

FEBRUARY 2022

Herb Letter

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
BATON ROUGE UNIT



Monthly Meeting, February 24, 2022

6:30–8:00 p.m.

LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens Orangerie (this month only)
4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA

Herb Day Preparations! Details on p. 2.

Herb Day, February 26, 2022

8:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens Pavilion
4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA

Our big once-a-year plant sale! See story, p. 3.

Herb of the Month— Bay Laurel, *Laurus nobilis*

The bay laurel, also known as bay leaf tree, sweet bay, Grecian laurel, and true laurel, among other common names, is hardy to zone 8. In Mediterranean-type climates, the evergreen bay laurel tree can grow up to 60 feet tall. It can also be grown in containers, planted as hedges, and pruned into topiary standards, in addition to being grown as house plants in colder areas. More info on p. 5.

Message from the Chair

What happens on 26 February that should be a state holiday? Why, Herb Day, of course! Our annual frenzy of restocking local gardens is perhaps the number one herb event of the season. Just everybody who is anybody will be there drooling over our fabulous array of green friends for sale! Naturally, we need plenty of HSABR members there to both manage the event and claim bragging rights... everyone is welcome, so please contact Sylvia Lowe [see meeting announcement below] to volunteer! By the way, if you can come Friday and help set up, I'll tell you a fabulous secret! Just ask!

As most of you know, our Unit will be hosting EDCON 2023. the education conference for the Herb Society of America. People from across the country will be visiting our neck of the woods for a fun-filled weekend of thrilling seminars, special events, and fellowship. Our own Mary Williams is leading the charge on our behalf, so if you would like to help with planning and execution, please contact Mary.

And we're pleased to announce that our unit now has two garden interns for 2022! Congratulations to LSU students Kevin Folivi, who returns for a second term, and to Jennifer Blanchard, who's joining us for the first time! We'll have more on the intern program and our interns in next month's HerbLetter.

We have a marvelous opportunity to influence sustainable garden practices through the marvelous medium of herbs. To that end, each of us is an ambassador for a greener future. Together we can move mountains!

Tell your friends about Herb Day, EdCon, our wonderful educational, programs, and our sincere need for recruits! Let us move forward from the dark days of COVID with a spirit of renewed hope and dedication to the future! 🌿

— Art Scarbrough, HSABR Chair

Monthly Meeting

February 24, 2022, 6:30–8:00 p.m.

LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens, Orangerie (note change of venue, this month only!)
4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA

Herb Day Preparations

HSABR members (and anyone else who'd like to help!), we need an hour or two of your time on Friday evening to help set up, and/or at the sale on Saturday to help make our big event of the year a success.

Herb Day 2022 is scheduled for Saturday, February 26, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. We have thousands of herb plants for sale and want this to be as smooth and successful as possible. If you can, please volunteer a portion of your day and help sell the plants, greet visitors, or check out their purchases.

We'll also be setting up the sale, getting plants organized and labeled, on Friday afternoon, February 25, from 3:00 to 5:30. This is an important job, because it sets the stage for our visitors to find and buy their chosen plants. The setup and sale will all be in the Pavilion at Burden. **Please come to the meeting or contact Sylvia Lowe ([email](#) or 985-629-1286 if you can help either or both days!**

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

Herb Day 2022

Ready for spring? Come to our annual Herb Day plant sale at the LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens Pavilion and stock up!

We'll have thousands of healthy herb plants for you to touch, taste, and purchase!

Because we're still being mindful of Covid, this year, like last year, Herb Day will be a plant sale only. We hope to be able to resume our extravaganzas of the past next year, so please bear with us as we all navigate the pandemic together!

Reserve your time slot at [Eventbrite](#); there's a \$5 charge for tickets, but you'll receive a \$5 credit on your purchases. Don't forget to bring your phone or print your receipt to show your Eventbrite confirmation for entry—sorry, no admission without an Eventbrite receipt.



Here's a QR code to scan for easy access to the Eventbrite ticket site!

Admission is scheduled at 30-minute intervals to avoid over-crowding and to give everyone a chance to look over and select their purchases. Please bring carts, baskets, etc. to carry home your herbs!

Cash is preferred, and if you can bring small bills, it makes things a lot easier on our end.

Here's a list of the herbs we hope to offer. There may be some variations to this list because the cold weather has impacted some of our growers, but we'll still have plenty to choose from.

Aloe Vera
Arugula, Wasabi
Artemisia (Cola)
Basil: Sweet, African Blue, Everleaf
Emerald Tower
Catnip
Chamomile, German
Chickory
Chives: regular and garlic
Cilantro
Citronella - Lemon Balm
Celery Cutting type
Oregano, Cuban
Dill: Bouquet and Fernleaf
Fennel
Feverfew
Foxglove
Garlic: Elephant, Society
Lavender: Madrid Purple, Madrid Rose,
Primavera, Goodwin
Lemon Grass
Lemon Balm

Mint: Bowles Applemint, Chocolate, Ginger, Grapefruit, Kentucky Colonel, Spanish, Mojito, Moroccan, Orange, Peppermint, Pineapple (variegated), Spanish Spearmint, Strawberry, Swiss Spearmint, Sweet Lemon
Pelargonium Mosquito Plant
Pepper: Cayenne, Habanero, Jalapeño
Rosemary: Tuscan Blue, Creeping, Foxtail Rue
Sage: officinalis, Purple, Tricolor, Bergarten, Bergarten variegated
Sorrel, Garden
Stevia
Thyme: English, French, Golden, Lemon variegated, Mother of, Silver Queen Lemon, Lemon, Red Creeping, Woolly
Viola Sorbet (white and yellow)
Yarrow, New Vintage, Red and Rose 



January Meeting Recap

At our January 27 meeting, fifteen members and guests came out to hear Dr. Charlie Johnson, LSU AgCenter Professor Emeritus and fruit tree expert, tell us about growing fruit trees in our part of the country. Some of the wisdom he imparted was to think seriously about our needs, wants, and available resources, and do research before deciding what trees to buy.

Among his many valuable tips were these: pick only those trees that are appropriate for our area (avocados and most tropical fruit trees don't do well here); don't buy large trees as they're less likely to survive transplant (stick to those no taller than 36 inches); and if you buy and plant citrus, it's important to prune off the thorny shoots that grow from the rootstock at the bottom of the graft to prevent them from growing into the desirable graft plant and taking over. A big thanks to Dr. Johnson for a most informative and enjoyable program! 🌿

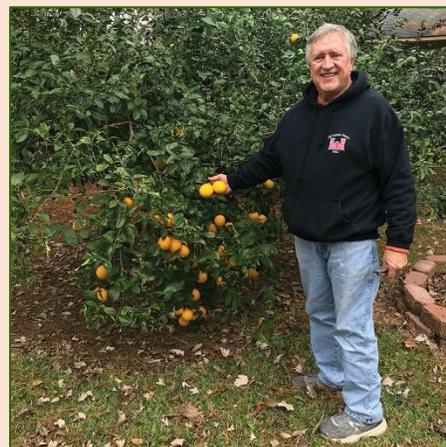


Photo from [Louisiana Gardener](#)

MidCity Makers Market Recap

In late January the unit was invited to have a booth at the MidCity Makers Market. Since a plant sale in January isn't feasible, Kevin Folivi, HSABR intern, put together a herbal petting zoo in conjunction with an educational talk on the use of herbal remedies and extracting medicinal compounds from plants.

Kevin reports that he had a great time manning the booth and sharing knowledge with the visitors. This also provided a good opportunity to bring HSABR's presence and mission here to the public attention, as well as to promote our annual Herb Day sale and his upcoming talk on steam distillation and the science behind essential oils. We are looking forward to doing more public outings and educational talks! 🌿



HSABR informational table at January MidCity Makers Market

Herb of the Month: Bay Laurel, *Laurus nobilis*

From the Herb Society of America:

Facts:

- Since the bay laurel is dioecious (male and female on separate plants), small, pale yellow-green flowers followed by small, berry-like drupes appear on the female trees. As the one-seeded fruit matures it becomes purplish black.
- Culinary uses of bay leaf have existed since the ancient Greeks. It has also been used in cuisines around the world, including Mediterranean, American, French, Thai, Indian, and Pakistani.
- Bay laurel is an ingredient in the French *bouquet garni*, massaman curry, garam masala, and biryani rice, to name a few well-known dishes and spice blends.
- With a long history of medicinal uses, bay infusions have been used to treat digestive disorders, rashes, aches and pains.
- In Greek mythology, the nymph Daphne was turned into a laurel tree after fleeing from Apollo. In his despair, Apollo used the leaves of the noble laurel to honor athletes winning the Pythian Games. Romans made laurel crowns to symbolize victory.
- Poet laureate, baccalaureate and the saying “resting on one’s laurels” originated from the symbolism associated with bay laurel. Wreathes of laurel can be seen on Roman pottery, statuary and mosaics.
- In another tradition from Europe and Britain, young girls placed a small bouquet of bay leaves under their pillows on the eve of St. Valentine’s Day so they’d dream of their future husbands.
- Do not confuse *Laurus nobilis* with mountain laurel, (*Kalmia latifolia*), which has poisonous leaves; West Indian bay (*Pimenta racemosa*) used to produce bay rum for hair; or bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*), grown as an ornamental shrub with aromatic leaves and fruit used to make candles.



Tips:

- Dried bay leaf is what is meant in most recipes unless fresh is specified.
- Dried leaves should be muted green color, with a paler green on the bottom of the leaf.
- Dried leaves have a sharp and slightly floral flavor resembling thyme and oregano.
- To infuse flavor, use bay leaves whole or crushed at the beginning of the cooking time.
- Remove whole or crushed leaves before serving to avoid digestive distress. Place leaves in a muslin bag to make removal easy.
- Ground bay leaves are often added to herb blends and do not require removal before serving.
- The flavor of bay leaves is best infused in dishes with long cooking time, such as soups, stews, chilies, gravies, pot roast, tomato sauces, marinades, and pickling brines. 🌿

Recipes

Herbed Olives

2 cups un-pitted ripe or green olives
1 bay leaf
2 small hot dried chiles
2 Tbsp drained capers
2 cloves garlic

12 rosemary leaves
2 Tbsp finely chopped celery leaves
1 cup olive oil (or more as needed)

Press each olive between your fingers so the marinade can penetrate the olive. Place olives in a glass jar with all ingredients except the olive oil. Pour enough olive oil to cover the olives. Cover jar and shake well. Refrigerate for 3 or 4 days before using. Remove garlic if olives are stored any longer than 4 days.



— Marion Foster, HSA Tidewater Unit

The Herb Society of America's Essential Guide to Growing and Cooking with Herbs

Chocolate Pudding with Bay

2 cups half-and-half cream
3 large fresh bay leaves or 2 dried bay leaves
3 Tablespoon cornstarch
2/3 cup sugar
2 pinches salt

1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa
1/2 cup milk
3 ounces bittersweet or semisweet chocolate, cut into small pieces
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Whipped cream, for serving (optional)

Heat the half-and-half cream with the bay leaves in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium heat. When the cream starts to bubble around the edges of the pan, remove from heat and cover. Let stand for 30 minutes.

After the bay has infused in the cream for nearly 30 minutes, combine the cornstarch, sugar, salt, and cocoa in a bowl and add the milk, whisk the contents together.

Pour the mixture into the warm cream and place over moderate heat. Continue cooking and whisking as the pudding thickens.

When the pudding begins to bubble and come to a boil, stir and boil for 1 minute. Remove the pan from heat and whisk in the chocolate pieces until they are melted. Add the vanilla and stir well. Discard the bay leaves; divide the pudding among six ramekins or custard cups.

Place the ramekins on a plate or pan and allow them to cool to room temperature. Refrigerate until chilled, at least 30 to 45 minutes. Serve at a cool room temperature and garnish with whipped cream, if desired. 🌿



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](#) or [Sylvia Lowe](#).

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.

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. Items must be received by the 10th of each month for inclusion in the next issue of HerbLetter.

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

THURSDAY SENSORY GARDEN MAINTENANCE SESSIONS, 8:00–10:00 A.M.:
Please contact Sylvia Lowe for scheduled dates.

March 24, 2022
MONTHLY MEETING, 6:30–8:00 P.M.
Kevin Folivi: Distilling Herbal Oils

April 28, 2022
MONTHLY MEETING, 6:30–8:00 P.M.
Amber Ryan: Pickles, Jams, and Jellies