

PIONEER PATHS

Newsletter of the Herb Society of America
Pioneer Unit

September 2
Labor Day

September 13
Harvest Full Moon

September 23
Autumnal Equinox



September 2019

Volume 27, Number 1

MONTHLY UNIT MEETING

Date: September 12, 2019

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

Location: Brenham Presbyterian Church
900 South Jackson Street, Brenham

Directions: From Highway 290 head north on Business 36 North (Day Street). Turn left on College Street and go two blocks to Jackson Street. The church will be on your left.

Program: Prairie Restoration

Speaker: John Hart Asher
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Angel: Madeline Johnson
Hosts: Pam Traylor, Lynn and Alton Ehler, Connie Gwyn, Patty Mills, and Lucy Nehr Korn

Lunch: Vegetarian Cuisine



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings to all!

September is here, school has started, and fall is soon to be on its way. I got a taste of fall weather on my recent visit to Michigan. August is a hot month up there, but not nearly as hot and dry as Texas in August. The weather was warm, and the evenings were cool! It was a refreshing break.

Many thanks to the brave and hardy souls who helped keep Festival Hill or Sensory gardens hydrated during a hot and dry August. As always, any little bit of time spent supporting either garden is appreciated. Festival Hill garden support will likely continue to be a challenge until Festival Hill hires someone to oversee the gardens. However, you can never go wrong when you water dry plants or pull weeds. Call Pat Garrett (FH) or Marcella Ausmus (Sensory Garden) if you have questions.

This month, a special shout out to Ann Lugg! She stepped up to replace Susan Lake, our previous Website and Facebook Chair (in the Communications working group). This change is within-term, but Susan has served the Unit in this capacity for a number of years, and I am grateful for her past support. I am also grateful to Ann Lugg for stepping up. Please contact Ann with any questions or comments about our Unit's web presence at <http://www.herbsocietypioneer.org/> or on our Facebook page <https://m.facebook.com/PioneerHSA/>

Each of our Working Chairs is a member of the Pioneer Unit Board and, as such, helps our organization move along smoothly and adapt to its changing needs. Working areas often become group efforts, as necessary, to assist with planning efforts. Working on smaller group projects is an excellent way to connect with members. Feel free to contact anyone on the Board and let them know about your interests.

Now is also the time to start thinking about fall gardening and fall events. Our South Central District Gathering is October 3 – 5, 2019, at the Ozark Folk Center State Park in Mountain View, Arkansas. Go to <https://ozarkfolkcenter.ticketleap.com/> for more information. **MARK YOUR CALENDERS** and make your **RESERVATION!**

Question of the month: How does the connection between our "little unit" and the national organization, The Herb Society of America, work?

Answer: There are currently more than forty units, with about 2,200 members, of The Herb Society of America [<https://www.herbsociety.org/>] located in seven membership districts across the United States. New units are approved through the national organization based on size, location, etc., within districts based on geographical area. Our little unit was formed in 1992. The national organization provides education and support for our mission. We also contribute to their organization in various ways. More background on this relationship will be available at our January Orientation. Stay tuned!

I hope your summer was filled with joy and that September will head you to new, exciting experiences.

See you at the September meeting in Brenham!

Karen Cornwell
Unit Chair

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Wow, our month off in August this year was quite busy for Membership. From mid July to late August the Yearbook Committee was busy drafting the 2019-2020 Yearbook and Member Directory. Copies will be available at this month's Unit meeting September 12th at Brenham Presbyterian Church. Our new HSA letters and member badges are available and will be ready for pickup at the Registration Table. Likewise, the neck wallets we received in July are also available for those members who have not received theirs. Speaking of the Registration Table, if one or a couple of members are interested in helping out at the Registration Table, please remember that you earn volunteer hours as part of the Unit Administration Membership Committee when you help out here. Please let me know if this is something you would like to do; your efforts are always appreciated.

As mentioned in July, we have new sign-in sheets beginning our new fiscal year of July 2019 through June 2020. Please just stop at Registration to sign in and pick up your new HSA letters and member badges, and you may then email any volunteer hours that you have worked in whatever capacity. Many of our members are emailing their hours to Membership, and it is so much easier to get these logged and recorded for you. Thank you to all of you who are responding to this request.

My article for this month is much abbreviated because I am having some time off from Unit business. As always, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments about Membership: email gzsowers@att.net or call (979) 836-8228. I'm ready to help however I can or guide you to the proper person or department that can help further.

I am so looking forward to Fall 2019 and some cooler weather after our long hot Summer 2019. All is well and I look forward to seeing everyone September 12th at 9:30 a.m. at Brenham Presbyterian Church!

Herbally Falling Leaves,
Georgia Sowers
Membership Chair





September Birthdays

- September 2 — Kay Scanapico
- September 12 — Debi Thomas
- September 13 — Janie Plummer
- September 15 — Pat Cox and Sue Edmundson
- September 22 — Linda Hartson
- September 26 — Sherrie Tolbert
- September 27 — Connie Gwyn and Jane Press
- September 30 — Georgetta Welch



Herbal Strippers

There is a group of us who harvest, strip, and process herbs that go into some of the herbal blends that are sold in Time Well Spent. New members are always welcome! It is fun and a good way to get better acquainted as there is generally a lot of conversation as we strip.

We meet once a month to strip the leaves from the stems, and later in the year to both strip, process, and make the blends. We usually meet on the fourth Thursday of the month at my home which is just up the road from Festival Hill in Round Top. If you would like to become "a stripper" and receive notices of the meetings and the herbs that will be working with each month, please email me at tkscan@cvctx.com or call 979 966 7208.

Kay Scanapico

PIONEER UNIT BOARD MEETING

July 17, 2019, Service Building, Festival Hill

Present: Karen Cornwell, Kathe Forrest, Georgia Sowers, Linda Yochim, Janie Plummer, Henry Flowers, Lynn Ehler, Cathy Nitsch, Ann Lugg, and Pat Cox.

Programs: Kathe Forrest has booked all speakers for next year. The deadline for the new Yearbook is August 16. Lori Yeats, Hospitality, would like to limit monthly door prizes to three; the Board agreed.

Membership: Georgia Sowers made motions out of committee that were approved as follows:

Motion: A motion was made and approved out of committee to ratify new Active members Jean Bachofner, Helen Forrest, Patty Royal, Myra Simmons, Barbara and Tom Solis, and Cammie Beierle.

Motion: A motion was made and approved out of committee to ratify Marijane Lipscomb as Active.

Motion: A motion was made and approved out of committee to ratify as Affiliate members Carolyn Thomas, Lucy Nehrkorn, and Mary Ann and Oscar Hillegeist.

Motion: A motion was made and approved out of committee to ratify Janie Plummer as Treasurer.

Treasurer: Janie Plummer distributed the Quarterly Income Statement/Budget Summary Report for Three Months Ending June 30, 2019, and the Forum Comparative Income and Expense Report. The Proposed Budget FYE June 30, 2020, was distributed and the Board made the following changes:

- a) Increased income for local membership dues from \$900.00 to \$1,000.00
- b) Decreased percentage of Forum revenue to Festival Hill from 10% to 5%.
- c) Increased the Thyme Well Spent Shop budget from \$2,300.00 to \$2,500.00.
- d) Increased the communications budget from \$1,100.00 to \$1,500.00.
- e) Increased the college scholarship budget from \$2,000.00 to \$4,000.00.
- f) Increased the storage unit2 budget from \$2,000.00 to \$2,500.00.
- g) Increased the Yearbook budget from \$500.00 to \$600.00.

Motion: Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Board voted unanimously to approve the financial statements and new budget.

Past Chair: Henry Flowers is working on an application form for members interested in being on the Board and will have it ready for the new Yearbook after Board approval.

Standing Committee Reports

Archives and Rosemary: Lynn Ehler will send a card to Gwen Barclay.

Gardens: Billi Parus plans to visit in September and will help with the mints at Festival Hill. Karen Cornwell is still searching for a Sensory Garden Education Chair. The memorial bench for Betty Powell has been installed in the Sensory Garden and a plaque will be added shortly.

Communications - Cathy Nitsch will begin preparations for Forum 2020 advertising in August. Ann Lugg has taken over the website from Susan Lake.

Plant Sale/Gazebo – Karen Cornwell will order more green vests for Forum. Susan Yancey and Jana Rinehart will be plant sale assistants. Barbara Hemmer will not be chairing the Gazebo at Forum 2020.

Thyme Well Spent Shop – Planning is under way for the shop for Forum 2020. Cathy Nitsch and Belinda Weatherly will take over seed collecting and packaging from Susan Lake.

Old Business

a. Henry Flowers has contacted HSA regarding whether the Unit should seek an independent audit.

Motion: Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Board voted unanimously to seek an independent outside audit of the Unit's financial records.

b. The Forum 2020 Steering Committee will next meet in August.

New Business

a. There will be a short Orientation after the January 2020 meeting for all interested.

b. Kay von Minden and Euphanel Goad will receive Rosemary pins for 25 years of membership.

c. More lunch hostesses/coordinators are needed, and Lori has put a request on the listserv.

Respectfully submitted,
Pat Cox, Secretary



History and Mystery of Herbs – Vanilla

Just recently I finally got around to listening to Susan Wittig Albert's latest China Bayles murder mystery – [A Plain Vanilla Murder](#). If you like a good murder mystery and haven't read the books in this series, I suggest that you do so. It may take a while to get to this one if you start with the first of the series, as this book is #27, but they are all just as enjoyable and the Pioneer Unit is mentioned in one of them. Not many series go that long, so this is a testament to the fact that many enjoy reading (or, as I do, listening to) Susan's books.



Each book in the series centers on one herbal plant, but Susan never uses an herb as an actual means of killing a victim in any of her stories. She always includes much about the history, culture and uses of the herbs as is pertinent. This book is definitely no exception and includes much information about the history and culture of vanilla –mainly in its native region in southern Mexico, but also on a global scale. Susan also has China talk about the culinary uses of vanilla, which are vast because vanilla is one of the most popular herbs in the world and (if I remember correctly) second in value only to saffron.

Vanilla is an orchid and although it may not be the only orchid that has uses other than its beauty, it is the only one of really significant culinary use. The native region of vanilla is directly south of us in the tropical jungles of southeastern Mexico and Guatemala. The tropical nature of this region gives a clue as to the culture of this plant – it will need warmth and moisture and if you are tempted to grow it (and it is one of the orchids that is easier to grow) you will need to provide it with these conditions – possibly a greenhouse or extremely warm and sunny window inside for winter protection. In habit the vanilla orchid is a vining plant and will wind its way up the trunk of larger plants to a height of many feet, so in culture it is commonly grown up into small trees, which also provide a bit of shade.

The vanilla flower is pretty, but is not likely to be considered as one of the showiest of the orchid family, which is the second most diverse plant family in the world (750+ genera and over 28,000 species according to Wikipedia). Can you name the plant family that is bigger? The flower has 5 greenish yellow petals and the sixth petal is more yellow and forms a tube with a large lip in the center of the flower. It is within that tube that the critical stamens and pistil are located. Nature designed the flowers of orchids to be pollinated by insects and in its native region the orchid flower is pollinated by a small native bee. The chances of pollination naturally occurring are said to be around 1% - not very good. Thus commercially vanilla has to be hand pollinated. You can find instructions with pictures on how to do this online, if you are interested.

Once pollination occurs, a long, thin pod grows. This pod contains thousands of very tiny seeds. It takes about 5-6 months for each vanilla pod (commonly called a bean) to mature. At this point they can be picked and then have to go through a curing process in which the beans turn almost black in coloration. After picking they are quickly blanched in hot water and wrapped tightly in cloth to keep them warm for many days. They must be kept warm as cooling will promote the growth of mold. This process of “sweating” promotes the formation of the essential oil vanillin –

the most important aromatic oil in the bean. The beans are then placed outside in warm sunshine to prevent molding as they cool and also to begin the drying process to concentrate the oils. Once they are dry enough, the beans are moved inside to continue drying. Once they are at the proper stage, they are sorted and bundled and then placed in large paper-lined bins and allowed more time to mature. It is at this point that they can be shipped. Variances in culture and in the curing processes can affect the flavor of the beans. The Tahitian process does not involve boiling the beans and is purported to create beans that are suppler and more floral in taste. The Madagascar (Bourbon) and Mexican processing usually entail boiling, but even they (probably due do cultural differences) result in differently flavored beans.

A young plant takes about 3-5 years to mature enough to flower and produce beans. It then takes about another year for the fruit to mature, be harvested and then processed. Thus vanilla is one of the most labor intensive plant products in the world, and as a result it is one of the most expensive as well. Currently, due to many factors, vanilla beans are quite expensive – commonly over \$5 per bean and much more for highest quality ones. There is no way that natural production can meet the demand for the taste of vanilla, so synthetic vanillas (vanillins) are commonly used instead. Good chefs often reserve expensive natural vanilla for dishes such as custards and sauces where the taste of vanilla will be highlighted and use synthetic vanilla flavorings for dishes where the taste of vanilla will be paired with other tastes and thusly where the more refined flavors of natural vanilla would likely be lost.

Because of its value, vanilla is also a very dangerous crop for farmers. Beans can be stolen at many points in the long production process, and it is not uncommon for murders to occur along the way. Through China Bayles, Susan also gives this aspect of vanilla production a great deal of attention. She also discusses the world's orchid economy, the effects that jungle deforestation and overharvesting are having on wild orchid populations, and many other uses for vanilla – such as in cosmetics, perfumery, aromatherapy, and for aphrodisiacal purposes.

If you love vanilla, a taste that is anything but "plain Jane" and which actually exhibits much complexity, you will certainly get a lot out of the book other than the entertainment of the story. Kudos, Susan, for another wonderfully engaging and educational book!

Henry Flowers
HSA Pioneer Unit Past Chair



HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA

The Secrets to Cooking with Lavender with Nancy Baggett

Tuesday, September 17, 2019 - 1pm Eastern

In this lively, information-packed PowerPoint Webinar, attendees will learn dozens of fun and creative yet practical ways to use culinary lavender to boost flavor, fragrance, and pizzazz in dishes. Enhanced with a wealth of eye-catching and informative images, a quick video, lots of how-tos and tips (with Q & A opportunities interspersed), Nancy Baggett's presentation will cover the following:

1. How types of lavender differ from one another; which kinds are best for culinary; and which should not be used in cooking (and why not).
2. Useful basic methods for taking advantage of lavender flavor and aroma, including dry infusing, wet infusing, and adding whole buds, ground buds or fresh spikes or bloomlets (aka corollas) directly into dishes. Will include dos and don'ts for getting the best taste results, plus pleasing presentation and garnishing ideas, plus actual recipes to enjoy.
3. A helpful discussion of "what lavender goes with," revealing the surprising number of great affinities of culinary lavender for an array of diverse ingredients/dishes. Will include some technical insights into why certain lavender flavor combos succeed in items from baked goods, desserts, condiments, seasoning blends and beverages to foodstuffs like meats, cheeses, fruits, and nuts.

You can sign up for webinars at herbsociety.org. Remember that all past webinars are available to members in the archives.

HSA Library

The Herb Society of America Library Collection includes more than 3,500 volumes covering a wide range of topics related to herbs and gardening. Materials collected include books, periodicals, multimedia, collateral, and rare books.

The Herb Society of America Library seeks to maintain a comprehensive collection of herb-related materials for our members and the public to learn more about herbs and to encourage their everyday use.

The library includes:

HSA Online Catalog: *(including how to use the HSA Online Catalog & FAQs)*

Authors' Corner: Many of our members are authors; you should sample their work!

Book Sale: We have books that are for sale. Take a look!

Check the library out at herbsociety.org

September 2019



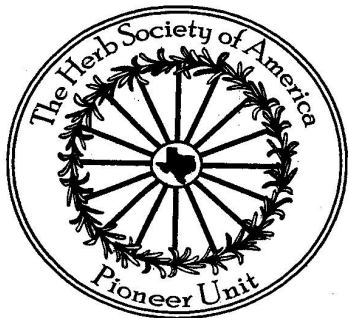
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 CG at FH 11:00	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 Pioneer Unit Meeting	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 Pre-order Deadline Bulb & Plant Mart	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					CG = Culinary Group FH = Festival Hill SG = Sensory Garden



October 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
CG = Culinary Group FH = Festival Hill SG = Sensory Garden		1	2 CG at FH 11:00	3 District Gathering Ozark Folk Center	4 District Gathering Ozark Folk Center	5 District Gathering Ozark Folk Center
6	7	8	9	10 Pioneer Unit Meeting	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		





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Volume 27

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

Vice Chair Membership—Georgia Sowers

Secretary—Pat Cox

Treasurer—Janie Plummer

