



La Yerba Buena

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN ANTONIO HERB SOCIETY

NUMBER 215, FEBRUARY 2008

Be sure to view the unedited version of this newsletter @ www.sanantonioherbs.org

If you would like to receive the SAHS newsletter electronically, please contact Lyn @ belisle@satx.rr.com

The San Antonio Herb Society is organized to bring together those who are interested in using and growing herbs and to promote general knowledge of herbs to the membership and the public at large.



February Program



Essential Oils are so much more than pleasant aromas. Did you know essential oils have properties that affect us not only physically, but mentally, emotionally and even spiritually?

Jean Dukes, Certified Aromatherapist, will present a basic introduction to essential oils focusing on fragrances used to uplift, refresh, create a romantic atmosphere, and kindle (or rekindle) the spark in your love life.

The meeting is on Thursday, February 14, 2008. The program will begin at 7:00 (with refreshments served beginning at 6:30) at the San Antonio Garden Center, located on the corner of Funston and N. New Braunfels. The meeting is free and open to the public. For more information, check out our web site at www.sanantonioherbs.org

♥ Be sure to bring your sweetheart to this meeting! ♥



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Members with the last names starting with **L-Q**, please bring refreshments to the January meeting. Please be sure to pay attention to when it is your turn for refreshments and do your part by bringing some finger foods to share. Email your recipe to: karyrebecca@yahoo.com and we'll likely publish it in the next newsletter.

DECEMBER TREASURER'S REPORT

Submitted by Jennifer Hubbard

BEG. BAL.	\$3,450.78	MEMBERSHIP DUES	
INCOME	\$390.00	NAME BADGES	
	\$20.00	COOK BOOK SALES	
	\$763.93	T SHIRTS	
	\$54.00	APRONS	
	\$36.00	RAFFLE	
	\$125.10	LORI CAPES / ENTERTAIN.	
EXPENSES	(\$60.00)	SA GARDEN CENTER	
	(\$85.00)	CAROL LEE/ TURKEY BANQ.	
	(\$120.00)		
END. BAL.	\$4,574.81		
2 YR CD	\$1,058.80		
SVGS ACCT	\$1023.31		
TRANSFERS	0		
	\$6,656.92	TOTAL ASSETS	



Do You Have A SAHS Name Tag?

If you have attended at least three Herb Society meetings you are eligible for a free nametag. If you do not have one, please contact Carol Hamling, Membership Chairman. You can email her at

obith@satx.rr.com

or fill out a nametag form at the sign in desk before any monthly meeting. Please remember to wear your SAHS to every meeting & event! Thank you.

Did you join the San Antonio Herb Society. . .

- . . .to learn about cooking, growing, and using herbs?
- . . .to meet like-minded people and make new friends?

The San Antonio Herb Society presents great programs on growing, cooking, and using herbs, but the SAHS is also a great place to make new friends, especially when you join the very special group of people that make up the SAHS board. The following positions need volunteers. Could it be you?

Program Chairperson

This person meets and gets to know very talented speakers, gardeners, and chefs from all over San Antonio and the Hill Country.

Commitment and Skills Required: One board meeting a month. You would introduce the speakers at the regular meeting and coordinate booking of the speakers.

Vice President, Membership

This position is great for meeting people. It requires that you have a computer with Excel program and that you know how to use it to maintain the membership list.

Commitment and Skills Required: One board meeting a month. You would staff the welcome/membership table at the door at general meetings, so that new members can join, pick up nametags, and visitors can sign in and pick up visitor name tags. You would maintain the membership roster. You may choose to enlist the help of an assistant.

Newsletter Chairperson

If you have a flare for layout and design, or if you enjoy writing and editing behind the scenes -- or both -- this is an opportunity to create something for your portfolio and/or get published while you're having fun learning a lot about all aspects of herbs. A knowledge of a publishing program is required.

Commitment and Skills Required: One board meeting a month. The newsletter is generally due to be mailed out approximately 1 1/2 weeks before the general meeting.

Publicity Chairperson

The publicity person is the liaison between the Board (particularly the program chairman), the Webmaster and the local media. Based on program descriptions, the publicity person sends out press releases by FAX and/or electronically to the print media such as the Express News and the Current two weeks before the meeting. Radio/TV releases are sent out one week in advance. The publicity chair also designs flyers to be distributed by the flyer committee three weeks in advance.

Commitment and Skills Required: One board meeting a month, and attendance at meetings to take pictures for publicity purposes.

Historian

If you are a creative person you can fill this position...

Commitment and Skills Required: Take photos at regular meetings and events (or find someone to do it) and create scrapbook pages for our yearly photo diary and historical record of the SAHS; email the photos to the webmaster and newsletter chairman for use on our website and in our newsletter.

President

This is the best position of all! You would create the agenda for, and lead the board meetings. You would create the agenda for, lead, and make announcements for the general meetings. You would oversee all the workings of the SAHS, enlisting the help of all willing members. You would personally get to know the membership of the SAHS.

Commitment and Skills Required: One board meeting a month. This position requires strong leadership skills. You would open the general meeting monthly, create agendas for both the general and board meetings, and attend all events the SAHS participates in whenever possible.

Please call Carol-lee Fisher ASAP at (210) 473-0872 if you are willing to fill any of these positions.



Devine Avocados

by Carol Hamling



When you hear the name Lola, you probably think we're referring to a woman. No so. Bill Schneider of Devine Avocados. He has named many of his varieties of avocado trees after people he knows—some of whom originally gave him the scion wood—and Lola is one of those special trees.

Bill is a member of the California Avocado Society (www.californiaavocadosociety.org) and he is constantly reading and trying to learn more about growing and cultivating avocados.

If you take a trip to Devine to visit Bill, you will see two rows of different varieties of trees he has grafted that are from Mexican, not Guatemalan, heritage. They are more cold hardy than the trees grown in the southern part of Mexico. The biggest difference is that the leaves from the Guatemalan trees are toxic, whereas the Mexican ones are not. Take a leaf from a Mexican avocado tree, crush it between your fingers, and you will discover an unmistakable, beautiful anise fragrance. These are the leaves that are used in cooking and herbal teas.

Bill tells us we shouldn't expect a Hass avocado tree to grow here in the San Antonio area and for us not to be disappointed at our lack of success with such plantings. Many different types of Mexican avocado trees, which are usually evergreen, grow here in San Antonio. The fruits vary in shape and size. The skin of one of the varieties is so thin that you can eat the fruit without peeling it. These varieties ripen July through October, rather than all the fruit on the trees all at once, so you'll have a nice, long season for fresh guacamole.

Only in Texas would you find an old pickup truck bed liner put to good use in a greenhouse, yet that is what Bill has full of Perlite and avocado seeds that he is sprouting for root stock. Perlite is the perfect medium for sprouting the seed for transplanting, since you can shake it off the delicate roots without harming them. The sprouts are then transplanted to one-gallon containers. After a year, they are about 18 inches tall. You would keep the tree in a container for another two years, repotting as needed. It will bear fruit after the third year.

We were reminded not to try to bring any seeds or fresh leaves from Mexico when we come across the border, since a weevil that lives in some of the seeds can destroy a healthy tree. It is also a violation of the law.

Alpha Martinez-Suarez discussed the many benefits of using avocado as a facial mask, as well as some of the health benefits of the leaves in natural remedies.

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Avocado Facial Masks

Cucumber Avocado Facial Cooling Mask

½ cup chopped cucumbers
½ cup chopped avocados
1 egg white
2 teaspoons powdered milk

Combine all ingredients in a blender and process until a smooth paste-like consistency. Apply the mask immediately to your face and neck. Allow to remain on for 30 minutes or until it dries. To remove, wash your face with warm water followed by cool water. Air dry or pat with a clean towel. This mask will remove dead skin and unclog your pores.

Banana and Avocado Facial Mask

½ small ripe banana
½ small ripe avocado
1–2 tablespoons plain yogurt
2 drops vitamin E oil

Mash together the banana and avocado to form a thick paste. You can use a mini-processor. Add the yogurt and vitamin E oil. Massage onto clean and slightly damp face and neck. Leave on face 10–25 minutes. Wash off with warm water, and pat dry. Moisturize if needed.

Moisturizing Avocado Facial Mask

1 avocado
1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
1 egg white, lightly beaten
3 teaspoons olive oil

Peel and mash avocado, and add the remaining ingredients. Apply to face and neck. Wash off with warm water after 20 minutes. This provides great moisture for the skin.

Avocado and Oatmeal Facial

½ cup non-instant oatmeal
1 cup mashed avocado
1–2 tablespoons honey

Mix all ingredients together, and apply to face and neck. Leave on for 15–30 minutes. Wash off with warm water.

Monster Mash

½ cup avocado mashed into a paste
1 tablespoon sea salt or kosher salt
A generous squeeze of honey
Juice of 1 fresh lemon (you will need enough to thin out the avocado mash into the consistency of a thick sour cream so that it will spread nicely onto the skin)

Mix all together, and apply to the face and neck. Leave on 10–15 minutes. Rinse off with warm water.

(continued from page 3) Bill is currently out of avocado trees to sell, since this is the beginning of the season for grafting new, young trees. Grafting the young trees is delicate, exacting labor, so Bill can only graft so many trees in a day. He hopes to catch up, so keep checking back with him. The recording on his phone will tell you when they are available. I know we all want one, but supplies are limited. Until then we will have to mail order the dried leaves and satisfy ourselves with the avocados we can purchase locally.

If you ask Bill how he came to have his talent, he will tell you he is a “modest man that God gifted with a talent” and he never planned to do what he is doing. All I can say is, “Keep it up Bill. You are doing something right.”

Bill Schneider
Devine Avocados
(830) 663-2492



Carol Hamling used fresh avocado leaves, chicken, and dried chiles to prepare a *mixiote de pollo* for everyone to sample:

Mixiote de Pollo

6 ancho chiles	8 guajillo chiles	4 pasilla chiles	
2 teaspoons coarse salt, plus more for soaking chiles			
1/8 teaspoon dried marjoram	1/8 teaspoon cumin seeds		1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1 dried bay leaf	1/8 teaspoon dried thyme		8 whole cloves
4 cloves garlic	2 teaspoon coarse salt		1 tablespoon white vinegar
3 chicken drumsticks	3 chicken thighs	3 fresh avocado leaves	1 fresh tortillas, for serving

1. Toast chiles in a dry, hot skillet over medium-high heat until pliable, about 3–5 minutes; turn often to prevent burning. Remove seeds and veins from chiles and discard. Soak each type of chile separately in hot, salted water to cover for about 20 minutes. Drain and reserve liquid.
2. Grind marjoram, cumin seeds, oregano, bay leaf, thyme, and cloves in a spice grinder.
3. In batches, combine drained chiles, ground herbs, garlic, salt, vinegar, and 1/2 cup soaking liquid in blender. Transfer to a large bowl. Add chicken, and marinate for at least 1 hour, preferably overnight.
4. Cut three 16-by-16-inch parchment-paper squares. Place a drumstick, thigh, and an avocado leaf in the center of each square. Bring the four corners together, and tie with string. Place in a steamer, and steam over simmering water for 1 hour.
5. To serve, remove string, and open parchment paper, folding under slightly. Serve with fresh, warm tortillas.

The origins of *mixiote* date back to pre-Columbian Mexico when small packages of chile-seasoned meat were wrapped in a transparent skin from maguey leaf (from the agave family). When steamed, the leaf wrapper infused the meat with a distinctive herbal flavor. However, since each maguey leaf takes eleven years to grow, the trees have become endangered. Josefina Howard of Rosa Mexicano (www.rosamexicano.info restaurant in New York City, renowned for her classic presentation of regional Mexican cuisine, substitutes parchment paper with outstanding results.

Her recipe for *mixiote de pollo* uses chicken thighs and drumsticks marinated using three varieties of dried chiles. She roasts the chiles in a dry skillet, seeds and deveins them, and then soaks them in hot water. She also tucks a fresh Mexican avocado leaf into each parchment package for added flavor.

She steams the savory packages over simmering water for about an hour. If you don't have a proper steamer, improvise as Josefina often does. Put a colander, lined with a kitchen towel, in a large pot filled halfway with simmering water. To create a steam-proof seal, arrange two kitchen towels around the perimeter of the pot, and set the lid firmly in place.

Serve each package on a plate with fresh, warm tortillas. Cut the string from each package, and soak up the chile sauce with a tortilla. This recipe can easily double to serve six.

Born in Cuba and raised in Spain, Josefina lived in Mexico for 28 years, where she developed her passion for the country's rich and varied cuisines. Since opening Rosa restaurant in New York City, renowned for her classic presentation of regional Mexican cuisine, substitutes parchment paper with outstanding results.

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Precaution: If you are pregnant or nursing, do not follow any treatment without medical supervision.

Acne, skin inflammation: Make an avocado paste, apply over affected area, and leave for 15 minutes. It calms and soothes.

Bronchitis, diabetes: Drink the infusion of 3 avocado leaves added to a liter of water.

Hair loss: Grind a ripe avocado and add an egg. Apply over recently washed hair and leave for an hour. Then rinse with warm water.

Caries, inflamed gums: Crush avocado leaves and use to massage gums.

Cuts and scrapes, infections: Wrap the avocado pulp with sterile gauze and apply over affected area.

Diarrhea: Grind the avocado seed, burn it a little, and take 1 teaspoon of cooked plantain in water.

Digestive, laxative: Eat the pulp regularly.

Headache: Heat the avocado leaves and apply immediately on forehead.

Hemorrhoids: Smear avocado pulp mixed with egg yoke and chicken fat on the affected area.

Sunstroke: Cut an avocado in two, take out seed, and rub interior part over burned skin.

Eyesight problems: Prepare a little of avocado juice and apply 3 drops in each eye.

Menstrual problems: To accelerate the flow, include in diet.

Alpha's Avocado Leaf Teas

For cough:

1 small head of garlic

½ of a small onion(optional)

3 cinnamon sticks

5–8 avocado leaves

Bring water to boil, add the ingredients, boil 2–5 minutes, turn the stove off, let it rest until warm, and sweeten with honey. Drink it warm—not hot or cold, which is harsh to the throat and bronchitis when sick.

For upset stomach: 5–7 avocado leaves 5 star anise

Bring to a boil, and boil 5 minutes. Let it rest. Drink hot without sweetener.

Avocado Tea

5 dried avocado leaves

Water to boil

Clover honey

Bring the water to a boil, pour the water over the leaves, wait 5–10 minutes, and strain into cups.

Sweeten with honey, add 2–3 drops of lime for additional vitamin C (aids in respiratory illnesses).



TUSSIE MUSSIES....

...to Carol Hamling, who worked so hard to bring about our January meeting. She visited Bill's farm, coordinated with him, prepared handouts, and cooked & prepared enough of the **Mixiote de Pollo** so we could all have a generous taste (plus, who knows what else she did to make it happen!). And while we're at it, we're going to thank her for being such an organized and efficient Membership Chairman. It's people like Carol who make our SAHS work. Thanks, Carol, for all your hard work!

The fragrant leaves can be used in medicinal teas and for cooking. Alpha demonstrated an herbal tea made with the dried avocado leaves and star anise. In Mexico, this tea is used for an upset stomach. Alpha demonstrated for us a second tea prepared with the dried leaf and honey as a sweetener.

California Avocado Moisture

The inside of the avocado peel is actually valuable. The oil contains a humectant, a substance that promotes the retention of moisture. Using gentle upward strokes, lightly massage your face with the inside of the peel. Let the oil residue remain on your skin for about 15 minutes. At that time you may either leave the oil on your skin and go to sleep or, if you intend to put on makeup, wash your face with three or four rinses of tepid water and pat dry. The oil will be invisible, but it is there ready to hold your foundation in place for hours.

My Green Valentine?

Lyn Belisle, Green List Coordinator

Who says that Valentine's Day has to include fattening chocolates or short-lived cut flowers? Why not give a growing Green Valentine to your special someone?

Fill a heart-shaped basket with five small herb plants that can be planted later in the spring. This "Valentine" will last longer and be much more useful. And make the gift extra-special by tying a heart-shaped label to each plant that explains its meaning in The Language of Herbs. Some suggestions:

- *Bay: Unchanging affection and faithfulness*
- *Basil: Warm friendship*
- *Geranium: Comfort*
- *Sage: Esteem and friendship*
- *Lavender: The acceptance and recognition of love*
- *Coriander: Secret feelings*
- *Marjoram: Happiness and joy*



Think "Green" this Valentine's Day and give a meaningful herbal gift that keeps on giving – sustainably!

Heart-shaped baskets can be found in almost any craft store, or may be ordered on line from the Oriental Trading Company: <http://www.orientaltrading.com>

Thanks to the Fredricksburg Herb Farm for the Language of Herbs information.

BRIAN'S FEBRUARY TO-DO LIST

Please note, most of the information shared here was obtained from Research-based sources (see contributors acknowledgments below), and from individuals who are considered very knowledgeable on a particular subject. While some little tidbits here may be of interest, they should be taken "with-a-grain-of-salt".

1st WEEK:

If you didn't do it in Jan., **check pH** and add sulfur or other acidifying supplement.

Till composted organic matter and shredded cereal (Elbon) rye into veg. garden soil.

Control chickweed now before it deposits more seed.

If your oaks require pruning, do it now to minimize the threat of oak wilt (be sure to paint cuts and wounds).

Use Gerbera daisies like winter geraniums. They are decorative on the patio and can tolerate cool weather. Cover them for below-freezing spells.

Plant your spring crop of broccoli, cabbage cauliflower, carrots and asparagus over the next

month, the earlier the better. For the highest quality broccoli, harvest before the heads begin to bloom. Secondary heads will allow a second harvest several weeks after the large head is cut.

Potatoes, English peas, onions, radishes, sweet peas and pansies can be planted now.

If you find it difficult to handle small seeds for such things as carrots and lettuce, try using seed tapes.

This is an excellent time to transplant established trees or shrubs because they are dormant.

Vegetables such as tomatoes and peppers and flowers such as begonias and petunias can be started now from seed. The seedlings will be ready for transplanting in the garden in 6 to 8 weeks. - EO

Prune shade trees to restore good shape and remove damaged branches. Do not "top" shade trees.

"Scalp" lawn to remove winter-browned stubble. Drop mower one or two settings. Wear quality respirator, goggles.

Use a water-soluble complete-and-balanced analysis fertilizer to new flower, vegetable transplants, for quickest start.

Use a high-nitrogen fertilizer to feed asparagus beds for vigorous spear development.

Prune fruit trees.

In Our Herb Garden: Prepare soil for planting so that it is friable and workable. Till or fork well, adding compost and/or coarse sand for drainage. Gardenville & Fertile Gardens

are good sources for compost, soils, and sand. * Plant seeds of cool season annuals when soil temp. reaches 45 F. These include cilantro, dill, nasturtium, parsley, chervil and onions from transplants. To have a continuing crop of popular dill and cilantro, many S.A. gardeners plant them every several weeks throughout the spring months as hot summer weather causes early maturation. * Prune and clear debris from mature perennials (examples are Mexican mint marigold, sorrel, chives, or lemon verbena). Frost victims (or sections thereof) should be

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

removed when it is warm enough to recognize evident losses. Beware of removing discouraging looking plants that are simply still dormant. Frostbitten tops can offer some protection; don't prune too soon! Watch for new growth before cutting back dead wood. * Late in the month divide roots of invasive or overgrown herbs (examples are chives, mints, oregano and yarrow). * Prune shrub roses after Feb. 14th. Shape overgrown rosemary and sage. - *HERBS: A Resource Guide for San Antonio*

2nd WEEK:

Red-winged Black birds are visiting the feeders; they will get into just about everything! - *me*

Apply dormant oil to pecan and fruit tree trunks, also hollies, euonymus and other shrubs to control scale, phylloxera and other pests and larvae. Remember to re-apply dormant oil on the roses before buds open.

Perennials planted now will bloom in spring.

Water and fertilized winter annual bedding plants.

Plant nasturtium, cosmos, sweet pea, coreopsis and Mexican poppy seeds.

Plant fruit trees now. They live longer if planted in an 8 x 8 foot raised bed. - *CF*

Plant carrots and asparagus for spring crops.

Look for goldfinches starting to get color. - *EO*

Prepare beds and gardens for spring planting.

3rd WEEK:

Stubborn weeds? Try *vinegar*! For my safe, natural "Wild Weed Wipeout Tonic", mix 1tbsp. of vinegar (use 9% or higher for around here); 1tbsp. baby shampoo; 1 tbsp. of gin; 1 qt. of warm water. Combine all of these ingredients in a bucket, then pour into a hand held sprayer. Drench the weeds to the point of run-off.

4th WEEK:

Control sophora caterpillars on Texas mountain laurel with Bt (brand names include Thurcide, Dipel, BioWorm Killer).

Feed shade and fruit trees with one cup of slow-release lawn fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter. Spread fertilizer at the drip line, the ring directly beneath the tree's outermost branches. - *CF*

Late February into early March is a good time to plant tomatoes in containers. Suggested varieties include Merced, Bingo and Celebrity.

Mulching tomatoes and peppers will conserve water and help the plants set blooms.

Fertilize cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli.

Use a high-nitrogen fertilizer to pecans in South Texas late in month. - *NS*

This is a very abbreviated version of Brian's To-Do List. Read Brian's **complete, unedited** list on the SAHS website at www.sanantonioherbs.org/todo.htm

UP & COMING: 8th Annual Encino Park Home & Garden Show

Saturday, March 29th 9am-5pm. Speakers, Vendors, Entertainment & Food. Encino Park Community Center; 1923 Encino Rio, Just 2 miles north of Loop 1604 on Hwy 281 N. Admission is FREE. Call Ann Morrisey @ 210.497.3553 for more information.

DISCLAIMER

Information presented in this newsletter and at the SAHS meetings is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, or replace the advice of a health professional. Herbal formulas are given for reference purposes only and a person may have a reaction to any herbal product even though it is not a toxic substance.

'07-'08 SAHS Board Officers

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Carol Hamling - Vice President Membership

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Jennifer Hubbard - Treasurer

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Robin Maymar - Flyer Coordinator

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Business Members

We thank our business members for their support. When you patronize their businesses, be sure to mention your SAHS membership.

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