

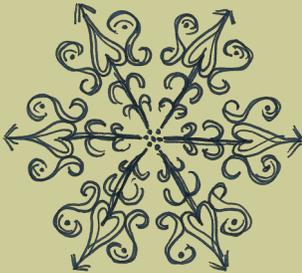


PIONEER PATHS

Newsletter of the Herb Society of America
Pioneer Unit

January 2026

Volume 33, Number 5



January 1
New Year's Day



January 3
Wolf Full Moon

January 5
Twelfth Night

January 6
Board Meeting
9:30 at Festival Hill
School Room #2

MONTHLY UNIT MEETING

- Date: January 8, 2026
- 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
- 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: Restoring Biodiversity to Your Soil with Native Plants
- Speaker: Stephen Brueggerhoff
- Angel: Tess Hartman
- Hosts: Carol Edwards, Cindy Nash, Becky Nichols, Cathy Nitsch, and Deb Pruitt
- Lunch: Winter Warm-Up Soups

HOSPITALITY NOTES

The January meeting will be featuring Winter Warm-Up Soups, although it's been a warm winter so far. We hope everyone brings something to warm your heart and start the New Year with hearty, healthy dishes. We look forward to seeing everyone in the New Year.

Caroll Edwards and Connie Gwyn

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Happy New Year 2026!! I anticipate that we will have another fabulous year. There is much to look forward to with upcoming programs, visiting with members each month, preparing and holding our annual March event, and attending the April 2026 EdCon in San Antonio. I'm hoping to learn some new skills like making bee hotels. In case you didn't see my email a couple of weeks ago, Early Registration for the 2026 EdCon is open.

Thanks to Tom Shaughnessy, our December program was amazing. Everyone seemed very excited to learn about our native bees. I heard lots of requests to have Tom teach us how to make bee hotels, and I am certainly interested in that too. Until a few months ago, I had not paid much attention to the bumblebees in my yard. I knew they were pollinators, but not to the extent of just how critical they are to sustaining our ecosystems and the fact that they are declining in numbers. One of my goals this year is to plant more native plants, including native herbs, and convert grass into waterwise gardens. I don't see much hope that our Texas drought crisis will improve. I just finished reading a book called [Buzz: The Nature and Necessity of Bees](#) by Thor Hanson. It's an informative, fascinating, and at times hilarious story of the history and biology of bees. Did you know that there are 20,000 species of bees worldwide, 4,000 species in North America, and 800 species in Texas? It's an interesting book to read to learn more about our native bees.

Forum, Plant Sale, and Thyme Well Spent Shoppe: In the last couple of Unit meetings, we've talked a little about our upcoming March event. There are many things still to do, but much work has already begun. The Planning Committee started meeting in October, has had great discussions, and has made a few decisions. Now the preparations begin in earnest, starting at the January Unit meeting. Please bring your calendars. Each area (Plant Sale, TWSS, and Forum) will have sign-up sheets for you to indicate where you will volunteer to help. And, of course, we'll need lots of volunteers. I'm so impressed and appreciative of all the help that everyone provides every year.

This event is truly important for the life of our Unit. We only receive a small amount of money from dues each year, so the income from the March Event is the primary resource that provides the money needed to have our amazing programs and operate the Unit. There are many areas where members can choose to volunteer – a few examples: setting up for the Plant Sale, cashiers (Plant Sale or TWSS), ticket writers (Plant Sale or TWSS), greeters and hostesses for the Forum, stuffing packets for the Forum attendees, and many other areas. Many members have already stepped forward to say they are willing and ready to be active participants, and I know I can count on all of you. Thanks so much!

Forum: The Planning Committee approved the theme for the Forum – "Dishing the Dirt on Herbs." I don't yet know the titles of their presentations, but three super presenters have been selected, and they are very excited to participate in the Forum.

Plant Sale: Julie Johnson, Madeline Johnson, and Phoebe Lake have been busy talking with plant suppliers and discussing ways to make the Plant Sale flow more smoothly and be more successful. A team met in November and built 15 more tables for the plants to be displayed on. It was a little scary during our past Plant Sale to watch as some of our very old tables started falling apart.

TWSS: Leslie Conrads has been working very hard buying supplies and talking with members about TWSS sale items. I know that Belinda Weatherly's culinary group has already made mustards.

Looking forward to the new year with excitement,

Diana Sellers
Chair, Pioneer Unit

FROM THE PROGRAMS CHAIR

Happy New Year! We will be kicking off 2026 with our friend Stephen Brueggerhoff on January 8th. Stephen will be sharing the presentation he put together for the 2025 forum on Restoring Biodiversity to Your Soil with Natives.

Join us at St John's United Church of Christ in Burton, Texas, at 10:00 a.m.

Looking forward to seeing you all there.

Tory Farley
Programs Chair



MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

A very Happy New Year to you!!

At this writing, Christmas is still to become a memory and the next year is nine days away. I'm still picking ripe tomatoes and lots of my spring plants are budding. We had a guest from Minnesota recently. It was 70+ degrees here and -13 at his house. Needless to say, he was grateful for the cold relief while he was here.

I so enjoyed the December meeting at Menke House!! All the cheery chatter and well-fed attendees!! Bravo, Chef Nicole!! We had a final attendance of 52: 46 members and six guests. Jill Quimby came and has already trained at the Sensory Garden (thank you, Ann Lugg, for responding to her on Facebook!!); Mary Sockwell came with Euphanel Goad; Cindy Yielding came with Barbara White; Joy Kamani was here for her 3rd meeting (she just needs to complete her Sensory Garden training); Sheila Ripple, also her 3rd meeting, came with Georgetta Welch; and David Kieke. So glad to see everyone!!

We have three new members this fiscal year who are not in the directory. Here is their contact information. Please add them to your directory!

Kathy Carter, carterkath2@gmail.com, 281-413-3954, Birthdate 8-13
Sharon Fothergill, sharon.fothergill@protonmail.com, 713-962-8988, Birthdate 8-18
Barbara White, sudib52@yahoo.com, 979-203-9867, Birthdate 2-13

Thyme to get ready for the Plant Sale!! Onward and ready to work hard!!

Cammie Beierle
Membership Chair, Pioneer Unit

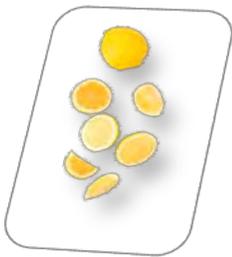
CULINARY GROUP



By the time you read this, mustards for Thyme Well Spent will be nestled in boxes quietly aging to flavor perfection. Every year on the first Wednesday of January the alchemy of sweet, sour, spicy and hot will occur so that deliciousness will be produced by happy culinary elves. The Culinary Group welcomes anyone interested in using herbs and spices in their cooking. No experience or culinary talent required. Come to our party every month. First Wednesday of the month at 10:00 in Menke House.

Belinda Weatherly

HORTICULTURE STUDY GROUP Growing Lemon Without a Tree



Yes, herbies know how to get that wonderful lemon flavor and scent without a tree. The Horticulture Study Group is ready to explore the world of lemon herbs in 2026. Each HSG participant grows and measures eight different lemon-scented herbs. The herbs under consideration include: lemon balm, lemon basil, lemon beebalm, lemon catnip, lemongrass, lemon thyme, lemon-scented pelargoniums, and lemon verbena.

If you like growing herbs and are interested in becoming a better gardener, this is the group for you. No expertise is required. You will learn to cultivate lemon herbs in pots and in the ground. At our monthly meetings, we learn to use these herbs in cooking, crafting, and for better health. We share how this collection of eight herbs is doing, solve challenges, and celebrate successes. Mostly, we have fun while learning.

You are invited to join or re-join the Horticulture Study Group. At this meeting, you can learn more about the 2026 study and get your hands dirty propagating lemon-scented herbs from seed as well as cuttings. Each participant will take home a 4-inch pot of seeded lemon basil and a lemon-scented pelargonium cutting. If you have any questions, please talk to either Madeline Johnson (979-249-6211) or Phoebe Lake (281-660-6071).

Horticulture Study Group: Propagating Lemon Herbs
January 22, 2026, from 10 a.m. to Noon
Phoebe Lake's Home, 9521 Shelby Road, Brenham 77833

Submitted by Madeline Johnson

MINUTES OF UNIT MEETING
PIONEER UNIT
December 11, 2025

The December meeting of the Pioneer Unit was held at the Edythe Bates Old Chapel at Festival Hill in Round Top, Texas.

Tory Farley, Programs Chair, introduced Tom Shaughnessy of Cedar Hollar Services. Tom helps landowners make informed decisions about how to manage their property. His presentation focused on native pollinators. While conservation of European honeybees has been promoted with slogans such as "Save the Bees," it is native pollinators that need our conservation efforts. Members learned many fascinating facts. Thirty percent of bees lay their eggs in cavities such as hollow trees, stems, and the ground. A bee's last egg will be a male. And the hover fly, which looks like a bee, is a productive pollinator in our yards. It was a highly engaging presentation with lots of audience participation. Many members plan to incorporate nesting boxes for the pollinators at their homes.

Diana Sellers, Unit Chair, opened the business meeting.

Cammie Beierle, Membership Chair, welcomed 42 members and six guests. Diana presented Euphanel Goad with her 30-year pin.

Royceanna Kendall, Treasurer, discussed our bank balance of \$66,090.20 as of November 30, 2025.

Julia Johnson, Pharmacy Garden Chair, encouraged volunteers to join her in the Pharmacy Garden for First Friday. Members were excited to hear she has ordered materials for the greenhouse and construction will begin soon.

Debi Meschwitz thanked the volunteers who helped teach the students in the Sensory Garden. Plants N Things Nursery donated plants so each student could plant their own plant in the garden.

Cathy Nitsch asked anyone needing jars to make jams and jellies for TWSS to email her or Leslie Conrads.

Courtney Kieke asked anyone interested in a hypertufa workshop to email Pat Cox.

Diana thanked volunteers who helped build 15 new tables for the plant sale.

Caroll Edwards thanked hostesses Belinda Weatherly, Ann Lugg, Linda Rowlett, and Deb Pruitt for the delicious breakfast they provided.

The meeting was adjourned and members enjoyed a delicious lunch in the Menke House.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Hagler
Secretary

FESTIVAL HILL GARDENS

First Friday at Festival Hill has been RESCHEDULED for Friday, January 9th, 9-11:00 a.m. We will be digging turmeric for the plant sale.

Cheers to all for a blessed 2026!

Signups for the Plant Sale days will be available at our January and February Unit meetings.

Julia Johnson
Festival Hill Gardens

SENSORY GARDEN

The workday for the Sensory Garden will be on our usual day, Thursday, January 15, from 9 till 11:00 a.m. We had three people at the December workday, and we did as much as possible with only six hands working!! Please come out and give us a part of your day to keep this garden cleaned up for the children at the Brenham Elementary School to enjoy along with the general public. I will keep an eye on the weather and notify everyone if it is going to be a bad day for us to work.

Wishing everyone a Happy New Year and safe travels.

Blessings
Serena Speaker
Sensory Garden Chair

REPORT FROM OUR EDUCATION CHAIR

WORKSHOPS

Now that Christmas is over, it's time to focus on all we need to do for our 2026 Herbal Forum and TWSS. We plan to have one more hypertufa workshop in early January (weather permitting), a couple of crafting workshops, and lotions workshops in February. Please let me know if you would like to get other workshops on the list.

Thanks,
Pat/ Cox
bmerlynn@cvctx.com

REPORT FROM THE SCHOLARSHIPS CHAIR

Here's an idea!

Planning on attending EdCon (HSA National Educational Conference) in April in San Antonio, but finding the price a bit too much for your budget?

Apply to become an Herbal Scholar and use the scholarship toward your EdCon expenses!

Afterwards, give an informal presentation on your conference experience to our Unit.

To apply, contact Phoebe Lake, PVLake@gmail.com or 281 660 6071.

Pioneer Unit Herbal Scholar Program-General Information

Interested in learning more about a particular herb, gardening idea or culinary topic?

Apply to become an Herbal Scholar! Previously known as a Unit Scholarship, here's how it works. You fill out a simple application outlining the area of study that you're interested in pursuing.

You'll then receive a stipend of \$250 to use in researching your study — books, classes, etc.

In return, we ask that you present your findings to the Unit in the form of a presentation, a display, an article for the newsletter, or an idea of your own.

Previous applicants have studied lavender, salvias, homeopathy, the genus *Rubus*, flavors of Japan, Oaxacan cooking, witching herbs, and The Spice Trail. As you can see, the possibilities are endless!

For more information contact Phoebe Lake, pvlake@gmail.com, 281 660 6071



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- January 1 — Carolyn Thomas
- January 7 — Mary Doebbeling
- January 9 — Erica Menconi
- January 20 — Cammie Beierle
- January 21 — Jo Ann Reichle
- January 27 — Cindy Nash
- January 28 — Euphanel Goad



Jo Ann Reichle (January 21) sent the lovely photo adjacent and wrote the following: "This iris has been blooming in my backyard for a couple of weeks now. I think it's confused because of the weather we've been having. My irises normally do not bloom until March."

Carolyn Thomas (January 1) sent a photo of part of her gardens and wrote: "As of January 1, 88 years of my life have gone by. Twenty have been with the Herb Society of America and Pioneer Unit. It's been enriching and enjoyable.

"For the past several years I've been attempting to bring my 2 1/3 acres and gardens to reasonable management. Studying all the plants and trees on my property as part of achieving Green Bridges designation has been really helpful. I've also enjoyed the botany study group, workshops from propagation to tool maintenance, and certainly learning to use the herbs we grow, especially culinary knowledge. Chairing the Programs Committee and the Pioneer Unit, as well as in involvement in the TWSS, Plant Sale, and EdCon, have been enlightening. Now my main contribution is propagating plants for the sale.

"Best of all have been the bright, interesting people who have come into my life through my involvement with the Herb Society."



January 2026

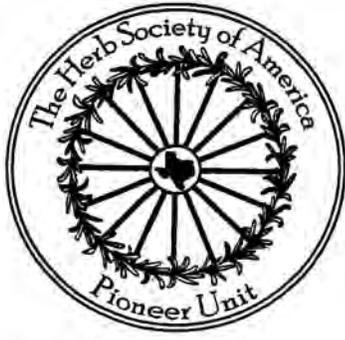


Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
CG = Culinary Group FH = Festival Hill SG = Sensory Garden	HSG = Horticulture Study Group			1	2	3
4	5	6	7 CG Menke House	8 Pioneer Unit Meeting	9 FH Workday 9-11:00	10
11	12	13	14	15 SG Workday 9-11:00	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 HSG 10:00-noon	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February 2026

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





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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
Secretary—Joanna Hagler

Vice Chair Membership—Cammie Beierle
Treasurer—Royceanna Kendall

The following note from Julia Johnson and the collage she sent seem to be the perfect way to end the first newsletter of 2026: "Thanks for all the fun that we've had over this past year. Lovely memories, fantastic presentations, and lots of garden fun! May you all have a blessed 2026!"

