

JUNE 2023

# Herb Letter

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
BATON ROUGE UNIT



**No Monthly Meeting in June or July**

## **Herb of the Month — Lovage (*Levisticum officinale*)**

Lovage is an aromatic perennial herb that belongs to the Apiaceae family. Native to Southern Europe and Western Asia, it has been cultivated for centuries for its culinary and medicinal uses. Lovage grows tall, reaching heights of up to six feet, with hollow stems and large, dark green leaves that resemble those of celery. Its flavor profile is reminiscent of celery, but stronger, with more intense notes of parsley and anise. The leaves, stems, and seeds of lovage are all used in various culinary preparations, adding depth and complexity to soups, stews, stocks, and salads. Medicinally, lovage has been traditionally used to aid digestion, relieve flatulence, and promote urinary health. Its essential oils are known to have antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties. Overall, lovage is a versatile and flavorful herb that offers both culinary delight and potential health benefits. More information on p. 5. 🌿

## Message from the Chair

Happy Summer! Baby, it's HOT outside!!

I would like to start out by thanking the members who are actively participating in events and garden maintenance. HSABR has been busy with community outreach and weeding and planting in the Sensory Garden and the Heritage Garden. Sterling Sightler, a Master Gardener, has been a very welcome addition to the worker bee team. Sterling joins us in the Sensory Garden and she's not even a member!!! We have been asked by members to have a Saturday workday so more members could attend. But the last Saturday we tried this, just the same small handful attended. Guys, y'all are missing out! The gardens are beautiful and bountiful. You can also go home with some fresh herbs when you come to help in the gardens. We learn more about herbs every time we go. It takes a village—the small group of regulars can't do it alone. Per the bylaws: "An active member shall support the endeavors of the Unit during the fiscal year. He/She must: 1. Be willing to hold office and/or serve on committee(s). 2. Attend a minimum of three (3) meetings in a calendar year. 3. Participate in the preparation of one major event. 4. Participate on site in one major event, 5. Help in the planning and/or maintenance of any unit sponsored herb garden for at least five (5) hours..."



HSABR has been invited to speak at the Central Bloomers Garden Club on June 20<sup>th</sup> and Julie Walsh has agreed to be the key speaker. We've been invited to speak next March at the West Baton Rouge Garden Club, too! Volunteers are needed to keep our face in the forefront of our community. Please consider being an active participant in YOUR Herb Society.

We won't be having meetings in June and July, but I am working on a field trip in June and a class on teas and tinctures on July 29 at Burden (more info to come so read your emails!). Please let your board members know if you have someplace you'd like to visit as a group. We will have our business meeting on August 17 (a week earlier than usual because of a schedule conflict with Burden, so mark your calendars) when we will elect officers and discuss many new items on the agenda. The August meeting is open to members only.

Stay cool!

—Sylvia 

## Garden Interns' Memoirs

We continue our Spring Interns' thoughts on their experiences with Aris Williams. Enjoy her story!

—Sylvia

In my time as an intern for the Baton Rouge chapter of Herb Society of America, I have become much more familiar with the primary botanical gardens in Baton Rouge: Burden Museum & Gardens and Independence Botanical Gardens. I grew up visiting both regularly, and gained a deeper understanding of how much work and time goes into maintaining these public spaces. Both gardens have seen substantial progress this year under the direction of committee chairs Judy Hines, Sylvia Lowe, Julie Walsh, and Art Scarbrough.

The biggest problem faced when maintaining these botanical gardens was navigating the inconsistent, unpredictable weather of South Louisiana. There was a hard freeze in late January that caused significant damage at both sites, and working meetings would often get rained out. After evaluating the damage, committee chairs determined starting from scratch as the most effective course of action. Garden cleanup began in February in preparation for the spring bloom; the chapter used mostly plantlets that they then transferred into soil. This method saved time and allowed the garden spaces to be fully planted in time for spring.

I have no suggestions to make regarding improving the gardens and feel that this chapter did a great job of restoring them to their former glory. Mostly perennials were planted, and this method will allow the garden to regenerate and be enjoyed by the public for years to come.

I learned from this internship that gardens can be cultivated sustainably and that it's up to all of us to treat Mother Nature with the utmost kindness. I also learned that cultivating your own garden really isn't that difficult and that you just have to be willing to try. All of the board members and committee chairs were once novice gardeners; it's okay to be a beginner and work your way up! We're in an age where information is more accessible than ever, and there is always some free resource available to help you along your journey.

My internship fulfilled my expectations and allowed me to participate in outreach work for the first time. One aspect that I especially enjoyed was working HSABR events and answering people's questions about growing herbs and becoming a part of HSABR. My only suggestion for improvement that I have is more hands-on opportunities for interns to participate in. Work at the gardens was almost always on early weekday mornings; other interns and I had classes during those times and missed out on gardening hours as a result. I tried to participate as much as I could, but often found that there were time conflicts and became concerned about fulfilling the requirements of this internship. This isn't necessarily anyone's fault, as there were an array of factors that threw the chapter off track (scheduling conflicts with Burden, harsh weather, planning for EdCon, etc.).

I would like to thank everyone at HSABR for your support of this internship program and hope to stay in touch.

Aris Williams, HSABR 2023 Spring Intern 🌿

## Toasted Herbs at the Heritage Garden!

Calling all helpers! The irrigation system is OUT OF ORDER at the Heritage Garden and as you probably know, watering has been quite a challenge the last few weeks. Plans to plant more are on hold until we can get this situation fixed. In the meantime, it is all hands on deck to help. There is a working hose ready to be used by any willing member able to get over there and water the toasty herbs. Thank you for your assistance in this matter as we hope to get it resolved as soon as possible.

—Julie Walsh, Heritage Garden Co-Chair 🌿

## How to Build an Herbal Materia Medica

*Materia medica* is a Latin term from the history of pharmacy for the body of collected knowledge about the therapeutic properties of any substance used for healing (in our case, herbs). To create your own materia medica for the herbs you grow, begin by listing the properties, medical uses, and parts harvested and used, and providing information (from research in books and handouts) on your herbs. The example below is a template.

Example: Fennel

Medical Uses: Congestion, croup, diet/weight loss, digestion, halitosis

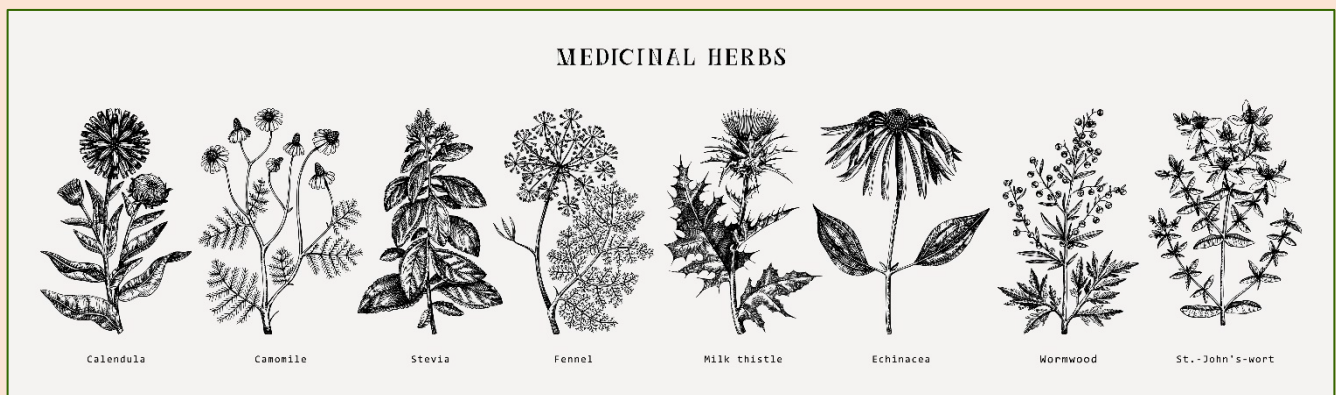
Properties: Analgesic, anodyne, antifungal, antispasmodic, anti-viral, appetite depressant, aromatic, carminative, depurative, diuretic, galactagogue, insect repellent, laxative, splenic

Parts Used: seeds, leaves, roots, oil, whole plant

Check the internet for more templates that you might wish to adapt for your own use. Here is another one for fennel: <https://goldenpoppyherbs.com/blog-fennel-materia-medica/>

Knowledge is power! Start with individual herbs, expand your vocabulary to include words like “depurative.” Consider starting a monthly herb study with your friends!

—Julie Walsh 🌿



## Herb of the Month: Lovage (*Levisticum officinale*)

From the Herb Society of America:

### Facts:

- The leaves and seeds of lovage are often used as a substitute for celery. The flavor has been described as celery-like, but stronger, with notes of parsley.
- This hardy perennial grows 3–6 feet tall with hollow stems and compound leaves. It is related to parsley, dill, and angelica.
- The yellow flowers of lovage are arranged in umbels and grow on tall stems. Bees are attracted to the flowers and the larvae of black swallowtail butterflies feed on the leaves.
- Lovage leaves are used for flavoring; the seeds are also flavorful, resembling fennel, celery, or caraway seeds, and the roots are eaten as a vegetable.
- Lovage grows best in full sun to partial shade, and in rich, moist, and well-drained soil.
- Historical medicinal use of lovage dates back to early Greeks where they chewed the stems to relieve gas and indigestion, among other uses.
- Other historical medicinal uses of lovage included aiding digestion, treating nausea and curing jaundice, preventing kidney stones, as an antiseptic, and healing boils and migraines.
- Lovage was used as a salt substitute during World War I and II in many European countries.
- As one might guess by the name, lovage has been used as an ingredient in love potions.
- The English herbalist Nicholas Culpeper noted that a tincture made from the leaves removed freckles.
- Colonial Americans brought lovage with them from England. It was consumed as a tea to cure aches and pains.
- Young leaves are the sweetest while older leaves mature to a bitter flavor.
- Among the culinary uses, leaves are added to soups, stews, salads, and chicken dishes.
- Lovage has high quercetin (just less than green tea and capers) and is valued for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.
- Tanqueray Lovage Gin incorporates lovage in its flavor profile. Lovage simple syrup can be used in cocktails or mocktails to make a version of a gimlet, among others. 🌿



## Lovage Tips

- Add leaves to soups, stews, salads and chicken dishes.
- Crushed lovage leaves rubbed around the rim of a salad bowl will leave behind flavor for the salad that follows.
- Use the compound leaf as a garnish or stirrer for savory cocktails.
- For best flavor, use the leaves, stalks or stems fresh.
- To preserve, freeze leaves that have been blanched for 30 seconds, shocked in a cold water bath, and dried. Store in an airtight bag or container.
- Lovage stems can be pickled.
- The roots of lovage that are at least 1 year old can be sliced or grated and used fresh or oven dried. 🌿

## Lovage Recipes

### Potato Salad with Lovage

2 pounds small red potatoes	¼ cup chopped fresh lovage
½ cup chopped chives (use blossoms too if available)	¼ cup dry white wine
1 green pepper, chopped finely	⅛ cup tarragon vinegar
	½ cup salad oil

Wash and cut potatoes into bite-sized pieces. Cover potatoes with water and cook until tender. Drain potatoes and pour wine over them while still warm. Add green pepper, chives, celery, and lovage, tossing lightly. In a small bowl, whisk together oil and vinegar. Pour over the potato mixture and toss.

—Jo Sellers, HSA Potomac Unit

*The Herb Society of America's Essential Guide to Growing and Cooking with Herbs*  
edited by Katherine K. Schlosser

### Lovage Soup

2 tablespoons salted butter	3 medium Russet potatoes, peeled and chopped
1 green onion, white and light green parts, chopped	1 oz. lovage leaves, chopped fine
1 yellow onion, peeled and chopped	Heavy cream to serve
6 cups chicken broth	

Melt the butter in a heavy-bottomed stock pot over medium-high heat. When it froths, reduce the heat to medium and stir in green and yellow onions. Fry until fragrant, about five minutes. Pour in chicken stock and stir in chopped potatoes. Simmer, covered, about thirty minutes or until potatoes are tender. Stir in lovage and simmer, covered, a further five or six minutes. Remove from heat and blend with an immersion blender until smooth. Season with unrefined sea salt and freshly ground pepper. Stir in a spoonful of heavy cream and serve. Makes 2 quarts.

—Jenny McGruther

<https://nourishedkitchen.com/lovage-soup/>  
Nourished Kitchen.com 🌿

## 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](mailto: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.***

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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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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

**July 29, 2023**

**TEAS AND TINCTURES CLASS, 10:00**

**A.M.–NOON**

**Burden Conference Center**

**Details to follow**

**August 17, 2023**

**ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING, 6:30–**

**8:00 P.M.**