



NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN ANTONIO HERB SOCIETY January 2020

## **San Antonio Herb Society – Herb of The Year**

Herbalist and lecturer Leslie Bingham will introduce our Herb of the Year, Blackberry!

This wonderful herb grows readily in South Texas, and the fruit can be used many ways. So, our hospitality challenge is to present as many ways as we can to cook with blackberry. So, enjoy the chilly weather while it lasts, come sample blackberry dishes and join us to think about picking blackberries in the summer heat.

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**San Antonio Herb Society meets on January 9, 2020 at The Garden Center at 3310 N. New Braunfels from 6:30 to 8:30 PM.**

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**Every meeting is a potluck, so bring whatever you would like to share, and bring the recipe, too!**

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From the Prez

## BLACKBERRIES

I grew up in urban Washington, D.C., but there were lots of undeveloped green spaces nearby. My sister and I picked blackberries every summer and were rewarded with pies and wonderful blackberry jam all winter long.

My fondest memory was the day our little black dog went berrying with us just down the block. An empty lot had lots of low bushes we had never noticed before, so all the kids gathered with pails to take in the harvest. At some point, the dog left. He arrived on our front porch and wanted to be let in. My mom wondered why he had not stayed with us, let him in and went back to sewing by hand in her favorite chair. The dog came into the living room and sat in front of her, looking at her. Then he put his face on her lap. She looked up and asked, "What is it you want?" He put his paw in her lap. She looked up again; he turned the paw over so she could see the thorn in the pad of his paw.

She carefully removed it. He immediately jumped up, when to the door. She opened it, and he headed back to join us.

We had to tell the new kids that the red blackberries were not raspberries, but unripened blackberries, too sour to eat. The berries come in a variety of sizes, from very tiny spherical fruit, to elongated plump berries the size of your thumb. The usually black **fruit** is not a berry in the botanical sense of the word. Botanically it is termed an aggregate **fruit**, composed of small **drupelets**. Isn't that a great word? I think of eating a blackberry and squashing each drupe between my teeth. The individual drupe contains just one seed, but on these berries they all grow together. Plums, cherries, apricots or peaches are considered drupes because they consist of the fruit around one seed.



When you pick a blackberry the white cone that the drupes attach to comes with it. In a raspberry, the fruit pulls away and you have a hollow fruit.



From my experience, they must be hybridizing themselves as they grow. Each individual bush has unique berries. In a patch you often find many different types of berries. The canes seem to 'walk', because each year you find the bushes moved over a little bit. This is because they have a life cycle of three years. Year one, is the **primo-cane**. It comes up and grows vigorously through the summer with no flowers or fruit. At the fall it dies back, then the next year, it blooms and fruit forms from the flowers.

From the Prez (cont)

This branch may touch the ground and form roots, to propagate a primocane the next year.

The whole plant may die back, send runners under the ground in all directions and arise the next year feet away from where the original plant grew.

The blackberry has **prickles**, I am informed. A **thorn** is a sharp-pointed leafless branch, where a prickle is a sharp, pointed process or emergence arising from the subepidermal tissue. This explains why thorns, as in lime trees, firmly attached to the branches, can give a ferocious scratch; where a blackberry prickle breaks off in you skin, or paw as the case may be. I am all for those prickles, because as the bushes grow it provides shelter and haven for many birds and small animals. You can buy thornless blackberries, but in the hybridization you lose a lot of the flavor as well.

Leslie Bingham will be our speaker on January 9. So join us at the Garden Center to hear much much more about the marvelous blackberry: cultivation in Texas, medicinal uses, lore and cooking. Our pot luck centers on blackberry, but feel free to bring any dish that suits you fancy at 6:30. Meeting at 7. Robin Maymar



“Why is blackberry considered an herb?” Herbs are defined as “any plant with leaves, seeds, or flowers used for flavoring, food, medicine, or perfume” In botany it is “any seed-bearing plant which does not have a woody stem and dies down to the ground after flowering.” In general use, herbs are plants with savory or aromatic properties that are used for flavoring and garnishing food, medicinal purposes, or for fragrances; excluding vegetables and other plants consumed for macronutrients. Culinary use typically distin-

guishes herbs from spices.

Blackberry fruit, leaves, and stems have been used to dye fabrics and hair. Native Americans have even been known to use the stems to make rope. The shrubs have also been used for barriers around buildings, crops and livestock. The wild plants have sharp, thick thorns, which offered some protection against enemies and large animals. Blackberries contain numerous large seeds that are not always preferred by consumers. The seeds contain oil rich in omega-3 (alpha-linolenic acid) and omega-6 (linoleic acid) fats as well as protein, dietary fiber, carotenoids, ellagitannins, and ellagic acid.

However, the plants are also considered a weed, sending down roots from branches that touch the ground, and sending up suckers from the roots.

Robin Maymar



Robin informed everyone that the January meeting would be focused on Blackberries, which is the Herb of the Year 2020. Leslie Bingham will be there to introduce the Herb of the Year. Robin encouraged everyone to bring as many dishes with blackberries as you could.

The dinner ended at approximately 8:30. Debarah invited everyone to take their centerpieces either intact or if they preferred they could disassemble and each take part of the centerpiece

Our next meeting will be on January 9, 2020. Our topic is Blackberries, Herb of the Year. Join us at 6:30 for delicious food and blackberry creations, meeting at 7.

Submitted by Debarah Wilson



This year for our Herb of the Year talk, I will be bending the rules a little. Yes, I will be talking about the official Herb of the Year for 2020 which is the genus *Rubus* (family *rosaceae*) – from which our standard cane fruits arise, such as raspberry, blackberry and dewberry. But being a natural rebel, I will also be steering a little into the *Ribes* family in order to give ourselves a little more room for growing from both species, here in south central Texas with our variable hot summer (and sometimes) freezing winter temperatures. *Ribes* being fruits also caned, from which we derive many pleasurable jams, jellies and wellness products. These are the now elusive and difficult to find - red, white and black currants as well as that very old fashioned grandmother’s garden fruit, gooseberries. Should be fun so please join us to celebrate the onset of the New Year and hopefully a spring, just lurking around the corner.” Leslie Bingham

Jane McDaniel suggests using gallon size plastic jugs to cover individual plants when weather threatens a freeze. Cut the bottom off, place over plant with the top on to protect at night. In the case of a warm sunny day following you can remove the lid or move the whole jug to a convenient place. Keep a set next to each raised bed. Small plastic or glass jars can be used for smaller plants.

A big THANK YOU to Laura Jarvis at Rainbow Gardens on Bandera. Some people just make our lives go so much more smoothly and she is one of them. She has provided our Society with a large box of garden seeds and some herbs. Rainbow Gardens is located at 8516 Bandera Highway, 78250. This may be out of the way for you, but it is definitely worth the trip. You will find a very large garden shop, with paths and places to sit and enjoy the garden. Plants, highly organized, with very large signs, detailing all the information you need to know to grow this plant. Take out your phone and take pictures.

It also has lots and lots of pots. Lots of ideas, very pleasant staff who are interested in your project and how to accomplish it. They often have theme weekends, we always end up at the one just before Mother’s Day. But any day at this garden will be an enormous satisfaction.

Laura has provided us this lots of seeds for your vegetable gardens and a few herbs. We thank her profusely for her generosity. When you visit, Look for Laura and thank her.



## Culinary SIG

### CULINARY SIG HAS COOKIE EXCHANGE

By Grace Emery

Culinary Special Interest group got together at the home of Grace Emery to enjoy a special lunch of vegetarian enchiladas, homemade black refried beans topped with crème fresh and cheese and a Tex Mex green salad with Cilantro dressing. Home-made queso and salsa were the appetizers. Very lovely meal and wonderful company.

But the day was about cookies! Tera made seven-layer Magic Cookie bars, very delicious, personal favorite for our family. Mike and Robin made sugar cookies but very different as you can see from the picture, both brought a smile to all the faces. Gloria made her famous gingerbread men and they were soft and chewy. Sandra had the group smiling with the pecan balls that were very incredible. Italian Christmas Cookies were a hit with a sweet ricotta cheese mixture that make them forever soft and very festive with the white icing and red sprinkles.

If you are interested in joining our Culinary SIG email Robin Maymar at [robinmaymar@gmail.com](mailto:robinmaymar@gmail.com), We meet the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month.



# WEED AND GLOAT SIG

Dec 30 2019 Weed and Gloat, San Antonio Botanical Garden (SABOT)

Did you know that sunshine has curative powers? It seems we have moved toward fear of sunshine because of skin cancer dangers. But a little of curative sunshine stimulates our bodies to make their own vitamin D, something necessary for growth and repair of cells.

Our Weed and Gloat group is outside in sun or mist for about an hour. Due to the earliness of the day, not a bad time for sun exposure. We meet, generally, on the last Monday of the month. During these relatively cold months, we meet at 10 a.m. The Botanical Gardens have built a beautiful building on the back side of their grounds, providing ample parking for weeders and those headed to the green houses.

At our general meeting we always have the paperwork for those interested in volunteering at the Botanical Gardens. Look for our volunteer, who has a map to the parking and a list of what tools to bring. This is a separate entity from us, but by having a volunteer badge, you can volunteer to do many things at the Botanical Gardens, if you wish. Sometimes, when we finish, after we put our tools away, we walk around to see what is new in the garden in general. Then head for coffee and lots of talk.

Come to join us in the sunshine. Weed and Gloat is on Monday January 27, 2020.

## Herb Society Board

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Robin Maymar [robinmaymar@gmail.com](mailto:robinmaymar@gmail.com)

### 1st Vice-President (Programs)

Position vacant

### Membership

Position vacant

### Secretary

Position vacant

### Treasurer

Debarah Wilson [debarah\\_wilson@bellsouth.net](mailto:debarah_wilson@bellsouth.net)

### Member at Large

Jane McDaniel [janesirish@att.net](mailto:janesirish@att.net)



## IN THE HERB GARDEN JANUARY 2020

v Notes from Brian Townsend, edited by Robin Maymar

**WEATHER:** This is the beginning of the coldest part of winter (Jan 15 to Feb 15) Protect tender plants with covers or mulch when freezes are forecast. Remember that plastic and or cloth over a plant or green house will heat up if the sun appears. Be prepared to open it up for ventilation. (\*Plastic directly against leaves in a freeze can actually conduct heat away and freeze-burn the leaves.) *Thinsulate* makes a good cover for a bed. If the weather warms, remove. Remember to mark a corner with the dimensions, making it easy to find the cover for a specific place. Black permanent marker for white; for dark green, use a white paint pen.

Be sure outdoor plants are well watered. Cold weather can damage plants that are too dry. Get cold frames ready for vegetable seedlings and flowering transplants.

Do not be too quick to toss plants that appear too be frost-damaged. If the cold was not severe, the stems might not be damaged. Wait until the ground warms to remove frost victims.

**HERB GARDEN** Plan spring herb garden, consider location, space, size, shape, sun and plant groupings. Plan companion plantings. Review seed catalogs and visit with herb growers as to new varieties and then order seeds. Keep in mind as you read and plant that many herb books and even seed packets are written for growing conditions other than ours. We are Zone 8b, but even we have our own microclimates. Also, with global warming, our hotter summers make some things more likely to grow, others less.

**ROSES:** If El Nino raises its ugly self in our area, there can be periods of wet and mild weather which can bring about perfect conditions for **DOWNEY MILDEW**, something that we don't want in our gardens. Here's what to look for 1. Ideal temperatures- spores will germinate and become active with temps between 50 and 75 degrees and relative humidity above 85%, especially during periods of wet and rainy weather 2. Visual description: at first, purple splotches will appear on the foliage and canes, then will turn a camouflage pattern of brown, yellow and green. Then the foliage will fall off (this dropped foliage should be cleaned up by putting in the trash can because the spores can be reactivated if the right conditions occur. 3. Take preventive measures: Howard Garrett recommends: "Controlling Diseases For black spot, brown patch, powdery mildew, and other fungal problems, the best control is prevention through soil improvement, avoidance of high-nitrogen fertilizers, and proper watering. Spray Garrett Juice plus garlic. Add potassium bicarbonate for tough problems. Baking soda will work if you can't find potassium bicarbonate. Treat the soil with horticultural cornmeal- it's the best natural disease fighter of all. Alfalfa meal and mixes containing alfalfa are also good disease fighters."

**BIRDS:** Suet is a high-energy food for insect-eating birds and is beneficial during the winter months when other food sources are low. Put it in wire cages made for the purpose (allow some time for the birds to find it as the suet is not a naturally recognizable food source)

- It is time to think about bird houses for your yard. Some birds begin breeding in February.
- Gather wood chips and wood mulch to put in woodpecker houses. This lets them think they're cleaning/preparing their own 'house' nest.

INDOOR GARDEN CHORES: Take advantage of bad weather (or holiday, any reason will do!) to study Texas A & M's Plant Answers Web site at <https://www.plantanswers.com/>

- Have your soil tested for pH. Add acidifying iron supplements to acid-loving plants and replenish their pine bark or pine needle mulch.
- Make sure your pruners have been cleaner, oiled and sharpened for the upcoming bush pruning in late February. Using a file or whetstone will provide you with a sharp, smooth cutting edge.
- Now would be a good time to flush out your sprayer to remove alkaline residue buildup. Use a mixture of half and half distilled vinegar and water. Run it through the sprayer. Does a great job.
- Since we all handle mixtures, compost, manures, etc. it would be a good time to check with your doctor to see when you had your last tetanus booster shot. It is recommended at least every ten years, but some rose people feel a shorter shot cycle of five years is safer. Get your doctor's opinion, and get it updated if it is needed.
- Make notes and plans now on your calendar and in your garden journal.
- Use a water-soluble, complete balanced analysis fertilizer such as 20-20-20 to new annual flower transplants for quickest start. Use the same source, diluted by half for houseplants during the dark days of mid-winter. Watch houseplants for mealy bugs, spider mites, scale and other pests.

OUTDOOR GARDEN CHORES Check winter dressing of compost or manure and keep at least 2" depth on the beds into February. Also, you might consider kelp, fishmeal, blood meal, alfalfa or other organics that take time for the microbes to make their goodies available. Some rosarians use soil conditioners about this time of year. Temperature extremes (abnormally high day/night, then a hard freeze blowing in) during the winter months may cause new growth for perennials and resultant freezing. Mulch should help protect plants. Prepare garden beds for spring planting by working in organic matter.

- **PLANTS:** Secure the leaves of cauliflower over the head with rubber bands or clothespins for pure white heads. Onion plants are available at area nurseries. Plant them 3 inches apart and harvest every other plant for green onions. Large bulbs will be ready to harvest in May. It is time to replant sweet peas and English peas if the cold weather destroyed the seedlings
- **HARDSCAPE:** Now is a great time to build walkways and retaining walls. Consider adding drip or soaker irrigation or even burying ollas for more efficient watering..
- **WEEDS:** Keep the chickweed (and other junk) pulled out of established beds. It grows and seeds like crazy in cool weather and seeds now are multiplied to the nth power. Chickweed is edible, it is a shame it is not palatable. Dandelions can be quite bitter. However, they are quite tasty if harvested in cool weather before they flower. Use the young, tender leaves in salads. The more mature leaves can be steamed or boiled much like spinach or other green

**Get your Monthly Garden Tips from Brian Townsend on our website. Your entire "to do" list, all in one place, for each month.**

<https://sanantonioherbs.org/monthly-garden-tips/>

**2019 Year End -****Income & Expenses**

## Income

Memberships	\$ 2,592.58
Event Sales	\$ 1,759.60
Meetings Sales	\$ 523.35
Scholarship Sales	\$ 86.01
Refund from Sales Tax Overpayment	\$ 495.14
Interest on CD & Savings	\$ 6.56
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 5,463.24</b>

## Expenses

Garden Center Rent/Attendant	\$1,525.00
Public Storage	\$ 898.17
Registrations / Outside Sales Expenses	\$ 835.85
Legal & Professional - Tax Prep	\$1,316.45
Honorariums	\$ 300.00
Meetings Expenses	\$ 821.50
Sales Tax	\$ 608.60
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 6,305.57</b>

<b>NET INCOME OR (LOSS)</b>	<b>\$ (842.33)</b>
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**BALANCE SHEET**

Checking Account	\$ 9,483.70
Savings Account	\$ 1,585.33
CD	\$ 1,225.07
<b>CASH AS OF 12/31/19</b>	<b>\$ 12,294.10</b>

# *Culinary Contributions*

## **SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE FROM PAM DE ROCHE, WHO GOT IT FROM JOANNE RHODES**

Casserole ingredients:

2 cups canned or fresh sweet potatoes  
1/3 cup butter  
1/4 cup brown sugar  
1/2 tsp. salt  
2 extra large eggs  
1 tsp. vanilla  
2 tsp. flour

Topping:

1/2 cup finely-chopped pecans  
1/4 cup butter  
1/2 cup brown sugar  
1/6 cup flour

Mash potatoes and melt butter. Add to potatoes. Add sugar and salt. Beat eggs. Add flour and vanilla to eggs. Mix into potatoes. Put in greased 8x8 baking dish.

Mix topping and spread over potatoes. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes. Can be mixed in one day and baked the next.

### **THE WAY I DID IT TODAY:**

I use the Sugary Sam 40 oz. canned sweet potatoes. Drain liquid and squash the potatoes with my hands. If you need more potatoes, buy another can - come in several sizes. (Didn't think it was enough today and I had 2 sweet potatoes I'd baked this week, so I added them.) Topping: I use light brown sugar. If you grind the pecans the way I did, you'll need almost 1 cup to soak up all that butter to make it manageable.

I don't go through all those steps above. I just mix all the ingredients at one time in a bowl and then add the little bit of flour. Don't have to grease the baking dish either since it has so much butter in it. Don't have to check on it while it's cooking - 35 minutes is good.

**BUSINESS MEMBERS**

**WE THANK OUR BUSINESS MEMBERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT.**

**MENTION YOUR S.A.H.S. MEMBERSHIP WHEN YOU PATRONIZE THEM!**

 <p><b>Natures Herb Farm</b> 7193 Old Talley Road Lot #7 San Antonio, Texas 78253 Email: <a href="mailto:naturesherbfarm@att.net">naturesherbfarm@att.net</a> Website: <a href="http://naturesherbfarms.com">naturesherbfarms.com</a></p>	 <p><b>Nick and Liz Campanella</b> Garden Construction and Maintenance Check our website for services and prices Website: <a href="http://uprootedgardens.com">http://uprootedgardens.com</a> <b>210-842-5613</b></p>
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