

MAY 2024

Herb Letter

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
BATON ROUGE UNIT



Monthly Meeting, May 23, 2024

6:30–8:00 p.m.

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

We will make an Echinacea tincture and have a business meeting.

Herb of the Month — English Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*)

English lavender is a fragrant and versatile herb celebrated for its myriad of uses and enchanting aroma. Native to the Mediterranean region, this perennial plant is renowned for its slender stems adorned with clusters of small, violet-blue flowers that emit a captivating scent. Widely cultivated for its aromatic oils, English lavender is prized in aromatherapy for its calming properties, often used to alleviate stress and promote relaxation. Beyond its therapeutic benefits, it is also cherished in culinary pursuits, adding a delicate floral note to dishes and beverages. Furthermore, English lavender serves as a delightful ornamental addition to gardens, attracting pollinators and lending an air of serenity to outdoor spaces with its graceful appearance and soothing fragrance. With its rich history and multifaceted appeal, English lavender continues to captivate and inspire admirers around the globe. More information on p. 3. 🌿

Message from the Chair

My message this month will be short and sweet. The weather is heating up and May is bringing some nasty storms. April and May have been busy months for both HSABR and ourselves. We have all been busy in our gardens and I am sure they are all looking great.

May's meeting, May 23rd from 6:30 p.m.–8:00 p.m. at Burden, will be jam-packed with important information on planning for the rest of the year into next year. It is imperative for members to participate and be active in the society that you joined. Members have made suggestions of herbal activities so we will be discussing those suggestions and making plans. The Herb of the Month is English lavender, and you can read about it in this newsletter. If you've been successful in growing lavender, please bring a plant to show off and share your successful tips with everyone. Not all of us are so lucky. We will be making an Echinacea tincture at the meeting as well.

See you next week!

— Sylvia 🌿

Upcoming Events For HSABR Members and Friends—Save the Dates!

May 19

Garden, Pond, and Art Tour at the Harbs' to benefit Red Stick CARES

9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

841 Pastureview Drive, Baton Rouge

Free admission; \$5 split-the-pot raffle. For more information, click [here](#).

May 23

HSABR monthly meeting, 6:30–8:00 p.m.

LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens, Ione Burden Conference Center

4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA

We will make an Echinacea tincture and have a very busy business meeting.

June 11

Ruby Homayssi, along with another member, will be speaking at the West Feliciana Garden Club in St. Francisville.

June 20–21

EdCon 2024 in Philadelphia for HSA members and friends. See more on p. 3.

October 24–26

Southeast District Gathering in Dothan, Alabama, a mini EdCon for SE District Units. Contact sylviamlowe@gmail.com for more information or if you would like to attend. 🌿

EdCon 2024—A New Language of Flowers and Biblio-Botany Once upon a thyme...stories from the garden...

EdCon 2024 invites HSA members and friends to America's Garden Capital, Philadelphia, PA!

This year's agenda offers several options for add-on tours and workshops, as well as a more convenient check-in process and plated dining. The Thursday evening Welcome Reception and Awards Dinner is included in the registration fee.

Refresh your creative spirit by joining us at EdCon 2024! Several of our presenters work at the intersection of the plant world and the creative one, encouraging us to explore our passion for gardening in a brand-new way.

Lisa Meeks will share her work, collectively called Biblio-Botany, and discuss the craft and inspiration for her exquisitely rendered art. Many of her pieces, such as *Thymeless*, (pictured) turn a lens to nature and our place in it.

The Language of Flowers is a Victorian-era classic but Sam Cusumano, an engineer and educator, has created a new version called **biodata sonification**. Using his device, we can listen into the invisible biological processes occurring within plants. We talk to our plants; are they talking back?

Since medieval times, Tussie-Mussies have a language all their own and Elizabeth Kennel will share the secret meanings of herb and flower combinations with workshop attendees. Do you want to show your love or are you better off as friends? Let the bouquet speak for you.

Registration for EdCon 2024 includes live presentations, optional free and paid workshops, communal meals, the HSA Awards dinner and welcome reception, and more! For more information and to register, click [here](#). See you in Philadelphia! 🌿



Thymeless, by Linda Meeks

Herb of the Month: English Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*)

From the Herb Society of America:

Facts:

- *Lavandula angustifolia* is known as English lavender, true lavender, fine lavender, and common lavender. It is generally hardy between zones 5 to 9.
- Lavandin, *L. x intermedia*, is a cross between common lavender and spike lavender, *L. latifolia*. 'Grosso' is a variety which, among others, produces much of the world's lavender essential oil. This oil is used in products such as soaps and lotions. 'Provence' is another variety of *L. x intermedia* that can be used for cooking as well as soaps and lotions. These varieties are not generally used in aromatherapy or the perfume industry.
- Lavender prefers to grow in full sun of 6 or more hours per day and benefits from afternoon shade in hot climates. It will tolerate partial shade, but it will produce fewer flowers and leggy growth.



- Grow lavender in well-drained soil which can be amended with gravel or sand and be kept on the dry side once established. It will grow well in the ground, raised beds, and in containers with minimal fertilizer. Ideal growing conditions include low humidity and good air circulation.
- *L. angustifolia* flowers are quite often the preferred lavender for use in teas, cookies, and other confections, as well as savory dishes. Lavender is a component of “Herbes de Provence” and Lady Grey Tea.
- Some varieties of lavender used for culinary purposes include ‘Provence’ (*L. x intermedia*) for meats and savory dishes, and ‘Royal Velvet,’ ‘Betty’s Blue,’ and ‘Melissa,’ which are all *L. angustifolia*. Taste a lavender bud for flavor to determine suitability for culinary uses.
- According to The Lavender Association, there are over 45 species of lavender, with more yet to be classified, and more than 450 varieties.
- Since Roman times, lavender has been used for healing, washing, repelling insects, and for its antiseptic qualities.
- Roman soldiers took lavender with them to address war wounds as well as the other healing properties known at the time. These included treating upset stomachs, kidney disorders, dropsy, jaundice and easing insect bites.
- Lavender was considered effective against infection in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when the plague and cholera ran rampant and was used to treat head lice in the twelfth century and up to 1874 in France.
- During World War I, lavender oil and sphagnum moss were used together to dress war wounds since antiseptics were in short supply at the time.
- Historically lavender has been used to treat depression, insomnia, anxiety, and fatigue. Current research supports the calming, soothing, and sedative effects of lavender when inhaled.
- While both the foliage and flowers are fragrant, typically flower buds are harvested and dried to scent potpourri, sleep pillows and other projects.
- For more lavender information, see HSA’s Quick Fact Sheets: [HSA Publications](#). 🌿

Tips:

- *Lavandula angustifolia* is generally considered the best lavender for cooking, though *L. x intermedia* ‘Provence’ is used for flavoring meats and savory dishes.
- Taste dried lavender buds to determine flavor and preference for culinary use as each variety has a slightly different flavor profile.
- Add about ¼ teaspoon of dried lavender buds to brewed black tea, steep 1 to 2 minutes or to taste for tea with a hint of lavender. A light-bodied tea like Darjeeling is ideal for this.
- Make lavender simple syrup by infusing 2 tablespoons of lavender buds in a syrup made from heating 1 cup of sugar in 1 cup of water until the sugar is dissolved. Pour hot sugar water over the buds and steep for 30 minutes before straining and storing in the refrigerator. Use in cocktails, lemonade, or other recipes.

- Infuse lavender flavor into any liquid for use in a recipe by pouring hot liquid over the buds, steeping, and straining prior to use.
- Make lavender lemonade by infusing a small bundle of lavender spikes in prepared lemonade. Steep overnight in the refrigerator and strain before serving.
- Mix 1 tablespoon dried lavender flower buds with 1 cup sugar in an airtight container to make lavender sugar. Let the mixture infuse for 1 to 2 weeks. May strain before use in recipes or to top cookies, cakes, and muffins. 🌿

Lavender Recipe

Lavender Cookies

4 oz. (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
 ⅓ cup light brown sugar
 1 ¼ cups self-rising flour

1 tablespoon lavender flowers (dried)
 Pinch of salt
 Confectioners' sugar for garnish

In a bowl, cream the butter, brown sugar, and salt until light. Add the flour and lavender. Mix well, set in refrigerator and chill for about an hour. Preheat oven to 400°F. Grease a heavy cookie sheet. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured board and roll ⅓-inch thick. With a small biscuit cutter, cut the dough into rounds, place on the cookie sheet, and bake for 8–10 minutes, or until delicate brown. Cool on a wire rack, sprinkling with confectioners' sugar while still warm.

— Alma de la Guardia, HSA Nashville Unit

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

Growing Lavender in Baton Rouge

By Art Scarbrough

Yes, it IS possible to grow lavender here if you remember these tips:

1. Plant lavender on a slight slope or at least where drainage is good, as it'll die if its feet stay wet.
2. Mix a handful or a cup of crushed limestone into the soil with each plant you put in the ground. It'll improve drainage and provide calcium. Do NOT use powdered lime, as it'll just form a crust and not improve drainage—get crushed limestone at a stoneyard such as our local JimStone Co. 🌿



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'd 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 June and August 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

NO MEETINGS IN JUNE OR JULY