

NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN ANTONIO HERB SOCIETY

MAY 2020

Just for the record, this Governor's office has decided to "open up Texas" even though the Corvid-19 virus is still raging in our city. I do not want to dwell on this issue, so other than to tell you that we will not be meeting again in May, we continue our mission with wonderful information to all Herb Society members.

Again, we will try to have a virtual meeting, with a presentation. In the works: How to Make the Lasagna Noodles, recipe from Sandra Woodall and demonstration from Robin Maymar and Aubrey Langford. Will again, try to notify you before hand.

Our goal is always to present something relevant to gardeners with especial emphasis on herbs. So in this issue I have called upon many of our members to contribute. There is a long article on how to prepare a Vegan Lasagna, from Aubrey. We had the room, and a wonderful recipe, so we included it in. It took some elbowing to get all the relevant parts on the pages, but we got it done.

Lisa Kelly wrote a lovely piece for Weed and Gloat.

Grace Emery continues to welcome people to our FaceBook page. Now, I want you all to consider actually becoming members of our society. sanantonioherbs.org will take you to our web page, There is a form you can fill out, and pay for on PayPal. Come join us!

San Antonio Herb Society will meet 'virtually" on May 14, 2020

NOT at The Garden Center at 3310 N. New Braunfels from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. But on line, with a virtual meeting.

We will miss having all of you for pot luck. Looking forward to the time when we can meet again for a meal.

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THINGS ARE STILL ON HOLD...HOWEVER

May should be the meeting where we introduce new Board Members! There is a distinct feeling of being lost in time. We are beginning to understand the expression 'a month of Sundays" which was reinterpreted to me as 'a month of Somedays" This makes more sense. So often I have bought something: a basket making kit, or a tea pot that I think would look cute painted and filled with real flowers, or some yarn that has a wonderful color that "some day" I will get around to knit or macramé into a wonderful object. Well, we have certainly had a month of 'Somedays'! I hope yours have been as fruitful as ours. (see Lisa Kelly's painting p 10)

At our house, the trellis has been made out of the bamboo, scavenged from the neighbor on brush pick-up day. The birdhouse has been reconstructed, repainted and placed back on its post. The garden has been planted fertilized and watered. The new bird-feeder is up. All those frozen assets have been removed from the freezer and the complicated recipes addressed, constructed, critiqued and typed into a permanent file. Cards, letters, e-mails, FaceBook friends have all been sent messages.

Then it is on to new adventures: how to order Curbside from HEB, discovering what all those little Aps on the phone do, and reading, reading, reading wonderful books. Figuring how to message someone when you only have a FaceBook address and no phone number. Catching up on the family tree with Ancestry.

WHAT'S HAPPENING ? What are our members doing?

Sandra Woodall continues her volunteer work with San Antonio Feral Cat Coalition on the Wednesday afternoon help line. This is kitten season, so they are very busy. Their goal is to trap, spay or neuter, vaccinate, then release cats. The cats are an important part of the ecosystem, but the overpopulation of kittens puts a burden on the community. The more people who help with the project, the healthier the community becomes. sanantonioferalcats.org. 24/7 Hotline210-877-9067 You can help, get involved!

The Children's Garden at the Botanical Gardens has shuttered and Sandra faithfully volunteered Tuesdays and Saturdays, With her extra time Sandra has done her own spring planting. Her agave is flowering. This is a favorite of bats, so she is watching at night to see if any bats arrive.

Her son has sent her information on Community Supported Agriculture, and she has subscribed to imperfectfoods.com. The boxes she has gotten are good selections, prompt and very fresh. She highly recommends it. Lyndon has been creating a San Antonio city scape for the SA Model Trains Club

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Due to the Corona Virus, the meeting was cancelled. There were no minutes.

Debrah Wilson has been sewing masks. Way past 100 so far. They go to hospitals in our area.

Do you have a project you finally got to? Or fruitful work that you would like to tell us about? Contact robinmaymar@gmail.com. Send a picture so we can include it.



MAY TO DO IN THE GARDEN

In The Herb Garden: Start harvesting herbs as many perennials bloom this month. *Plant summer everlastings (examples are globe amaranth, sweet Annie, cockscomb, salvias, tansy, etc.). *Plant lemon grass and **continue to plant basils**. *Weed and water as necessary. *Hot rainy spells are hard on herbs as they do not like humidity. Solutions are good drainage (raised beds are a necessity in most of our area), a good quality soil from a local source and mulch.

*Herbs should be gathered in dry weather, first thing in the morning before their essential oils evaporate in the sun. Hang bunches of herbs upside down to dry so that the oils flow into the leaves. Once dry, store them in airtight containers away from sunlight and they should last for several months. (see photo p. 7)

BIRDS: Yearling purple Martins could still be coming in looking for new nesting sites to colonize. No matter where you live, keep your housing open through June. Martins may arrive and begin nesting as late as the end of June, anywhere in North America! - visit their website @ http://www.purplemartin.org **G**oldfinches have migrated back up north! Watch feeder (especially if it is the "upside down" type) and take it down <u>if not in use</u>.

Even when the American goldfinches leave, you can attract lesser goldfinches, house finches and an occasional painted or indigo bunting to the thistle (niger) feeder.

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GARDEN:

When asked what he would do if he knew the world would end tomorrow, it is reported that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said "I would plant a tree."

CONNECTIONS

GARDEN CENTER

Rhonda Banuelos, the Garden Center manager tell me that the Center will not be open in May. She is in touch with the Mayor's office and the city and, with all of us, is waiting to hear when we can open again.

When the Center opens, she has a crew that will thoroughly sanitize all of the interior, walls, floors, tables and chairs. The health and safety of all members is her priority.



She tells me she misses us all. We are all proceeding with caution for the future, but we know that our place at the Garden Center is assured for the next year.

Nature's Herb Farm

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

7913 Old Talley Rd #t 78253 is open every day except Sunday.

After Marsha Wilson wrote the lovely article included in this issue, Mary wrote me back to say that she has never had success with Sweet Annie, our herb of the month! Tinky was successful. So we are challenged: either order some and see what you can do, or try artemisia, which is available and grows well here.





FIREFLIES lighting up the night! Fireflies in San Antonio are not something that's real common anymore, mainly because of "urban sprawl", insecticides and fire ants. Good weather, keeping the use of pesticides down and fire ants having a bad year, are perfect conditions for fireflies. Fireflies can be seen arising in the evening out of meadow grasses or knee-high stemmy woodland ground covers. Planting a patch of bunch grasses would provide a place for fireflies to hide during the day. Lightning Bugs show up in South Texas in May and June, primarily in open areas adjacent to woods.

WEED AND GLOAT SIG

April 27, 2020 Weed and Gloat, San Antonio Botanical Garden (SABOT) by Lisa Kelly

One of the things I miss while being stuck home is our Weed n Gloat SIG. I enjoy going to the beautiful Botanical Gardens. As a volunteer, I just stroll right in wearing my volunteer T shirt and toting a bag full of gardener's tools. The Rose garden and Crepe Myrtles greet me first and I take note of what is blooming and healthy. Close by are our herb beds, ready to be tended to.

My fellow Herb Society members are always cheerful and ready to work. We talk about our own gardens, or travels, or some helpful tip while working. There is weeding to be done, mainly the Oxalis, which is very happy in our garden. Mint always needs to be cut back and smells so good when you do. My husband, Michael, is a champ at cutting back the Lemongrass and I learned to always wear gloves when working with it. Ouch! I am always interested in what is new to plant, and have learned a lot about herbs from this garden and my fellow Herbies.

After we finish our tasks, we can stroll about the Gardens and take it all in. We are surrounded by the most beautiful plants with birds singing and the occasional bee or butterfly passing by looking for nectar. Or, we meet at a nearby coffee shop to continue conversations and enjoy the friendships we have made.

All in all, that is a lot to miss and I hope we will all be back soon.

New instructions to Weed and Gloat Team

May: go outside early to weed for an hour. Then come inside, fix a cup of coffee or tea & a snack, then call one another and catch up on things.

We miss you all, and can hardly wait until we meet again in the garden.



Painting by Lisa Kelly

Feel welcome to come to join us next month in the sunshine.

Next Weed and Gloat is on Memorial Day Monday May 25, 2020. Keep your fingers crossed that we will actually be able to meet. To be included on our notification list, contact robinmaymar@gmail.com

Kerb of the Month: Sweet Annie/ Sweet Wormwood

My first encounter with May's Herb of the Month was about two years ago at the Botanical Garden during a monthly gathering of the Weed 'n Gloat SIG. While weeding in the herb bed, I mistook this gangly tomboy of the Artemisia family as an invasive shrubby weed and was about to consign it to the compost heap. Fortunately, I decided to first consult with our more knowledgeable group leader and fellow society member Tinky (aka Lenore Miranda). In her very pronounced New York City Brooklyn accent, Tinky informed me that the herb I had mistaken for a "weed" was none other than "Sweet Annie." She said it with such an affectionate tone that one would have thought she was referring to a favorite Raggedy Ann doll from her childhood.

Our new addition in the herb garden bed, Sweet Annie (Artemisia annua or annual wormwood) is one of nearly 200 species of Artemisia that includes the Common Wormwood (Artemisia absinthium), used as an insecticide as well as a notorious flavoring for absinthe, and the popular French Tarragon (Artemisia dracunculus), one of the most useful of culinary herbs. It turns out that this gangly member of the Artemisia family is popular with holiday wreath crafters, florists, aroma therapy gardeners, and has been used for centuries in traditional Chinese medicine.



<u>General Description</u>: An aromatic annual that is not only drought tolerant but deer resistant, makes Sweet Annie a perfect addition to many gardens in the San Antonio suburbs. It is described as being a tall, blue-green colored upright growing herbaceous plant that blooms with aromatic golden or chartreuse flower clusters at the end of its branches. Because it retains its sweet fragrance for a very long time, it is highly prized for constructing dried wreaths. In earlier times, sweetly fragrant Sweet Annie was hung in closets to scent linens and repel pests, and as a natural air freshener in homes.

<u>Growing conditions and care:</u> It tolerates most soils, and is easily grown from seeds or transplant. Germination time is usually 7-21 days, but can take up to a month before emerging. Choose a planting site that receives at least six hours of full sunlight per day. Once established, plants require little care and tend to re-seed themselves readily.

In South Texas, direct sow seeds on the bare ground in the fall, and remember that Sweet Annie does best when planted in a well drained area that receives morning sun or partial shade. While drought tolerant, it prefers our cooler spring and fall temperatures. Fertilize only once a year. Water regularly, but remember it is an Artemisia, so be careful not to overwater. Sweet Annie tends to spread easily so be sure to deadhead the blossoms. Other than root rot from overly watered soils, wormwood plants are not typically bothered by disease problems.

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Sweet Annie is best planted in straight rows, spacing 3 to 4 feet apart. Plants started from seeds can grow up to 6ft or more, however, transplanted seedlings tend to grow about 3 to 4 ft. Keep this in mind when planning your herb garden layout.

Native Habitat: While native to temperate zones of Asia and Europe, it has been naturalized across North America. Habitats include woodland borders, low-lying areas along rivers and ponds, fields, vacant lots, edges of yards, fence rows, gardens, back alleys in older cities, and areas along railroads and roadsides.

Uses:

Pollinator: It can be used as a pollinator plant, because its fragrant blooms attract bees, butterflies and/ or birds.

Crafting: Predominately an ornamental herb, its lace-like foliage dries beautifully and adds a lovely blue-green touch to dried herb bundles. Once dry, sweet Annie branches can be used to make wreath bases or fill out dried flower arrangements. Note: we hope to do a wreath workshop in November, so plant now!)

Medicinal: In Southeast Asia, the herb is used to treat jaundice, dysentery, parasites, and skin complaints. In China, it is used to stop wound bleeding and to promote new muscle growth. The Chinese army has used the herb to prevent and treat malaria. In the mid-1960s, Chinese researchers isolated its ingredient compound, Artemisinin, which is known to have anti-inflammatory, anti-viral, anti-fungus properties. As an anti-malarial compound, Artemis-

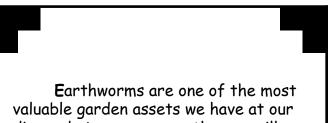


inin, has been used to treat drug-resistant strains of the disease. Artemisinin is effective against the parasites that cause malaria, causing the parasites to become inactive, but doesn't kill them. In addition, the seeds are used to treat eye disease.

Seed/Plant Sources:

Sweet Annie seeds are available online from Johnny's Seeds, Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, and





valuable garden assets we have at our disposal. An average earthworm will produce its weight in castings (poop) every 24 hours. A healthy population of earthworms can deposit up to 50 tons per acre of valuable organic matter each year. They will burrow as deep as 6 feet into the soil, breaking up heavy clay soils and enriching sandy soils. As outside temperatures increase, it is important to rinse and refill hummingbird feeders

twice a week or more. Pour the old sugar water on a rock or in a bowl with a sponge for the butterflies *There is still time to plant tomatoes. Use the largest plants available.

Onions are ready to be harvested when the tops fall over. Place the bulbs on the ground for a day or two to harden off. Harvest onions and allow them to air dry for a couple of days before storing. Plant okra and southern peas. * Fertilize container plants every week or two with liquid fertilizer .* Trim perennials of dead wood from last year. Prune suckers from crape myrtles.

Pests and Weeds:

Control ANTS in your compost pile by renewing the active composting process. Turn the compost, wet it (like a wrung sponge) and add a cup of fertilizer to increase the temperature of the pile.

Watch out for NUTSEDGE or nut grass, use Image or Manage.



<u>Plants selections for shady areas</u>: A) Turf-St. Augustine, Zoysia; B) Shrubs-hollies, cleyera, aucubas, fatsias and viburnums; C) Groundcovers-English and Algerian ivies (*do not use Algerian ivy in colder areas north and northwest of San Antonio*), lamium, ajuga, mondograss and dwarf mondograss, liriope and ferns. Use aspidistra as a tall herbaceous ground cover, perhaps in combination with ferns, in a really shady bed; E) Perennials- Texas Gold columbines, violets, oxalis, ajuga, liriope, summer phlox and spiderwort; F) Foliage- pony-tail, split-leaf philodendrons, tropical ferns and unusual ficuses, sansevierias, fancy-leafed begonias, cro-

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	Herb Society Board President Robin Maymar robinmaymar@gmail.com	I f your lawn or plants are turning yellow, apply a cheated iron supplement to the soil (results are slower, but longer lasting, using a "granular" form of iron), or as a foliar spray to correct iron deficiency, which causes CHLOROSIS (the yellowing).
	1st Vice-President (Programs) Position vacant Treasurer Debarah Wilson	F ertilize established potted hibiscus (every 4 to 6 weeks with a granular hibiscus food) and bougain- villea (every 2 weeks with a water soluble fertiliz- er) on your patio.
		F ertilize vegetables. Side dress tomatoes, car- rots, beans, squash, okra, peppers and other vege- tables with 1 cup of slow-release lawn fertilizer per 10 ft. of row.
	Our website: <u>https://</u> <u>sanantonioherbs.org</u>	For highest quality, harvest crookneck, zucchini and other summer squash when they are imma- ture and tender.

Culinary Contributions Westlake Vegan Lasagna

Howdy quarantiners! Robin suggested that I indulge in a longer recipe given the recess in Herb Society meetings. I accepted her challenge: this is probably the most complicated thing I cook. I'm at the point now where I make it entirely from scratch except for the lasagna noodles, but as soon as I get a pasta maker that's going to change. It's vegan, a twist on a family favorite recipe, and I'm proud to say that it's always a hit - even with the omnivores!

A Little Self-Indulgent History

This recipe has been evolving since my early childhood. Mom taught me how to shop and cook frugally, and one of my favorites was her meat, spinach and mushroom lasagna. At the time, low-fat diets were all the rage so she made her lasagna with Neufchatel cream cheese and only a little mozzarella on the top, and used the leanest meat possible. It wasn't until much later that I realized that to most people lasagna means layers upon layers of cheese with a little meat tucked in there somewhere.

In college I studied abroad in Italy and took a cooking class. When I got home I felt inspired to make the most bourgeois lasagna ever. So I started using fresh, fancier ingredients and learned to make sauce from scratch. I dubbed it "Westlake Lasagna" after the wealthiest suburb of Austin.

There were trials and errors. The first time I decided to make the sauce into a vodka sauce, I used at least half a liter of Tito's. It tasted great and I stopped after eating one large slice. My friend Chris, however, ate half the pan. While his enthusiasm was flattering, I was irritated to be deprived of my cherished leftovers. But it didn't take him long to realize that the vodka had not cooked out properly; dinner turned into a dinner party.

These days I've modified it to suit my plant-based diet and utilize a plethora of fresh herbs year-round from my garden. They make a world of difference in flavor. I also suggest letting the finished lasagna sit in the fridge for a day or two before eating it (if you can help your-self). It's great fresh but it's so much better as a leftover.

Simmering Broth

Ingredients for the simmering broth:

• 1 quart vegetable stock (or vegetable bouillon)

- about 6 cups of water
- 2 tablespoons tamari

• A few cloves of roughly chopped garlic, they don't need to be peeled Herbs, including a few sprigs of fresh thyme

Seitan

Ingredients for the seitan:3 cups vital wheat gluten

- •¹/₂ cup nutritional yeast
- •2 cups vegetable stock
- •1 cup tamari
- •2 tablespoons of ketchup4 cloves of garlic, minced
- •2 teaspoons grated lemon zest
- •1 tablespoon vegan Worcestershire sauce
- •2 teaspoons liquid smoke
- •1 tablespoon old fashioned mustard (the kind with seeds)

A handful of fresh herbs, chopped

Instructions:

1. In a large pot, start the simmering broth. Add ingredients for simmering broth to pot, begin to heat it. Don't bother to separate the leaves from the stem of the thyme, just toss it in whole.

- 2. Start the seitan. Mix vital wheat gluten and nutritional yeast in large bowl.
- 3. Add all wet ingredients. Stir and then knead seitan until it has a spongy, elastic texture.
- 4. Form the seitan into a log, cut it into six pieces.

5. Once the broth is boiling, add the pieces of seitan. Partially cover the pot and let simmer for an hour, stirring and flipping the seitan occasionally so it cooks evenly.

Remove seitan from pot, let it cool until you can comfortably cut it.

Chop seitan into small chunks, try to emulate the texture of ground meat.

Tomato Sauce

Ingredients:

Instructions:

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- A handful of chopped, fresh herbs (suggested: rosemary, 2 tablespoons of olive oil •
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- Greek oregano, lemon thyme a head of garlic
- One sliced yellow onion 15 ripe medium tomatoes

- Tools:
- Stockpot •
- Immersion blender
- Extra large bowl with ice wa-• ter
- Tongs •
- Frying pan
- 1.Pull apart garlic into cloves, but don't remove the skins

2. Heat frying pan on medium heat, add garlic. Stir occasionally until it's fairly browned on all sides, about 5-10 minutes. Remove from heat and let it cool.

3. Fill your stockpot about halfway up with water and boil it.

4. Rinse tomatoes and slice a little "X" on them with a paring knife.

5. Fill the large bowl with iced water.

6.Blanche the tomatoes for 30 seconds in boiling water. I tend to do five at a time to ensure they don't overcook.

7. Remove tomatoes from stockpot with tongs and put them in the ice water bowl.

8. Repeat with remaining tomatoes, add more ice and water to bowl as needed.

9.Empty the stockpot.

10.Peel skins from tomatoes, slice them into quarters.

11. Peel skin from roasted garlic, it should be easy to remove. Slice garlic up roughly.

12. Heat stockpot, add olive oil and sliced onion. Saute for 3-5 minutes and add a pinch of salt. 13.Add tomatoes, roasted garlic, and a teaspoon of salt. Let it cook for 5-10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes are soupy.

14.Add herbs and use the immersion blender. Blend until it's the consistency of your preference. Chunky is best if you have the self-discipline, but hey, immersion blenders are fun and it's easy to overdo it.

15. You're drinking red wine from a fancy crystal glass, right? Of course you are. Splash it into the sauce for good measure and top your glass off.

16. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer for about 30 minutes and partially cover, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. Adjust simmer time as needed, the goal is to reduce the wateriness of the sauce and thicken it.

Add chopped seitan, let it simmer for a few minutes longer. Add additional seasonings to taste.

Creamy Spinach and Mushroom Cashew Cream Ingredients: Ingredients: •2 cups of raw, unsalted cashews • 2 portobello mushrooms (soaked overnight) 8 shiitake mushrooms •2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar • 5 button mushrooms •Juice of 1 large lemon 1 tablespoon olive oil 3 tablespoons nutritional yeast 2 teaspoons of pink salt 1 teaspoon of kosher salt 1 bunch of spinach, or about 4 cups Tools: chopped Frying pan with lid (or a wok) Cashew cream **Cashew Cream Instructions:** Instructions: 1. Combine all ingredients in a blender 2. Blend until smooth and the consistency is such that you could spread it rooms and salt on high heat. Sauté until on a cracker. Sample it with a cracker and adjust salt minutes. and seasonings to taste. And Finally... the Lasagna! ring occasionally. 4. Turn off heat and stir in cashew cream. Congratulations, you're almost there! Only about Adjust salt to taste. another hour and a half of this until dinner time. Don't fret, most of this time is just baking and waiting for it to cool down.

Inaredients:

1 package of oven-ready lasagna noodles (at least 9 noodles required, minimum)

- ¹/₂ cup panko bread crumbs
- ¹/₄ cup nutritional yeast
- Olive oil

1. Don your adorable apron, pour yourself a beverage, and crank the tunes.

2. Preheat oven to 375 degrees

Lightly oil the bottom of the casserole dish, then add a few spoonfuls of tomato sauce and spread it around, just enough to make a very thin layer. Try to keep the seitan out.

- 4. Lay out three lasagna noodles on the bottom of the pan.
- 5. Put approximately half of the tomato/seitan sauce on top, then cover it with three more noodles.
- 6. Add all of the spinach and mushroom mixture, top with three more noodles
- Add the rest of the tomato/seitan sauce, and top it with three more noodles
- Sprinkle panko across the top, then the nutritional yeast.
- 9. Cover the dish with foil, bake for 45 minutes

10. Do the dishes, assuming you have the energy. Better yet, sit down with your glass of wine and make someone else do the cleanup. You've earned this.

11. After 45 minutes, remove the foil from the top of the lasagna and put it back in the oven for 15 minutes longer, enough to crisp the bread crumbs and nutritional yeast.

12. Remove lasagna from oven and let it sit for about 20 minutes.

Grab a slice and enjoy!

1. Rinse mushrooms and spinach, chop them

2. Heat up your pan and add olive oil, mushthey've released their juices, approximately 5

3. Stir in spinach and reduce heat to low. Cover and let it simmer for another 5 minutes, stir-

Tools:

- Boston's debut album, playing loudly •
- Fancy wine glass
- Adorable kitty apron
- Large, deep casserole dish (9X 13") Aluminum foil

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