

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2022

Herb Letter

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA
BATON ROUGE UNIT



No Monthly Meetings in November and December

Next Monthly Meeting, January 26, 2023

6:30–8:00 p.m.

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

Art Scarbrough: Herbal Magic (mark your calendars; more info in January's issue!)

Herb of the Month – Cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*)

Cranberries are evergreen dwarf shrubs or trailing vines in the genus *Vaccinium* that can be found in acidic bogs throughout the cooler regions of the Northern Hemisphere. In North America, *V. macrocarpon* grows wild from the mountains of Georgia to the Canadian Maritimes, and as far west as Minnesota and is cultivated throughout the northern United States, Canada, and Chile. Cranberries have slender, wiry stems and small evergreen leaves, with dark pink flowers that are pollinated by bumble bees and honeybees. The fruit is a berry that is larger than the leaves of the plant; it is initially light green and turns red when ripe. Cranberries can be added to countless dishes, from quick breads, yeast breads, salads, relishes, salsas, and chutneys, to soups, grain-based entrees, and of course, desserts. More information on p. 4. 🍃

Message from the Chair

It is time to plan for next year. According to the LSU AgCenter, many hardy trees, shrubs, and fruit trees can be planted now. We have harvested seeds from our gardens, including an abundance of herb seeds. So, what do you do with those seeds now? I've seen so many ideas while reading books, magazines, and online resources. Personally, I save pill bottles and wash them out. Did you know that they are waterproof? Once they are dry, I fill them with seeds and label them. I store many in a drawer (not sure what the drawer was intended for, maybe eggs) in the refrigerator. Seeds can last for years if stored properly, so do your research. I also have a box filled with seeds in my laundry room. It feels like Christmas morning when I open those containers. It is time for a seed swap, don't you think?

Community outreach and building relationships is a main focus of the Baton Rouge Unit of the Herb Society of America. A seed swap is just one of the possibilities—read on for what else we've been doing!

In October I spoke at the Ascension Parish Master Gardeners meeting. I spoke about growing herbs and how easy it is to be successful. It was a fantastic group of people who were engaged and excited to learn about herbs. We had a great time and before we knew it the time had run out. I met some very knowledgeable gardeners, and we shared a lot of information.

Our Unit also participated in the Makers Faire sponsored by the East Baton Rouge Parish Library in October. Garden interns Kevin Folivi and Jen Blanchard demonstrated different uses and storage options for fresh herbs. Jen also showed how different flowers and avocado seeds are used as dyes. Kevin brought plants to show at his "herbal petting zoo" and adults as well as children enjoyed the many fragrances. We were amazed by the interest the attendees displayed! Many thanks to Mary Williams and Judy Hines for their help during the event. Judy gave tours of the Sensory Gardens and shared some of those seeds I mentioned above. We offered plenty of education during the event and gained an equal amount as well.

In early November, along with Claudia Ross, I spoke at the West Feliciana Garden Club in St. Francisville. Again, the topic was growing herbs. The meeting was well attended, and the members were very interested in the ease of growing herbs. Many of them also shared their own experiences.

We will also have a presence at Magnolia Mound Creole Christmas Fair on Sunday, November 27th from noon until 5:00 p.m., so please come by to learn more about HSABR. We will not have general meetings during November and December but be prepared to hit the ground running in January. We have monthly speakers who provide loads of education and information. AND our annual Herb Sale is on February 25th next year!

Spreading those seeds,
Sylvia 🌿

October Meeting Recap

Our October guest speaker, Corinne Martin, wowed the attendees with her entertaining stories about some of the native herbs of Louisiana. Many of the plants considered to be weeds are actually herbs that are edible and medicinal in nature. Corrine spoke about such herbs as cleavers, dandelions, goldenrod, mock strawberry, passionflower, plantain, and white clover. Many trees have medicinal purposes too, such as live oak and magnolia. We learned so much about many of the plants (and weeds) that are growing all around us. Corinne also shared some of the tinctures that she has created with some of these herbs and explained the basics of making them as well.

Sylvia Lowe 🌿



Sensory Garden Update

The Sensory gardens are doing great and have been cleaned for fall planting. I would like to give a big thank you to whoever planted the beautiful mums in the gardens—they add just the right touch at this time of year. We will be working in the garden on November 26th, depending on weather and availability of workers. When it comes to December, it will depend on what needs to be done. Thanks to all who help and remember that all members and their friends are welcome to come out to work or just enjoy the gardens.

Judy Hines 🌿

Herb of the Month: Cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*)

From the Herb Society of America:

Facts:

- Cranberry bogs are often flooded for wet harvesting. In the winter, water in the fields is also used to control insects and to protect the plants from frost and drying winter winds. Growers also use a practice called ice sanding. In winter or spring, clean sand is spread to stimulate vine growth and manage weed and fungal growth as well as insect eggs and overwintering insect pests. This practice dates back to the beginning of the cranberry industry, 1816.
- About 10% of cranberries harvested in dry fields in Massachusetts and these are sold as fresh fruit. The cranberries harvested wet are used to make cranberry products such as juice, sauce and dried cranberries.
- The origin of the name is traced back to the Pilgrims who called them “cranberry” because the four delicate petals are reflexed, exposing the anthers that protrude like a beak and loosely resemble the head and bill of the Sandhill crane.
- Historically, the fruit of the cranberry plant has been used for bladder, stomach, and liver disorders. It also has been used in diabetes, wound and skin care as well as other conditions.
- Wampanoag People across Massachusetts used cranberries for fabric dye, to treat wounds, fevers, swelling, seasickness, and to prevent certain illnesses.
- Proanthocyanidins (PACs) are bioactive compounds in cranberries that are linked to a number of health benefits, including: reducing certain infections, promoting heart health, protecting the urinary tract, decreasing inflammation associated with chronic disease and aging and supporting digestive health, according to the according to the Cape Cod Cranberry Grower’s Association.
- Studies suggest that in healthy people who are at an increased risk for urinary tract infections (UTI), cranberry products decrease the risk of UTIs. However, studies have shown that the cranberry is not an effective treatment for a UTI.
- Research is being done on the phytochemical and antioxidant attributes of cranberries and their benefit to gut health and disease prevention. A review of cranberries and health research studies can be found at The Cranberry Institute, cranberryinstitute.org. 🍃



Cranberry Tips

- Fresh cranberries can be frozen for up to nine months and used in recipes without thawing.
- Fresh cranberries can be kept in the refrigerator for two to three months in an air-tight bag or container.
- Add dried cranberries to warm and cold cereals, salads, yogurt, cottage cheese, grain-based dishes, meat dishes, and baked goods. 🍃

Cranberry Recipes

Roasted Sweet Potatoes with Cranberries

4 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
2 tablespoons maple syrup
3 tablespoons olive oil
7 garlic cloves, smashed and roasted

½ teaspoon sage, dried
½ teaspoon thyme, dried
¼ teaspoon rosemary, dried
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
1 cup cranberries, fresh or frozen

Line a cookie sheet with aluminum foil. Brush with oil, and preheat the oven to 450°F.

Put all the ingredients except the cranberries in a medium bowl, and gently stir to combine.

Spread evenly in the pan.

Bake for 10 minutes, then stir it to prevent burning. Rotate the pan. Bake for another 10 minutes, then add the cranberries and more olive oil. Stir well.

After another 10 minutes of baking, remove from the oven and serve immediately.

Notes:

- Don't overcrowd, put the cubed potatoes in a single layer on the roasting tray.
- To increase the flavor, evenly coat cubes with oil and spices.
- To prevent burning, turn the cubed veggies twice in 10-minute intervals.
- Cook more than you think you'll need as cubed potatoes shrink when roasted.
- To make this sweeter, drizzle with extra maple syrup or balsamic vinegar after baking.



From

<https://savorthe flavour.com/sweet-potatoes/>

Brooke
SavortheFlavour.com

Herb Cranberry Sauce

12 ounces cranberries, washed
½ cup dark brown sugar, packed
½ cup water
1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary or ⅓ teaspoon dried
1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme or ⅓ teaspoon dried
1 cinnamon stick, or ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

In a medium-sized pan, add cranberries, brown sugar, water, rosemary, and thyme. Bring sauce to boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, or until cranberries pop and the mixture has slightly thickened. Make sure to stir occasionally, about every 5 minutes.

Turn off heat and remove cinnamon stick. Taste sauce and add more sweetener if desired. If needed, add more water for a thinner sauce.

Allow to cool slightly to thicken before serving. Yields 1 ¼ cups.

Cool completely and store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week or up to 1 month.



From
<https://www.jessicagavin.com/herb->

Jessica Gavin
JessicaGavin.com 🌿

Cranberry Harvesting

From [The Herb Society of America Blog](#)

Cranberries are perennial, low-growing, trailing vines. The vine can reach a length of six feet with upright stolons growing up along it. It is these upright stolons that bear the flowers and then the cranberry fruit. Rich, boggy wetlands are the ideal environment for cranberries to grow, but they are also grown in areas with a shallow water table. Flowers bloom in May and June on the stolons and terminal ends of the vine. Because the flower pollen is too heavy to be carried by the wind, pollination is dependent on native bees and honeybees. Fruit matures after about 80 days, and harvesting begins at the end of September and extends into October. To harvest the berries, the growing area is flooded. Then, the plants are “beaten” with specialized equipment causing the berries, which have four small air pockets in them, to float to the top. (These air pockets also make fresh cranberries bouncy.) The floating berries are corralled into one area and then harvested using conveyor belts. This “wet harvesting” method is used for berries that become cranberry juice and sauce. About 5% of berries are “dry harvested” and packed for use as fresh fruit.

Dry harvesting is done by mechanized “combing” of the fruit from the vines (Cranberry Institute, n.d.).



“Wet” cranberry harvesting

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'd 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 winter holiday season. 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, 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

SENSORY GARDEN MAINTENANCE SESSIONS

SATURDAY, 8:00–10:00 A.M.:

November 26, weather permitting

No meetings in November and December because of Thanksgiving and Christmas

January 26, 2023

Art Scarbrough: Herbal Magic

February 23, 2023

Pre-Herb Day meeting

February 25, 2023

Herb Day

April 27–30, 2023

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