

PIONEER PATHS

Newsletter of the Herb Society of America
Pioneer Unit

October 7

Board Meeting
10:00 a.m.

Festival Hill
School Building



October 6

Harvest Full Moon

October 2025

Volume 33, Number 2

MONTHLY UNIT MEETING

- Date: October 9, 2025
- 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: Exit Highway 290 to Business 36 North (Day Street) into Brenham. Continue north to College Street. Turn left to Jackson Street, and the church will be on your left.
- Program: Workshop: Making Herbal Remedies for Common Ailments
- Speaker: Cammie Beierle, Julia Johnson, and Dawn Wilson
- Hosts: Patty Mills, Madeline Johnson, Wendy Matthews, Becky Nichols, and Betty Pior
- Lunch: Harvest Favorites



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

While I know we enjoyed our summer hiatus from meeting, relaxed, and took some trips, it's fun when we gather during our first meeting back in September. There is so much energy as the new year begins, and we say hi to friends we haven't seen in a while.

Our first program of the Pioneer Unit program year started with a super hit. Cathy Nitsch and Phoebe Lake were fantastic. Their presentation included fascinating information about the language of flowers, and they showed us how to make our own little bouquets. Cathy and Phoebe were recipients of a Unit Scholarship. The presentation was made to inform the members about what they learned.

Cammie Beierle is also a Unit Scholarship recipient, and she will give her presentation to the Unit in October. Tory describes Cammie's presentation more in her Programs article. I encourage all members to consider applying for a Unit Scholarship. It's a fun way to study an herb subject of your choice in more detail, and the members appreciate hearing what you've learned.

In addition to Cammie's presentation, we will also hear from Roman White, the falconer. Last year, the Pioneer Unit supported Roman and his brother with funds to attend a falconer conference. Roman will talk with us about his experience of learning to be a falconer. He is bringing his falcon to the meeting. It should be very exciting!

Preparing for March 2026 – Last week, a group of Pioneer Unit members met to begin planning for the 2026 Forum, Plant Sale, and TWSS event. This event is scheduled to happen on March 13th and 14th, which is a week earlier than usual. Last year was my first time in leading this event, and I learned a lot from that experience. The most important lesson I learned was to start planning early. March is here before you know it. A number of decisions were made during our first planning meeting, but there are more details to determine. Please let us know if you are interested in participating in the planning (Plant Sale – Julia Johnson, Madeline Johnson, and Phoebe Lake; TWSS – Leslie Conrads; Forum – Diana Sellers; Refreshments – Connie Gwyn and Caroll Edwards).

Before I start writing my newsletter article each month, I like to look back to what I wrote last year and remember what was going on. Last year at this time, a cool front had blown in and the temperature was apparently very pleasant. My butterfly garden was thriving, and I had many pollinators bustling about. This year, it is hot outside, and I've had very little rain. My yard is very dry. The butterfly garden continues to do well this year. I've had lots of beautiful butterflies and big bumblebees, but I don't think I've seen as many insects this year. I have Queens, Orange Sulfurs, Eastern Tiger Swallowtails, Giant Swallowtails and Pipevine Swallowtails. I haven't seen any Gulf Fritillaries or Julias this year.

Pollinators and Citizen Science - Have you ever heard of participating in a Citizen Science project? From October 10th through October 26th, Texas will host a Texas Pollinator BioBlitz. The goal is to find pollinators and nectar-producing plants during this timeframe and take photos of what you see. Then post your pollinator photos during the event to your own Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook accounts (use #TxPollinators) or to iNaturalist. The purpose of this event is to document what is currently happening with pollinators. Pollinators are important to our gardens. If you are interested in participating in this event, click on the link in the next sentence. Sign up [here](#) to be

added to the Texas Pollinator BioBlitz mailing list. Once you sign up, you will receive emails each year leading up to and during the event. [Editor's Note: I had to use control/click on my computer to open the link and sign up. Your experience may vary.]

2025/2026 Directories and Membership Cards – We started distributing the new Directories and Membership Cards in September. Come to the October meeting to pick up yours.

October – the month of Halloween – Once again I will dress up in my sorcerer's costume for our meeting. Please join me in celebrating this crazy holiday if you dare, and wear your most outlandish costume!!

I look forward to seeing you at the October Unit Meeting,

Diana Sellers
Pioneer Unit Chair



FROM THE PROGRAMS CHAIR

Hello friends!

We're excited about our next Pioneer Unit program and can't wait to share it with you. Cammie Beierle, Julia Johnson, and Dawn Wilson will be sharing their experience with using herbs from our gardens to create medicines for common ailments. We will be making salves and teas and other concoctions with assistance from our presenters. It will be a wonderful chance to gather, learn something new, and enjoy time together as a community. Be sure to mark your calendars: you won't want to miss it!

The meeting and program will take place at Brenham Presbyterian Church located at 900 S. Jackson Street., Brenham, on October 9, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

Tory Farley
Programs Chair

MINUTES OF UNIT MEETING
HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
PIONEER UNIT
September 11, 2025

The September meeting of the Pioneer Unit was held at Brenham Presbyterian Church, Brenham, Texas.

Tory Farley, Programs Chair, introduced Cathy Nitsch and Phoebe Lake, recipients of a Pioneer Unit Herbal Scholarship. Their presentation, entitled "Floriography: The Language of Flowers," encompassed how flowers have been used to communicate across cultures and time. We learned that the pink rose symbolizes grace and the zinnia everlasting friendship. Cathy and Phoebe provided flowers, herbs, and supplies to make nosegays. Everyone had fun creating our own nosegays as we learned the position of the nosegay communicates interest in another.

Diana Sellers, Unit Chair, congratulated our speakers and looked forward to Cammie Beierle's presentation of her scholarship study at the October meeting. Diana shared that Debi Meschwitz has set up the children's program at the Sensory Garden. Teachers have been contacted with a start date in October. Susan Bame added that Serena Speaker, Sensory Garden Chair, is recovering from surgery, so additional help is needed in the garden.

Cammie Beierle, Membership Chair, welcomed 11 guests and 44 members.

Julia Johnson, Pharmacy Garden Chair, announced she has a contractor lined up for the greenhouse rebuild. They are currently working on the budget and expect work to begin in October. She asked members to volunteer for First Fridays at Festival Hill and Third Thursdays at Sensory Garden. Members are researching plants for the Pharmacy Garden website. Volunteers can sign up at the October meeting.

Phoebe Lake, Scholarships Chair, asked for suggestions for how the scholarship committee allocates discretionary funds. These are funds in addition to two \$250 Pioneer Unit herbal study scholarships and \$8,000 in college scholarships.

Diana Sellers reported on our current bank account balance of \$73,840. She asked interested members to attend a Plant Sale and Forum Committee meeting to be held September 23rd from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. She thanked Leslie Conrads for accepting the position of TWSS chair as Erica Menconi is stepping down.

Hostesses Patty Mills, Pat Cox, Carla Lessard, and Leona Marshall provided a delicious breakfast and lunch buffet.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Hagler
Secretary

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Hey, Herbies!! Looks like we are going to survive the heat of 2025! I have so enjoyed the cooler mornings and evenings. We've picked nearly 3 gallons of Roselle Hibiscus calyxes. If you are interested in helping make jam for the TWSS and/or learning to make jams, please let me know by text, phone or email. It may have to wait until January or February. They are safe in the freezer until then.



It was so very good to see everyone at the September meeting!! A total of 55 of us got to enjoy that fabulously fun meeting with Cathy Nitsch and Phoebe Lake!! We had 44 members and 11 guests: Allye Schroeder with Debi Meschwitz; Kathy Carter with Allye; Marie Patterson with Phoebe Lake; Catherine Hall, Elizabeth Price, and Colleen Bronder with Sue Edmonson (Gold Star goes to Sue this month for bringing the most guests!); Angela Hernandez with Beverly Elam; Kim O'Donnell with Ginger Heath; plus Amy Gardner, Jo O'Donnell, and Sharon Fothergill. This was Sharon's third meeting. We are just waiting for her to complete her Sensory Garden training to become a Bona Fide member.

I'm looking forward to the October meeting as we experience hands-on use of what we produce in our gardens. We/you will mix teas, salves, and infusions in a practical way with a little bit of knowledge on the use and consumption of common herbs medicinally. Julia Johnson, Dawn Wilson, and I will be available to explain the process. Swee Lang Rapatz and Sonia Miller have graciously agreed to help you mix those teas!

I look forward to seeing you next week!!

Cammie Beierle
Membership Chair
HSA, Pioneer Unit
281-844-4852



HORTICULTURE STUDY GROUP

Harvesting Healthy Lavender

Did you know that the peak time to pick lavender is when the buds are still closed? Courtney Kieke presented the program on harvesting and storing lavender. She explained that lavenders reach their peak flavor and oil content when the buds are fully formed (look like they could burst open at any time) but not yet open. The lavender stem on the far left in the photo is optimal. As with other herbs, morning is the best time of day to harvest. Courtney also provided tips for preparing lavender for the winter. First, the lavender should be trimmed lightly to remove all stems and re-shape the plant to its spherical mound shape. Second, apply gravel around the base of the plant for improved drainage. Last, if the temperature is forecast to fall below 20°F, then cover the lavender.

Phoebe Lake made an informative presentation on fungus. If a lavender gets sick and dies, it is likely the result of phytophthora (and yes, that's a mouthful). The combination of heat and humidity encourage the growth of this soil fungus, and lavenders are particularly susceptible to it. Thus, growing lavender in Texas is a challenge. Best practices to minimize phytophthora are raised beds and a gravel or rock mulch.

We are nearing the end of the lavender study and are cautiously optimistic that we will be able to report that lavender can be grown successfully in our area.

Madeline Johnson



Image from [How to Harvest Lavender \(and 24+ Things to Do With It\) - Garden Therapy](#)

[Editor's Note: Copy this link and paste it in your browser for a wealth of information about using lavender. Make sure you have plenty of time to get lost in the labyrinth of links about lavender!]

SENSORY GARDEN

At the Sensory Garden cleanup day in September, Courtney Kieke and Julia Johnson clipped back summer annuals, raked leaves, and watered the garden. Please consider joining Serena Speaker and our Pioneer Unit volunteers to help keep this garden beautiful for the children at Brenham Elementary! The kids love to come out and explore the garden, and they delight in simple things such as touching the soil or planting a flower! Sensory Garden volunteer days are the third Thursday of the month from 9:00 -11:00 a.m.

From Julia Johnson

This garden is so special for the children at the Elementary school. A big thanks to Susan Bame who has been so diligent in watering the garden with the extreme heat and dry weather while I have been unavailable. I am planning on being at the next scheduled Sensory Garden workday on October 16. I am not sure exactly how much I can do as my knee is still healing and quite stiff, but as everyone does their best so will I. We always need additional help to work this garden, so please consider a wonderful donation of your time.

Thanks so much!
Serena Speaker
Sensory Garden Chair



FESTIVAL HILL GARDENS

This Friday (October 3) is our First Friday at Festival Hill. We will be planning our Pharmacy Garden regions, checking what needs to be propagated for next year or purchased, and brainstorming ways to fix some challenges we have. In September our First Friday group helped to plant fall color in the Mary Garden, and we also celebrated Noreen's birthday! A big thank you to Courtney Kieke, Tess Hartman, Susan Bame, Wendy Matthews, and Noreen Barker for coming out to help me in the gardens!



At Festival Hill we also installed the first of our bird signs, featuring Wetland Birds of Festival Hill. It is located on the trails at the back of the campus (behind the Log House and brick house where Mary Reeves once lived). More signage is being planned to help visitors find the trails!



Table Building Day: We are preparing for our spring Plant Sale and getting the rest of the tables constructed on November 19, from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. Mark your calendars!

Thanks for all the ways our members give back to the community!

Julia Johnson
Pharmacy Garden Chair



October Birthdays

October 5 —	Ginger Heath
October 9 —	Debi Meschwitz
October 13 —	Carla Lessard and Catherine O'Brien
October 16 —	Ann Lugg
October 17 —	Pat Garrett
October 23 —	Jan Hughes
October 27 —	Betty Pior
October 28 —	Cathy Nitsch



Ginger Heath (October 5) sent the adjacent photo and wrote: "This African violet was a lonely leftover at the Pioneer Unit plant swap earlier this year. Never having had success with violets, this one bloomed for our 60th anniversary in September, is blooming for my 83rd birthday in October, and has promised me it will stay in bloom for my husband's 84th in November. Thank you, Member, whoever you are. This little plant has brought us much cheer."

Debi Meschwitz (October 9) wrote: "I have always had a love of flowers and plants having grown up in a flower shop. My grandmother and mom were the ones to instill this love for floral and plants in my heart. I am a retired home economics teacher and have always enjoyed using fresh herbs in cooking. I have been in the Bluebonnet Garden Club for 15 years and have learned so much from that experience. The herb society has been a perfect place for me to grow and learn. I look forward to learning more about herbs and the benefits of each herb."

Catherine O'Brien (October 13) sent the photo to the right accompanied by this great quotation: "Sometimes life is tough. So if you're going to be a mama bear, be a grizzly."



October 2025

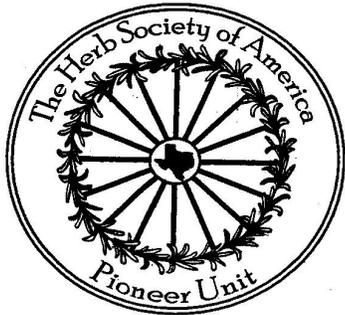


Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
CG = Culinary Group FH = Festival Hill SG = Sensory Garden	HSG = Horticulture Study Group		1 CG Menke House	2	3 FH Workday 9-11:00	4
5	6	7	8	9 Pioneer Unit Meeting	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 SG Workday 9-11:00	17	18
19	20	21	22	23 HSG 10:00-noon	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

November 2025



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23	24	25	26	27 	28	29
30						



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Volume 33

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—Diana Sellers

Vice Chair Programs—Tory Farley

Vice Chair Membership—Cammie Beierle

Secretary—Joanna Hagler

Treasurer—Royceanna Kendall



FROM YOUR SCHOLARSHIP TEAM

Each year we offer two Unit Scholarships, now known as "Herbal Scholars."

The idea is that members of our Unit apply for, and are awarded, a Scholarship in the amount of \$250 to study an herb or a subject related to herbs. Really, anything you are interested in and want to learn more about! You can use the money to buy books, take a course, etc.

What does the Unit ask in return? Simply that you share your newfound knowledge with the unit in the form of a presentation, an article for the newsletter, or a display. Use your imagination!

Intimidated by the idea of going it alone? Grab a friend and do it together; it's even more fun! Ask me how I know....

For more information contact Phoebe Lake, PVLake@gmail.com