

AUGUST 2021

# Herb Letter

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
BATON ROUGE UNIT



## Monthly Meeting, August 26, 2021

6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens, Lone Burden Conference Center  
4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA

Dr. Kit Chin: Catnip as a Niche Crop in Louisiana (see details on p. 2).

## Herb of the Month—Cayenne Pepper

Cayenne Pepper, *Capsicum annuum*

Cayenne pepper, a member of the Solanaceae, or nightshade, family, is native to tropical North and South America. The term “cayenne pepper” can generically refer to any of a number of peppers within the *Capsicum annuum* Cayenne Group. More info on p. 4.

## Message from the Chair

Summertime, and the living leaves something to be desired, between the oppressive heat, afternoon monsoons, COVID, and other odds and ends! It's so hot (How hot *is* it?) that the dog has been issuing fans to the cats with instructions to keep one always going on him.

Even in these sweltering times, our Garden Worker Bees have kept both the Heritage Garden at Burden, and the Sensory Garden at the Botanic Gardens going strong. If you haven't been to the Sensory Garden lately, you need to make that trip—it is as lush as any tropical paradise anywhere! The amazing efforts by all concerned have really paid off! And a very special thanks goes out to the team who supported the Plant Sale at the Botanic Gardens on Saturday. Even in the heat, our team sold plants a-plenty and represented HSABR in fine fashion!

Few of us think of catnip as anything other than a feline intoxicant, but when you come to this month's meeting (see below) you'll find out that it's that and much more to boot. Dr Kit Chin of Southern University will be there to tell us more about catnip than even the brightest cat among us ever imagined! Be there or be square!

We are once again working through a rough spot with our COVID response, with that in mind, we do ask that everyone attending be vaccinated if you possibly can be. For the sake of our families and friends, we encourage wearing a face covering, social distancing, and vaccination. Not only is it recommended, but the evidence is also overwhelming that those steps are the keys to getting us back on track toward normal, hug-possible life!

I hope each one of you is having the best possible summer, getting a little dirt under your fingernails, talking to the plants, and through them, touching the divine. See you on the fourth Thursday! 🌿

— Art Scarbrough, HSABR Chair

## Monthly Meeting

August 26, 2021, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens, Lone Burden Conference Center

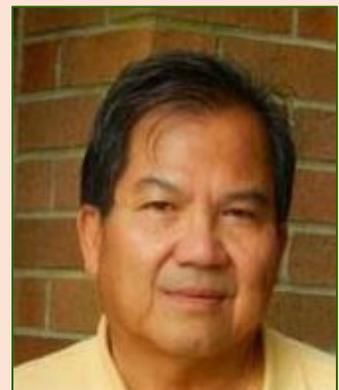
4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA

### Catnip as a Niche Crop in Louisiana

Dr. Kit Chin, Professor, Department of Agricultural Sciences, Southern University

For August, Dr. Kit Chin, a researcher who has studied catnip as a niche crop for Louisiana, will talk to us about this herb and its uses.

Dr. Chin has also studied the roselle hibiscus.



*Dr. Kit Chin*

In view of the resurgence of COVID-19, we ask that our participants be vaccinated unless they are unable to take the vaccine. Please wear face coverings and practice social distancing while at the meeting.

As always, visitors and guests are welcome. Admission is free for HSABR members, \$5 for all others. Please bring small bills if possible. 🍃

## July Meeting Recap

A small but enthusiastic group welcomed Dr. Elizabeth Floyd, Associate Professor at Pennington Biomedical Research Center, back to HSABR for her third visit with us.

Dr. Floyd updated us on the research being done at the Botanical Dietary Supplements Research Center at Pennington on identifying the medicinal properties of herbs. The Center is one of three federally funded botanical research centers in the country and collaborates with the Rutgers University Department of Plant Biology in these research efforts.

In case you missed the meeting, Dr. Floyd has graciously provided her slides so you can at least read her talking points. You can download them [here](#). 🍃



*Chair Art Scarbrough presents Dr. Floyd with a yarrow plant*

## Herb of the Month: Cayenne Pepper, *Capsicum annuum*

### From the Herb Society of America:

- The botanical name *Capsicum annuum* includes many different kinds of pepper such as bell peppers, jalapeños, pimientos, serrano, and poblano peppers, among many others. These peppers are in the nightshade family (Solanaceae), which also includes eggplant, potatoes, and tomatoes.
- The cayenne pepper plant has long, tapered seed pods with a curved tip; they turn red at maturity. The plant grows three to five feet on average and has cream-colored flowers.
- Grow in full sun in rich, well-drained soil.
- Harvest the pods when the skin looks waxy, firm, and is a vibrant red.
- The pods can be used fresh, dried and crushed, or ground into a powder. They are used in the commercial production of hot sauces and are included in many seasoning blends and rubs.
- Capsaicin is the compound responsible for the “heat” and the carotenoids capsanthin and capsorubin primarily give cayenne its red pigment.
- On the Scoville Heat Unit scale (SHU), cayenne measures 30,000 to 50,000 SHU. (Bell pepper registers 0, jalapeño is 3,500 to 5,000 SHU, and habanero is 100,000 to 350,000 SHU.)
- Ethnobotanists speculate that cayenne peppers were eaten and used for medicinal purpose in early Mexican and Central American civilizations, 8,000 years ago. *Capsicum annuum* may be the earliest domesticated plant.
- Medicinal uses this pepper continue today, including topical treatment for arthritis, muscle pain, and sprains. It has also been used as an antifungal, anti-irritant, and antibacterial, and has been included in remedies to treat stomach upset, ulcers, colds, sore throats, coughs, and gastrointestinal complaints, among others.
- Pepper spray is made from a derivative of cayenne pepper. 🌿



For tips on growing peppers in our area, see the pepper publications from [LSU AgCenter](#) and [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension](#).

And from the [Herb Society of America Blog](#):

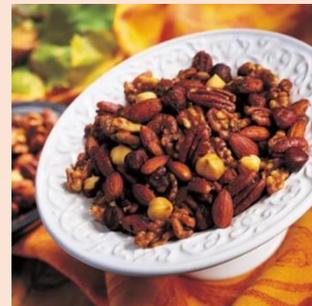
“An interesting study done in 2017 showed that eating foods containing cayenne pepper ‘resulted in significantly higher satiation at the end of the meal and one hour post intake. Further, adding cayenne pepper was associated with subjects feeling significantly more energetic and overall satisfied one hour post intake. During intake of [a] soup with added cayenne pepper, desire for salty and spicy foods were significantly decreased and desire for sweet and fatty foods were significantly increased.’ The study concluded that cayenne pepper could be used to influence eating habits ([Anderson, 2017](#)). This conclusion echoes some of the traditional reported medicinal benefits of cayenne: that it is good for cardiovascular health, increasing weight loss, and stimulating the appetite.” 🌿

## Recipes

### Spicy Herb Roasted Nuts

1 ½ cups almonds  
1 ½ cups walnut halves  
1 cup hazelnuts  
1 cup pecan halves  
½ cup maple syrup  
¼ teaspoon cayenne  
1 ½ teaspoons chopped fresh oregano  
1 ½ teaspoons chopped fresh sage  
1 ½ teaspoons chopped fresh thyme

1 ½ teaspoons  
chopped fresh  
rosemary  
1 ½ teaspoons  
chopped fresh  
savory  
1 ½ teaspoons chopped fresh marjoram  
3 tablespoons olive oil  
About 1 teaspoon kosher salt



Mix almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, pecans, maple syrup, cayenne, oregano, sage, thyme, rosemary, savory, marjoram, and oil in a 10- by 15-inch rimmed pan. Sprinkle nuts with 1 teaspoon salt.

Bake in a 300° oven, stirring occasionally, until all liquid evaporates and nuts are golden under the skin (break open to test), about 45 minutes.

Let cool. Taste and add more salt if desired.

— [Sunset.com](http://Sunset.com)

### Lebanese Onion Sauce

4 large onions, sliced  
6 tablespoons butter  
2 teaspoons spice mixture

Spice Mixture:  
1 tablespoon cinnamon  
1 tablespoon paprika  
1 tablespoon salt  
¾ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Warm a heavy pan over low heat and add butter. As butter begins to melt, toss in onions and cook, stirring frequently, for 30–40 minutes. Keep heat low to avoid burning the butter. When onions are done, sprinkle the spice mixture over the onions and toss thoroughly.

Serve the Lebanese Onion Sauce with meatloaf, with chopped tomatoes as a garnish. You might also try adding a bit of the spice mixture to your favorite meatloaf recipe.

Spice Mixture: Stir spices together and keep in a tightly covered jar.

— Ruth Mary Papenthein, HSA Virginia Commonwealth Unit, Colonial Triangle of Virginia Unit

*Essential Guide to Growing and Cooking with Herbs, 2007*

## Help Make Our Meetings Better!

We're looking for members who will volunteer to do a short talk (no more than 10 minutes) at some of our monthly meetings to introduce our audience to different herbs. This doesn't need to be a big, complicated lecture...just a few tips on growing and harvesting the herb, along with some common uses, will be great. It's not required, but handouts and samples of dishes featuring your herb are very welcome! Please contact [Art Scarbrough](#), unit chair, if you'd like to do one of these presentations, so he can get you on the agenda for the meeting!



## Sensory Garden Update

Maintenance sessions for the Sensory Garden at the Independence Botanical Garden, 7950 Independence Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70806, are on Thursday mornings from 7:00–9:00 a.m., except on the week of the monthly meeting, when we meet on Saturday instead of Thursday. Any and all are welcome, even if you can come only once a month or less. If you can help keep the largest herb garden in this area looking its best, please contact [Judy Hines](#).

*Unless otherwise specified, monthly meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the month from January through October, at the LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens, Lone Burden Conference Center, 4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA., from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. Visitors and guests are welcome. Admission is free for HSABR members, \$5 for all others.*

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HerbLetter is a monthly publication of the Baton Rouge Unit of the Herb Society of America, for and by its members and friends. For questions, comments, corrections, or to submit articles, announcements, or photos, please write [hsabrnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:hsabrnewsletter@gmail.com). Items must be received by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month for inclusion in the next issue of HerbLetter.

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## Upcoming Events

THURSDAY SENSORY GARDEN MAINTENANCE SESSIONS , 7:00–9:00 A.M.:

August 26

September 2

September 9

September 16

SATURDAY SENSORY GARDEN MAINTENANCE SESSIONS , 7:00–9:00 A.M.

August 21

September 25

SEPTEMBER 23

MONTHLY MEETING, 6:30–8:00 P.M.

Judy Hines and Sylvia Lowe, Sensory Garden Co-chairs: Using the Herbal Harvest