

SEPTEMBER 2023

# Herb Letter

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
BATON ROUGE UNIT



## Monthly Meeting, September 28, 2023

6:30–8:00 p.m.

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

Kathleen Harrington: 2023 Herb of the Year—Ginger (see p. 2 for details)

## Herb of the Month — Aleppo Pepper (*Capsicum annuum* 'Aleppo')

Aleppo peppers, also known as Halaby peppers, are a flavorful and aromatic spice that originates from the region of Aleppo in Syria. These red chili peppers are prized for their balanced heat and fruity, slightly sweet undertones. They impart a unique and complex flavor profile to a variety of dishes, adding a gentle heat without overwhelming the palate. Aleppo peppers are often crushed or ground into flaky, vibrant red pepper flakes, making them a versatile seasoning for anything from grilled meats and vegetables to soups, stews, and sauces. Their distinctive taste has made them a beloved ingredient in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cuisines, and they have gained popularity worldwide for their ability to elevate the flavor of countless dishes. More information on p. 6. 🌿

## Message from the Chair

Last evening, I smelled fall. I know you're thinking that fall has no smell, but I beg to differ. It is just like smelling the rain. YOU can smell the rain, right?? We have endured a hot summer like never before, but just like many of the herbs, we survived. A little wilted, too, just like the herbs. Herbs are tough and resilient and come back in force (proof that fall is coming). I've been asked how to grow herbs. My answer is that herbs are easy to grow. All they need is soil, sun, and water. Oh, and a little TLC. They will reward us time and time again. Even in record hot summers!

As Fall approaches (take a deep breath and you'll smell it) we ready our gardens for cooler weather. Remember to plant more herbs, especially cool weather herbs, along with the fall vegetables.

Enjoy this newsletter as it's packed with exciting information about past and future events from your favorite Herb Society!

—Sylvia 🌿

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**2023 Herb of the Year—Ginger.** Kathleen Harrington will offer a look into the fascinating world of ginger, the Herb Society of America's Herb of the Year for 2023. Learn about its rich history, its numerous uses in both culinary delights and natural remedies, and the incredible health benefits it offers. Get ready to spice up your knowledge about this extraordinary herb! Refreshments will feature both the Herb of the Year and the Herb of the Month.

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

## HSA Now Has an Etsy Shop!

Ever wish you could show your support for the Herb Society of America with a cool purple phone case? How about a baseball cap or t-shirt? Visit the [HSA's new Etsy Shop](#) for fun and exclusively branded HSA merchandise. Proceeds support The Herb Society of America's mission of herbal education!



Expect a changing catalogue of seasonal offerings, limited edition clothing, gardening, kitchen, and gift items designed by HSA artists.

Inventory will grow and change regularly so check back often. Each ETSY order is created when it is purchased; fulfillment takes a little time. By creating your order on demand, HSA doesn't keep an inventory or a warehouse, and shipping is handled by Etsy. Ideas for the Shop are welcome! If you have an idea that you would like to see added to the Shop's inventory, email [contact@herbsociety.org](mailto:contact@herbsociety.org) and make a suggestion. 🌿

## August Meeting Recap

On August 17th, HSABR held its annual business meeting. The following topics were the high points of the discussion:

- Chair Sylvia Lowe announced that the Herb Society of America requires us to report our membership information to them in October, so we need to move our date for collection of annual membership dues from October to September. This means that current members need to pay their dues by September 30.
  - [You can use the online renewal ("[Current Members Renew Here](#)" button at the bottom of the HSABR website home page) or if you attend the September meeting, you can give your check, payable to HSABR, to Treasurer Claudia Ross. For anyone who'd like to join HSABR, there's also a button for new members. —Ed.]
- We welcomed two new members, Carol Howell and Sudha Jindia, bringing our total membership to 53.
- The unit needs a new membership chairperson for the 2023–2024 year. Anyone interested in filling the position, please let Sylvia know.
- The unit is putting together a yearbook for members that is going to include names, home addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers of all members. If you don't want certain personal information to be shared with the group, let Sylvia know.
- Art Scarbrough, program chair, is putting together the program lineup for the coming year; please send him any suggestions for program topics or speakers.
- More members are needed to help with the maintenance of the Sensory and Heritage Gardens. This is a great way to learn about the different raised beds, herbs, and get free plants for your own garden.
  - [Please contact Sylvia Lowe or Julie Walsh (contact info on last page of this newsletter) if you can help. —Ed.]
- November 11 is the next herbal workshop. Topic, time, and location TBA.
- In early December, members will have a potluck in lieu of a meeting. Details TBA.
- Two interns have completed their internship with the unit and presented short talks:
  - Lauryn Langley, LSU grad student in landscape architecture, told us about lemon balm, its history, growing conditions, uses, propagation, and medical lore.
  - Haley Facian, LSU student majoring in crop services, discussed St. John's wort, its propagation, historical and current medicinal uses, and use as a tea. In herbal lore it was associated with the sun because of its yellow flower. It was also used to communicate a relationship interest.
- The Herb of the Year for 2024 is Yarrow.
- Book recommendation: *Secret Doctors: Ethnomedicine of African Americans* by Wonda Fontenot. It is based on research in Louisiana of medical care and practices by and for Native and African Americans.

—Betsy Dunham, Acting Secretary 🌿

## Fish Mint

By Olivia Letlow, Garden Intern

Growing up, I always steered far away from the heart-shaped leaves on the table during our weekly family dinners at my grandparents' house. We usually gathered around to eat family style, with a selection of herbs piled in the center of the table, meant to be added by the handful to the dishes that my grandmother prepared. There was one herb in particular that I would never touch. We called it "fish mint." The Southeast Asian herb *Houttuynia cordata* has an unusual taste and smell thanks to volatile oils that make the plant "fishy" in flavor. To a young child, a leaf that smells like the pond in the backyard was the furthest thing from appetizing.



I had never seen the plant anywhere else except in my grandmother's garden. After immigrating to the United States from Vietnam, my grandmother could never find the ingredients she needed to cook traditional dishes from our culture. Grocery stores in our small town did not carry all of the exotic herbs that went into Vietnamese cuisine. When visiting family and friends, she would always trade seeds and plants for all of the herbs she could not find.

I remember walking around her garden when I was little. It was what I could only refer to as "guerilla gardening," with plants growing from whatever material she could find. Old jars, plastic bottles, and tin cans were all full of starter plants. Large buckets were set out to collect rainwater. She would even train vining plants up the old clothesline in the backyard. One year, my uncle spent a summer building her an entire wooden garden, complete with a walkway. After that, her garden exploded with color from the abundance of herbs and vegetables. I saw the hard work she did to feed her family while still staying true to her culture. As I got older, I began to appreciate the fact that the piles of herbs I never touched were the product of my grandmother's toiling hands. Now, every time I see that heart-shaped, fishy-smelling herb, I smile and think of her. 🌿

## Fuzzy Butts!

Four of our curious members, Sylvia Lowe, Claudia Ross, Sharon Murphy, and Sharon Kleinpeter, participated in the Herb Society of America's "Fuzzy Butts 2023 Watch Day" on Sunday, September 10. In addition to counting the bumblebees, the new twist for this year's project was to watch the bumblebees play. Honeybees do the hard work, but [bumblebees like to play!](#)

The group spent several hours locating, watching, and recording the bumblebee activity and reported the results to HSA.

**SPOILER ALERT:** The bumblebees' metabolic rate is 75 percent higher than that of hummingbirds!

### Fun Facts about Bumblebees:

- They harvest as much as 25–75 percent of their body weight in nectar and pollen.
- They live in smaller groups than honeybees and do not swarm.
- They hibernate underground.
- They scent-mark the flowers they visit.

- They will not die if they use their sting and males do not sting at all.

These “fuzzy butts” are important pollinators of wild flowering plants and agricultural crops and are so important to our herbs. Next time you see them, don’t run! Give them thanks for the job they do!

—Sharon Kleinpeter 🌿

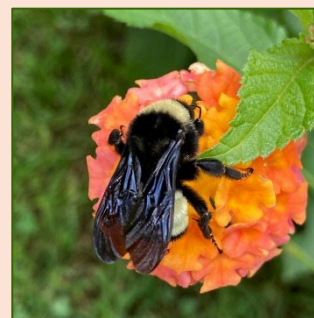


*Sharon Murphy (left) photographs a bumblebee on Mexican petunias (right)*



“Aerodynamically, the bumble bee shouldn’t be able to fly, but the bumble bee doesn’t know it so it goes on flying anyway.”

—Mary Kay Ash



## Help Needed in the Sensory Garden!

[Sylvia Lowe](#) is looking for help with spreading pine straw mulch in the Sensory Garden on Independence on Saturday, Sept. 30th, from 8:00 a.m.–10:00 a.m. If you can help, please let her know! 🌿

## Herb of the Month: Aleppo Pepper (*Capsicum annuum* ‘Aleppo’)

From the Herb Society of America:

### Facts:

- The Aleppo pepper, named for the city in Syria of the same name, is a variety of *Capsicum annuum*. It is grown for local use and export in both Syria and Turkey.
- This pepper is also known as the Halaby pepper, from the Arabic word Halab for the Syrian city Aleppo.
- This pepper is cut, de-seeded, and partially dried in the sun. They are then coarsely ground, mixed with olive oil and salt, and finished drying for use as a spice.
- The Aleppo pepper can be used fresh. It is typically sold in tins, dried and ground as described above, for use dried.
- The history of this pepper dates back centuries, in Aleppo, Syria. Their location on the Silk Road led to the development of this cultivar to be used in their cuisine.
- Common uses of Aleppo pepper include spice mixes or rubs for seasoning meat and poultry, bean dishes, roasted vegetables, egg dishes, avocado toast and dips.
- While spicy, this pepper only ranks a moderate 10,000 units on the Scoville scale.
- This pepper enhances the flavor of food with a sweet heat, and earthy, fruity, and smoky notes.
- Ripening in late summer or early fall, the fruit of the Aleppo pepper matures to a rich red or burgundy color, 3.5 to 4 inches long and 1.5 inches wide on plants reaching 4 feet tall. 🌿



For more information on growing the Aleppo pepper, see the article in the forthcoming 2023 *Herbarist*, Issue 88, pages 32–35.

### Tips:

- Purchase Aleppo pepper, not “Aleppo-style” pepper, which has a higher heat level.
- Crushed and prepared Aleppo pepper is a rich burgundy color, does not include the seeds, and is milder than crushed red pepper.
- Aleppo pepper enhances and adds complex flavors and layers of flavor to dishes.
- Along with the spice, Aleppo pepper adds sweet, tangy, earthy, and fruity flavors to foods.
- Use in spice blends or seasoning rubs or directly on meats, poultry, roasted vegetables, egg dishes, and avocado toast.
- Use to rim cocktail glasses.
- Store in a dark, cool, and dry place for up to 3 years. 🌿

## Aleppo Pepper Recipes

### Creamy Whipped Feta Dip

8 ounces block quality feta, drained  
¾ cup Greek yogurt  
Zest from 1 lemon  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, more as needed  
1 teaspoon Aleppo pepper (or red pepper) flakes (to your taste)

2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley  
2–3 tablespoons toasted pine nuts, optional  
1–2 tablespoons crushed pistachios, optional

In the bowl of a large food processor fitted with a blade, combine the feta, Greek yogurt and lemon zest. Blend, and while the processor is running, drizzle olive oil through the top opening, until the feta is whipped to a smooth mixture. Transfer the whipped feta to a serving plate. With the back of your spoon, smooth the top of the feta, making an indentation in the middle (or a “well”). Pour a bit of olive oil all over the feta, then top with the Aleppo pepper, fresh herbs, and nuts. Can also top with roasted tomatoes or broccoli. Serve with pita chips, pita wedges or favorite vegetables.



—Suzy Karadsheh, [The Mediterranean Dish](#) 🌿

### Aleppo Pepper Marinade

An aromatic, zesty Mediterranean marinade with Aleppo pepper, balsamic, honey, lemon, and garlic. Delicious on chicken, fish, or vegetables.

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil  
4 large or 6 small cloves garlic, minced, or pressed  
3 tablespoons Aleppo pepper flakes  
1 tablespoon honey or agave nectar (use agave to make vegan)

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar  
1 tablespoon fresh rosemary leaves, roughly chopped  
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves  
1 teaspoon lemon juice  
¼ teaspoon sea salt

Place all ingredients into a blender or food processor and puree until well combined and no large chunks of herbs or garlic remain.

Transfer to a bowl, cover, and refrigerate until ready to use, up to one week.

Yield ½ cup of marinade.

Notes: The marinade keeps for up to a week in the fridge, and it can be used on chicken, fish, veggies, and non-Kosher things like pork and shrimp. It can also be used to make a dip by adding one part marinade to 3 parts sour cream or Greek yogurt. It is great with cut veggies and crackers! If you want to tweak the sweetness, you can add up to 2 total tablespoons of honey without changing how the marinade performs, so taste it and stir in more as desired once pureed. Don't add too much, or the marinade might burn before your protein or veggies are completely cooked.



—[Tori Avery](#) 🌿

## 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'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 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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## Upcoming Events

**September 21, 2023**  
**MUSIC IN THE GARDENS AT BURDEN,**  
**5:30–7:30 P.M.**  
Purchase tickets [here](#).

**September 30, 2023**  
**SENSORY GARDEN MAINTENANCE**  
**SESSION, 8:00–10:00 a.m.**  
This session is to spread pine straw in the garden, and we need lots of help! Please consider participating!

**October 26, 2023**  
**MONTHLY MEETING, 6:30–8:00 P.M.**  
Herbs of Halloween; Art Scav-  
brough

**NO MONTHLY MEETINGS in November**  
**and December**