



NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN ANTONIO HERB SOCIETY
OCTOBER , 2020

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND: COMPOST QUEENS

The ultimate goal in gardening is good fruit, vegetables and flowers. The best way to accomplish this is starting with a strong foundation in the soil. Compost is the key to this process. Setting up a compost space seems like a big deal, an insurmountable project requiring carpentry skills to build a container, and then kitchen organization to provide the raw material. Fear not! Compost Queens have a minimalist solution that integrates quickly and easily into your life routine. Not only are you able to recycle food materials, but you end up with compost and lots and lots and lots of microbes that will bring health to your soil and production to your garden.

Interested? Meet Alma Rominger, our speaker on October 8. She has worked in regenerative agriculture for the past three years and educates about the importance of soil and compost. She will tell us about composting in general and Compost Queens specifically. Started by a mother-daughter team in 2017 in local neighbors, Compost Queens has grown to serve greater San Antonio. They have two partner farms, provide compost to neighborhood gardens and to subscribers. Our speaker will tell us about two kinds of composting you can do. One is traditional and the other bokashi. Both result in excellent compost. The best element of this compost is invisible. The microbes found in Bokashi compost supports a rich eco system beneath the soil that makes micronutrients and minerals available to your plants. You can't see this microscopic activity, but you can certainly appreciate the beautiful tomatoes on your plants.

Come learn about "Saving the Earth one bucket at a time". Meeting begins at 6:30 for visiting and a brief business meeting, Alma Rominger speaks at 7.



**San Antonio Herb Society
will meet by Zoom
October 8. 2020 6:30 pm**

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

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BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

Our program for this month: Compost Queens.

Compost is a subject near to my heart. There is a strong sense that we should be good stewards of our planet, and that includes using nutrients wisely. So, this month we want to introduce you to two people who have a 'down to earth' way to take care of kitchen vegetable waste. What goes into the compost heap? Tune in on Zoom and find out.

Be forewarned! This month ends on a solemn note: Halloween is on a Saturday night of the full moon. As a gardener, I have no premonitions as to what that means. As a former coffeehouse manager, we always knew that first of the month (a payday, which this may be), full moon and Saturday night would be high volume of customers. Add to this that the next day Daylight Savings ends. Maybe that will be good, an extra hour of sleep.

All of this is quickly followed by All Saints Day and All Souls day the next day. And The Day of the Dead is in there somewhere, too. I hope these are not days we will rue. But just in case, we have included rue herb as our herb of the month. Do not go buy any, as it has a weird characteristic: the oil it emits, which smells terrible, causes a rash reaction only when exposed to sunlight. There is probably a place where this is very useful, but not on skin, and not when you are gardening in sunshine. We suggest Cilantro. This herb does so poorly during the summer, but now would be an excellent time to put some in, if it pleases your palate. I often wonder how cilantro got into so many dishes with tomato. Mind you, they go together well, but they are completely out of season to each other. A May-December wedding if ever there was one.

Despite the holidays of doom and gloom, October, is really one of the nicest months to be in the garden. We highly recommend it. In keeping with our theme, we encourage you to join us for two, yes TWO October events: **Rainbow Gardens Bandera on the 10th** and **Herb Market at the Pearl on the 17th**. We would love to have volunteers come help us man the booth. However, if you just want to come and shop that's fine, too. Join us.



BACK TO WORK!

BOOTH AT RAINBOW BANDERA

We have been invited to do a booth at Rainbow Gardens Bandera on Saturday October 10.

Laura Jarvis tells me that they will not advertise anything, because too many people will flock to the store. Since most of it is outdoors, it is well ventilated and reasonably safe. We would have our booth from 9 to noon or 1, depending on how we feel. We need some volunteers to help us sell merchandise. We still have to have our hands clean, go through temperature check, and wear masks.

I expect that we will sell Ollas, books, cookbooks and t-shirts. Let's all see if we can gain some new members.

AND HERB MARKET IS ON!



We have been asked to have a booth at **Herb Market at the Pearl Saturday October 17 from 9 to 1**. This annual event features Mary Dunford's Nature's Herb Farm. They always bring marvelous plants. It is a great time to replenish your garden. They will have featured recipes—probably the herb of the year Blackberry. They usually design a shirt for the event.

Again, we will be selling Ollas, cookbooks, seeds, and sachets. We will also have lots of informational brochures and invitations to join Herb Society.

NEW FRIENDS AND KEEP THE OLD...

Jackie Compieri contacted us last week. She has harvested her beautiful herb garden and had seeds to share. We need some volunteers to help package these and help distribute them to members and friends. Available: cilantro, bunny ear larkspur, elephant garlic, blue bonnets-five colors, mixed in bag, and hot pink single poppies. These need to be planted now! Would you help package them this week? Do you want some to plant? Contact Robin Maymar to volunteer. We have a large table outside where we can work and keep safe distances.

A big "Thank You" to Jackie for her generosity.

MAKE



Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. Attending: 12 members and one guest. We met using the zoom platform on our computers.

We discussed the hoped-for opening of the Garden Center. Unsure whether we would open or not, there were two proposed meeting scenarios.

The first was an open-air meeting on the terrace of the Garden Center, topic to be Keeping a Garden Journal. Andrew Waring suggested Robin Maymar take picture to be presented in a PowerPoint of the various types of garden journals members had. If we met in person the rules would still apply: masks all around, no food or drink (unless person brought their own water bottle, etc.), temperature checks at the door, social distancing, hand sanitizer available.

The alternative meeting would be a zoom meeting, topic Compost.



The membership was polled to see how many would attend in person. Result was about half. As there were only twelve people attending, we could project that of the fifty or so in our group, perhaps twenty-five would attend. We project that more people would be guests as we have nine hundred Face-Book friends, and some of them would be interested in attending also.



Our program was presented by Robin Maymar, with the help of three of our business partner members. Her topic was Gardening in Small Spaces. The presentation was on PowerPoint. Laura Jarvis from Rainbow Gardens showed members how to use soak peat moss, place it in a wire rack and line with colored moss to present a ten by twenty-four garden box to hang on the wall. Then Robin showed a step-by-step flower box for hanging on a chain link fence. There are also similar boxes for two-by-four rails on decks and porches. There were photographs of various other small space gardens: window boxes, table gardens, vertical displays, wall displays and small landscaped areas.

WEED AND GLOAT AT THE BOTANICAL GARDENS

FILL IN THE GAPS

Journal: What wonderful weather for gardening: windy and a little overcast, 65 degrees..We could wear over-shirts until, digging, we warmed up and took the long sleeves off. Since last month we have had two rain showers. Enough to stimulate growth. The basil was so tall and lush that it had fallen over. We trimmed the top off and propped it up. Left the part that had gone to flower for the pollinators. Lemon grass had grown back to four feet tall, gave it a hair cut.

There were a whole lot less weeds to clean up, but the nut grass was, as usual, still there. Bea made a task of removing all, all, all of it, then digging by the lattice fence to put in our new rue. We placed it up against the fence, as we did not want garden visitors to brush up against it. Rue has oil in its leaves that can get on the skin. If exposed to sunshine, the oil causes a rash. (see article on Herb of the Month)

The mint had, as usual, grown back to fill in all the spaces we left blank last month. Our wonderful gardeners at the Botanical Gardens had supplied us with a wealth of herbs. Gloria thrashed back the mint, and we set out salad burnet. Because the mint propagates by underground roots, we had to pull plants, then dig down to remove what we could of the roots.

Marsha took the other end of the garden and filled the corner with dill. It needs lots of sunshine. We expect caterpillars to eat some, but there was plenty of plants for all. We looked at the beds, determined that the two best thyme plants were in the relative shade of the tree. So placed our new lemon thymes there also.



It is probably not Kosher to leave the plant tags with the plants, but our theory is that visitors will want to know what plants these are. Here is a wish for my wish list: we have a QR code on the sign that tells visitors who maintains the bed. That code connects right here to the news letter, or to information about our garden. Guests would be able to look up the plant and read more., find places they could purchase plants or seeds, read recipes of how to use the plants. We are such dreamers!

Have we mentioned that we like Commonwealth Coffee on 118 Davis Court, parking lot on Hildebrand near Broadway? The are now serving food, and have more outdoor than indoor tables. The back lot has small gardens, live chickens, attentive waiters.

Our garden maintenance team “Weed and Gloat” meet the last Monday of the month. Members are welcome to come, learn and enjoy.

Herb of the Month: Rue

Adapted from home Blog *Magical uses of the Rue plant and AgriLife Extension Herb information Submitted by Grace Emery*

Rue: to suffer remorse for, to repent, hence to regret.

The rue herb (*Ruta graveolens*) is considered to be an old-fashioned herb garden plant. Once grown for medicinal reasons, these days rue plants are rarely grown in the garden. But just because an herb has fallen out of favor for its original intent does not mean that it can't have a place in the garden for other reasons.

What is Rue Plant?

While little known, growing rue herb in the garden can be helpful to a gardener in a number of ways. Its strong smell is a repellent to many creatures, including dogs, cats and Japanese beetles. Because of this, it makes an excellent companion plant. It has semi-woody growth, which means that it can be pruned into hedges. It attracts a multitude of butterflies, and, last but not least, makes a lovely cut flower. For all of these reasons, it is beneficial to a gardener to learn how to grow rue.

Rue plants are perennial and have bluish-green, fernlike leaves that are bushy and compact. The flowers on the rue herb are yellow with petals that are frilly on the edges and the center of the flower is normally green. Rue normally grows to a height of 2 to 3 feet tall.

How to Grow Rue Herb

Rue herb does well in a variety of soil but does best in well-drained soil. In fact, it will do well in the rocky, dry soil that many other plants have a difficult time surviving. It needs full sun to grow well. It is drought tolerant and rarely, if ever needs to be watered.

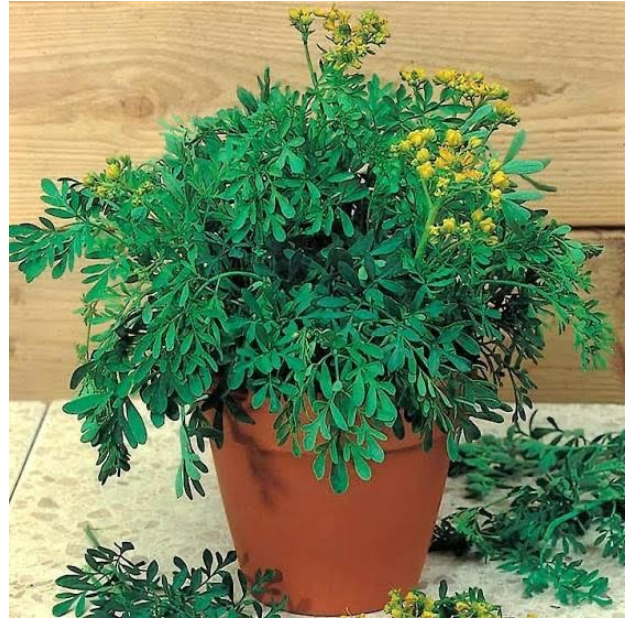
Care should be taken when handling rue plants. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** The sap of the rue plant is often irritating and can burn or leave rashes on people's skin.

Rue can be harvested and used in the house as an insect repellent. Simply cut some of the leaves and dry them, then put the dried leaves in cloth bags. These sachets can be placed wherever you need to repel bugs.

Rue is edible but in very small amount has a bitter taste, good to put in beans and stews. If you want the flavor with only a bit of bitterness, steep the rue in a gently simmering liquid, discard leaves and use liquid. Rue can be nice used with sour, acidic to help tone down the bitterness --- tomato sauces, and dishes with olives or capers etc.

The Lore and history of the Rue Plant

Rue, which is also known as ruda or the queen of herbs, is native to the Mediterranean area. It has been used in magic rituals since antiquity. The ancient Romans believed rue could protect the user from the evil eye. The rue herb is used for protection. It can be used in baths and candles, and it can be carried in pouches. A witch can use rue to protect and strengthen her aura and promote health, concentration and love.



Rue has a strong scent that cats typically find repugnant. Since cats have historically been associated with witches, rue has been used as a substance to ward off witches and their familiars since the Middle Ages. So, since this is the Halloween Month it is important you have some Rue by the front door of our home for sure!

Fresh rue herb is typically used in rituals, however some gain its benefits from rue soap, rue bath and floor wash, as well as from burning rue candles. Incenses made from rue can be used to purify a house and purge it of negative energies. The smoke purifies the area. As the celebrant carries the incense through their home, they recite a prayer or psalm or sing.

On another note, Rue can be made into a lover's incense if it is mixed with sandalwood and lavender flowers. Putting the incense in a man's shoe will insure his fidelity.

Rue is also known as the 'herb of grace' and 'herb of repentance' due to its use in some Catholic rituals. Michelangelo and Leonardo de Vinci both used the herb regularly for its purported ability to improve eyesight as well as creativity. Medicinal uses are not the only reason for harvesting rue herbs in the garden. Although the leaves have a bitter flavor, both the fresh and dried foliage have been used in not only perfumes, but in foods of all sorts, and the ancient Romans used the seeds of the perennial in their cooking. (This last paragraph from Gardening Knowhow on line)



HELP! HELP! Is there a member or friend that can help the editor with WordPress? The tutorials are no help at all. We have old pages that display on our website and we are at a loss as to how to change them. Even just telephone help would be great. Contact Robin Maymar.

And now a word from one of our sponsors...

We want to feature our culinary business partner, San Antonio Gourmet Olive Oil company. This hidden gem is located at 1913 S. Hackberry, 78210. We include this map, as the shop is located on South Hackberry close to IH 10. It is not far from downtown, but not in an area familiar to most of us.



Christine Arredondo is the proprietor. She established her business after retirement from United States Marine Corps, Veteran of the War on Terrorism. Christine has a passion for educating her community about the benefits of cooking with high-quality ingredients. She sells 50 varieties of Extra Virgin Olive oils infused with a variety of flavors. The company also offers aged Italian Balsamic vinegars with ingredients like cilantro, blood orange, Persian lime and black and white truffles. If you have not been introduced to Balsamic vinegars, it is well time you were. Gourmet Olive Oils is an excellent place to get started.

Christine Arredondo's

Tuscan Oil Infused Vinaigrette Dressing

Ingredients:

- 3 Tablespoons red wine
- 1 garlic clove minced
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon Kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Tuscan infused olive oil

In a pint-sized jar combine the vinegar, garlic, mustard, salt and pepper.

Cover and shake to dissolve the salt.

Add the Tuscan olive oil and shake to blend. Taste for seasoning.

The vinaigrette can be refrigerated in an air-tight container for up to two weeks. This is a good make-ahead recipe.



IN THE GARDEN OCTOBER TO DO LIST

IN OUR HERB GARDEN: Exposure to light triggers germination of many annual weed seeds so use mulch whenever possible to reduce the amount of labor required to keep your garden weed free. Add compost to your garden as a winterizer and mulch. * It's not too late to plant frost-tolerant herb annuals or perennials. * This is the month to plant garlic cloves and onion sets. The Tex. Coop. Ext. Svc. recommends Texas white garlic and 1015 onions. * Salad groupings and exotic greens should also be planted now. Examples are sorrel, arugula, salad burnet, leaf lettuces, nasturtium. * Sow wildflower seeds. * Plant Antique roses.

VEGETABLE GARDEN Side dress vegetables with 1 cup of ammonium sulfate, per 100 sq.ft. bed. Get compost bins ready to handle the leaves that will fall soon. * Contact the Extension office at (210) 467-6575 for information about composting.

Great Texas Garden tips - This is a super month to install landscape plantings because of available soil moisture, cooler temperatures, and PLANT SALES. *) October is a super month for planting cool season annuals because the soil is warm and the air is cooler. *) For a fall garden, Chinese cabbage, celery, collards, garlic, kale, and kohlrabi may all be planted during the month. *) October is a good month to dig, divide, replant, or plant many spring/summer blooming perennials because of ample soil moisture, cooler air temperatures, and longer available time for them to establish themselves for spring and/or summer bloom

Turnover compost piles. Watch for "steam" in morning! Canvass area for more material. Consider planting a green manure or cover crop on part of your vegetable garden this fall. If you select a legume such as vetch, clover or peas, this living layer of plants will add nutrition to the soil by fixing nitrogen as it grows and later adding organic matter to the soil when it shredded and rototilled into the soil. Cover crops also help prevent weeds and can break the cycle of pests and disease that often occur when crops are not rotated.

BIRD Keep your hummingbird feeder clean and full of sugar water. Fall is the best time to observe the colorful birds. Your feeders will not affect the birds' fall migration. Clean and refill birdbaths regularly. Both the native and migratory birds will be grateful.

ROSES Some rain and cooler temperatures will help jump-start our roses for some beautiful fall color. Feeding: This is an ideal time to maintain a soluble feeding program. (Keep in mind, whether you are a hard-core exhibitor or not, fertilization containing any kind of nitrogen should stop by mid October.) Suggestions for this might include the following: 1) *Regular Feed Every Two Weeks* - Mix two cups of your favorite soluble feed (like 20-20-20) into a clean 32 gal. container (like a trash can). Into this solution add 1 cup of fish emulsion and 1 cup of a chelated iron like *Sprint 330*. Give miniature plants 1 qt. each and your larger bushes 1 gal. each. 2) *Show Feed* - If you are a rose show fanatic, trophy or hardware hunter, do the following two weeks before the show. Mix 2 cups of *Superbloom* (12-55-6) along with 1 cup of fish emulsion/ seaweed, two cups agricultural molasses, one cup *Sprint 330*. Mix this in a 32 gal. container. Feed each bush and miniature as previously recommended.

*Remember Water – Water – Water !

Bush Grooming: You've finished your fall pruning, but we need to keep our bushes clean of small,

twiggy growth. As your old blooms fade out, cut them off. * Old blooms left on the bush are ideal homes for thrips, cucumber beetles, etc. This will help you keep the thrips population curtailed.

FLOWERS Dig up day lilies and separate bulb masses into smaller pieces. Replant 1' apart and 2" deep in soil you have amended with compost. With our first cool spell, plant dianthus, calendulas, stock and snapdragons for cool-weather color. Deadhead zinnias, marigolds, salvias and other flowering plants to stimulate more blooms. Prepare beds for planting cool-season flowers. Well-drained soil is important, and the bed should get at least six hours of full sun for successful flowering.

Quarantine container plants that are going to be brought in with house or greenhouse plants to be certain they're free of insects and diseases. Spray only as necessary. Watch drain holes for hiding **PILLBUGS**, **SLUGS** and even **ROACHES**

PESTS FIRE ANT baits applied now will reduce ants through next spring. (Try a bucket of soap sudsy water on an active mound, the ants hate it!)

HEALTH

Consider herbal extracts to boost your bodies natural immune system (we need care too!) such as: *Echinacea* (*Echinacea purpurea*, "Purple Cone-flower" root), and/or *Garlic* (concentrated tablets).

As cool weather approaches and night-time (bed time) relative humidity drops to the 50's, consider a room humidifier for health sake.

Roses should only be grown organically since they are one of the best medicinal and culinary herbs in the world. When they are loaded with toxic pesticides and other chemicals, that use is gone, or at least should be. Drinking rose hip tea or using rose petals in teas or salads after spraying with synthetic poisons is a really bad idea

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TIP OF THE WEEK

How to be a smarter composter

Always seek balance. As easy as it is to fill a compost bin with grass clipping now and fallen leaves later in the year “variety is more important than volume.” Try always to alternate green materials with brown. In summer, when pulling weeds and other green ingredients are abundant, beef up your carbon-rich brown layers using bales of straw or hay—even an occasional newspaper.

Know your quick fixes. If the balance is right, you can leave the heap alone: It will decompose without smelling. Should a foul odor arise, tame it by turning the pile and getting air to the microbes trying to do their work. If the pile instead is getting too dry, moisten it with water. (You will learn this by experience)

Think beyond green. Not everything in the nitrogen-rich layers needs to be literally green. Also throw in fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, cooked rice or pasta, and egg, shrimp, or lobster shells. (The above from Source: The Washington Post, via The Week magazine)

Shredded paper: line the bottom of your compost pail with a layer of shredded paper. This absorbs moisture and odors. Makes emptying the bucket no big chore.

FALL IS A LONG SLOW PLANTING SEASON

Fall arrived on the 22nd of September. That was the Equinox "the time when the sun crosses the equator; night and day are of equal length in all parts of the earth."

October 1 is the Harvest Full Moon Friday afternoon, **Oct. 16, 2020**, at 3:31 p.m. EDT, will be the **new Moon**, when the **Moon** will pass between Earth and the Sun and will not be visible from Earth. About 4 hours later, at 7:47 p.m. EDT, the **Moon** will be at perigee, its closest to Earth for this orbit. October 31 is Halloween and the Hunter's Full Moon. Changes in the weather are more likely a few days after a full or new moon because the moon moves the tides and the flow of water around the planet.



A practical tip shared by a gardening friend that makes a good rule of thumb with herbs you like: Don't give up on a new plant until you've tried it in three different spots.

Put your herb in three pots, and locate them in various places in the yard. Let the plant tell you where it will grow well.

Come to think of it, this would work with birdbaths, too. Place the birdbath in differ-

Come weed with us at the Botanical Gardens!

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

Next Weed and Gloat is scheduled for Monday October 26' 2020. We will meet early to spread out volunteers 8 a.m. There are new rules to follow so be sure to contact robinmaymar@gmail.com for simple safety measures we need to take See you then

BUSINESS MEMBERS

WE THANK OUR BUSINESS MEMBERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

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



Natures Herb Farm

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Website: naturesherbfarms.com



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