



For the Thyme Being: Madalene Hill's Sage Wisdom for the Garden & Kitchen

By Billi J. Parus

A LITTLE HISTORY.....

- In 1957, Madalene & Jim Hill moved to a plot of land in Cleveland, TX, planning to retire & grow a few herbs. They would relax and grow gladioluses for market and herbs for joy, use & delight.
- That retirement project of 65 years ago took a turn that has had a profound effect on thousands of people all over the world.
- The retirement project grew into a full-fledged career for Jim, Madalene, and their daughter Gwen.
- It became a thriving business, employing 25 staff members to tend gardens, harvest plants, and create herbal products and meals of all kinds.
- **THAT WAS HILLTOP HERB FARM !!**

MORE HISTORY...

After a tornado did serious damage to Hilltop Herb Farm in December 1983, Madalene & Gwen started a whole new chapter in their “herbal lives”. They traveled throughout the country & world, sharing their vast knowledge of all aspects of herbs, along with their enthusiasm, with everyone they met.

When they lectured, they usually brought their book, “Southern Herb Growing”, and would autograph the books, as shown in the above picture.

In June of 1986, Madalene was installed as the President of The Herbs Society of America. The picture on the lower right, taken at the 25th Anniversary of the National Herb Garden, shows Madalene with other Past-Presidents of the organization.



In 1994 Madalene & Gwen moved to Festival Institute, where Madalene could plant her collection of herbs & other plants, and Gwen became Director of Food Services at Festival Institute.

Madalene brought plants for the gardens that became known as the Cloister Garden, the Mediterranean Gardens, and the Lavender Garden. All of these gardens are known as the McAshan Gardens. Additionally, Madalene brought plenty of scented pelargoniums for containers that resided in front of Menke house.

Additional gardens have been added over the years, including the Terrace gardens, Mint Collection containers behind Menke House, and the Pharmacy Garden back on the lake.

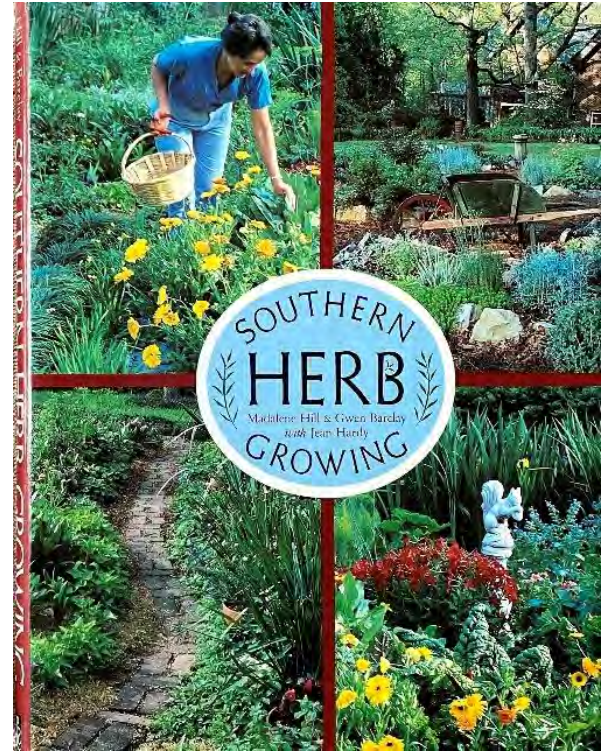


With Madalene's connection to The Herb Society of America, it was no surprise that a Unit soon was started in Round Top.

Mary Reeves, Madalene Hill and Gwen Barclay were instrumental in establishing the Pioneer Unit of The Herb Society of American in 1995!

THE PUBLICATIONS

Probably the first publications we saw of Madalene's were the product catalogs & usage sheets she wrote for Hilltop Farms. Some are pictured below, with a list of products and what you might do with them.



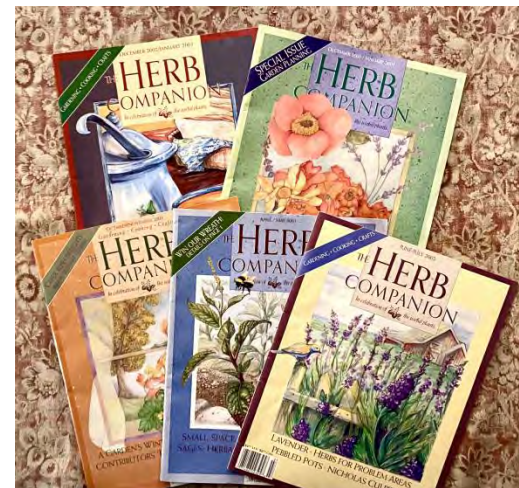
As a result of the success of Hilltop Herb Farm and articles published in the Houston Home & Garden Magazine from 1976 – 1983, Interweave Press published Madalene & Gwen's "Southern Herb Growing", an herbal masterpiece for the South, in 1987.

MORE PUBLICATIONS....

In July of 1976, Madalene was asked to do an article for the Houston Home & Garden Magazine. That first article, “Homestead & Dear Mama Letter” was a hit with the readers.

Beginning In January 1978, Madalene wrote more articles. In August 1978, she & Gwen co-authored 68 more articles. The last issue was December 1979, “Herbal Harvest Wreaths Bid a Fragrant Welcome”. **They wrote a total of 78 articles for the Houston Home & Garden Magazine.**

At the same time, they were teaching from amazing handouts they had written for classes and writing 25 articles that appeared regularly in “The Herb Companion”, by Interweave Press.



PLANTS & GROWING

Today's herb & small vegetable gardens have been in existence in America since 17th Century.

Traditionally the garden was the responsibility of the housewife – planting, careing, harvesting and using.

The housewife was expected to be knowledgeable about culinary & medicinal uses and share with anyone who came to her door.

Perhaps that is why today we inherently share plants, growing tips, recipes and food with each other today.

MORE PLANTS & GROWING...

Madalene always said, “Grow what makes you happy!”

Growing herbs is a sensory experience – visual, fragrant, flavors, textures and sounds.

You can use herbs in every aspect of your life.

Which do you want in your garden? Create the garden you want.

Be imaginative with your beds and hardscape.

The Knot Garden on the right is in the National Herb Garden at the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. Funds to construct the garden were donated in honor of Madalene Hill, by the McAshans.



MORE PLANTS & GROWING...

Even apartment dwellers can grow herbs & most vegetables in containers.

Container growing is great for patios & balconies, people with limited time for gardening or are starting out small with a new hobby.

Several containers located together can create a lush garden. Container materials can be changed out.

Essentials for containers.



The picture at the left shows Ruth, Madalene's sister, Madalene, and Gwen.

GATHERING THE HARVEST

Herb harvests begin as soon as there is sufficient growth for plants to withstand cutting.

Never cut back plant a completely; with annuals being the exception.

Ideally, cut in mid-morning, after moisture is gone from leaves.

You want plants as dry as can be so no harvesting in rainy weather, unless using fresh, immediately.

Never cut more herbs at one time than you can handle or process.

CULINARY TIPS



- Don't feel bound by an herb chart....or recipe for that matter.
- EXPERIMENT!!!
- If an herb or flower is fragrant, it usually means it has flavor.
- All culinary herbs are good in food.
- Use a light touch with herbs – don't over power the food.
- Use 2-3 times as much fresh herbs as dried; always start with a smaller amount, then increase if needed.

TIPS CONTINUED....

Flavor – the blend of taste & smell sensations evoked by a substance in the mouth.

Catagories of Flavor: delicate & mild, strong & robust

- “Delicate” herb flavors – don’t like a lot of cooking time – use in non-cooked dishes or add at the end of cooking. Examples: basil, cilantro, lemon balm, mint marigold, salad burnet.
- The stronger herbs that can handle long cooking times – bay, oregano, sweet marjoram, rosemary, sage, thyme, winter savory.
- Combining mild & robust herbs gives a nice flavor.
- **Distinctly-flavored herbs** – often used alone – cilantro, dill, lavender flowers, lemon verbena, peppermint, salad burnet.

TIPS CONTINUED....

The flavor of some herbs can be altered by over-chopping.

For consistency, always measure herbs by firmly packing in container OR weighing.

Herbs & spices are not the only flavorings – cheeses, nuts, aromatic vegetables, honey & sugar, herbal seeds, citrus peels/zest.

To test herb blends – put combos together with cottage cheese to taste & experiment with the flavors. That way you experiment without wasting large amounts of herb materials.



MORE TIPS.....



GINGER - peel the skin off ginger with the bowl of a spoon, scraping it off easily. If you have too much ginger, you can freeze peeled ginger. The ginger will be a little mushy when comes out of freezer.

Infuse pieces of fresh ginger in Sherry in the refrigerator....use both the ginger and the sherry.

CHIVES – cut about 1” above ground level – rinse off; put in zip lock bag & freeze. When needed, take it out and cut off what you need with scissors and return the rest to the freezer. Don’t forget to use the blossoms too!

GARLIC – you can freeze whole cloves or make a puree – small amounts of garlic processed with a little oil. Freezing the puree gives you flavor of fresh garlic year round.

PARSLEY

After parsley is rinsed in cool water & dried, rubber band stems together & place in gallon sized plastic bag & place in freezer.

When parsley is needed, take out of freezer & gently crush sprigs with hands on outside of bag. Open the bag & take out the crumbled parsley you need. Reseal & refreeze before it thaws.

Parsley melds different flavors together. It can be used in basil pesto, as part of the basil amount, to help the pesto retain its green color. It can also be used as a filler for tough stemmed herbs.



TIPS CONTINUED....

- The flavor of some herbs can be altered by over-chopping – coriander leaf, mint, marigold, basil.
- Use only leaves & tender stems. The woody stems often have a bitter, strong taste. They are better used as “shish kabob” skewers.
- They can be put in soups, stews or marinated dishes (3”-5”, no woody stems). Use 10-12 sprigs to each 10-12 cups of soups or other “liquidy” dishes.
- Whole small leaves added to salads, soups, or marinated dishes – tear or cut if leaves are large.
- Chopped with knife or snipped with scissors – butters, cheeses, general use.
- The amount of heat the herb is subjected to can change its flavor – the essential oils in the herbs are damaged with high heat.

TIPS CONTINUED

again....

FRESH IS BEST - Purest flavor!!

Cut, rinse, dry your fresh harvest. Use immediately or store in refrigerator in a baggie with a slightly moist paper towel...OR...hang in a mesh bag suspended in the refrigerator.

FREEZE in ice cubes – rinse. Measure by tablespoon amounts into ice cube trays. Add enough water or oil to cover & freeze. Pop out & store in bag until ready to use.

You can dry your herbal harvest by stripping off leaves & drying on a paper towel, covered loosely with another paper towel. Store in air tight jar.

Other ways to preserve the herbal flavor is in oils, vinegars, pestos, butters. Some of these can also be frozen.

The picture below features Madalene & Gwen with Henry Flowers and regular Herbal Forum attendees, Gayle Engels and Billi Parus.



HERBAL VINEGARS

You need a sterilized quart canning jar, strainer, coffee filters, saran wrap.

Use your favorite vinegar. Add approximately 1 cup (minimum) of fresh herb or herb combination, hard-packed, for each 3 cups of vinegar.

Put herbs in a quart canning jar, using a wooden spoon to bruise the herbs. Pour in the vinegar to within 1” of the jar top; push the herbs down with the wooden spoon and tap the jar to release air bubbles.

Place plastic wrap over the jar opening and cap with a metal lid. (Plastic wrap prevents the vinegar from coming in contact with the metal lid so the lid does not corrode.)

Let this “age” for 3 weeks. Strain it through coffee filters to remove the herbs or combination of herbs, pour then into a sterilized bottle and cap.



HERBAL VINAIGRETTE

1 cup extra virgin olive oil (or mixture with vegetable oil)

¼ cup herbal vinegar

2 – 4 Tbsps. water

1 Tbsp. Dijon or other flavorful mustard

1 garlic clove, peeled & mashed

½ - 1 tsp. salt

½ tsp. hot pepper sauce

¼ - ½ cup herbal leaves & tender leaves – parsley, mild oregano, thyme, basil, rosemary
and/or mint marigold

Place all ingredients in blender and mix at low speed ‘til nearly smooth, then at high speed for about 30 seconds. Add additional water and taste for salt if flavor is too sharp. Use for salad greens or to marinate cooked or raw vegetables.

Yield: 1 ½ cups vinaigrette.

HERBAL OIL CONCENTRATES

Basic Recipe – 2 hard-packed cups herb leaves & tender stems – single herb or combination (parsley may be added to make measurement)

½ cup good quality vegetable oil *

Combine in food processor, using pulse control. You may need to stop and push material down side of processor bowl. Store in the refrigerator, or long term in the freezer.

Uses: substitute for fresh herbs – about 1/3 normal amount. Use in sauces, soups, salad dressings, basting mixtures, vegetable salads, in sour cream or yogurt for quick dips or sauces.

For preserved garlic cream, substitute 2 cups fresh pooled cloves of garlic for herbs – Proceed as directed above.

*Use vegetable oil unless the flavor of olive oil is desired for dish.

When preparing flavored oils, use dried chiles, rather than fresh, so you have no worries about molding.

PESTO

Basil is the prime ingredient in pesto, though other herbs and nuts can be experimented with.

BASIC RECIPE

½ cup extra virgin olive oil

2 or more cloves of garlic

2 cups fresh basil leaves, hard-packed

½ cup fresh parsley, hard-packed

¼ cup lightly toasted pine nuts

½ cup grated Romano or Parmesan cheese

Place all ingredients in a blender or processor, and puree. Use immediately for best flavor or freeze in small containers for later use.

Dill Almond Pesto

This recipe was originally shared with the Tidewater Unit, in Virginia. Madalene always told me to share it.

2 ½ Tbsps. coarsely chopped shallots

1 tsp. chopped garlic

1 cup vegetable oil

¼ cup lemon juice

2 cups hard packed fresh dill

1 tsp. salt

1 cup hard packed fresh parsley

1 Tbsp. lemon zest - yellow portion only

1 cup sliced toasted almonds, blanched or natural

Place all ingredients in blender and blend until smooth, stopping to push material down as needed. Alternately, use a food processor for a coarser texture. Refrigerate or freeze to store. Use for seafood sauté, salad dressings, pasta, chicken or sauces.

Makes approximately 2 cups.

HERBAL BUTTER

HERBAL BUTTERS –Always remove leaves/flowers from stems. Chop herbs in processor but fold into butter by hand or with mixer; avoid over mixing

BASIC RECIPE

½ pound butter or margarine, softened

1 Tblsp. fresh chives

1 Tblsp. fresh parsley, preferably Italian

1 Tblsp. Other fresh herb or combination of 2-3

Chop herbs with scissors, knife, or food processor. Work herb into butter with spoon, spatula, or fork until smooth. Taste and add more herb if flavor is not strong enough. Remember though, the flavors will develop more after several hours of storage.

Refrigerate or freeze until ready to use.

ANOTHER HERBAL BUTTER

BASIC SAVOURY HERB BUTTER or CHEESE

1 pound butter, margarine, cream cheese, ricotta or a combination

2 Tbsps. chives – onion or garlic

2 Tbsps. parsley – flat leaved preferred

2 – 3 Tbsps. other fresh herbs: dill, basil, bay (fresh), marjoram, tarragon, rosemary, sage, English or lemon thyme, spearmint, lemon balm

Combine ingredients. Make into rolls to freeze; slice off as needed. Can be used for sauces, vegetables, meats, poultry, seafood and breads.

SCENTED PELARGONIUM



ROSE GERANIUM POUND CAKE - from “Southern Herb Growing”, printed with permission from Madalene Hill & Gwen Barclay.

This famous cake freezes well and is equally delectable served with fresh fruit, vanilla sauce, or lemon curd.

10 – 12 fresh rose geranium leaves, stems removed **

3 cups vanilla sugar (or add 1 tsp. vanilla extract if using plain sugar)

1 ½ cups butter, softened

5 eggs (at room temperature)

3 cups sifted flour

6 ozs. lemon-lime soda (NO DIET)

1 Tblsp. fresh lemon juice

Additional rose geranium leaves for garnish

Grease and flour a 10” Bundt or tube cake pan. Preheat oven to 325° F.

Place geranium leaves face down on bottom of pan, tearing some leaves apart to fill in completely. Cream butter and sugar with electric mixer until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well between each addition. Add flour to the cake batter, alternately with soda, beating well. Stir in lemon juice. Pour batter into prepared cake pan, smoothing top. Bake approximately 1 to 1 ¼ hours. If necessary to prevent over-browning, place a piece of aluminum foil lightly over the cake toward the end of baking. After cake is removed from oven, cool for 10 minutes; invert carefully on plate.

Yields: 15 - 20 slices of cake.

****Since this recipe was first published**, Madalene and Gwen have changed the way the geranium leaves are prepared. They now process those leaves with ½ of the sugar in the recipe. The sugar becomes slightly green with fine specks.

ROSE GERANIUM POUND CAKE continued.....

Billi likes to prepare this recipe as loaves of pound cake, filling 2 bread loaf pans. They usually bake for 1 ¼ hours, and she tents them with aluminum foil at the 1 hour point.

Billi's Tarragon adaptation: In place of rose geranium leaves, add ½ cup fresh tarragon, chopping up with part of the sugar in the recipe.

Billi's Lavender adaptation: In place of rose geranium leaves, add 2 tablespoons dried lavender flowers, chopping up with part of the sugar in the recipe.



GOOD 'N NUFF HERB BLEND

– Madalene Hill & Gwen Barclay

1 part fennel seed, ground

1 part cumin seed, ground

1 part coriander seed, ground

½ part caraway seed, ground

Mix together & use where needed for a nice flavorful spice blend.

Great in baked goods, vegetables, rice.....just try it in everything.

HERBAL BEER BREAD – by Billi Parus

3 cups self-rising flour

3 Tblsp. sugar

2 Tblsps. melted butter

2 - 3 Tblsps. dried herbs

one 12-oz. can of beer or lemon/lime soda

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Grease bread loaf pan with butter. Mix all ingredients in bowl. Pour the bread batter into the bread loaf pan and smooth out. Drizzle 2 tablespoons melted butter over top of bread batter.

Bake for 1 hour.

** The Good 'N Nuff Herb Blend is fantastic in this recipe.



Hope you enjoy your samples!

Madalene's plants



'Arp' Rosemary



Mexican Mint Marigold



'Hilltop' Oregano



'Madalene Hill' Rosemary
AKA 'Hill Hardy'



'Newe Ya'ar' Sage



Red Stem Applemint



“Always
grow where
you are
planted”

Madalene
Hill

(1913 – 2009)



Handout