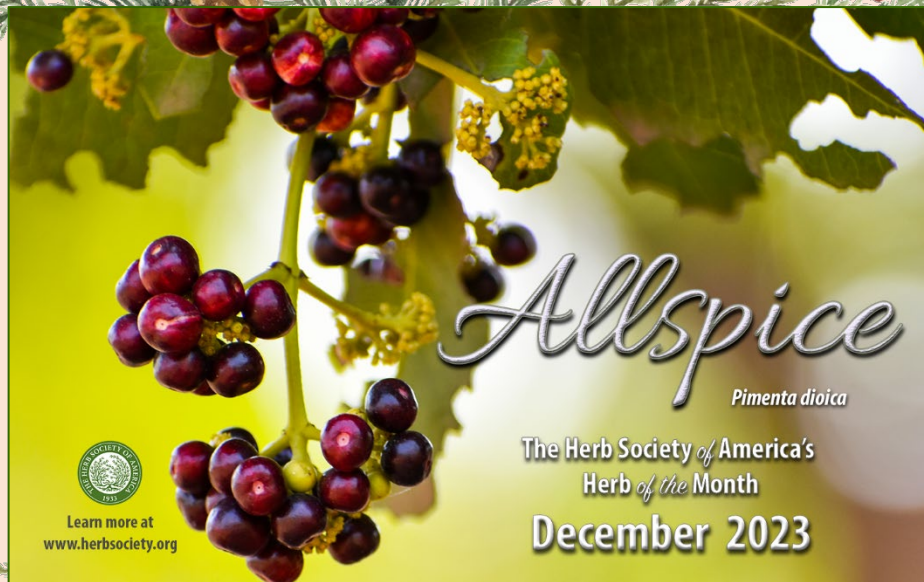


NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2023

Herb Letter

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
BATON ROUGE UNIT



No Monthly Meetings in November and December

Our regular meeting schedule (fourth Thursday of each month, 6:00–8:00 p.m.) resumes in January.

Herb of the Month — Allspice (*Pimenta dioica*)

Allspice, derived from the dried berries of the *Pimenta dioica* tree native to the Caribbean, is a spice that captivates with its unique fusion of flavors. Contrary to its name, allspice is not a blend but rather a singular spice with notes reminiscent of cloves, cinnamon, and nutmeg, hence its name. Widely used in culinary traditions around the world, this aromatic spice adds warmth and depth to both sweet and savory dishes. It is a key player in Caribbean and Latin American cuisines, featuring prominently in jerk seasoning and various desserts. Beyond its culinary applications, allspice possesses potential health benefits; it is believed to have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Whether enhancing the richness of stews or infusing desserts with a comforting aroma, allspice stands as a testament to the diverse and intriguing flavors found in the world of spices. More information on p. 7. 🍃

Message from the Chair

Happy Autumn and Winter to all! Our gardens are showing a short resurgence, and we are able to harvest some of our herbs. That makes me so happy. So, what do you do with all those herbs? Your membership includes access to [The Herb Society of America](http://TheHerbSocietyofAmerica.com) website, which has abundant information on harvesting, saving, and cooking with herbs. I really enjoyed Lin Lange's (HSA president) message in the HSA November newsletter. While you are sitting by the fire this winter drinking your hot chocolate, why don't you look at that, and also our own website—HSABR.org—and our Facebook page, [Baton Rouge Unit of the Herb Society of America](https://www.facebook.com/BatonRougeUnitoftheHerbSocietyofAmerica).

October and November were busy months with Herbal presentations and an Herbal workshop. Please keep reading to see the events and pictures.

Plans are underway for our fundraiser, Herb Day, scheduled for February 24th (rain date on February 25th)! This is an exciting event with thousands of herbs for sale, herbal educational classes, vendors, and food trucks. Please keep an eye out for emails regarding this event. Sharon Murphy and Claudia Ross are this year's Co-Chairs and they are already doing a wonderful job!!

See y'all in January!

—Sylvia 🍃

Students and Other Worker Bees in the Sensory Garden!

From a September work day in our Sensory Garden at Independence Park:



*From left, back row: Judy Hines, Sterling Sightler, Sharon Murphy
Front: Catherine Hirschak, Ruby Homyssi, Claudia Ross, Ashley Zavec,
Sylvia Lowe, Karen Cashio, Aris Williams*

HSABR Garden Internship Program is Now Accepting Applications! Application Deadline January 15, 2024

The Herb Society of America Baton Rouge Unit is now accepting applications for the 2024 Garden Internship.

The Herb Society of America Baton Rouge Unit in 2021 established an annual Garden Internship Program to enable the Intern to receive professional experience in two public Gardens in Baton Rouge under the care and keeping of the Baton Rouge Unit. The Intern will be an enrolled student in a college or university, have an interest in gardening and an interest in a career working with plants, especially herbs, and be able to do hands-on gardening and record-keeping. The total yearly Internship grant is \$1500 and consists of two seasonal terms with an award of \$750 per term. Applicants may apply for both or either of the two terms. Interns will dedicate a minimum of 15 hours working in the gardens and attend monthly HSABR meetings during the assigned term. This internship provides an opportunity to learn the hands-on horticulture of herbs and provides an opportunity to meet and engage with the public, give garden tours, and presentations. It is an excellent opportunity for students pursuing an education in horticulture.

The HSABR Garden Internship is a one-time \$1500 grant consisting of \$750 for each term, Spring (Jan.–May) and Fall (Sept.–Dec.) + HSA Membership

Internship grants can be awarded for each term or the two terms, at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

Applications must be received by Jan 15, 2024.

For more information on duties and responsibilities and to apply, [click here.](#) 🌿

In Memoriam: Lena Ebey Crotwell



We recently learned that Lena Crotwell, one of the founding members of HSABR, passed away last May. Lena's dedication and expertise played a pivotal role in shaping the organization into the thriving community it is today. Her green thumb and extensive knowledge of herbs were instrumental in not only the Society's growth but also in inspiring countless individuals to explore the world of herbs and their diverse applications.

Messages for her family can be posted under the Memories and Condolences section of her [obituary page](#) in *The Advocate*. 🌿

Community Outreach

On November 1, HSABR members Julie Walsh, Sylvia Lowe, and Sharon Kleinpeter presented to the Garden Growers Study Club a program entitled “Herbal-Infused Holidays: Mixology for the Seasons!”

Julie, a 30+ year practicing Home Herbalist, charmed the group with information on the selected herbs of sage, mint, thymem and rosemary. Julie included information on the folklore, medicinal uses, and cultivation of each of the herbs. Sharon and Sylvia then demonstrated how to make an herb-infused simple syrup to be used in cocktails, mocktails, or to sweeten coffee or tea. The members were surprised to find out that even infused in simple syrups the herbs had medicinal benefits.

Those who attended received a thank-you gift of a 2-ounce bottle of homemade Rosemary Simple Syrup and a cordial recipe (see below).

—Sharon Kleinpeter 🌿



Julie Walsh presents information about sage, mint, thyme, and rosemary to Garden Growers Study Club members



Sharon Kleinpeter and Sylvia Lowe demonstrate making herb-infused simple syrups

Ginger Herbade Beverage

Just about any herb-infused simple syrup would work well in this simple recipe!

1 Tbsp grated lemon rind

½ cup chopped mint

½ cup lemon juice

½ cup simple syrup

¼ cup orange juice

4 quarts ginger ale

Combine the first 4 ingredients and let stand for one hour. Strain.

Add remaining ingredients and stir well. Pour over crushed ice in tall glasses and garnish with a sprig of herb. Makes 12 tall iced tea glasses. 🌿

Internship Report from Olivia Letlow

I spent this semester working for the Baton Rouge Unit of the Herb Society of America. Although my term was only from August to December, I helped out during the spring term too.

As an intern, one of my duties was helping maintain HSABR's two community gardens, the Heritage Garden at Burden and the Sensory Garden at Independence Park. Although this past summer's intense heat and drought took such a toll on the gardens that there was not as much work as usual, I assisted with weeding maintenance whenever I could.

The main fundraiser of the year for HSABR is Herb Day, held every February. Even though it was not during my term, I participated as a volunteer for Herb Day last February, helping set up, replenishing sold-out herbs, and assisting customers.

Another of HSABR's community outreach projects that I assisted with was tabling at Burden's Music in the Gardens concert in September. While enjoying live music, people intermittently approached the table, where we had a selection of herbs for people to view. Nicknamed the "herbal petting zoo," people were invited to touch, smell, and taste the herbs we had on display. Some fan favorites were rosemary, Cuban oregano, and holy basil.

Another part of my duties included helping with the setup and clean up for HSABR's monthly meetings, as well as helping to welcome any guests and introducing them to the officers and committee chairs. I would enjoy these meetings even if I weren't an intern. They allow me to learn more about the world of herb cultivation and how it impacts society.

Interns are also required to send in two articles for the monthly newsletter based on any herbal topic. My first article on fish mint, published in the September newsletter, got lots of compliments from the members. My second article, on rosemary, will be published in an upcoming issue.

My time spent with HSABR also provided me with some unexpected networking opportunities. One notable experience was at the October monthly meeting, where I spoke with a guest who was a retired employee at a large agricultural company. In chatting with him about my internship position and schooling at LSU, he offered to forward my resume to his company.

Overall, I found my internship to be a very good educational experience. From working in the gardens, I had hands-on experience in maintaining and growing herbs—and I find it is always best to learn by getting your hands dirty. I also improved my communication skills through community outreach, and in helping to educate others, I expanded my own knowledge of herbal cultivation and uses. Luckily, I had a plethora of knowledge from monthly meetings, time spent in the garden, and from listening to people talking about their own herb gardens at home. Participating in Herb Day was especially useful in dealing with large crowds of customers, all with unique questions that I had the pleasure of answering with my newly improved knowledge of herbs. 🌿

Perennial Native Sunflowers in My Backyard

I planted seeds in the spring and these grew up to cover the whole bed. Since they are perennials and native North American plants, I expect they will die after a freeze and then regrow from their underground root system in the spring.

I have some in my Milwaukee garden, but not nearly as many as grew here from the seeds. They bloom for ages. My Baton Rouge friend Debbie Harris says she cuts hers down in summer after first bloom and they were blooming again last week when we visited her.

I LOVE them! They are cheerful, pretty, and hardy.

They get to be 5 feet tall or higher, and tend to flop over, so think about where you want them. They thrive against this brick wall and receive full sun all afternoon. In my Milwaukee garden they have more shade and grow among other plants. They are late bloomers in Wisconsin, so are thriving among mums and goldenrod there. They are sturdy enough to survive the extreme heat in Baton Rouge summers.

— Mary Williams 🌿



Herb of the Month: Allspice (*Pimenta dioica*)

From the Herb Society of America:



Facts:

- Allspice is the dried unripe berry (botanically a drupe) of the evergreen *Pimenta dioica* tree.
- The common name allspice comes from the flavor that resembles a combination of cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, and black pepper.
- Other common names include Jamaican pepper, pimento, myrtle pepper, newspice, and Turkish Yenibahar.
- The tree, *Pimenta dioica*, is native to the tropical forests of West Indies, southern Mexico, and South and Central America.
- Commercially, allspice is primarily grown in Jamaica, and is also grown in Mexico, Honduras, Trinidad, and Cuba.
- Allspice is used in both sweet and savory cooking, including desserts, Caribbean jerk seasoning, curry powders, sausage, barbeque sauce, pickling liquid, and Cincinnati-style chili.
- Allspice is found in the French liqueurs Benedictine and Chartreuse. It is also an ingredient in mulled cider and Christmas wassail.
- The berries are harvested green and unripe, traditionally dried in the sun, and sold whole or ground.
- Whole allspice berries have a longer shelf life than ground, which is about 6 months.
- Fresh leaves from the allspice tree can be used by infusing their flavor then removing them before serving, much like bay leaves.
- In spite of their common names, Carolina allspice (*Calycanthus floridus*), Japanese allspice (*Chimonanthus praecox*), and wild allspice (*Lindera benzoin*) are unrelated to allspice (*Pimenta dioica*).
- The compounds in allspice, quercetin, gallic acid, and ericifolin, have been studied for use in treatment of chronic disease and cancer.
- Allspice oil is often used to add fragrance to men's toiletry products. This goes back to the Napoleonic War of 1812 when Russian soldiers put allspice in their boots to keep their feet warm and odor-free. 🍃

Tips:

- Allspice is available whole or ground. Whole allspice retains flavor longer than ground, which begins to lose flavor when as soon as the grinding begins.
- Whole allspice can be quickly ground using a spice grinder or a coffee grinder dedicated to spices.

- Sprinkle ground allspice on a variety of foods, including curry, stew, and roasted vegetables.
- Include in spice blends such as jerk seasoning, poultry or beef rubs, pickling blends, and barbecue sauce.
- Add allspice to pumpkin pie spice blends or make your own.
- Add to baked goods, especially gingerbread, pumpkin pie, stone fruit pies, applesauce, cakes, and cookies.
- The spice blends of beverages such as chai tea, spice tea, mulled cider or wine, and wassail punch often include allspice. 🌿

Allspice Recipes

Wassail

This sprightly holiday punch may be prepared a day ahead of serving.

6 small baking apples, unwaxed
1 cup packed brown sugar
1 cup water

2 tablespoons cognac (optional)
1 cup water (additional)

Place the following spices in a coffee filter and secure with string to form a spice bag:

6-inch cinnamon stick, broken into pieces
1 teaspoon whole allspice, crushed
6 whole cloves

6 cups apple cider
2 cups cranberry juice
1 (46-ounce) can unsweetened pineapple juice

1 (12-ounce) can frozen orange juice concentrate
1 (6-ounce) can frozen pink lemonade concentrate

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Lightly oil a 1 ½ quart casserole. Wash apples and place in casserole. Do not peel or core. In a small saucepan combine brown sugar and water. Over medium heat, bring to a boil, stir to dissolve sugar, and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in cognac. Pour syrup over apples and bake for 35 minutes. Lift apples out of syrup with slotted spoon and set aside.

In a 5-quart saucepan place syrup from apples, the additional cup of water, and spice bag, along with remaining ingredients. Simmer for 15 minutes or until heated through.

When ready to serve, transfer to a large heat-proof punch bowl. Float the baked apples for decoration.

Note: Clove-studded orange slices may also be floated in the Wassail Bowl. 25–30 servings.

— The Western Reserve Herb Society
Cooking with Herb Scents 🌿

Grilled Jerk Pork Chops

A seasoning mix that originated in Jamaica, jerk is popular throughout the Caribbean in the preparation of meats such as pork and chicken for grilling. Jerk seasoning typically includes chilies, onion, allspice, and thyme. Can be prepared in 45 minutes or less.

¼ cup chopped onion

1 teaspoon dried thyme, crumbled

1 teaspoon sugar

1 teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon black pepper

½ teaspoon cayenne

½ teaspoon ground allspice

1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

1/8 teaspoon cinnamon

Two ½–1 inch-thick rib pork chops (each about 4 ounces)

Prepare grill.

Mince and mash onion to a coarse paste with thyme, sugar, salt, and spices. Pat pork chops dry and rub all over with jerk paste. Grill pork on an oiled rack set 5–6 inches over glowing coals 4 minutes on each side, or until just cooked through. (Alternatively, pork may be grilled in a hot, well-seasoned, ridged grill pan over moderately high heat.)

Yield: 2.

— From *Gourmet*, July 1997

Epicurious.com 

Lagniappe: Rosemary!

The November Herb of the Month was rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), and while we don't have the space this month to do a full profile of this wonderful herb, here are a few tips and a recipe that may come in handy for incorporating into your holiday entertaining. And watch for Olivia Letlow's research report on rosemary in a forthcoming HerbLetter!



Tips for Using Rosemary:

- Use rosemary fresh or dried in recipes. Finely chopped is preferred if using dried.
- Harvest rosemary in late summer or early fall, ideally just before flowering.
- Hang or screen dry or freeze leaves in an airtight container.
- Pungent rosemary compliments poultry, fish, lamb, and beef as well as tomatoes, cheese, eggs, potatoes, squash, soup, and salad dressings.
- Use woody stems for kabob skewers or fire starters.

Herb Roasted Garlic

2 heads garlic
4 teaspoons olive oil
1 ½ teaspoons honey

1½ teaspoons fresh basil (½ teaspoon dried)
1½ teaspoons fresh rosemary (½ teaspoon dried)

Slice the garlic heads in half horizontally. Drizzle 1 teaspoon olive oil on exposed cloves then drizzle with ½ teaspoon honey. Sprinkle with herbs. Wrap garlic in aluminum foil and bake for about 45 minutes, or until soft. Spread on whole grain crackers or pita triangles.

— Ed Pierzynski, HSA South Jersey Unit

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

Don't Forget: HSA/HSABR Dues Are Due!

If you haven't already renewed your membership in HSABR, please do so as soon as possible. And if you're not yet a member, now is a great time to remedy that situation!

Please use the online renewal form ("[Current Members Renew Here](#)" button at the bottom of the HSABR website home page) and you can use PayPal or (preferred) send a check, payable to HSABR. Mail checks to Treasurer Claudia Ross, P.O.B. 77210, Baton Rouge LA 70879, or give it to her or Sharon Kleinpeter, membership chair, at the next meeting. Please also let Sharon know if we can share your contact information in an upcoming yearbook for members. For anyone who'd like to join HSABR, there's also a button for new members.

Your membership in the Herb Society of America, Baton Rouge Unit (HSABR), includes all of the benefits of the national organization as well as our local unit. There are many wonderful benefits to membership, including numerous opportunities to learn and delight in the use of herbs. 🌿

Save the Date: [Arbor Day and Tree Giveaway at Burden!](#)

January 20, 2024, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

The LSU AgCenter Botanical Gardens partners with [Baton Rouge Green](#) to bring you the best Arbor Day celebration ever!

Join us for tree climbing with [Bofinger's Tree Service](#), a scavenger hunt, ax throwing with the [Timber Tigers](#), shopping with local vendors, and even a chance to meet Smokey Bear (don't worry, he's not a real bear). Plant your very own tree in the Burden Woods and track its growth using GPS coordinates! Planting trees is limited to one per family. The trees you plant help reforest the Burden Woods after previous hurricane seasons.

Baton Rouge Green will host their annual tree giveaway in conjunction with Arbor Day. Giveaway trees are limited to one per household. 🌿

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, 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

January 25, 2024
Monthly Meeting, 6:30–8:00 p.m.
Program TBA