

JULY 2023

Herb Letter

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
BATON ROUGE UNIT



No Monthly Meeting in July

Herbal Workshop, July 29, 2023

10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

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

Learn to make a nettle infusion and an elderberry syrup! (see p. 3 for details)

Herb of the Month — Tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculus*)

Artemisia dracunculus, commonly known as tarragon, is a perennial herb renowned for its delightful aroma and culinary uses. Native to Eurasia, this herb belongs to the Asteraceae family and typically grows up to three feet tall. Its narrow, lance-shaped leaves boast a distinctive anise-like flavor, making it a sought-after ingredient in a variety of dishes, particularly in French cuisine. Tarragon is also valued for its medicinal properties and has been traditionally used to aid digestion and alleviate toothaches. Its vibrant green foliage and versatile nature continue to make tarragon a cherished herb among chefs and herbalists alike. More information on p. 6. 🌿

Message from the Chair

HSABR has been busy despite the summer hiatus. On June 29th members attended a presentation by Julie Walsh at the Central Bloomers Garden Club. Julie spoke about medicinal uses of herbs in general and gave us all a recipe for a gut relaxing/restorative tea. Julie was invited to visit one of the member's gardens in Central. We are forging relationships!!

One of the goals for HSABR is to reach out into our community and touch someone. In March Sharon Kleinpeter and I spoke at The Claiborne of Baton Rouge, an assisted living facility. Some of the residents had been avid gardeners and still enjoy growing herbs and flowers. On Wednesday, July 12th, some of the residents toured the Sensory Gardens despite the heat. The ladies enjoyed "petting" and inhaling the wonderful aromas of the herbs. It was quite fun to show them around. The garden beds looked great and the herbs stood at attention for their performance.

The newsletter is chock full of exciting information. Please take a few minutes to enjoy the happenings of HSABR!

—Sylvia 



Julie Walsh speaks to the Central Bloomers in June



Residents of The Claiborne tour the Sensory Garden in July

Herbal Workshop

July 29, 2023, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Burden Conference Center

Free for members of HSABR; \$15 for non-members

All supplies are provided.

Class size is limited, so please register in advance at <https://www.hsabr.org/herbal-workshop-registration.html>

In this class, you'll learn to make a **nettle infusion** and an **elderberry syrup** and take one of each home with you!

According to renowned herbalist Rosalee de la Forêt in her book *Alchemy of Herbs: Transform Everyday Ingredients into Foods and Remedies That Heal*, nettles are really something special!

“In the age of exotic miracle herbs imported from all over the globe, stinging nettle remains an unsung champion for improving health in many powerful ways. According to herbalist Susun Weed, ‘Nettle infusions are recommended for those wanting to stabilize blood sugar, reset metabolic circuits to normalize weight, reduce fatigue and exhaustion, restore adrenal potency to lessen allergic and menopausal problems and eliminate chronic headaches.’ And she's not exaggerating! Nettle's nutrient-dense qualities, as well as a myriad of other beneficial constituents, make it a powerful ally for a variety of health challenges.”

And because cold and flu season is just around the corner, we're also going to show you how to make a healing elderberry syrup. Many of you are familiar with elderberry and it grows wild here in Louisiana. Both the flowers and the berries are incredible herbs for preventing and addressing upper respiratory infections. Again from Rosalee de la Forêt,

“In fact, herbal preparations with elderberries have been shown to be as effective as modern antiviral drugs for the flu, but without the risk of adverse effects.”

If you're a member of HSABR, just register at the link above, no charge. If you're not, you can still take part for a \$15 registration fee. Either way, it's a deal and you'll learn about two powerful healing herbs! 🌿



*Nettle tea and elderberry syrup
(Images from Shutterstock)*

In Memoriam: Cathy Scarbrough, 1950–2023



Cathy Stokes Scarbrough, longtime member and officer of HSABR, transitioned from this life on July 9, 2023. Born in New Orleans on June 16, 1950, Cathy grew up in Covington, LA. She was a graduate of St. Scholastica Academy and Southeastern Louisiana University (Class of 1972). She taught at Buras High School for two years before ultimately moving to Baton Rouge, where she was VP of Training at City National Bank until it changed hands. Cathy remained in the banking industry, training many of the Louisiana bankers of today until her retirement in 2007. She remained active until her death serving on the boards of several local non-profit organizations.

In addition to her roles in HSABR, she was a founding member of Louisiana Master Naturalists of Greater Baton Rouge, and an active member of the Baton Rouge Cat Club. Her volunteer efforts included work at LSU Ag Center Botanic Gardens, as well as being a supportive wife to all her husband's interests and adventures. Known nationally for her champion Shaded Silver and Golden Persian cats, Cathy was an award-winning author for several national and international cat fancy magazines. She also developed the largest Persian cat pedigree database in the world.

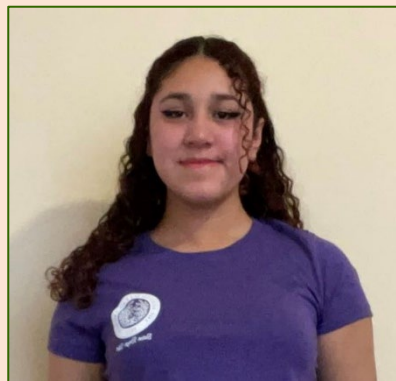
She is survived by her loving husband of 33 years, Cecil "Art" Scarbrough; son Chad R. Odom; stepson Adam Scarbrough (Leslie); four adoring sisters and brothers, Sandra Stokes of New Orleans, LA, Bonnie Stokes, Samuel J. Stokes III, and Stephen J. Stokes of Covington, LA. Cathy is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews, step-grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and cousins. By family and countless friends around the world, she is greatly loved and will always be remembered for her quick wit, her amazing sense of humor, and her ready, knowing smile.

A Celebration of Life will be held Saturday, July 22, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. at the Conference Center at Burden. 🌿

Garden Interns' Memoirs

We conclude our Spring Interns' thoughts on their experiences with Amanda Tello's memoir. Enjoy her story!

— Sylvia



I am currently a Horticulture major with a concentration in plant and soil sciences. I'm still not entirely sure what I want to do, but I am very fond of tropical plant research. I picked this internship because I have never interacted with herbs before and wanted to expand my knowledge of all aspects of plant life and production. I really enjoyed this internship because I learned that planting and keeping the gardens nice is very hard work. I only got a small taste of what you ladies do all year and I have really learned to appreciate all the hard work y'all do.

I had the pleasure of working with the HSABR team for the past 3 months and I can confidently say they are some of the most intelligent and kind people I have met. Here I have learned so much about herbs and their uses through the monthly meetings and through working in the gardens. I generally go to the Sensory Garden once a week to help mulch and plant the herbs and it has helped me to learn all of the hard work it takes to make the gardens look as great as they do and how to work well with others. Although, it wasn't very hard to get along with this group of people. I felt very welcomed into this community and felt great pleasure getting to see all our hard work catch the eyes of the public. I will see a few people taking their morning walks and stop by to admire the different sections of herbs. I have noticed more people coming by in the afternoons with their children to show them the herbs we grow. It has been an amazing experience and I love seeing the kids' faces light up as they run through the gardens.

February 25 was HERB DAY!!!! I got there around 9 and it was super hectic. I didn't realize so many people would come out, but we sold out of pretty much of everything before noon. All I did was restock plants when we ran out and tried to help people make selections. I still don't know too much about herbs so I was a little unhelpful, but this was a great experience...today was super fun!!!

— Amanda Tello, HSABR 2023 Spring Intern 🌿

Open the Gift of Herbs with Kids: HSA Webinar

Herb Society of America Webinar, July 27, 2023, 1:00 p.m. Eastern, noon Central with Betsy Smith, EdD, educator and Vice President of the Herb Society of America. Free for HSA members, \$7.50 for non-members. [Register here.](#)

The fragrance and diverse uses of herbs are a perfect match for kids who love to create, explore with their senses, and eat! How can we increase the time and variety of herbs that kids are introduced to, improving their mental health, physical activity, nutrition, and academic achievement? This presentation will share program examples such as recent Samuell grant recipients and Hope Garden. Simple kid-friendly recipes, adopt-an-herb, garden yoga, and other activities to inspire will be included as well. You can make a difference as an individual, through community partnerships or in your own backyard!

Betsy Smith, EdD holds a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership from Samford University and retired in 2018 from a 32-year career in public education as a teacher and elementary school principal. Betsy serves as Vice President of the Herb Society of America (HSA) and is a Master Gardener in Alabama. She has previously served HSA as the Southeast District Membership Delegate and as the Education Chair.

As vice-president, Betsy's motto is "Growing Learners, Growing Leaders," to promote the mission to encourage the knowledge, use and delight of herbs through education. In this role, she enjoys monthly meetings with Herb Society Unit Leaders from all over the United States. She also believes kids can also be leaders! 🌿

Herb of the Month: Tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculus*)

From the Herb Society of America:

Facts:

- While the exact origin of the name remains a mystery, *dracunculus* means little dragon. One theory is that it was used to fight off dragons in the Middle Ages. Another theory suggests that the name refers to the serpentine shape of the roots.
- French tarragon, designated by the cultivar 'Sativa,' has a subtle anise or basil-like flavor and is typically the variety used in cooking.
- French tarragon is well known for adding flavor to eggs, poultry and fish. The versatile tarragon flavor also pairs well with fruit such as strawberries, mustards in salad dressings, or on chicken, potato, and chicken salads, and is a primary ingredient in Béarnaise sauce.
- Popular in the Middle East and eastern Europe, tarragon is used in many traditional dishes. It is used as a side dish in Iran (*sabzi khordan* or fresh herbs). in stews, and in Persian-style pickles.
- A green, carbonated soft drink called *tarhun*, found in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, is flavored with tarragon.
- *Potica* is a traditional nut roll sweet cake flavored with tarragon from Slovenia.
- Since tarragon is a delicately flavored herb, fresh tarragon is often preferred over the less flavorful dried tarragon. In fact, some chefs feel the fine and subtle characteristics of fresh tarragon is lost in the drying process and will not use it dried.
- French tarragon does not produce seed and is propagated by cuttings or divisions. It is best grown in full sun and well-drained soil kept on the dry side. Cut back several times during the growing season to maintain healthy growth for the season.
- Russian tarragon produces seed and has a bland, less desirable flavor so is not used for culinary purposes.
- Mexican tarragon, *Tagetes lucida*, is in the marigold family. It is often substituted for French tarragon and is said to have a stronger flavor with cinnamon overtones. It is sometimes grown instead when growing conditions for French tarragon are unfavorable.
- Perennial French tarragon thrives in a sunny location with rich, well-drained soil and good air circulation in areas with high humidity.
- Tarragon put in shoes before a long walk was thought to give the walker strength for the journey.
- American cookbook author, teacher, and syndicated columnist James Andrew Beard was quoted as saying, "I believe that if ever I had to practice cannibalism, I might manage if there were enough tarragon around."
- "A Béarnaise sauce is simply an egg yolk, a shallot, a little tarragon vinegar, and butter, but it takes years of practice for the result to be perfect," according to French chef and restaurateur Fernand Point. 🌿



Tarragon Tips

- Use fresh tarragon whenever possible since tarragon loses flavor when dried.
- Store freshly cut tarragon in a glass of water on the counter for a week or loosely wrap in a damp paper towel and store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.
- Add at the end of cooking time to sauces, stews, soups, meat, and fish dishes, etc. to maintain the most flavor.
- Substitute tarragon for basil for a different twist on classic basil dishes like a caprese salad.
- Add tarragon to mayonnaise to make a sandwich spread.
- Make tarragon vinaigrette for salads or cooked vegetables using tarragon vinegar, olive oil, salt and pepper.
- Tarragon is part of the French medley of herbs referred to as *fines herbs*, along with parsley, chervil, and chives. 🌿

Tarragon Recipes

Tarragon Vinegar

Tarragon, stems and leaves

White wine vinegar

Optional: thyme, chives, or other herbs

Wash herbs in cool water. Pat or spin dry in a salad spinner. Loosely fill a clean canning jar half way with tarragon or combination of herb sprigs. Pour white wine vinegar over the herbs, covering herbs completely. (Use a ratio of about 1 part herbs to 2 parts vinegar.) Cover with a noncorrosive lid (such as plastic wrap followed by a canning jar lid or a cork) and store in the dark for two weeks or longer. Shake occasionally. To decant, strain vinegar into smaller bottles with an additional decorative sprig of tarragon. Use vinegar in potato, chicken, or tuna salads, and to make vinaigrettes and marinades.

— Karen Kennedy HSA Staff 🌿

Green Goddess Sauce

Great with salmon, crudites, or turkey sandwiches

2 tablespoons parsley

2 tablespoons tarragon

2 tablespoons scallions

2 tablespoons chives

½ cup mayonnaise

2 tablespoons crème fraîche

2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

Salt and pepper to taste

Combine herbs in a food processor and blend until a smooth paste forms. In a bowl, combine mayonnaise with crème fraîche and vinegar. Add the paste to the mayonnaise mixture and stir to combine; season with salt and pepper. Makes ½ cup.

— [Saveur.com](https://www.saveur.com) 🌿

Comfrey Tea—for Plants, not People!

I have a comfrey plant in a pot that has thrived for years. Every year I prune it back and discard the leaves (insert gasp here); this year I decided to make Comfrey Tea Fertilizer. It was an easy four-step process (see photos):

- 1.) Harvest mature or damaged comfrey leaves.
- 2.) Compact the leaves in the bucket and hold them down with a weight.
- 3.) Add water. Mine is half full, leaving room to dilute at a later date.
- 4.) Cover and steep for 3–6 weeks.

From what I understand, Comfrey Tea is VERY stinky, so it is important to cover to keep bugs out and the smell in. When you are ready to use the tea, make sure to strain and dilute. I am patiently steeping for 4 weeks and will let you know how it goes in the next newsletter. (For more information, see <https://gardenerspath.com/how-to/organic/comfrey-tea-fertilizer/>.)

—Julie Walsh 🌿



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

Garden Maintenance

Maintenance sessions for the Sensory Garden at the Independence Botanical Garden, 7950 Independence Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70806, will be announced as they are scheduled. If you can help keep the largest herb garden in this area looking its best, please contact [Judy Hines](#) or [Sylvia Lowe](#) and they'll get you on the Worker Bees mailing list!

We also need volunteers to help maintain the Heritage Garden at Burden. If you'd like to get in on this, please contact [Julie Walsh](#). 🌿

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

August 17, 2023

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING FOR
HSABR MEMBERS, 6:30–8:00 P.M.