

AUGUST 2022

# Herb Letter

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
BATON ROUGE UNIT



## Annual Meeting, August 25, 2022

6:30–8:00 p.m.

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

Election of officers, discussion of plans for the coming year, and a program on the Herb of the Year, *Viola* spp. More information on p. 2.

## Herb of the Month — Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

This lemon-scented herb, also known as sweet balm, melissa balm, melissa, heart's delight, English balm, bush balm, and honey plant, among other common names, is in the Lamiaceae, or mint family. It is native to Europe and Central Asia and is cultivated throughout most of the temperate and subtropical regions around the world. More info on p. 6. 🍃

## Message from the Chair

Magic, mystery, and secrets abound at the August meeting of the Herb Society of America Baton Rouge Unit! Take home prizes in our unique educational quiz! It's election time for new officers, words of wisdom from old officers, secrets never revealed, and gossip galore at our Annual Meeting and gabfest! Be a voice in YOUR herb society...be there!

It's all hands on deck for EDCON 2023 right here in Baton Rouge! Earn special volunteer points while meeting herb aficionados from around the nation! Consume reasonable quantities of special culinary delights while embracing a unique entertainment and educational event! Learn more at our Annual Meeting!

Our two managed gardens, the Sensory Garden at the Baton Rouge Botanical Gardens site, and our Heritage Garden at the Burden Center, are the talk of the town! Key volunteers like Sylvia and Judy and the entire gardens team have made our gardens points to visit for residents and visitors to Baton Rouge alike. Remember, there's a place for you on our gardens teams, so get a little dirty under the fingernails and share a laugh-filled morning or two in the gardens!

Did I mention that on August 25, at 6:30 we will meet at the Burden Center for our Annual Meeting? I'll be there with bells on, and I hope to see each one of your smiling faces ready to have fun, elect officers, and get down! See you there!

—Art Scarbrough, HSABR Chair 🌿

## Annual Meeting

August 25, 2022, 6:30–8:00 p.m.

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

Our annual meeting will feature election of officers, and we'll discuss projects for the next year, including EdCon, which we're hosting next April.

The proposed slate for 2022–2023 to be submitted for approval by the membership is as follows:

Sylvia Lowe, Chair

Kathleen Harrington, Vice Chair

Cathy Scarbrough, Secretary

Claudia Ross, Treasurer

The program will be a presentation on the 2022 Herb of the Year, *Viola* spp., by Kathleen Harrington.

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

The Three Roll Estate tour was a wonderfully informative night, and a good time was had by all. Learning and laughter, fellowship, and fun—those are the best kinds of meetings! If you were wondering why we chose Three Roll Estate, a rum distillery, for our July meeting, well, as a group we are always looking for local businesses that are of interest to our organization.

The distillation process itself is the most effective way to remove the components of the herb (essential oil) needed to use in herbal remedies. This process gives us the most concentrated form of the oil and gets the best use out of the plant material. Second to distillation, using alcohol for a tincture is the most potent way to extract the essential properties of the plant and requires 80–100 proof alcohol.

Three Roll Estate is a Louisiana Certified Farm to Table, Local Family-Owned business that has been servicing the community for generations, and their craft rums are Louisiana Certified Products. The venue itself is rich in history and we received a wealth of knowledge about the Alma Plantation, where the cane is grown, and about sugarcane production and distillation from juicing sugarcane through an industrialized juicer, all the way to a sampling of the finished product at the end!

— Julie Walsh 🌿



## Culinary Herbs in My Garden!

One of the many reasons I joined HSABR was for the culinary aspect of using fresh herbs. Today, I ventured into my garden to prepare Chicken Cacciatore, Louisiana style.

All the herbs I needed were at my fingertips, the ultimate in freshness, starting with fresh green onions, rosemary, oregano, basil, and bay leaf.

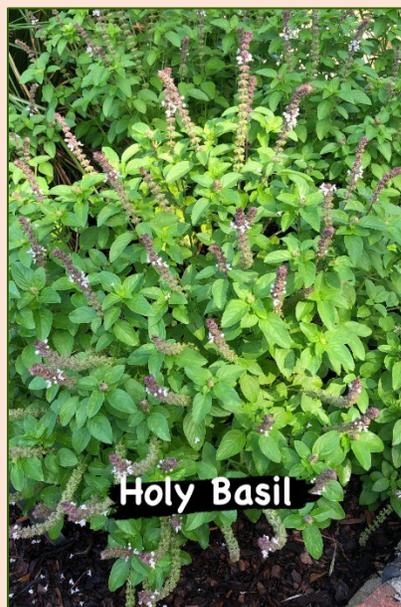
I feel so fortunate to be a member of the Herb Society and share ideas with other members. They offer firsthand experience and uses for herbs. There are many discussions while working at the Sensory Garden each week. Starting with the culinary to growing herb in different seasons. These activities are an important facet of being an Herb Society of America Baton Rouge Unit member.

—Claudia Ross 🌿



## Sensory Garden Photos, August 2022

Sylvia Lowe sends us a photo update of what's growing in the Sensory Garden in the Botanical Gardens on Independence right now:



## HSABR at the 21st Summer Plant Sale & Garden Expo

BREC's Independence Botanical Gardens held its 21st Summer Plant Sale & Expo on August 13, and HSABR was there! This sale is held twice a year to benefit the whole gardens complex, with members of the various organizations that maintain specialty gardens staffing each organization's tables.

HSABR participated and sold herbs that we had propagated from the Sensory Garden beds and that we had obtained from one of the nurseries in Covington. It was a success with the help of Sylvia Lowe, Kay Martin, Claudia Ross, Kevin Folivi, Sharon Kleinpeter, and Judy Hines. The funds we raised went back into supplies, mulch, and plants for the Sensory Garden. Special thanks to Judy Hines and Kay Martin for propagating so many plants for us!

In addition to selling herbs, we handed out information on how to use herbs and how to plant them. We gathered names for our newsletter distribution list and even got some new members to join the society!

It is always a very fun and informative day as we get a chance to talk to people and not only give information out but to learn new things ourselves. It was hot, but thankfully it did not rain, and we were under the shade of the beautiful large trees at Independence Park.

—Judy Hines and Sylvia Lowe 🌿



*HSABR members (from left) Kay Martin, Sylvia Lowe, and Judy Hines at the Summer Plant Sale & Garden Expo at the Independence Botanic Gardens*

## Herb of the Month: Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

From the Herb Society of America:

### Facts:

- Lemon balm contains both vitamin C and thiamin (a B vitamin), is high in flavonoids and has anti-viral, antibacterial, antifungal, and mood-elevating properties.
- The lemony flavor and fragrance are due to citral and citronellal in the essential oil. But rose-scented geraniol and lavender-scented linalool are also present and contribute to the aroma as well.
- Lemon balm is a vigorous grower, thriving in sun to part shade. It will do well in containers for a season before needing to be divided. It is easily propagated by division, cuttings, and seed.
- Stems can be cut back for use as needed, up to 50% at a time. Pruning or harvesting prior to seed set will help control the spread of the plant.
- The history of medicinal and culinary herbal uses dates back over 2,000 years. It was used to encourage bees to return to the hives in first century Rome. And early herbalists used lemon balm for its medicinal and uplifting qualities. Europeans also used it as a strewing herb. It has been used to polish furniture.
- In the Victorian Language of Flowers, lemon balm was used to signify "pleasant company of friends, memories, a cure, and don't misuse me."
- Early immigrants brought lemon balm with them to North America. They used it to make potpourri and as a substitute for lemons in jams and jellies. There is record of lemon balm being grown on Thomas Jefferson's farm.
- Culinary uses for this plant are many, both sweet and savory. It can be added to teas and other beverages, salads, soups, butters, cheeses, fish, egg dishes, vegetables, fruit salads, jams, jellies, sauces, dressings, herb vinegar, and many desserts.



## Beware of the Lemon Balm!



It's a member of the Mint family and can be quite invasive if the small white blooms are left to seed. Lemon balm, aka *Melissa officinalis*, is great pass-along plant that possesses a sweet lemony fragrance. It's not picky about where it grows but prefers full sun; fertilizing is discouraged as it can diminish the lovely fragrance of the plant. Tea, potpourri, soap, bug repellent, tinctures, vinegar, and the list goes on for the uses of this understated but powerhouse plant.

—Julie Walsh 

## Lemon Balm Tips and Recipes

- Add fresh leaves to complement fruit salads or beverages.
- Combines well with parsley and basil as well as dill, tarragon, chervil and chives.
- Steep in hot milk for custard-based dessert recipes and ice cream.
- Like other tender leaf herbs, add towards the end of cooking time.
- Combine fresh or dried with other herbs for herbal tea or add to black, green, or white tea, served hot or iced. Add a handful to a pitcher of black iced tea, with or without a handful of spearmint.
- Make a simple syrup to add to cocktails/mocktails and other recipes.
- Make lemon balm-scented sugar by adding chopped lemon balm to sugar; seal and store for six weeks.
- Infuse in cold drinking water alone or with other herbs such as spearmint, orange mint, pineapple sage, rose petals, basil, and sliced fruit.
- The flowers are edible and can be used in salads and as a garnish. 🌿

### Chicken Salad with Creamy Lemon Herb Dressing

1 pound cooked chicken breasts, cut or torn into bite size pieces.  
¾ cup thinly sliced celery (cut on diagonal)  
½ cup thinly sliced chives or substitute green onions (green portion only)

¾ cup toasted pecan pieces, or other nuts may be substituted  
1 cup seedless grapes, cut in halves  
½ cup golden raisins  
Sprigs of lemon balm, lemon thyme, lemon basil or Mexican mint marigold for garnish

### Creamy Lemony Herb Dressing

¾ cup sour cream  
¾ cup mayonnaise  
2–3 tablespoons lemon juice  
1 teaspoon ground coriander seed  
3 tablespoons honey  
1 tablespoon grated lemon peel  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh lemon balm

2 tablespoons chopped fresh Mexican mint marigold or tarragon  
2 teaspoons chopped fresh lemon thyme  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley  
½ teaspoons salt  
¼ teaspoon freshly ground white pepper

Mix dressing by combining all ingredients in a small bowl with a rubber spatula or a wire whip. Do not combine in a blender or processor, or it will be too thin. Dressing should be highly seasoned to flavor chicken and other ingredients. Place chicken pieces in a medium mixing bowl. Add celery, chives, nut pieces, grapes, and raisins, tossing them lightly with a fork. Taste dressing For seasoning, adding more salt and lemon juice as needed. Gently fold in just enough dressing to coat salad. Serve on lettuce leaves or other greens; garnish with additional nuts and herb sprigs. Yield: 4 generous servings

—© 1994 Madalene Hill, Gwen Barclay, *Flavour Connection* 🌿

## Help Make Our Newsletter Better!

Like to read stories about what our members are doing in their gardens? Like photos of plants? So does everyone else! Help us keep our newsletter interesting by contributing something! It doesn't have to be a long, scholarly article (although if you do want to contribute something like that, we'd be glad to have it!); just a few words about your herbs, a recipe you love, or a photo of what's looking good in your garden right now will add a lot.

Please send submissions to [hsabrnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:hsabrnewsletter@gmail.com). We'll appreciate it greatly! 🌿

—Kathleen Harrington  
HSABR Newsletter Editor

## Sensory Garden Update

Maintenance sessions for the Sensory Garden at the Independence Botanical Garden, 7950 Independence Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70806, are now on Saturday mornings from 7:00–9:00 a.m. 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, Ione 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). <mailto:info@hsabr.org> 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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Disclaimer: It is the policy of The Herb Society of America, Baton Rouge Unit, not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal or health use. Information offered in this newsletter is for educational purposes only. Neither the Herb Society of America nor the Baton Rouge Unit (HSABR) makes medical claims or dispenses medical advice. Women who are pregnant or nursing, and persons with known medical conditions, should consult their licensed healthcare provider before taking any herbal product. HSABR neither endorses nor is in any way responsible for the content of links shared here. Readers must do their own research concerning the safety and usage of any herbs or supplement

## Upcoming Events

### SENSORY GARDEN MAINTENANCE SESSIONS

SATURDAYS, 7:00–9:00 A.M.:

August 27  
September 3  
September 10  
September 17  
September 24  
October 1

September 22, 2022

MONTHLY MEETING, 6:30–8:00 P.M.

Debi O'Neill will present a program on plants for bees.

October 27, 2022

MONTHLY MEETING, 6:30–8:00 P.M.

Speaker and topic TBA.