

JANUARY 2023

Herb Letter

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
BATON ROUGE UNIT



Monthly Meeting, January 26, 2023

6:30–8:00 p.m.

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

Art Scarbrough: A Druid's Garden: From Magic To Medicine (see p. 3 for details)

Herb of the Month — Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)

The Herb of the Month, ginger, is also the International Herb Association's Herb of the Year for 2023. Ginger is commonly used in cooking and has a strong, pungent flavor. It is native to Asia and is widely cultivated in many tropical regions around the world. The ginger plant is a perennial and the part of the plant that is used is the rhizome, a horizontal underground stem rather than a root, that is harvested when the plant reaches maturity. Ginger has a long history of use as a medicinal herb and is known for its digestive and anti-inflammatory properties. It is often used to treat nausea, motion sickness, and morning sickness, and is also used to alleviate muscle pain and soreness. Ginger can be used fresh, dried, powdered, or as an oil or juice, and is a common ingredient in many dishes, including gingerbread, cookies, cakes, and ginger ale. More information on p. 5. 🌿

Message from the Chair

Happy New Year!!

The holiday season is always a busy time of the year but it ain't got nuttin' on the Herbal Season in Baton Rouge. The Herb Society of America Baton Rouge Unit is gearing up for the annual Herb Day on February 25th as well as sponsoring Herb Society of America's annual Educational Conference in April. Our committees have been extremely busy planning the shower of herbal wonders.

Some of our members gathered to celebrate the beginning of the Christmas season at our Christmas party. Everyone enjoyed delicious food, great company, and snazzy beverages. Guests were greeted by Santa's elves and reindeer too. Kevin, one of our garden interns, came in his medieval garb complete with a feather in his cap!

We are looking forward to the upcoming planting season and will be expanding the types of herbs to include more medicinal and native plants. We will be sponsoring community educational programs and meeting with local garden clubs as well. Members and guests will be wowed!

Read on to discover some of the exciting events that are planned.

My Herbal Cup runneth over!!

— Sylvia 🌿



From left, Sharon Murphy, Sylvia Lowe, and Claudia Ross



From left, Ruth Harb, Judy Hines, Kathleen Harrington, Claudia Ross, Karen Cashio, Sharon Murphy, Julie Walsh, and Kevin Folivi

In Memoriam: Sarah Liberta, 1941–2023

We're saddened to report the passing of one of HSABR's founders, Sarah Liberta, on January 17. Sarah was a remarkable woman, a dedicated herbalist and educator, who, despite many physical challenges, was tireless in sharing her knowledge of herbs with countless others. Sarah wrote HSABR's application to become a unit of the Herb Society of America back in 1991, and in 2017 she received the HSA's prestigious Helen De Conway Little Medal of Honor for her outstanding contributions to The Herb Society of America and the world of horticulture in general. She will be greatly missed. 🌿

Monthly Meeting

January 26, 2022, 6:30–8:00 p.m.

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

A Druid's Garden: From Magic To Medicine. Art Scarborough, longtime HSABR member and former chair, Master Naturalist, and practicing druid, will speak on the role of herbs in folklore and magical practice through the ages. Join us for a flight of fancy, fantasy, and fortune as we explore the magical properties of herbs!

We'll also have a seed swap, so bring any extra seeds you have to trade with others!



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

HSA EdCon 2023 Update

Save the Date!

THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
ANNUAL MEETING *and*
EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

APRIL 27-29, 2023
Hosted by
The Herb Society of America Baton Rouge Unit

Fellow Herb Lovers, the shape and scope of the big national Herb Society of America Educational Conference we're hosting here in Baton Rouge April 27–29 is almost complete. We just need your help to finish it and create a memorable event that will bring people back to Baton Rouge.

The Herb Society of America is celebrating its 90th birthday in 2023. Let's make it a great celebration!

First, our whole focus is on south Louisiana: its history, culture, cuisine, development, plants, healing traditions, music, and more. The whole schedule is on our website; [click here to download a copy](#).

Second, we are counting on your hospitality to welcome our guests, who will be HSA members from around the country and their companions or spouses. We need volunteers to spend an hour or two welcoming guests at the Welcome Reception on Thursday starting at 5:00 p.m.

Third, we need people to volunteer at the Registration/Welcome table on Thursday afternoon, all day Friday, and Saturday morning; this will also involve selling raffle tickets.

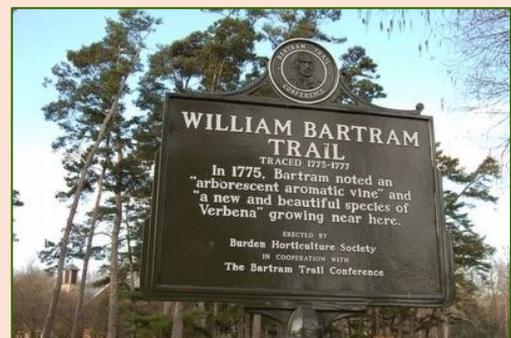
Fourth, we need you to find beautiful and useful items for the raffle. The raffle will end in the early afternoon on Saturday.

Fifth, we need helpers to look after the raffle items and encourage lookers to become chance-takers by depositing their raffle tickets into containers for each raffle item.

Local artisans, businesses, and artists will be at the Marketplace the whole EdCon2023. If you know people with garden-related items or unusual plants, contact Julie Walsh.

If you know individuals or businesses who would like to be sponsors of EdCon, please let me know and I will contact them. We are raising money to cover entertainment and bags. All sponsors will be given full recognition on all materials and publicity and their contribution is tax-deductible.

We have six excellent speakers, and one outside very important guest—William Bartram himself (aka Bartram reenactor [Kirk Brown](#)). He's coming to talk about his travels from the Atlantic across the Gulf Coast and inland in the 1700s, and what he saw and learned. He fondly remembers passing through the Baton Rouge area (you've seen the tall metal signs for Bartram Trail all over Baton Rouge). He will be with us all day and open to questions and discussions. He will just have celebrated his 284th birthday on April 20. We can celebrate his birthday Friday morning, April 28, by singing Happy Birthday to him.



Bartram Trail sign at Burden Botanic Gardens

Art Scarbrough, Ruth Harb, and Ruby Homyayssi worked with the Crowne Plaza Hotel to choose delicious and exemplary food for all the meals. Kitty Bull is making 15 of her wonderful Fairy Garden as centerpieces for the tables, and a bigger one for the raffle. Claudia Ross is leading the bus tour to Houmas House on the Thursday before the official start of the EdCon 2023. Judy Hines is running the raffle, but ALL of you need to be finding very good raffle Prizes. Julie Walsh is getting local artisans to be at our Marketplace. Sylvia Lowe and I are co-chairs of our local effort. There is a national HSA committee taking care of their formalities of awards and reports and the Annual Meeting of Members.

The very last event will be a gourmet buffet dinner and an irresistible Cajun band with dancers to teach us the steps. Our guests will be blown away. Please be sure you can be there for this very fun event. After two days of sitting and listening, people need to relax and play!

— Mary Williams 🍃

Herb of the Month: Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)

From the Herb Society of America:

Facts:

- The spicy edible portion of the ginger plant is the rhizome, which botanically speaking, is a horizontal, modified, underground stem rather than a root.
- Ginger is in the Zingiberaceae family, the same family as cardamon (*Elettaria cardamomum*) and turmeric (*Curcuma longa*). It is not related to the inedible wild gingers (*Asarum* spp.) found in the northern hemisphere, which have roots with a similar fragrance but contain aristolochic acid (which is associated with kidney damage).
- The tropical plant grows 3–4 feet, has bamboo-like pseudostems (false stems made of tightly wrapped leaf bases), narrow leaves, and flowers that emerge behind bracts on a dense cone. Ornamental varieties have showy flowers.
- It takes 8 to 10 months to produce ginger commercially, and it is grown in Asia, tropical Africa, parts of Central America, and the Caribbean and Australia. It is hardy to USDA Zones 8–12 and can be grown in containers if moved indoors in colder climates when temperatures drop below 50°F.
- Ginger prefers to grow in hot, humid climates in nutrient-rich soil.
- Young ginger rhizomes have a mild flavor. As they mature, the rhizomes become hotter to taste, drier, and more fibrous.
- Ginger is used worldwide in sweet and savory foods and beverages, medicinally, and in preparing cosmetics.
- The refreshing aroma of oleoresin, which is a mixture of essential oil and resin, is extracted from the rhizome for use in perfumes and cosmetics.
- Ginger was one of the first oriental spices to arrive in Europe, having been obtained by the Greeks and Romans from Arabian traders.
- Popular in diverse cultures, ginger was a major trade item gaining a following around the world including ancient India, Greece, Rome, China, and in Victorian England.
- The long history of ginger's health benefits dates to ancient Asian, Indian, Arabic, and Chinese herbal traditions.
- Ginger has been used to treat many ailments including the common cold, headaches, and arthritis, but the most popular use is for gastrointestinal relief.
- Due to the drying process which breaks down one of the volatile oils in ginger, dried ginger is more pungent than fresh.
- During the American Revolutionary War, soldiers received ginger in their food rations.
- Ginger is available fresh, dried, powdered, pickled, candied, and preserved.
- The sharp bite of fresh ginger comes from the aromatic compound called *gingerol*. This compound transforms when heated or dried to the sweeter compound *zingenone*. 🌿



Ginger Tips

- When purchasing, look for a tan rhizome that is firm with no shriveling or mold and feels heavy for its size.
- Recipes calling for a “knob of ginger” typically mean a two-inch piece, where as a “thumb” generally means a one-inch piece of ginger.
- Peel fresh ginger using a paring knife or the edge of a spoon.
- Store fresh ginger unpeeled in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks or peeled in the freezer for up to 6 months.
- Whole ginger can be frozen and grated without thawing using a microplane.
- Freshly grated ginger can be frozen in ice cube trays. Grate with a microplane or process in a blender to desired consistency. Add to recipes frozen.
- Add ginger in the beginning of the cooking process for a more subtle flavor or near the end for a fuller, more pungent flavor.
- Fresh ginger may be grated, sliced, or minced as well as crystallized, candied, and pickled.
- Powdered dried ginger is the form most often used in baking.
- Pickle fresh ginger by slicing peeled fresh ginger into thin slices using a vegetable peeler and place in equal parts vinegar and sugar (or to taste). Store in the refrigerator for up to two months. 🌿

Ginger Recipes

Ginger Syrup

Use this recipe to make cocktails and mocktails.

1 ounce freshly peeled and thinly sliced ginger
½ cup water
½ cup sugar

In a small saucepan, combine all of the ingredients and simmer until the sugar has dissolved. Cover and steep for 20 minutes. Strain the syrup into a jar and let cool. Use right away or refrigerate for up to 1 month.

— John Benjamin Savary
FoodandWine.com

Sesame Ginger Sauce

½ cup rice wine vinegar	2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
⅓ cup tamari sauce	1 clove garlic, crushed
⅓ cup canola oil	1 tablespoon tahini

Blend ingredients and store in a covered container in the refrigerator. Good as a seasoning for pan-seared or grilled salmon or tuna filets.

— Katherine K. Schlosser, HSA North Carolina Unit
The Essential Guide to Growing and Cooking with Herbs 🌿

Growing Ginger in Baton Rouge

Yes, ginger grows in Louisiana! All it takes is a little diligence and an eye on the weather when things get cold. Once you get your ginger growing you can grow quite a bit from one single root and have ginger all year long. If you find yourself with an abundance of ginger, you can pass it along to friends or donate to HSABR for Herb Day!

When purchasing your ginger rhizomes, you have many options. You can get ginger rhizomes from the grocery store, farmers market, or even order online. When choosing ginger root, look for one that is four to six inches long with multiple growth buds.

Like real estate, when planting it is all about location, location, location! Full to partial shade with rich, loamy well-drained soil for planting (5.5–6.5 pH) is its preference. Ginger is an understory plant that thrives in hot, humid conditions with dappled sunlight. It starts to die back in temperatures below 50 degrees F, but it can and usually will come back unless there has been an unusually long freeze and/or a long spell of cold, wet weather.

Growers recommend planting ginger in the spring when temperatures remain above 50 degrees. You can cut the rhizome growth buds into one- to two-inch-long pieces. Allowing the root to dry for 24 hours prevents possible root rot. Plant 12 inches apart, no deeper than one inch. Water well, and leaves will emerge after about one week. Ginger will reach heights of four inches tall. You can also propagate in water or use damp towels and a plastic bag. It's an easy beginner plant.

Zone 9 or higher is ideal. Zone 8 gardeners may be disappointed when their ginger doesn't grow back. Remember anything below 50 degrees makes ginger unhappy, triggering dormancy or death. Recently both the ginger and turmeric I planted in the ground turned to mush; fortunately, from experience, I have learned and recommend potted backups. Happy growing!

— Julie Walsh 🌿



Ginger sprouting



Ginger rhizomes

Help Make Our Newsletter Better!

Our newsletter is only as good as what we receive to put into it! We encourage (read: beg!) our members to contribute stories about what you're doing in your gardens, photos of plants, etc. You don't have to write a long, scholarly article (although if you do want to contribute something like that, we'll be glad to have it!); just give us a few words about your herbs, a recipe you love, or a photo of what's looking good in your garden right now. It'll add a lot!

Please send submissions to hsabrnewsletter@gmail.com. We'll appreciate it greatly! 🌿

—Kathleen Harrington
HSABR Newsletter Editor

Sensory Garden Maintenance

Maintenance sessions for the Sensory Garden at the Independence Botanical Garden, 7950 Independence Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70806, are now on a TBD basis for the rest of the winter. If you can help keep the largest herb garden in this area looking its best, please contact [Judy Hines](#) and she'll get you on the Worker Bees mailing list! 🌿

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.

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

February 23, 2023
Pre-Herb Day meeting

February 25, 2023
Herb Day

April 27–30, 2023
EDCON BATON ROUGE