



October 6
Board Meeting
Festival Hill
Service Building

October 26
Hunter's Full Moon

October 31
Halloween



PIONEER PATHS

Newsletter of the Herb Society of America
Pioneer Unit

October 2026

Volume 34, Number 2

MONTHLY UNIT MEETING

Date: October 8, 2026

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

Location: Brenham Presbyterian Church
900 South Jackson Street, Brenham

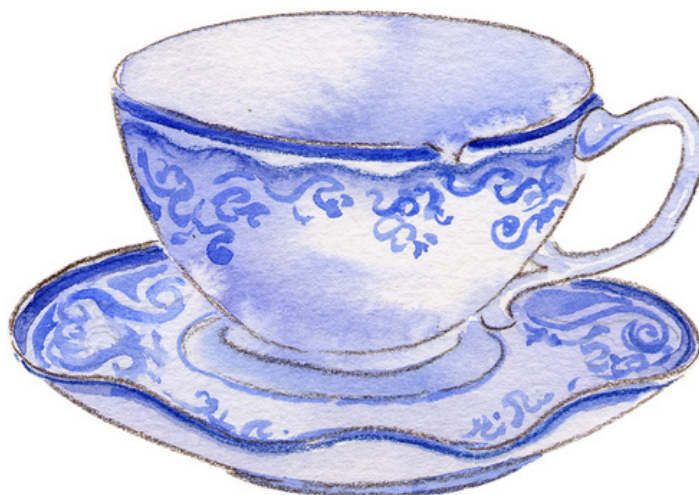
Directions: Exit Highway 290 to Business 36 North (Day Street) into Brenham. Continue north to College Street. Turn left to Jackson Street, and the church will be on your left.

Program: Tea with Friends

Speaker: Pioneer Unit Culinary Group

Hosts: Leah Pearce, Ann Allen, Bev Elam, Sharon Fothergill, and Julia Johnson

Lunch: There is no need for members to bring food. Lunch will be provided by the Culinary Group.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

It's been another really hot summer (actually unbearable). I've talked with several of our members who suffered from scary heat experiences, bordering on heat exhaustion. But I am hearing forecasts of rain and a cool front arriving later this week. I'm keeping all my fingers and toes crossed.

September Meeting -- Thanks to all of you for helping to turn a difficult situation at our last meeting into a really fun and educational meeting. Very special thanks to Phobe Lake for so quickly coming up with a creative alternative. Also, many thanks to Tess Hartman for chairing the meeting while I was on vacation.

I hope some of you have submitted articles to the newsletter about your plant successes this summer. It will be wonderful to learn some new garden strategies for growing plants in super-hot weather. I had several successes this summer, which really surprised me considering I was gone for six weeks during the height of the heat. I give credit to the plants themselves. I worked hard last Fall to identify plants that were very drought tolerant and native to this area. It was interesting for me to note that the drought tolerant plants didn't really grow much until it got really hot and dry, then they took off. I was amazed the day we arrived back home in mid-September to find that those plants had tripled in size – Pride of Barbados, lantana, Esperanza, Flame Acanthus, Turks Cap, Blue mist flower, Gulf Muhly, pentas, to name a few. I also have a second year Provence Lavender (non-native, of course) that loved the heat and loved not getting watered very often. It also tripled in size this summer. The additional benefit is having lots of butterflies and bees show up to enjoy those plants.

October Meeting -- I'm looking forward to our Culinary Group's tea party presentation. I know it will be a little painful for them and all of us as well, thinking about Belinda Weatherly. I talked with Cammie Beierle briefly last week, and the group sounds prepared to give us an excellent presentation. FYI – the order of the day's agenda will be different than usual to accommodate the flow of the tea party. We will start with the business portion of the meeting, then proceed with the program.

March Event Planning Committee -- As I mentioned in the September newsletter, the March Event Planning Committee held its first meeting on July 28th to start planning the March 2027 Forum, Plant Sale, and Thyme Well Spent Sale. We identified a number of things to begin working on and discussed tentative ideas for the Forum theme. Our next meeting will be held September 29th. It will be important for members to look for information each month as we will need to do things a little differently next year due to things outside of our control. I will explain more about why at our Unit meetings but essentially changes to keep in mind include:

- The plant sale, TWSS, and Forum will occur one week earlier than they have in the past (March 12 and 13).
- We will hold the Pioneer Unit meeting and prep day on Monday, March 8, instead of the Thursday before event week.
- Plants will start arriving in full force on Monday, March 8.

Please make note of our March event on your calendars and plan to help out however you can. We will need lots of volunteers to make this a successful event once again. As always, I appreciate all that all of you do.

2026/2027 Directories and Membership Cards -- We started distributing the new Directories and Membership Cards in September. Come to the October meeting to pick up yours.

Upcoming Events

The Herb Society of America South Texas Unit (Houston) presents the 53rd Annual Herb Fair on Saturday, November 7, 9:00 a.m. till 2:00 p.m., at the Southside Place Clubhouse (3743 Garnet Street, Houston, 77005) near West University. FREE admission. See flyer included in this newsletter for more information. I have attended an event held by the South Texas Unit in the past, and they are lots of fun and present great information.

South District Gathering -- This event will be held in North Texas in October 2027. Our new South Texas District Chair will soon be putting together a planning team in the upcoming weeks. Let me know if you are interested in participating on this committee.

I look forward to seeing you at the October Unit Meeting,
Diana Sellers, Pioneer Unit Chair

FROM YOUR PROGRAMS CO-CHAIRS

Our very own Culinary Group will present "Tea with Friends" for our October meeting. All our tables will be beautifully decorated for an authentic tea party. Tea will be served along with tasty biscuits, scones, and other British delights.

In addition, the group will present on the history of tea and the ritual of taking afternoon tea. This presentation will be dedicated to the memory of our Culinary Group Leader, Belinda Weatherly, who passed away recently.

Phoebe Lake and Tory Farley



MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Dear Pioneer Unit!

What a delightful start to our fall meeting schedule!! Thank you, Tess Hartman, Tory Farley, and Phoebe Lake for working together to provide such a fun day for our September meeting!

Other than a special event, we had a record attendance of 59: 54 members and five guests enjoyed a wonderful time together, laughing, telling stories of (plant) survival, and eating what this Unit is so well known for: a fabulous, homecooked potluck meal!

The five guests were Lisa Bonassin who came with Connie Gwyn; Richelle Vatzlavick who came with Robin Greer; Lorinda Draper, my guest; Susan Vanderworth who came with Phoebe Lake; and Cindy Yeilding (her second meeting) who came with Barbara White.

I am so looking forward to these fall meetings, with cooler weather and lots of TEA (shameful plug)!!

See you October 8 at Brenham Presbyterian!

Cammie Beierle
Membership Chair

MINUTES OF UNIT MEETING HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA PIONEER UNIT

September 10, 2026

The September meeting of the Pioneer Unit was held at Brenham Presbyterian Church, Brenham, Texas. The meeting was unique as it honored several members: Belinda Weatherly, Tony Scanapico, Carol Edwards, and Linda Hartson. The floral arrangements were designed to symbolize friendship remembered and kindred spirits with nature. The Culinary Group will host a tea party at our next meeting to honor Belinda.

Phoebe Lake opened the meeting by posing a question: "What is one plant doing well at the end of summer?" Each table was given the task of discussing the state of their gardens and determining one plant they could brag about. Table discussion was so robust that most tables couldn't pick just one plant. The following plants were recommended by PU members:

Ruella - It spreads easily.

Butterfly vine Mascagnia macroptera - These yellow flowers have seeds shaped like a butterfly.

Basil

Blue chill salvia - This is a Mystic Spires hybrid. It attracts lots of bees who enjoy blue flowers.

Plumeria - Carol Edwards, known for her beautiful plumeria, passed on a cutting which is now thriving.

Pride of Barbados

African Blue Basil

Henry Duelberg Salvia

Caper Plant - It has a gorgeous bloom. Capers are unopened flower buds.

Kidneywood - This native is fragrant and can grow into a tall tree. One member has a 12-foot kidneywood.

Lemongrass - The horticultural study group reports that it is tall and thriving.

Passion vine - The Texas native, Passiflora incarnata, is often referred to as Maypop vine. It grows in local pastures with beautiful flowers and fruit for wildlife.

Loofah - All parts of this plant are edible.

Turk's Cap - It may get stressed but will survive our heat.

Tess Hartman, Past Chair, opened the Business Meeting. She thanked Sara Holland for bringing Richter's Seed Catalogs for members.

Cammie Beierle, Membership Chair, welcomed five guests, with a total of 59 in attendance. The following PU members celebrated their membership anniversaries:

Noreen Barker, Tory Farley, Beverly Green, and Irene Spurrier 5 years

Madeline Johnson and Bonnie Lout 10 years

Belinda Weatherly would have celebrated her 10th year in the Pioneer Unit.

Directories and membership cards were given to PU members.

Joanna Hagler, Secretary, read the Treasurer's report. Checking account balance: \$69,834.76 on August 31, 2026.

Irene Spurrier, Field Trip Chair, told PU members to get ready for some field trips when the weather cools.

Julia Johnson, Pharmacy Garden Chair, reported First Friday at Festival Hill was a success. Mints were trimmed, mulch and compost were spread, and the greenhouse now has storage for tools.

Cathy Nitsch, Hospitality Co-Chair, encouraged members to sign up for the Thanksgiving meal.

Ann Lugg, Publicity/Website Chair, reminded members of the password for the website. The new yearbook can be found there.

Shawn Helm, Thyme Well Spent Shoppe Chair, is familiarizing herself with the items typically made in the shoppe. She asked PU members to let her know if they are making something for our March event.

Cathy Nitsch gave a preview of next month's meeting which will be a tea party. Seating arrangements will be adjusted to accommodate.

Connie Gwyn thanked hostesses Patty Mills, Earl Mills, Leona Marshall, Cindy Nash, and Louise Rice.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanna Hagler, Secretary

HORTICULTURE STUDY GROUP

A Comparison of Herb Storage Techniques

Our September meeting started with delicious snacks and beverages. We tried pesto that included lemony herbs (so delicious!). Cammie Beierle and Courtney Kieke presented information on storing herbs for long-term use. Their focus was on comparing the relative merits of different storing methods. The table below compares different storage techniques.

To demonstrate the texture/flavor differences, Cammie processed a few types of lemony herbs using the freeze-drying method and the dehydration method. At the meeting, she rehydrated bowls of each herb so that we could compare the texture and flavor. The photo shows Cammie setting up the taste test. The freeze-dried herbs had better color and texture with a stronger lemony scent. We became 'true believers' in the merits of freeze-drying.



Method	Nutrient Retention	Texture/Flavor	Shelf Life	Best For
Freeze Drying	Excellent	Original	Years	Long-term delicate foods
Dehydration	Moderate-Good	Altered	Months-Years	Fruits, veggies, herbs
Canning	Moderate	Altered	Up to 5 years	Ready-to-eat meals
Freezing	High	Original	Months-Years	Short-medium term



Phoebe spoke about a few more lemony herbs that weren't included in our study. They included Horse Mint, Lemon Mint, Lemon Eucalyptus, and Lemon Leaf Plectranthus. The most intriguing plant had to be Lemon Myrtle or *Backhousia citriodora*.

Widely grown in its native Australia, it is difficult to find here. Although the flowers are attractive, *B.citriodora* is grown more for the lemon fragrance of the foliage. When crushed, the leaves emit a very strong aroma which would rival any member of the citrus family!

Madeline Johnson



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 18	Debbie Cox
October 27	Betty Pior
October 28	Cathy Nitsch
October 30	Margie O'Brien

Ginger Heath sent the following: "Happy & thankful thoughts as another birthday rolls in. Pioneer Unit activities and memories are a part of my best past & present. Watching the Unit grow with younger community members with enthusiasm and new ideas makes for the good life. I think I'll bake a cake!!"

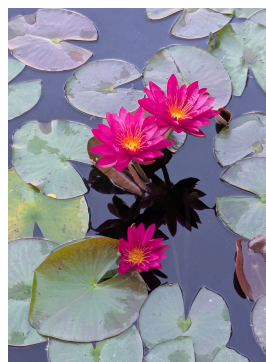
Catherine O'Brien introduced herself: "Dr. Catherine O'Brien was a biology professor and the Associate Vice Chancellor at San Jacinto College when she retired after 35 years to go back to the classroom. She then spent 6 years teaching anatomy and physiology before retiring again from UHCL to spend more time traveling, cooking, studying, gardening, and teaching others about herbs. "Catherine has taught zoology, botany, microbiology, anatomy and physiology, but when it came to botany, her professors usually said, 'Plants are food for animals. Any questions?' "It was not until she began gardening that she learned how exciting plants could be...sex, chemicals, and diversity all rolled into one. Catherine is a member of the Native Plant Society of Texas – Clear Lake Chapter and a member of the Herb Society of America. She is in her third year of the Family Herbalist Program through the Appalachian Center for Natural Health."

Ann Lugg wrote the following message: "October is one of my favorite months because it finally brings in cooler weather and because my birthday rolls around! I am so grateful for the friends I have made in the Pioneer Unit. Its welcoming community was just what I needed when we moved from Houston to our home in Industry. I have learned so much from our speakers and from other members. It has truly enriched my life."



Betty Pior sent this cute photo of herself feeding lettuce to a beautiful, purple-tongued giraffe at Fredericksburg Longneck Manor. She noted, writing in the third person, that she "is so happy to have her health back! It was a long two years of one severe illness after another. Betty missed being with all the wonderful, creative, hard working, devoted members of our herb society. She looks forward to the future learning more about herbs."

Cathy Nitsch sent the adjacent lovely photo and wrote: "I recently spent an afternoon at the Denver Botanical Gardens. Isn't that an amazing water lily photo? Such a beautiful way to enjoy our natural world! Birthdays remind me that blessings abound everywhere we look, especially in the garden and around all the 'kindred spirits' of the Pioneer Unit."



PHARMACY GARDEN ETC.

First Fridays at Festival Hill

This month for our First Friday workday we added compost and mulch to the Pharmacy Garden beds, clipped the mints back, and cleaned up any unruly plants. The Pharmacy Garden is thriving! Roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) is beginning to bloom and calyces are swelling; Moringa (*Moringa oleifera*) is towering above all with its lovely flowers and long string-like beans; Lion's Tail (*Leonotis leonurus*) is showing off its spectacular orange blooms; the Blue Pea Vine (*Clitoria ternatea*) is keeping the bees busy; and Tua Tua (*Jatropha gossypifolia*) is lovely with its blend of burgundy colors and dainty flowers.

Then on a Saturday I had a group out for our Gardens & Grounds Volunteer Day at Festival Hill, and we worked to uproot many giant ragweed that were covering up the old bottle tree and Garbage Graveyard. It was a start, and it's nice to see what was underneath everything! We also had eight youth from the local highschool come out due to the encouragement of one of our coaches!

On top of that, I was rewarded by a spontaneous clean up day in the Cloister/Mary Garden area, when several of our members joined me on a Wednesday to clear out spent wildflowers in the South Wall and tidy up the Mediterranean Garden. We all fondly remembered many good times with Tony Scanipico when we trimmed the climbing fig vines off the stonework. Tony must have been smiling down on us!

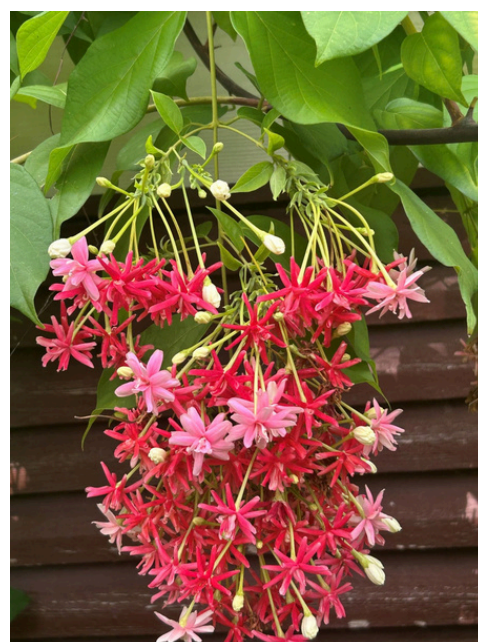




To top it all, I happened upon a beautiful double-flowering Rangoon Creeper (*Combretum indicum*) that I had never seen in bloom before. It was located on the front porch of the Menke house, and Henry Flowers said that he remembers planting it when he was here. Note: I had pulled out many of these Rangoon creepers earlier this year, because they weren't blooming and tended to be messy; people kept asking me to keep them clipped off the porch. I guess this one decided to prove to me that it gets to stay!

I look forward to seeing everyone in October!

Julia Johnson
Pharmacy Garden Chair



UPCOMING FIELD TRIP

Please mark your calendars for Thursday, December 3rd.

Our next field trip will be to The Brookwood Community located in Brookshire. We will eat lunch at The Brookwood Cafe and visit their Gift Shop and Garden Center.

More information to follow in the November newsletter.

Irene Spurrier
Field Trips Chair

NEWS FROM THYME WELL SPENT SHOP

Pat Cox is currently planning workshops to make candles and mosaic pavers for TWSS. She hopes to have a date for the candle workshop soon and expects to hold it some time in October. Please reach out to her if you want to participate.

Shawn Helm
Thyme Well Spent Chair

INFORMATION ABOUT LICORICE

While weeding in the Pharmacy garden over the past year, I have been saving the licorice root to take home and use for tea. Recently during a First Friday workday, Susan Bame mentioned that too much licorice can be toxic and that her friend developed a cluster of symptoms that mimicked a syndrome due to eating licorice. The symptoms resolved when she quit the licorice. I pooh-poohed Susan, but later looked into it. Turns out she was right, but you need to eat a lot of it. Glycyrrhizin, or glycyrrhizic acid, is the sweet tasting compound in the licorice root. Prolonged or high intake of glycyrrhizin can lead to the development of pseudoaldosteronism because it can interfere with cortisol and aldosterone regulation in the kidneys. Licorice candy sold in the US is FDA regulated to contain 3.1% or less glycyrrhizin, and much of what's sold as "licorice" is flavored with anise. If you are planning on using the root medicinally as tea or supplement and are worried about side effects, they sell deglycyrrhizinated licorice. (And maybe don't pooh-pooh Susan when she tells you something.)



And here are the recommendations from The American Botanical Council website:

Prolonged use (longer than 6 weeks) and higher doses (generally greater than 50 grams per day) may lead to sodium retention, water retention, and potassium loss, all of which may be accompanied by hypertension, edema (swelling), hypokalemia, and in rare cases, myoglobinuria (excretion of the muscle's oxygen-transporting protein, myoglobin, in the urine). Side effects are less likely with aqueous licorice root extract than with isolated glycyrrhizin due to the lower intestinal absorption when consumed as part of the total extract. Licorice may potentiate the side effects of potassium-depleting thiazide diuretics (e.g., chlorothiazide, chlorthalidone, hydrochlorothiazide, and metolazone). With potassium loss, sensitivity to digitalis glycosides (heart medications, e.g., digoxin, lanoxin) increases. Licorice should not be combined with corticoid treatment.

Wendy Matthews

SUMMER SURVIVORS

Expanding on the theme of our September meeting, here are messages from some Pioneer Unit members about plants that were successful in their gardens during the long, hot, dry summer of 2026.

The top ten along with a personal favorite from Phoebe Lake:

1. Moringa. Tropical tree with fragrant white flowers. Leaves are made into a tea with many health benefits (known as the miracle tree). Prune to keep bushy. Will die back in winter, but depending on the weather, should come back.
 2. Wild Petunia, Ruellia. There are several species of Ruellia and all spread! They are incredibly hardy and reseed prolifically. Usually they have purple flowers, but there are pink ones also.
 3. Butterfly Vine, Mascagnia. A heat and sun loving vine that doesn't put on a show until late summer, but the wait is worth it! Bright yellow blooms followed by butterfly shaped seed pods.
 4. Plumeria. A tropical plant best grown in containers. Fragrant blooms. AKA frangipani and used to make Hawaiian leis. Protect in winter.
 5. Pride of Barbados, Caesalpinia. Brilliant red/orange/yellow spidery blooms atop a large shrub with delicate foliage. Prefers full sun and is very drought tolerant. Usually perennial, but also reseeds.
 6. Caper. Sun loving, drought tolerant shrub. The flower buds are the source of capers for cooking. Large fragrant pink and white blooms appear each morning.
 7. Basils. Ocimum. So many basils and all love our heat! Check out the many varieties at our plant sale in March. They need plenty of water during the growing period. The blooms attract pollinators.
 8. Kidneywood, Eysenhardtia. This Texas native grows into a large airy shrub with fragrant small white blooms that attract pollinators. Likes full sun and good drainage.
 9. Lemon Grass, Cymbopogon. Fast growing grass with lemon scented leaf blades that can be used in teas and other culinary dishes. Cut back in winter and don't overwater, and it should come back. Reputed to keep tigers away- haven't seen any in my yard, so it's working!
 10. Luffa. Another vine that takes off when the temperature rises. Can be eaten like a squash when young, but most often used as a natural sponge.
- And my personal favorite is Rangoon Creeper, Quiscqualis indica. This vine just waits for the heat and then takes off! Fragrant blooms change from white to pink to red. The hotter it gets, the happier this tropical vine is. It is proving root hardy here in Brenham.



My lavenders, especially Grosso and Vera, loved this crazy weather!
Debbie Pruitt



Tagetes lucida / Mexican mint marigold / Texas tarragon (let)
As you see, this plant has survived our hot, dry summer in relatively good shape. I water it seldom, but deeply. Soon it will cover itself with golden yellow marigold-like blooms and attract many pollinators. While French tarragon doesn't like our climate, mint marigold thrives and has a similar anise flavor. It has grown in my garden for over a decade, asking for little care while giving me beauty and delicious flavor. I recommend using in chicken salad.
Irene Spurrier

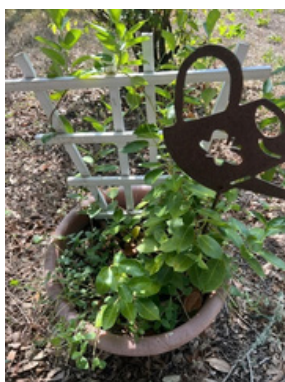
SUMMER SURVIVORS continued

The only herb that has survived my porch summer is my garlic chives. I have done not one thing special for them. Just hardy I guess.

I have resisted putting up a hummingbird feeder this summer. My Esperanza Yellow Bells and Porter Weed have attracted multiple hummers. Fun to watch them holding onto a stalk and swaying as they snack! The Porter Weed was purchased at our 2024 Plant Sale and continues to thrive in my morning sun beds. Its four-foot tall stems attract many hungry hummingbirds.

Diana Reed

Susan Bame sent photos of three plants with brief descriptions of each (left to right):



Purple Porter Weed. Easy to grow in hot summer as long as it gets some water. Better with afternoon shade. Yellow crown of thorns. Easy to grow in summer. I grow on the porch. Needs 3-4 hours of sun a day. Water when top inch is dry. Usually found in red or pink; yellow is more rare. Pink Mandevilla. Very easy to grow in hot sun but needs a lot of water, sometimes every day. Blooms more as weather cools. Climbs well on a small trellis.



Here's my Swiss chard, which I have managed to keep alive this summer by providing 50 percent shade cloth and watering every other day. It still tastes great!

Ann Lugg

Is Henry Duelberg Sage a herb? If so, mine is still blooming, dealing with the challenge of salty well water, and attracting fat bumble bees.

Tess Hartman

The editor will end with two from my own garden. Great Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) has been a joy to watch as bees spend the morning sipping nectar from my many plants. Candle Bush (*Senna alata*) forms a "wall" around part of my herb garden, making it seem like a private place as Doug and I have our caffeine in the gazebo there every morning. I water my herb garden deeply every three or four days (actually I run the sprinkler all night).

Linda Rowlett



53rd ANNUAL
HERB
FAIR

Saturday Nov. 7, 2026
9am - 2pm

*Huge variety of HERBS,
plants, herbal gifts, jellies,
teas, and culinary blends*

Presented by
The Herb Society of America, South Texas Unit

Southside Place Clubhouse
3743 Garnet Street, Houston, TX 77005

*We support local, regional & national gardens
and educational activities.*



MORE INFO



PIONEER PATHS

Volume 34

Editor: Linda L. Rowlett, Ph.D.
Pioneer Paths is a publication of
The Herb Society of America,
Pioneer Unit.

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 and Phoebe Lake

Vice Chair Membership – Cammie Beierle

Secretary – Joanna Hagler Treasurer – Royceanna Kendall and Debi Thomas

BOOK REVIEW

Writing Wild: Women Poets, Ramblers, and Mavericks Who Shape How We See the Natural World

Writing Wild, a book I read some time ago with the Herb Society of America nonfiction book club, is a collection of essays by Kathryn Aalto about an eclectic selection of women who have written about nature. Part of Aalto's purpose was to introduce the reader to some of the many women who have written about the natural world. She provides interesting details about each of the women and includes long quotations from their work because her intention was also to acquaint the reader with the works themselves as well as with the women who wrote them. The book opens with Dorothy Wordsworth, sister of the well-known poet. Dorothy kept a journal that is the subject of Aalto's essay about her, and I was surprised to learn how much her brother borrowed from her writings.

The book is organized somewhat chronologically, opening with Wordsworth (1771-1855) and ending with Elizabeth Rush, an American writer who currently writes primarily about climate change and sea-level rising. Aalto includes extensive essays about 25 women writers. After each essay, she includes a page or two of short pieces (one paragraph each) about women writers who address similar themes (such as "More on Mountains" or "More Bird Life") or about other works by the author just discussed.

The book cover sums up this vast collection better than I can: "Parts travel essay, literary biography, and cultural history, Writing Wild encourages a new generation of women to pick up their pens, head outdoors, and start writing wild."

I appreciated learning about some of the many women writers who observe nature and write about the natural world. Writing Wild is a perfect book for anyone interested in nature, the climate, or women who write.

Linda L. Rowlett, Ph.D.