

PIONEER PATHS

Newsletter of the Herb Society of America
Pioneer Unit

January 2025

Volume 32, Number 5



January 1
New Year's Day

—
January 5
Twelfth Night

—
January 7
Board Meeting
9:30 at Festival Hill
School Room #9



—
January 13
Wolf Full Moon

MONTHLY UNIT MEETING

Date: January 9, 2025

Time: 9:30 a.m. Meet and Greet
10:00 a.m. Presentation and Meeting

Location: St. John's United Church of Christ
516 North Colorado Street, Burton

Directions: [from the east] Exit Highway 290 onto Texas Spur 125 north into Burton. At North Brazos Street, turn right and continue to East Texas Street. Turn right and go one block to North Colorado Street. The church will be on your left.

[from the west] Exit Highway 290 onto Texas 390 going northeast into Burton. At the intersection of 390 (Washington Street) and Main Street, continue straight into Burton on East Washington Street. At North Colorado Street, the church will be on your right.

Program: Culinary Conversations about Herbs: Our Relationships with the Plant Life Around Us

Speaker: Jana Muniz

Angel: Sally Reynolds

Hosts: Shawn Helm, Madeline Johnson, Mike Perkins, Betty Pior, and Jana Rinehart

Lunch: Winter Warm-Ups

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As of this writing, there are two more days until 2025 arrives. I feel like I am preparing for a marathon race, and the starting gun will fire at 12:01 a.m. on January 1. December was full of many really fun, non-stop activities with family (especially grandchildren) and friends. Now it's time to get back to business; however, I anticipate that it will be a gratifying and educational business. I learn so much each month from our Unit presentations, and the upcoming presentations promise to be interesting. As the current Chair, I am also learning a lot about our Unit. In general, it's simple and straightforward, but with complexity intertwined.

In my December Newsletter article, I mentioned some of our great 2024 Unit accomplishments. I believe 2025 will continue to be very successful. We should soon have more new members as several guests have expressed interest in joining our group.

Our December meeting had some hiccups. Festival Hill was informed by the electric company two days before our meeting that they were coming to install the electricity lines for the new Festival Hill building and that the electricity would be turned off. It was only supposed to be for one day, but Wednesday afternoon they announced it would also be turned off Thursday. The Festival Hill staff did a wonderful job helping to set up a place for us to meet in the Menke House. It was cozy as we had around 57 people attending the meeting. And my hat off to the stupendous job that the Hospitality group did to provide a superb breakfast. Their spirit of flexibility was much appreciated as we moved them around a couple of times. Thanks to Cammie Beierle and her husband who stood out in the cold to greet everyone as they arrived. Henry Flowers gave a fabulous presentation, especially considering the space he had to work in. Everyone agreed that the Menke House was actually the perfect setting to hear about Peter Rabbit and Chamomile Tea.

Forum, Plant Sale, and Thyme Well Spent Shop: Of course, at the top of the 2025 list is preparing for the Forum, Plant Sale, and Thyme Well Spent Shop event in March (for simplicity I am going to refer to these three things as The March Event). There are many things to do, but much work has already begun. A planning committee met in December to appraise the status of each area of The March Event. We had a great discussion, made a few decisions, and determined what we needed to explore. We will continue meeting to make final preparations.

Forum: The committee approved the theme for the Forum – "Unlocking the Mysteries of Herb Superpowers." We are searching for presenters who can speak to the following topics:

Restoring Biodiversity to your Soil with Herbs
Growing Central Texas Herbs
The Science of Aromatherapy
The Healing Chemicals of Herbs

The theme and the presentation topics are driven by the need and the desire to understand how we as individuals can improve the ecosystem that immediately surrounds us and is within us. I have been immersing myself in the study of these topics for the past couple of months and have been astonished by how much I really don't know. I have recently discovered Doug Tallamy and his work to help us understand "how the choices we make as gardeners can profoundly impact the diversity of life in our yards, towns and on our planet." He has inspired me to become a backyard ecologist.

Plant Sale: Julie Johnson, Madeline Johnson, and Phoebe Lake have been busy talking with plant suppliers and discussing ways to make the Plant Sale flow more smoothly and be more successful.

TWSS: Erica Menconi has talked with several members about TWSS sale items.

Volunteering: Sign-up sheets for everyone to volunteer time at The March Event will be present at the January Unit Meeting. Please bring your calendars so you can determine when you are available. This event is truly important for the life of our Unit. We only receive a small amount of money from dues each year, so the income we earn from The March Event is the primary resource that provides the money needed to have our amazing programs and operate the Unit. There are many areas that members can choose to volunteer; a few examples: setting up for the plant sale, cashiers (plant sale or TWSS), ticket writers (plant sale or TWSS), greeters and hostesses for the Forum, stuffing packets for the Forum attendees, and many other areas. Many members have already stepped forward to say they are willing and ready to be active participants, and I know I can count on all of you. Thanks so much!

Looking forward to the new year with excitement (and a little trepidation),
Diana Sellers
Chair, Pioneer Unit



FROM THE PROGRAMS CHAIR

Happy New Year!

We rang in the New Year at our place in far west Texas. Sanderson is a small canyon town with big personality. Gardening is a joke here, but the vegetation (mostly cactus) that lives here is still really beautiful to me. After all, Sanderson is the cactus capital of Terrell County.

I look forward to what 2025 has in store for the Pioneer Unit. Bring on a new year of Herb Society programs, a new year of gardening, and a new year of friendships through this great group.

The Pioneer Unit kicks off 2025 on January 9th with "Culinary Conversations about Herbs: Our Relationships with the Plant Life around Us" by Jana Muniz. We are meeting at St John's in Burton. See you there!!

Tory Farley
Programs Chair

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Happy new year, Herbies!! As I write this, I am loving this weather and spending every minute outside as possible, though I checked the weather forecast and it appears that, if it holds, we could see some inordinately low temperatures about the time of our next meeting. My fingers are crossed that it will update to more normal temperatures! Whatever the weather, I am excited for our next meeting! We will welcome Vicki Wiste as our newest member and invite her to tell us a little about herself.

Our December meeting at Festival Hill was such a treat getting to enjoy Henry Flowers' teaching on Chamomile and the delightful luncheon prepared by the staff there. There were 44 members and 10 guests in attendance: Colleen Kieke, Zella Frey and David Kieke were there with Courtney Kieke; Julia Johnson brought Sherry Michie; Amber and Bryce Bartek were also invited by Julia; Randy White came with Leona Marshall; Earl Mills came with Patty; Jason Beierle came with me; and it was Vicki Wiste's last meeting as a guest, introduced to us by Irene Spurrier.

Please congratulate Susan Wood as she has been a member of HSA for 55 years this month.

We'll be watching the weather and prepping our tender plants for cold weather by the time we next see each other. In the meantime, I hope your celebration of the new year was safe and enjoyable.

Cammie Beierle
Membership Chair

FROM OUR ARCHIVES CHAIR

Hey, Herbies!

If anyone is interested in helping with a project with the Pioneer Unit archives, Diana Sellers and I would love to have your help. Any scrapbookers out there? We want to see what we have and put it into a useable form. We can take our time and even do some of the work at home. Just let me know.

Thank you.
Susan Bame



MINUTES OF UNIT MEETING PIONEER UNIT DECEMBER 12, 2024

The December meeting was held in Menke House at Festival Hill. This was a quick change of venue due to an electricity outage. Diana Sellers praised the hostesses for their flexibility and ability to pivot quickly.

Tess Hartman, Acting Programs Chair, introduced Henry Flowers who presented "A Cup of Chamomile with Peter." Henry captivated members with the connection of Beatrix Potter, Peter Rabbit, and chamomile. As always, we all learned something surprising and were delighted with the journey. Henry generously had chamomile and viola plants for members.

After the presentation, Cammie Beierle, Membership Chair, shared that the meeting's attendance included 10 visitors and 44 members.

Serena Speaker, Sensory Garden Chair, mentioned that the garden needed some work. She asked that workers bring rakes, trimmers, and gloves for the monthly work days.

The Sensory Garden in Brenham had a great event with children at Brenham Elementary. Debbie Meschwitz, Caroll Edwards, Jo Ann Reichle, and Diana Sellers facilitated as the children helped in the garden, including mulching the flower beds and placing pumpkins around the garden. Everyone ate pumpkin pie and pumpkin seeds.

Royceanna Kendall, Treasurer, reported our Unit has a \$59,007.37 ending balance for November.

Phoebe Lake revealed lavender as the herb of study for the Horticulture Study Group for 2025. Madeline Johnson applied for and was awarded a grant of \$1,000 from the Texas Lavender Association, Phoebe reported, noting that these monies will be used to help HSG members with supplies to grow their lavender. Phoebe commented that the HSG gets more scientific each year as the group reports back on what worked and what didn't with a particular herb. (The HSG is led by both Phoebe and Madeline who are very generous with their time and expertise.)

Pat Cox, Education Chair, shared details of the field trip and tour of Festival Hill Gardens led by Julia Johnson. A total of 24 members attended. Everyone learned something new about the gardens as Julia shared the history and led us on a walk through the trails. The morning concluded at Busted Oaks Cellars for lunch.

Diana Sellers, Unit Chair, reported that the Forum Committee has proposed Festival Hill Garden tours during Forum and the Plant Sale. She said that the theme of Forum will be "Unlocking the Mystery of Herb Superpowers." Diana added that there would be signup sheets at the January meeting for all Forum volunteer opportunities.

The meeting ended with a holiday meal and wishes for a joyous holiday season.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Hagler
Secretary

CULINARY GROUP



The January meeting of the Culinary Group is our annual mustard making for the Thyme Well Spent Shop. The Vitamixers and Processors will be humming. The kitchen will be steaming as we process dozens of jars of mustard. We will be enjoying Minestrone soup when the work is done.

Belinda Weatherly

HORTICULTURE STUDY GROUP

Everybody Loves *Lavendula*

How many lavender-scented products do you have in your home? Lavender is found in hundreds of products ranging from household cleansers to personal toiletries. It is a favorite for use in crafts such as candle-making, wreaths, and, of course, sachets. In the kitchen, it is used in herbal blends, such as Herbes de Provence, and infused in sugar to add flavor to baked goods. It all starts in the garden, where the lavender plant rewards visitors visually while providing an intoxicating aroma. So, why isn't everyone's garden full of lavender? Many Pioneer Unit members have grown lavender to mixed reviews. Lavender can be finicky, but there are hundreds of varieties from which to choose. Choosing the right variety is the first step to successfully growing lavender. The next and equally important step is creating the appropriate microclimate. The essential elements in the ideal microclimate include full sun, good drainage, winter protection, heat protection, and good air circulation. The general objective of the lavender study is to understand what it takes to grow lavender successfully in our area.



A few things about the study to help you decide whether to join the Horticulture Study Group. All of us will grow the same eight varieties. Two of the varieties will be grown in large containers and the remaining six will be divided equally between specially prepared raised beds and soil-amended ground plantings. Some of the expenses of growing these varieties will be covered by a grant from the Texas Lavender Association. Planting instructions will be provided to ensure that our lavender plants get a good start. You will report height and diameter measurements each month. The best part of this study is that you will be growing lavender as part of a group. Through the round robin discussions and excellent presentations, you will learn how to grow and use lavender. We hope that you will want to learn more about participating. **Our first meeting will be Thursday, January 23, in School Building #9 at Festival Hill, from 10 a.m. to noon.** This is an important organizational meeting. After this meeting, we will order plants and other supplies for the study. Therefore, we ask that you decide at that January 23 meeting (or before) if you want to participate. Check out your garden and start thinking about where you can create the perfect microclimate for lavender.

Madeline Johnson

REPORT FROM OUR EDUCATION CHAIR

FIELD TRIP NEWS: Julia Johnson was our docent for a field trip for 25 members to the Festival Hill gardens in December when we explored new areas of the gardens in addition to those we were familiar with. A delicious lunch followed at Busted Oaks Winery.

WORKSHOP NEWS: Leah Pearce and Bev Elam led a hypertufa workshop in late October and made some beautiful leaf yard art. See the photos below. One more hypertufa workshop will be held before Forum. Cammie Beierle is hosting a workshop in February to make items for the shop - details to follow. Workshops to make lotions for TWSS will be held in late February.

Pat Cox



FESTIVAL HILL GARDENS

I had a wonderful time giving our members a tour of the gardens and trails at Festival Hill a few weeks ago; the weather was beautiful, and everyone seemed to really enjoy it. If you missed it, we are planning to have an opportunity for a garden tour during this year's Forum and Plant Sale!

Speaking of which, look for our Plant Sale sign up sheets at our January Unit meeting. I am also working to have an online form ready for the research of Pharmacy Garden plants, and there will be a sign up sheet for that as well!

And don't forget our next work day:

First Fridays at Festival Hill, January 3rd, 9:00 till 11:00 a.m.
We meet behind the Menke House, usually in the Pharmacy Garden
Coffee available; bring a snack to share!

At our previous First Friday meeting we documented the state of the greenhouse at Festival Hill and are working on getting an estimate to restore it. More information will be coming soon.

Julia Johnson
Festival Hill Gardens

SENSORY GARDEN

The Sensory Garden will not have a workday in January but will in February, on Wednesday, February 19, 2025, instead of Thursday as I am leaving town on Thursday for a cruise.

Thanks for all your support. I will send out a reminder prior to the February workday meeting. Anyone can go and work at the garden on your own to pull weeds and trim. We all know how to do this, but just track your hours and please let me know.

Blessings
Serena Speaker
Sensory Garden Chair

USING UP THOSE HERBS! HAVE YOU EVER TRIED A FLORAL VINEGAR FOR A HAIR RINSE?

I have enjoyed watching and learning from a video blogger: Heidi with "Rain Country" from the Pacific Northwest. She is fascinating and uses herbs and the plants around her to make most of the things she uses every day. This vinegar rinse is so fun to put together!

Floral Vinegar Hair Rinse



MY DAUGHTER HELPING
ME COLLECT HERBS
AND FLOWERS!



A VARIETY OF FLORAL
AND HERBAL SCENTS.

Just collect a blend of herbs and flowers to fill a half-gallon mason jar about halfway to two-thirds. Then add 1/2 cup of sugar, fill with water, and place a lid loosely on top. You want it to "breathe." You could also just cover the top with a scrap of fabric and a rubber band.

Stir your herbal concoction daily, enjoying the natural fragrance. It will soon begin to bubble as the sugar is used up to create vinegar. After about a month, strain the herbs out and seal your vinegar tightly in a bottle; store in a cool, dark place.

To use as a hair rinse, place 1/4 cup vinegar and 3/4 cup warm water in a squeeze bottle, pour on your hair, and let soak in as you finish your

shower. Rinse out and enjoy its cleansing and conditioning effects. Heidi from Rain Country says that she uses her floral vinegar rinses daily and only uses a little of her homemade soap as a stronger cleanser about once every two weeks. I'm still investigating this process. But the vinegar rinse leaves your hair feeling so silky soft. My family is really enjoying it so far!

Here are my vinegars after two weeks: it's fascinating watching the colors and fragrances develop.

Julia Johnson



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

January 1 — Carolyn Thomas
 January 7 — Mary Doebbeling
 January 9 — Erica Menconi
 January 19 — Kathe Forrest
 January 20 — Cammie Beierle
 January 21 — JoAnn Reichle
 January 26 — Georgia Sowers
 January 27 — Cindy Nash
 January 28 — Euphanel Goad



Kathe Forrest (January 19) sent the adjacent photo and wrote the following:

"Happy birthday to all of us Capricorns and Aquarians!"

"I'm happy to be healthy and able to enjoy this 7th decade as I wander into my 74th year. I am returning this month back to school. One of my priorities and wishes is to learn watercolor and more about drawing so I will go to ACC for classes and enjoy this venture into color and focusing my mind on something that carries me away from reality, so to speak. Therefore, I will probably not see you all until March.

"I will also be leaving the state in June with my family, and there will be a lot to do before that in preparation.

"I am happy to have served the Unit and I have made many friends within this group.

"Love and Light,"
 Kathe




January 2025

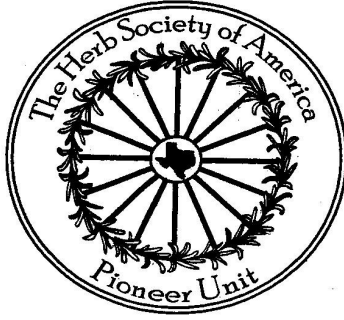


Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
CG = Culinary Group FH = Festival Hill SG = Sensory Garden	HSG = Horticulture Study Group HB = Herbal Blends		1	2	3 FH Work Day 9-11	4
5	6	7	8 CG Menke House	9 Pioneer Unit Meeting	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23 HSG at FH 10-noon	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	



February 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
CG = Culinary Group FH = Festival Hill SG = Sensory Garden	HSG = Horticulture Study Group HB = Herbal Blends					1
2	3	4	5 CG Menke House	6	7 FH Work Day 9-11	8
9	10	11	12	13 Pioneer Unit meeting	14 	15
16	17	18	19 SG Work Day 9-11	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 HSG at FH 10-noon	28	



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Volume 32

Editor: Linda L. Rowlett, Ph.D.

Pioneer Paths is a publication of The Herb Society of America, Pioneer Unit. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$10.00 per year.

The Mission Statement of The Herb Society of America: "To promote the knowledge, use, and delight of herbs through educational programs, research, and sharing the experience of its members with the community."

Chair—Diana Sellers

Vice Chair Programs—Tory Farley
Secretary—Joanna Hagler

Vice Chair Membership—Cammie Beierle
Treasurer—Royceanna Kendall



"A Favor"

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

Robert Frost
1920