insect repellent and can be used in sachets or dried bundles to keep insects and rodents from getting into stored clothing. Along with rue, rosemary, thyme, and such, it was used as a strewing herb – an herb tossed onto or mixed into thresh (usually reeds or some sort of straw) used as a floor covering (most often in winter on cold stone floors). As it was stepped upon, wormwood and these other herbs would release aromas into the air to perfume the room and they also helped by keeping vermin from taking up residence in the thresh. (On another aside – as the thresh was added onto and built up in a room, it became necessary to put a board across the bottom of the door to keep it from spilling out – thus the "threshold.")

Perhaps the most notable part of the history of wormwood is its link to the alcoholic beverage known as absinthe. In 1797 a Frenchman named Dr. Pierre Ordinaire, at the time living in Switzerland, concocted a 136-proof green liqueur with a bitter licorice (or more properly anise) flavor. It was made from a wide variety of herbs, which included wormwood. Absinthe was known to have psychoactive effects (but what alcohol doesn't?) and became quite popular by the end of the 19th century. It was used by such artists as Van Gogh, Degas and Lautrec and writers such as Oscar Wilde and Beadelaire. Because of its green coloration, absinthe became known as the "green fairy" and a popular time of consumption, between 5pm and 7pm, became known as "l'heure vert," the "green hour." (During the Herbal Forum in which we focused on the genus *Artemisia*, the movie shown was the modern version of Moulin Rouge. In one scene, some musicians are imbibing absinthe and a little green fairy of inspiration is seen flying around them. This is a great movie, but unfortunately it seemed to go over the heads of many in attendance.)

One of the notable chemical constituents of absinthe is thujone. Thujone has been shown to adversely affect the nervous system in large amounts (as does alcohol). Absinthe's popularity, addictiveness (remember, it is an alcohol and they generally have that effect), its adverse impact upon the sale of wine in France and a series of unfortunate events (too sad to mention here) led to its ban (actually the ban was on the use of wormwood oil as a flavoring agent) in Switzerland in 1908 and then in France and many other nations, including the United States (Britain never did ban it). It wasn't until over 100 years later that absinthe without thujone (or with significantly lower levels) was allowed to be sold in the US. Now you can buy it at our local Spec's and other liquor stores and give it a try for yourself. Another note – technically absinthe should be called a spirit as it is not sweetened, which is the case of liqueurs. It is a potent alcohol and ritually it is diluted with ice cold water and sugar before being imbibed. This process, called louching, renders a cloudy, pale green liquid which is much more palatable. **Note:** In some other countries, absinthe is sometimes amended with *Cannabis sativa*, marijuana, and thus has some other effects and is illegal for import into the US.

Here are a few more interesting quotes regarding wormwood:

*She was wean'd; I had then laid Wormwood to my breast.* – William Shakespeare

*Where chamber is sweeped, and Wormwood is throwne,  
No flea for his life dare abide to be known.* – Thomas Tusser, 16th century writer

*...these for frenzy be  
A speedy and a sovereign remedy,  
The bitter wormwood, sage and marigold;  
Such sympathy with man's good they do hold.*  
– John Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, c. 1610

In the language of plants, wormwood is symbolic of absence or, more poetically, the "bitterness of absence."

In legend it is said that wormwood sprang up in the tracks of the serpent after it was expelled from the Garden of Eden.

There is a star mentioned in the book of Revelations in the Bible that is called Wormwood. Wormwood is mentioned seven times in the Old Testament and at those times alludes to bitterness.

In Egypt, wormwood was carried in processions honoring the goddess Isis, the goddess associated with magic.

From Medieval times forward, wormwood has been hung in bundles near doorways to give protection from evil spirits and vampires.

It is an herb that is often associated with witches and magical brews.

If you were born on April 29th, it is your birthday flower.

Whether you grow the true wormwood (we usually have it for sale at our Herbal Forum plant sale), its famous progeny known as 'Powis Castle', occasionally take a sip of absinthe, or none of the above, one can't deny that it is truly a fascinating plant in terms of use and history.

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Submitted by Henry Flowers, June 2018




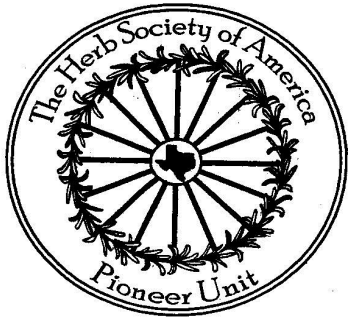


# July 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 Culinary Interest Group at FH	12 Pioneer Unit Meeting	13	14
15	16	17	18	19 BSG Festival Hill	20	21
22 Newsletter Deadline Send items to lrowlett@gmail.com	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31			BSG = Botany Study Group	FH = Festival Hill SG = Sensory Garden

# August 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
BSG = Botany Study Group	FH = Festival Hill SG = Sensory Garden		1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 No Meeting	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26 Newsletter Deadline Send items to lrowlett@gmail.com	27	28	29	30	31	



## PIONEER PATHS

Volume 25

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—Karen Cornwell

Vice Chair Programs—Kathe Forrest  
Secretary—Pat Cox

Vice Chair Membership—Georgia Sowers

Treasurer—Beverly Elam

