

OCTOBER 2022

# Herb Letter

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
BATON ROUGE UNIT



## Monthly Meeting, October 27, 2022

6:30–8:00 p.m.

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

**Corinne Martin: Native Louisiana Medicinal Herbs** (see p. 2 for details)

## Herb of the Month — Caraway (*Carum carvi*)

Caraway is a biennial herb that is related to dill, cumin, fennel, and anise. Caraway has been used for 5,000 years, dating back to Stone Age lake dwellers in Switzerland, and is perhaps the oldest spice native to Europe. The fragrant, white, umbel flowers of caraway mature into crescent shaped fruit (seeds) that have five pale ridges. The “seeds” are actually half of the caraway fruit, which splits down the middle and strongly resembles cumin seeds. The seeds have a distinctive fragrance when crushed. The common name seems to come from the Arabic name for the seed *karawya*. In Persia, it is known as meridian fennel and Persian cumin. The Netherlands, Poland, Germany, Finland, and Canada produce caraway commercially. More information on p. 5. 🍃

## Message from the Chair

Happy Fall, ya'll!

Our September meeting was well attended with a full agenda. We have a lot of projects to work on and it is very exciting! Below is a mini-meeting minutes report:

Ways & Means will be an as-needed committee.

Plants & Horticulture was divided into the Heritage Garden and Sensory Garden. Julie Walsh and Art Scarbrough will chair the Heritage Garden, with Judy Hines and Sylvia Lowe continuing to chair the Sensory Garden.

Ruth Crawford will be our Hospitality chair, and will be contacting members to bring refreshments to our meetings, events, herb sales, etc. If you contribute to this, be sure to save your receipts to submit for reimbursement.

Publicity will be chaired by Jen Blanchard and Kevin Folivi, and Art Scarbrough will chair Education/Programs.

Kathleen Harrington will continue with Communications, and Archives will be chaired by Sharon Murphy.

We've created a sub-committee to draft a membership handbook.

If you are interested in participating, co-chairing, or helping out with a specific need, then please just raise your hand and let me know!!

I am still the chair of the Membership committee, but if you are interested in assuming this role (or helping as a co-chair), just let me know.

I'm here for you!

— Sylvia Lowe, HSABR Chair 🍃

## Monthly Meeting

October 27, 2022, 6:30–8:00 p.m.

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

**Native Louisiana Medicinal Herbs.** Certified clinical herbalist and amateur naturalist Corinne Martin will present our October meeting on the native medicinal herbs of Louisiana. Corinne has practiced as an herbalist for more than thirty years. She recently retiring from teaching holistic and integrative health at the University of Southern Maine Nursing School, and now divides her time between Louisiana and Maine. In a world of constant change and crisis, the relationship between humans and their environment has never been more vital. Corinne will introduce some native Louisiana herbs, with details on identification, habitat, distribution, healing properties, and traditional uses, and will talk a bit on popular preparation methods such as tinctures and teas.

As always, visitors and guests are welcome. Admission is free for HSABR members, \$5 for all others. Please bring small bills if possible. 🍃

## September Meeting Recap

Debi O'Neal was our September speaker and gave us lots of good information about pollinators and the plants they love and need. She's generously shared her presentation with us, so if you missed it, or just want another look, check it out on the HSABR website by clicking [here!](#) 🍃

## Tea-Lightful Tea at Fleur De Lis

It was a beautiful fall morning as we stood among the tall pine trees, where nestled below in the dappled shade is a lush green tea farm. The Fleur De Lis Tea Farm sits among rolling hills in the piney woods of Amite in Tangipahoa parish, Louisiana. *Tangipahoa* is a word from the native American tribes that once inhabited this land and refers to corn or corn gathering.



Under these trees today are rows not of corn, but of lush, deep emerald-green tea plants (*Camellia sinensis* var. *sinensis*) that are just coming out of flower. The tea plant can be identified by evergreen foliage arranged alternate on the stem that is dark green in color. Leaves are ovate, with a slightly dentate or serrate margin, and the underside of the leaf is lighter in color and may have some fine pubescence. The flowers are small and white with five petals and bright yellow pollen-loaded stamens at the center. The bushes are now full of three-angle capsules about to pop open with seed. The plants came to the farm in 2017 and stand about 3 to 4 feet tall now.

We stood there, serenaded by songbirds singing and the buzzing around of bees and butterflies, as we looked out over the property. To our left there just beyond the bushes and down the slope is a pond and tea house with a bright blue roof; to our right among the tea plants stands our guide Hans Marchese, tea farmer and tea master.

Standing there almost as tall as the trees, his long blond hair tied back, I have to say that he reminds me of a Viking or Nordic god from mythology, but he's a gentle giant. Hans is all smiles and it's easy to see that he enjoys the guests and tea enthusiasts who visit the farm. Born in Texas and raised in Virginia, Hans holds a B.S. in Biology from James Madison University. He's an experienced farm manager and farm educator. Hans began his tea journey while working at Gong Fu Cha NOLA, a retail tea business, and this led him to his current occupation as Tea Production Manager at Fleur De Lis. He is extremely knowledgeable and passionate about his craft, where he gets to combine his knowledge of biology and chemistry with his favorite aspect of tea: community. This makes him an excellent tour guide to a group of curious herb enthusiasts!



Hans guided us through the farm, speaking about all the important aspects of a tea farm from site selection to soil, sun requirements, fertilization, harvesting, and propagation. After we quizzed him thoroughly on tea farming in the field, Hans guided us back to the tea house where we met the owners of the tea farm, David Barron and Debra Barron, as well as Lyra Schwartz, artist and product designer for Fleur De Lis.

We were so fortunate that our dear Claudia Ross had prepared blueberry cake and a variety of tea sandwiches, including the traditional cucumber sandwich, for us to enjoy. These were paired with the Fleur De Lis “Big Easy,” advertised as a black tea for the soul. All the teas harvested on the farm are small batch and hand-selected artisan teas. The black tea had a rich, earthy flavor, slightly sweet, with a deep amber color and after-notes of caramel or honey.

We enjoyed our afternoon tea in the dining room of the tea house where we learned that much of the interior wood used in the architecture was cut from old sinker cypress that was collected from the Maurepas swamp. The dining room is decorated much like a traditional Victorian tearoom and there were delightful centerpieces made from teacups and pixie gardens decorating the tables. There is also a small space dedicated to retail sales of some of the teas and tea accessories, along with Lyra’s tea trays made from the same cypress.



While we dined, Hans took us in small groups to tour the tea processing room which had specialized drying or withering shelves. Some of these are equipped with lighting for supporting the ongoing photosynthesis that the leaves continue even after harvesting. He had special bamboo trays brought all the way from China along with the rolling machine and drying ovens. It was interesting to learn about all the techniques that are involved in the processing of the tea.

We also learned about the differences between white, green, and black tea. All three are from the same tea plants; it’s just a matter of harvest time, processing, and flavor that differentiates between the tea varieties. White teas are dried in the sun and withered slightly. They are white or light in color and have a more floral and citrus flavor. The green teas are dried in the shade then are withered and pan fried or steamed to stop the process of oxidation; these teas are yellow to green in color and have a grassier and nuttier flavor. Both the white and green tea are low in caffeine. After our tour and lunch discussion, we enjoyed shopping for teas, tools, and plants in the retail space and then made sure to sign the guestbook upon our departure! I would highly recommend this excursion to friends and guests of our beautiful and bountiful state!

— Jennifer Blanchard, HSABR Intern 🌿

## Herb of the Month: Caraway (*Carum carvi*)

From the Herb Society of America:

### Facts:

- The flavor of caraway has been described as delicate anise, nutty, peppery, and warm. Historically, it has been used in both savory and sweet dishes.
- Caraway flavors sausage, sauerkraut, soups and stews, cheeses, breads and cakes. Seeds coated with sugar are used for comfits and to decorate cakes and cookies. Caraway seeds are what gives rye bread its distinctive flavor.
- It has long been a tradition to serve a small bowl of caraway seeds with baked apples. In Scotland, a piece of buttered bread dipped into caraway seeds is called salt water jelly.
- Kummel is a caraway-flavored liqueur from Germany and Russia. Aquavit is a Scandinavian spirit flavored with a variety of herbs, including a significant amount of caraway. Brennivin is produced in Iceland.
- Caraway has been used historically to aid digestive disorders such as flatulence and indigestion. The seeds are known to have antioxidants and flavonoids.
- The leaves can be used like parsley and roots, also edible, can be eaten like parsnips.
- Ripe seeds should be scalded with boiling water to destroy hidden insects, followed by drying in the sun for 2–3 days.
- Love potions included caraway as the ingredient that kept couples faithful. 🌿



### Caraway Tips

- Use caraway seeds whole or ground. The ground is more potent than the whole so use a scant  $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon of ground caraway vs. 1 teaspoon of whole seed.
- Toast whole caraway seeds in a dry skillet over medium-high heat until fragrant, usually 2–3 minutes.
- Add to coleslaw, potato salad, cabbage recipes and tomato-based sauces and soup.
- Use in rye, Irish soda, and fruit breads.
- To enhance the flavor of baked apples and roasted potatoes or sweet potatoes, sprinkle caraway seeds on top.
- Caraway is often included in seasoning blends for roast pork and pork chops.
- Store in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight for up to 6 months. Ground caraway has a shorter shelf-life than whole. 🌿

## Goldenrod

Goldenrod (*Solidago*) is an herbaceous perennial belonging to the Asteraceae family. There are about 150 species within the genus *Solidago*. Louisiana goldenrod (*S. ludoviciana*) is native to Louisiana, of course, as well as surrounding states such as Texas and Arkansas. It grows in just about any soil and blooms from summer all throughout fall. Louisiana goldenrod can grow up to 5 feet tall and can be seen just about anywhere when driving around town.



The genus name *Solidago* translates from Latin as “to make whole,” and, boy, do these plants live up to that name. Historically, this plant has been used all over the world from Europe and Asia to northern Africa and North America, for a wide array of medicinal applications such as wound care, diabetes, tuberculosis, asthma, inflammation, urinary tract infection, and arthritis, just to name a few. Native Americans residing in Louisiana and surrounding regions primarily used the dried leaves and flowers of this plant for medicine. Heavily researched and pharmacologically studied, it has been confirmed that goldenrod has high antimicrobial, antifungal, and antioxidative properties.

Unfortunately, for some period of time, goldenrod was thought to be the cause of hay fever and seasonal allergies, but research has proven this claim to be false and the true culprit, ragweed, was identified.

Goldenrod is great for pollinators such as butterflies and bees and has often been planted/ left alone to do its thing by farmers hoping to attract the extra workforce. To grow your own, it is recommended to start from seeds that have been cold-stratified. Goldenrod is a hands-off plant that requires minimal if any care once established. This plant has plenty of applications and can be grown without having to sacrifice a lot of time and attention. I hope that the next time you see this herbal gold flourishing in a ditch somewhere, you can look at it as one of the wonders of the plant world that it is.

— Kevin Folivi, HSABR intern 🌿

## Think You Can't Grow Basil?

“If you ever thought you could not grow basil—not true,” says Claudia Ross. “It will grow anywhere on its own with no help. I noticed these two plants growing in cracks at my home. All the plant needs is a seed, a little soil, and some water.” 🌿



## Help Make Our Newsletter Better!

Like to read stories about what our members are doing in their gardens? Like photos of plants? So does everyone else! Help us keep our newsletter interesting by contributing something! It doesn't have to be a long, scholarly article (although if you do want to contribute something like that, we'd be glad to have it!); just a few words about your herbs, a recipe you love, or a photo of what's looking good in your garden right now will add a lot.

Please send submissions to [hsabrnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto: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 Saturday mornings from 7:00–9:00 a.m. (8:00–10:00 a.m. beginning in November). All are welcome, even if you can come only once a month or less. If you can help keep the largest herb garden in this area looking its best, please contact [Judy Hines](mailto:judyhines@lsu.edu). 🌿

*Unless otherwise specified, monthly meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the month from January 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.*

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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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## Upcoming Events

### SENSORY GARDEN MAINTENANCE SESSIONS

SATURDAYS, 7:00–9:00 A.M.:

October 29

SATURDAYS, 8:00–10:00 A.M.:

November 5, 12, 19

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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