

PIONEER PATHS

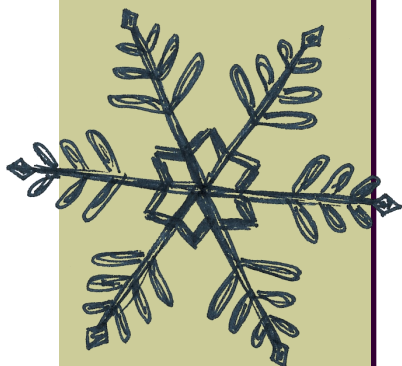
Newsletter of the Herb Society of America
Pioneer Unit

December 2021

Volume 29, Number 4

December 18
Long Nights Full
Moon

—
December 21
Winter Solstice



MONTHLY UNIT MEETING

- Date:** December 9, 2021
- Time:** 9:30 a.m. Meet and Greet
10:00 a.m. Presentation and Meeting
- Location:** St. John's Church of Christ
Burton, Texas
- Directions:** [from the east] Exit Highway 290 onto Texas Spur 125 north into Burton. At North Brazos Street, turn right and continue to East Texas Street. Turn right and go one block to North Colorado Street. The church will be on your left.
- [from the west] Exit Highway 290 onto Texas 390 going northeast into Burton. At the intersection of 390 (Washington Street) and Main Street, continue straight into Burton on East Washington Street. At North Colorado Street, the church will be on your right.
- Program:** The Genus Viola — Herb of the Year 2022
- Speaker:** Henry Flowers
- Angel:** Royceanna Kendall
Hosts: Betty Pior, Cathy Comiskey, Ginger Heath, Carla Lessard, Becky Nichols, and Kay Scanapico
- Lunch:** **Boxed Lunch Exchange** (See page 3 for details)



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I don't know about you, but now the days are flying past. It seems that I just planted a fall garden and Christmas is upon us. Some say mild winter ahead and others predict another harsh one. I just want the days to *slow* down so that I can enjoy being outside and gardening outside. I did bring all my succulents inside to prepare for what weather may come. One of those has tiny yellow flowers.

The roses still bloom and my shrimp plant as well.

So looking forward to this month's presentation and bought a few pansies and violets to grace the front bed.

In news, the new MOU or Memorandum of Understanding has been written up and now awaits Board approval. This is with regard to our Herb Sale and Voila Violets in March.

The other agreement with Festival Hill – signed, sealed, and done!

Many of us met at FH and Henry led us through a workshop for hypertufas and they turned out well. There is more to be done, and if you would like to make some hypertufa for the Gazebo or make other pretty and useful items, please contact either Susan Yancey or Leah Pearce for more information.

All for this month,

Kathe Forrest
Chair



FROM OUR PROGRAMS CHAIR

Today is one of those gorgeous autumn days that we have in abundance this year. I am slowly "putting my garden to bed" as my mother-in-law used to say. Each bed is tidied up and given a top dressing of mushroom compost. Later on I'll mulch the beds, and all winter long that goodness will compost down into the soil enriching it for spring growth.

My Salvias have never been happier! Perhaps it was winter storm Uri and a less than brutal summer followed by cool autumn days. Check out this one, pictured below, *Salvia wagneriana*. New to me, I'm waiting to see how it does through the winter, but wow, just wow, those blooms!

Speaking of flowers, my absolute favorites for fall and winter planting are violas. Yes, they're an annual, but plant them now and you'll have blooms through the month of May. Pretty good value for an annual!

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, December 9 at St John's Church of Christ in Burton.

Meet and Greet from 9:30 and the speaker begins at 10.

Our very own Henry Flowers will be speaking on "The Genus *Viola* - Herb of the Year 2022."

It will be a pleasure to have Henry back as he is always a popular presenter!

Under the guidance of Patty Mills, the Hospitality crew has been working hard to make our Christmas meeting festive and fun! To that end we will be having a "Boxed Lunch Exchange." If you'd like to participate, simply pack a boxed/bagged lunch. Please label it if it is vegetarian. No need to include a drink; those will be provided. Simply hand your lunch over to a hostess when you arrive. Refrigeration is available.

After our presentation and meeting, we will each be given a number and will "choose" a lunch in that order. This sounds like fun to me!
See you next Thursday.

Phoebe Lake
Programs



MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Except for the day after Thanksgiving, which was very cold and wet, I feel that we are having the Fall weather that we rarely have in this part of the country. My plants, especially my herbs, are relishing in the lovely temperature. They believe they are living in heaven right now. Me too!

We introduced Caroll Edwards during the November meeting. She has attended the required 3 meetings and completed the 2 hours of gardening work at Festival Hill. Caroll just needs to finish her gardening work at the Sensory Gardens and she will be ready for Pioneer Unit membership. Way to go, Caroll. We are looking forward to Caroll becoming our newest member. Please call or email Caroll if you are headed over to the Sensory Garden. I know she would love some company. Caroll's cell number is 361-648-0331, and her email address is carol.edwards@outlook.com.

I wish each of you a peaceful and joyous holiday!

Herbally Yours,
Diana Sellers
Membership Chair



December Birthdays

December 13 — Cathy Comiskey
December 19 — Linda Rowlett
December 25 — Becky Nichols
December 31 — Phoebe Lake
December 31 — Gwen Barclay



Cathy Comiskey (December 13): Cathy sent us all an invitation: "We wish for every one a happy and healthy 2022! If you are planning a trip to the country to see the Bluebonnets in the Spring, come see us too, or you can just come see us and our Alpacas. We would love to see you! " Cathy and Bill

Linda Rowlett (December 19) included this picture of her youngest grandchild helping to light the Christmas tree in Alvin, Texas. "It seems appropriate to include a Christmas picture, because my December birthday was often lost in the holiday season. I don't mind that now that I am turning 73, but I sure hated it when I was young.

Let me take this opportunity to thank everyone in the Pioneer Unit for being part of my life. I love this group!"



Phoebe Lake (December 31) wrote: "Every year people throw big parties on my birthday — New Year's Eve! The family story says my father insisted my mother have the baby before the year was out so he could claim it (me) as a tax deduction for the entire year. Well done, Mom!"

MINUTES OF UNIT MEETING
HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
PIONEER UNIT

November 11, 2021

In the absence of Chair Kathe Forrest, Vice Chair Programs Phoebe Lake welcomed members to the November meeting. The meeting was being taped for absent members to watch later.

Phoebe introduced speaker Belinda Weatherly, a Pioneer Unit member, who presented an excellent program on parsley, which is a much more versatile herb than was realized.

Betty Pior asked for a few moments of silence in honor of veterans, the day being Veterans Day.

Phoebe Lake asked members to visit the Church's Galilee Garden. The \$125.00 meeting rental to Brenham Presbyterian supports the garden, and the produce is given to a local food bank.

Madeline Johnson invited members to join the Horticultural Study Group which meets the third Thursday of this month. The group studied basil this year and will study thyme in 2022. There is a propagation workshop next week which would be good preparation for joining the group.

Patty Mills, Hospitality, thanked hostesses Janie Cornelius, Beverly Green, Bonnie Lout, and JoAnn Reichle. The centerpiece on each table was given as a door prize to whoever finds a turkey sticker. Whoever finds two gets a special prize of salvia from Phoebe's nursery. Patty asked for hostess volunteers for Spring and Summer 2022 and for door prize donations.

Diana Sellers, Vice Chair Membership, welcomed prospective member Caroll Edwards on her third visit. She has completed Festival Hill garden hours and is working on the Sensory Garden. Diana needs help finalizing an informational hand-out for new members. She will forward members' hours from Track It Forward to Festival Hill in December. Festival Hill no longer accepts driving time as part of your volunteer time. Diana hopes to distribute the new Yearbook next month after printing errors are fixed.

Phoebe introduced her friend Debbie Thornton who gave a Zoom presentation on cut flowers earlier this year.

Henry Flowers will be the December speaker with a presentation on Herb of the Year Viola.

Susan Yancey showed members the hypertufa pot she made at the workshop last weekend which will be sold at Forum. She encouraged members to join future hypertufa workshops.

Cathy Kietlinski thanked all those who watered the Sensory Garden this summer and Henry for ordering plants. The Sensory Garden is looking good.

PLANT SALE

The Pioneer Unit's 2022 plant sale will be Friday, March 18 and Saturday, March 19, 2022, on the grounds of Round Top's Festival Hill Institute.

Here are some current highlights:

- Henry Flowers, Plant Orderer, is communicating with our usual suppliers and will be submitting a budget for Board approval at the January board meeting.
- We will not be selling antique roses this year.
- Violas (violet, pansy, heartsease, et al.), the International Herb Association's Herb of the Year, will be a seasonal challenge for our regional plant suppliers. Henry has not found a source for true violets, but we will have Australian Violets for sale.
- Artist Pat Johnson is designing a t-shirt to showcase violas.
- Leah Pearce, aided by JoAnn Reichle, will be chairing the Gazebo to sell hypertufa pots of succulents and other garden accessories.
- Betty Pior is arranging for bags of worm castings to be sold.
- The Zion Lutheran Youth Group will be helping with set up and tear down.
- Jana Rinehart is organizing the schedule for volunteers so let her know what area of the sale fits your talents. Cashier? Plant waterer? Red wagon retriever? Publicity?

Susan Yancey and Jana Rinehart
Plant Sale Co-Chairs



THYME WELL SPENT

The Thyme Well Spent Shop reminds members to harvest seeds for our seed sale. Bring the seeds to our December meeting. A receptacle will be on the sign-in desk. They need to be bagged (plastic or paper is fine) and labeled with the variety. Enjoy your holidays and rest up; there are lots of fun tasks ahead to get ready for the March sale.

Cathy Nitsch

HORTICULTURE STUDY GROUP

It was propagation time for the Horticulture Study Group. Phoebe's greenhouse was nice and warm for this hands-on workshop, and we got to tour her amazing gardens. We started by planting two varieties of thyme from seed. The seeds purchased from Richters included Ayelet Thyme and Wild Thyme. Ayelet is an Israeli variety with plants that can grow up to 10 inches tall and wide. Wild Thyme is a creeping variety that is used as a ground cover but can also be used in cooking. In addition to planting seeds for these two varieties, we propagated lemon thyme from cuttings. However, we couldn't leave our beloved basil behind so we opted to take cuttings from some of our study basil plants, including Prospera and Aussie, and start some 'winter' basil to grow in our warm houses during the next few months. Basils can be started in water or soil and placed in front of a sunny warm window during the winter months. We are hoping that we can keep fresh basil in the house during the upcoming winter months.



November was our last meeting for 2021. We look forward to January 27, 2022, when we kick off the next year with our study of thyme. January is a great time to join the Horticulture Study Group. We will cover the basic botany and variations of thyme and start planning for planting which will occur in late March (after the Unit's plant sale). We will provide an orientation to the study process. If you love gardening, then you will enjoy this group. If you are interested in joining us, you may contact either Madeline or Phoebe. You are encouraged to attend even if you are undecided but think that this might be a group of interest to you.

Wishing everyone a happy holiday season.

Madeline Johnson and Phoebe Lake

CULINARY GROUP



The Culinary Group's cuisine for December was Israel in honor of Christmas. Israel's cuisine is a true melting pot of global traditions as a result of the return of Jews to the homeland after centuries of diaspora. These foods of the returnees added to the local hummus and falafel create a varied and original cuisine. January will be dedicated to our traditional mustard making for sale during Forum. For information, contact Belinda Weatherly. blw1071@gmail.com.

DECEMBER GARDEN TASKS

Now that cool weather is finally here and the end of the year is nigh, it may be tempting to think that gardening tasks are done until spring. Not so! There is plenty to do in the garden to keep you busy.

Much of what I wrote about in October and November is still applicable, but it is starting to get a bit late to be sowing seeds of many plants. If you have packages of seeds of poppies, snapdragons, or cool season vegetables such as kale or chard, I'd still risk planting them now, but don't delay - act now or you won't get the bonus of lovely spring blooms!



One of my favorite seed-grown plants to start right now are sweet peas. Soak the seeds for 4-6 hours or overnight and sow them in a rich soil in full sun and within reach of a trellis to climb on. The fragrance of their blooms in the spring is such a joy, and the best thing is that they beg to be cut (to keep blooming and avoid seed productions, which in turn slows blooming). There are so many varieties to choose from. I love the old, heirloom varieties, and if you just want a nice mix you can't go wrong with 'Old Spice'. That mix has nothing to do with the aftershave; its flowers are much more pleasant to smell. But really, any sweet peas you grow are better than no sweet peas at all!

You can still plant cool season annuals such as pansies, violas, snapdragons, and dianthus. I will be talking about the former two at this month's general meeting and hope to see you there. I also plan to have some violas to sell if you'd like to add some of their cheery, colorful faces to your garden and table. It is also still a good time to plant herbs such as parsley (Thanks, Belinda, for your wonderful program on this herb last month!), dill, cilantro, and hardy perennial herbs such as oregano, thyme, chives, and so on. If you happen to see basil for sale now resist – may the force be with you there – and hold out until spring.

When we have our first good freeze, some herbs may go dormant. Most basil will be dead and should be removed if you haven't already done that. A few, such as bell pepper and clove (Vana tulsi) basil, often come back from the root, so leave them alone or simply add a bit of mulch over their root and trim back only once they are good and dormant. Mexican marigold will freeze back, and I simply do the same – trim back and mulch. Lemongrass should be left alone and not trimmed. Its top helps protect its points of growth down deep in the plant, and pruning back too early may expose those points to damage. If you ever have a question about what to do with a specific plant, feel free to send me a message.



Should one remove all the falling leaves from garden bed? I usually don't. Leaves provide protection for many beneficial insects over the winter, and as they decay they add nutrients. I do certainly remove them from pathways and areas where they are smothering young or mature plants and chop them up to either spread under shrubs or add to the compost. Yearly I mulch my bed of turmeric and other gingers that are now starting to go dormant with a layer of chopped leaf mulch, and they seem to love it. I cringe when I see people bagging leaves and sending them away. I only have a few small trees in my yard so the plethora of leaves I am talking about come from the neighbors' yards. I'll admit that I often grumble about having to clean them up, but when life gives you lemons.....

I look forward to talking about the lovely plants in the genus *Viola* at the December meeting and hope to see you there. I also wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year for you and all your family and friends.

Henry Flowers



Celebrating the Life and Legacy of John Gaston Fairey

I was privileged to attend the invitation only Celebration of Life on November 13, 2021, for John Fairey as Golden Sage member of The Herb Society of America, affiliate of Pioneer Unit and Life Member of South Texas Unit. The beautiful, crisp fall day was perfect for friends, family, and patrons of the gardens to gather. The remarks about John told of his life, dreams, and struggles in creating Peckerwood Garden, now called the John Fairey Garden, which is associated with The Nature Conservancy.

After the new bridge and mural dedications, we enjoyed catered box lunches with a fantastic mariachi band under the huge oak trees. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet new friends and catch up with old friends. Afterward I spoke at length with Director Randy Twaddle about how to encourage other Texas Units of The Herb Society of America to enjoy the gardens privately as the Pioneer Unit did last May.

See below photos from this event. Perhaps you can visit the gardens again soon. www.jfg.org



Susan Wood



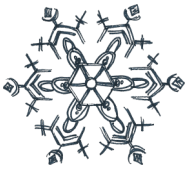
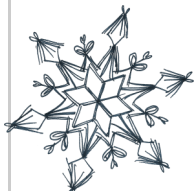
Susan Wood with the mural dedicated at the event

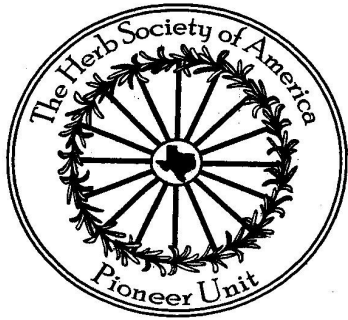
December 2021



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
CG = Culinary Group FH = Festival Hill SG = Sensory Garden	HG = Horticulture Study Group HB = Herbal Blends		1 CG 10:00 Menke House	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 Pioneer Unit Meeting	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 HB 9:30 Kay Scanapico	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25 
26 Newsletter deadline Email to the editor Irowlett@gmail.com	27	28	29	30	31 	

January 2022

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2	3	4	5 CG 10:00 Menke House	6	7	8
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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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Vice Chair Programs—Phoebe Lake

Vice Chair Membership—Diana Sellers

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