



NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN ANTONIO HERB SOCIETY  
 FEBRUARY 2022

**VALENTINES AND VIOLAS**

Time to party! Time to celebrate!  
 Come kick off the new year with us  
 Mark your calendar for  
 February 10, 2022  
 Banquet at the Garden Center  
 See next page for details

**SAN ANTONIO  
 HERB SOCIETY**  
 Mark your calendar for  
 February 10, 2022  
 Banquet at the Garden Center  
 6:30 pm  
 3310 N. New Braunfels  
 San Antonio, 79209

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Come Celebrate the New Year With Us

Our banquet will be Thursday February 10 at the Garden Center. Doors open at 6, social time 6:30 Dinner at 7

Herb Society caters the main dish: vegetarian or meaty lasagna. Each member should bring a dish.



Whatever you are inspired to bring: hors d'oeuvres, side dish, salad or dessert to accompany. We do not know how many will come, so it would be a big help if you texted RSVP to either Cindy Moore (210)259-1932 or Robin Maymar . (830) 459-8415



Safety first and foremost. Wear masks until it comes time to eat. Use hand sanitizer before eating. We will be spacing out tables and have only four to a table. We will probably open doors to air out the room, so wear comfortably warm clothing. You never know what the temperature will be. We are just hoping for the best. Please feel free to circulate around to visit with friends. You are always welcome to bring a guest.

Our banquet committee will meet about 1 pm on February 10 to set up the tables and the centerpiece and as much as we can do ahead of time. We would love to have volunteers help us at that time.

Thank you, thank you for a wonderful year.

## WEED AND GLOAT

Our monthly session in the Herb Garden at the Botanical gardens forces us outdoors. I certainly appreciate that monthly check in, even if it is cold and dreary. We need to get outdoors for a short time every day. (see page 6) Monday was both. Luckily it had rained in the night. The soil was so soft it was easy to get the weeds up.

A few softer herbs had died. The Cuban oregano, so brilliant with its soft fuzzy variegated leaves had succumbed to frost. We pulled the carcass out of the bed. The Mexican mint marigold looked red and shriveled. We cut it back, knowing that this would stimulate the roots and another (or the same plant?) would grow in its' place. Best part of weeding is taking out the trash. It always smells so good. Mexican mint marigold, even when faded has a lovely fragrance



Stimulated by the cold, the angelica is in full leaf. It has huge celery like stems that can be used to for a kind of candy by cooking with sugar. It was traditionally used as cake decorations, before processed foods became a thing. Artemesia is also huge and vibrant. Also, the German sage.

The thyme we had planted last month was a deep rich green. This would be an ideal time to pick, wash and dehydrate the stems. Once dry, peel the tiny leaves off. Throw away what was left of last year's harvest, put the fresh in the spice jar. If you still had thyme from last year, tell yourself that you are not making good use of your spice rack.

A huge lady bug joined our group. (see photo). We stopped to look up the difference between lady bugs and Asian Lady Beetles. Both eat aphids and are good for the garden. The Asian variety can bite, even break the skin. It can be identified by a M shape on its head near the wings. They also have large white spots on their heads. What we found was just a very large ladybug.



Gloria came late. Her friend had identified the electrical problem as a fault interrupter needing replacement. Her electrician did a thorough inspection, testing every other socket, and finally determining the at the fault interrupter needed to be replaced. She got quickly to work weeding and cleaning the mint bed. A mockingbird settled on the wheelbarrow to observe, then approached closer and closer to see what she was doing. Finally settled on the top of the post for a bird's eye view.



**WEED AND GLOAT**  
**Come weed with us at the**  
**Botanical Gardens!**  
**Feel welcome to come to join us**  
**this month in the sunshine.**  
Next Weed and Gloat is scheduled  
for Monday, February 28  
We meet at 9 A.M.  
Contact [robinmaymar@gmail.com](mailto:robinmaymar@gmail.com) for  
simple safety measures we need to take .  
See you then.

We toasted the new year with champagne flutes of bubbly pomegranate apple juice. The temperature began dropping and drizzle began, so we adjourned to La Madeline for lunch and conversation.



## Upcoming events

HERB SOCIETY **FEBRUARY 10** Valentines and Violas: Intrepid Valentines Dinner

**March 10 Meeting:** Herb of the Year, Viola.

**March 5** EARTHWISE LIVING DAY, 32<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL Saturday March 5 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. \*

**March 12** SAWS SPRING BLOOM second Saturday March 12. \*

March OLLA DEMONSTRATION, NEW BRAUNFELS TEXAS FOR MASTER GARDENERS

GARDEN CENTER PLANT SALE, March 20, 2022

\* Volunteers needed

### EARTHWISE LIVING DAY

Brochure says :”Our goal is to present exhibitors who demonstrate their participation in *Earthwise Living* by RETHINKING how to REDUCE, REUSE & RECYCLE daily. Booths should reflect this theme. Think GREEN--Together we can save our environment.

Handouts should be printed on recycled paper with soy ink if possible and promote our goals. Giveaways should reflect overall environment theme. Throwaway items should be avoided. Avoid plastic items unless they can be recycled. Use healthy ingredients, decomposable utensils and no beaded Styrofoam please.”

This is where we can find people who would like our ‘Save the Planet’ utensil roll.



SAWS SPRING BLOOM across from Trinity University campus.

This is usually the first week of Spring Break. The Zoo has a special rate during this time and traffic is a mess. Meets at Mulberry at IH 37, the big SAWS building has parking just for us. We will need lots of volunteers to help sell. Come early for plant give-away from other booths and the excellent lectures offered by SAWS. Take advantage of their coupons for water saving that really pays off.



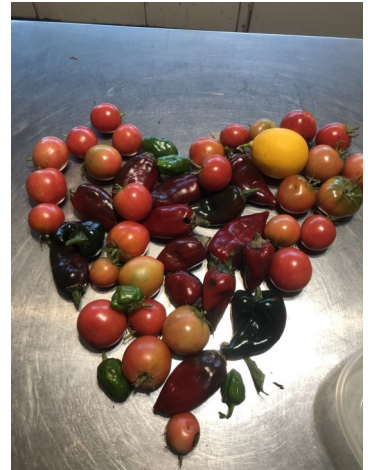
# Culinary Contributions

## 'LAST OF THE TOMATO SEASON' TOMATO SOUP

In developing this soup recipe, we wanted to make it thick and creamy without adding milk or cream. It was important to keep the nutrients of the tomato skins. This will be slightly lumpy which we liked. If you like it with chunks of tomato reserve a cup of the chopped up tomatoes after you have cooked them down, add with the broth.

### INGREDIENTS

4 cloves garlic, plus more to taste, finely chopped  
3 ½ pounds vine-ripe tomatoes, quarter, then chop a little further  
2 tablespoons (30 ml) olive oil  
½ onion (or more)  
1 ½ teaspoons salt  
½ cup (20 g) coarsely chopped or torn fresh basil leaves, reserve a few leaves for garnish  
about 4 cups (1 liter) basic light vegetable broth (or canned vegetable broth)  
freshly ground pepper  
garnish, fruity green olive oil  
optional garnish freshly grated Parmigian-Reggiano



### DIRECTIONS

Chop the garlic first and set aside for five minutes or so

Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil, in a large, non-stick sauté pan and stir the chopped onions in it over medium heat for 5-7 minutes, until it is translucent and soft.

Add the garlic and sauté another 2 to 3 minutes.

Add the chopped tomatoes with their juice, a teaspoon of salt.

Simmer for about a half an hour until the tomatoes are somewhat reduced and the color is deep. Reserve a cup if you want chunks of tomato in the soup

Set the tomatoes aside to cool or refrigerate for ten to twenty minutes.

By cup-fulls add the room temperature tomato mixture to food process or blender, alternating with a cup or so of the broth. Blend to a thickness consistency you like. Transfer as you go to a soup pot, combine the blended tomatoes with the remaining broth.

Bring the broth to a boil. Add the basil and the cup of unblended tomatoes, simmer for another 10 minutes stirring occasionally.

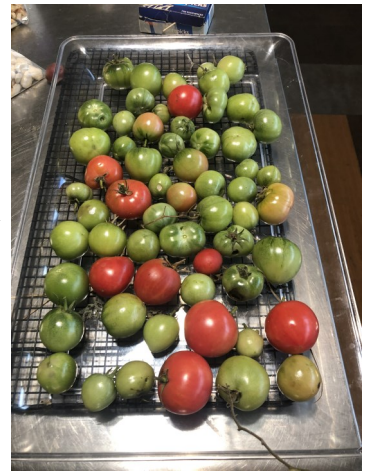
Taste; correct the seasoning with a little more salt if needed and a grind of pepper.

Pour a teaspoon of fresh green olive oil each serving of this soup and sprinkle on some freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano if you like. Garnish with a basil leaf.

## Mom Always Told Us To Eat The Skins

The most nutritious part of the tomato is the skin. The major elements in tomato peel are potassium, magnesium, calcium and sodium. Tomato peels contain most of the antioxidant minerals especially calcium, copper, zinc, magnesium and selenium which are important for antioxidant enzymes in vivo and hence protect the body from cancer. (Science Direct)

Lycopene, the most abundant carotenoid in ripened tomatoes, is particularly noteworthy in the fruit's plant compounds. It is found in the highest concentration in the skin. Generally, the redder the tomato, the more lycopene it has. Studies have also linked flavonols with lower risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease and other age-related complications. Do not peel your tomatoes. Up to 98% of flavonols found in tomatoes were found in the skin. Another source on Google states "Tomato peels contribute a high concentration of the carotenoids found in tomatoes. ... The tomato skin also holds most of the flavonols (another family of phytochemicals that includes quercetin and kaempferol) as well." (My computer seems to think that flavonols are spelled incorrectly, but these are taken from articles)



## Thought this was interesting

The term Nature-Deficit Disorder® was introduced in 2005 with the publication of "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder."

I coined the phrase to serve as a description of the human costs of alienation from nature and it is not meant to be a medical diagnosis (although perhaps it should be), but as a way to talk about an urgent problem that many of us knew was growing, but had no language to describe it. The term caught on, and is now a rallying cry for an international movement to connect children to rest of nature. Since then, this New Nature Movement has broadened to include adults and whole communities.

Although human beings have been urbanizing, and then moving indoors, since the introduction of agriculture, social and technological changes in the past three decades have accelerated the human disconnect from the natural world.

Among the reasons: the proliferation of electronic communications; poor urban planning and disappearing open space; increased street traffic; diminished importance of the natural world in public and private education; and parental fear magnified by news and entertainment media.

Since 2005, the number of studies of the impact of nature experience on human developed has grown from a handful to nearly one thousand. This expanding body of scientific evidence suggests that nature-deficit disorder contributes to a diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, conditions of obesity, and higher rates of emotional and physical illnesses. Research also suggests that the nature-deficit weakens ecological literacy and stewardship of the natural world. These problems are linked more broadly to what health care experts call the "epidemic of inactivity," and to a devaluing of independent play. Nonetheless, we believe that society's nature-deficit disorder can be reversed.

*Recent studies focus not so much on what is lost when nature experience fades, but on what is gained through more exposure to natural settings, including nearby nature in urban places.*

Abstracts to many of these studies, often linked to the original research, can be found at the Children & Nature Net-

works Online Research Library. Following the publication of “Last Child in the Woods,” the Children & Nature Network was created to encourage and support the people and organizations working to reconnect children with nature. We believe more research is necessary to better define the influence of nature experiences on human development. But as Dr. Howard Frumkin, Dean of the School of Public Health, University of Washington, and a past member of our Board of Directors says, “we know enough to act.”

By taking a lead role in the international movement to connect children, families and communities to the natural world, we are striving to reinforce the critical link between researchers and individuals, educators and organizations dedicated to the health and well-being of children, families and communities.

My 2011 book, “The Nature Principle: Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age,” explored this key question: “What could our lives and our children’s lives be like if our days and nights were as immersed in nature as they are in technology?” In 2015, a followup book, “Vitamin N” offered 500 ways that individuals, families and communities could incorporate more nature connection into their daily lives. Now, in 2019, my newest book, “Our Wild Calling,” explores how connecting with animals can transform our lives — and save theirs.



## COMPOST

Gallon ice cream tubs make an excellent compost container. They seal well, are easy to clean. By the time they are full they are easily transported, emptied and washed.

Begin by adding paper from you paper shredder. An inch or so will do. This helps empty the bucket at the end, and prevents moisture from accumulating. Adding some liquid will help speed up the composting process in you heap outside.



John’s working compost: dig the compost in around the strawberries. Add ashes to the side.

## Herb Society Board

### President

Robin Maymar

robinmaymar@gmail.com

**1st Vice-President (Programs)** Position vacant

**Treasurer** Vacant

**Secretary** Volunteer at meeting

**Membership** Milan Maymar, protem

**Publicity** Vicki Jamvold

Our website: <https://sanantonioherbs.org>



## COMPOST: TO TURN OR NOT TO TURN... THAT IS THE QUESTION

Our thanks to Jane McDaniel and John Opiela for their contributions to this article.

Voices were raised. Opinions differed. We were not sure if a fight was going to break out or not. Unprecedented in the annals of the Herb Society

John Opeilia said you had to turn the compost. Jane McDaniel said layering was enough. Apartment dwellers sat in wonder. Why is this so important to these gardeners?

Step back a moment. Gardeners recycle everything. "Use it up, Wear it out, Make it do" is the New England motto. They see all the organic waste coming from the kitchen, the leaf piles, the shredded paper as more nutrition for their gardens.

Think about it, trees in the forest lose their leaves, they fall around the base of the tree, animals and weather break up the leaves, they crumble, bacteria and water help decompose them and eventually the nutrients fall, add to the soil. Water carries the nutrients to the roots of the tree and the tree is fertilized. A deep layer of humus develops. Where there has been vegetation, soil builds up.



Our neighbors on the north side of town, think things are posh in their neighborhoods until they try to put a plant into the soil. They then realize the soil is, if lucky, half an inch thick, then solid rock. Older neighborhoods to the south of town have sandy loam. By the time you reach La Coste and Castroville the first layer of soil is nine inches deep, then it changes to a different sandy loam for another eight inches, then comes two inches of caliche. Here is a good place to dig a garden!

So, the gardeners are determined to use up everything. Gardeners refuse to feel guilty about food waste. The apple that rolled behind the cookie jar and is now decomposing- "Aw, heck, I was going to eat that for lunch and could not find it. Oh, well, the compost bucket will be happy." The pit, the peel, the bruised piece, the stems, the tea bag, the tough outer leaves that are hard to eat, all have great nutrients that will recycle with the turn of a spade. The huge bags of leaves that neighbors pay someone to gather seem puzzling. Why would you pay money to remove perfectly good fertilizer, then pay more to fertilize your plants? Even in the garden, where we want the plant and nothing but the plant, we weed out and compost weed, then in the right time, mulch to keep moisture in the ground and the plant cool.

So, the goal most gardeners who tend compost heaps have is to have the compost decompose as fast as possible. Compost when really working gets hot. It has been known to get so hot that it catches fire. This prevents worms from living in the heap but if you have a cool heap, the worms are great helpers. The large commercial composters have a thermometer about three feet long they stick into the center of the heap to make sure the temperature is up. It is almost like inflammation in our bodies, the temperature goes up because bacteria is working hard to decompose the material. (In bodies, temperature goes up to do the opposite, to kill off invading microbes)



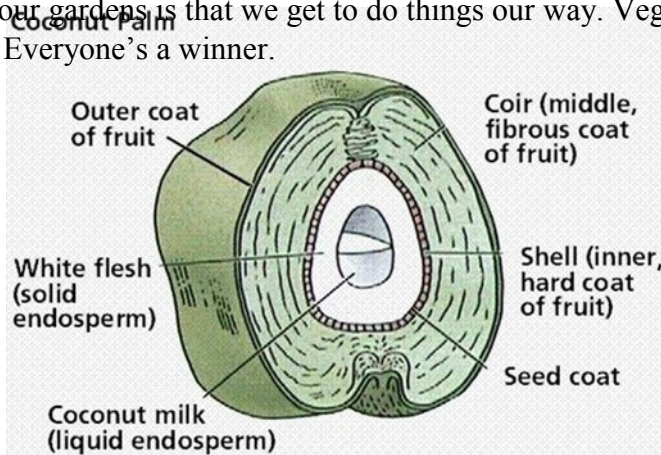


Which is better? Perhaps it has to do with life-style. Jane is called away during the summer quite a bit and is not home to turn. Her method is to do lovely layers. Leaves for three inches, grass and tiny sticks for three inches, vegetation for three inches, soil to top it, repeat. Her husband brought home a 'found' bathtub, which she insisted live at the very back of the lot hidden behind everything. She put layers in over early spring and summer; by fall, the tub was filled with lovely soft compost!

John takes the kitchen waste, digs a hole and places soil on top of it. Each hole is a small compost working center. Part of his three-foot-high raised bed is also compost. Next to the holes, strawberries gain the benefit of recycling.

Another gardener uses a large heap. Water is added to speed up the decomp process. The lower level is 'mined' for good compost. When it is hot in the summer and the compost is cooking along nicely, the gardener is focused on the plants in the garden, an indeterminate cherry tomato is usually planted on top of the compost pile. With watering, composting continues, but the cherry tomato is always the pride of the garden, free to stretch as far as a vine can, it usually yields a huge crop. That is why we are composting.

Both John and Jane agreed that the compost was key to their gardens. That extra stuff: the nutrients, bacteria and whatever else is there gives a huge boost to the garden. so a draw is declared. either method gets nutrients back into the garden where it can do some good. The nice thing about our gardens is that we get to do things our way. Vegetables on the table? Everyone's a winner.



## HOW I GAVE UP PEAT MOSS AND JOINED THE COIR

The original Square Foot Gardener, and Tom Harris who introduced square-foot gardening to many home gardeners; both recommended peat moss. These huge bales have been the staple for many gardeners for years. Recently, we have been made to feel guilty because peat moss is not renewable and is in limited supply.

What is peat moss? Peat moss is the partially decomposed remains of formerly living sphagnum moss from bogs. They are mainly found in bogs and wetlands in the northern hemisphere, covering about two percent of the land on earth, about one billion acres. About two-thirds of the world's supply is in Russia, and one quarter in Canada. Virtually all of the peat moss sold in the United States comes from the vast sphagnum moss bogs of Canada. This still means it is a limited commodity.

Are sphagnum and peat moss the same? In truth, they're two different parts of the same plant, but the impact of their use is wildly different. Sphagnum moss is a plant that grows on the surface of soil or a swamp. Peat moss, on the other hand, is the layer of decaying, water-saturated sphagnum moss that has sunk below the surface.

Gardeners use peat moss mainly as a soil amendment or ingredient in potting soil. It has an acid pH, so it's ideal for acid loving plants, such as blueberries and camellias. Peat moss doesn't contain harmful microorganisms or weed seeds that you may find in poorly processed compost. It can, however, harbor bacteria and fungus.

Because of its' lack of microorganisms, peat bogs can sometimes preserve things that have fallen into them. In July of 2006 a book was found in Faddan More, a bog in the townland of Faffan More in north County Tipperary, Ireland. It was a psalter, dating from about 800 A.D. A psalter is an early medieval Christian text of the book of Psalms. It was used as a prayer book. Every bale of peat moss now holds the possibility of something incredible preserved within. I always open them with great anticipation. However, so far, no great treasures.

According to one source, as a soil amendment, which is what the baled product is mostly sold for, peat moss is a poor choice. It breaks down too fast, compressing and squeezing air out of the soil, creating an unhealthy condition for plant roots.

Now that you feel guilty for depleting the world of peat bogs, what is the alternative? Coconut Coir. Coconut coir, also known as coco peat or coir peat, is rapidly gaining popularity and is the best-known alternative to peat moss. Coconut coir is a readily renewable, pH-neutral, non-hydrophobic soil amendment that aerates, improves water retention, and is more environmentally friendly than peat moss.

It is made from the husk of coconuts. Everything in between the shell and the outer coating of the coconut seed is considered coco coir. There are two types of fibers that make up coir — brown and white. Brown coir comes from mature, ripe coconuts and is a lot stronger, but less flexible. White fibers come from pre-ripe coconuts and are far more flexible, but much less strong.

Coir is made through a long process. First, they need to remove the coir from the coconuts. This is done by soaking the husks in water to loosen and soften them. This is either done in tidal waters or freshwater. If done in tidal waters, the coconut coir will take up a large amount of salt, which will need to be flushed out by the manufacturer at a later stage. Then, they're removed from the water bath and dried for over a year. After the drying process, which is quite extensive, the coir is organized into bales.

Coco coir is one of the most effective growing media for water retention out there. It can absorb up to 10x its weight in water. Coir peat is the ideal growing medium for houseplants, due to excellent moisture retention and good aerobic qualities. Indoor plants require a soil that is loose and open in texture, in order to ensure that water can disperse freely, and air can circulate. It can be used as the growing medium for both seedlings and mature plants, as rooting mats and growing baskets, and for rooting cuttings

It also improves soil drainage in the bed while also helping to retain moisture in quick-draining soils. Since coir breaks down slowly, much like peat, it creates air pockets in the soil that allow excess moisture to drain away from plant roots.

The most common problem with coir is it can have an extremely high salt content, especially in lower grades. Coir high in salts should be leached before use. Check with your garden supplier for information about this.

Coconut coir. No matter what form of coco coir you're using, always wet it thoroughly before you plant, and pay careful attention to the moisture level during the growing process.

Unlike other growing mediums, coco coir is not a nutrient-rich solution. As such, you'll need to use nutrient-enriched water or provide additional nutrients. This technique, also known as fertigation, consists of mixing nutrient-rich solutions and fertilizers with water. Because of this, it's a good idea to mix coco peat with an equal quantity of compost to plant vegetables in, in order to ensure the best possible growth. Coco coir stays moist and sustains any nutrients added to the medium, while oxygenating plant roots. Tomatoes are prone to garden pests and rot. However, since it is naturally resistant to insects, growing tomatoes with coir discourages infestation and external issues that cause decomposition.

Coir is renewable because it comes from coconut trees. However growing the trees in quantities depletes the soil. Processing the coir requires a large amount of water. Sea water is often used, which adds the salt. It can be argued that peat moss bogs continue to grow. So neither coir nor peat moss is perfect.

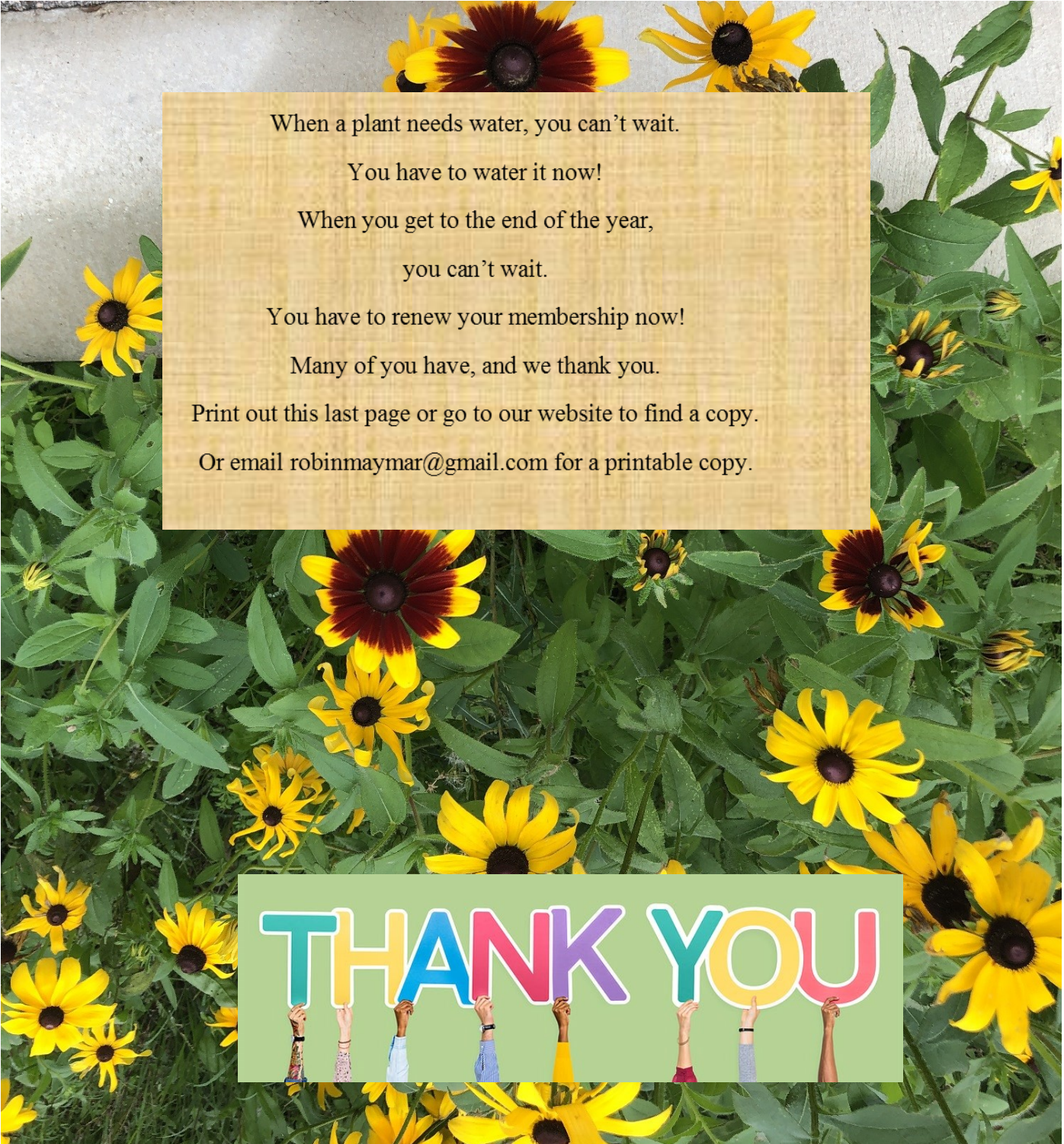
Peat moss is acidic, with a pH level around 3.3 to 4.0, which is great for acid-loving plants, but could cause harm to plants that are less tolerant of low pH levels. Because of its low pH, peat moss is often used as a soil amendment to adjust and acidify soils that are too alkaline. For most planting needs, a neutral pH is preferred, so lime is often added to peat-based soils before planting can occur. Most peat moss-based potting soils also include lime. Coconut fiber, in comparison, has a pH range of 5.2 to 6.8, which is much more acceptable to a much wider range of plants without the need of additives.

Finally, peat moss is less expensive because it comes from Canada, whereas coir is produced in India. This adds shipping cost, making it slightly more expensive.

There is just a lot that goes into the choice between these two media. The chemistry of growing plants is so very complex. We have just touched on one small part of the issue. I'll stop writing now.







When a plant needs water, you can't wait.

You have to water it now!

When you get to the end of the year,  
you can't wait.

You have to renew your membership now!

Many of you have, and we thank you.

Print out this last page or go to our website to find a copy.

Or email [robinmaymar@gmail.com](mailto:robinmaymar@gmail.com) for a printable copy.

THANK YOU

Membership form is on page 14



**San Antonio Herb Society Membership Application/ Renewal**  
January- December

If you joined after October first of any year,  
you are a member through December of the following year  
Print, complete and mail form with your check to:

**San Antonio Herb Society**  
**P.O. Box 6406**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name as you would like it to appear on your name badge).

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt/ Ste # \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Home/ Work/ Cell (circle one)

Alt. phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Home/ Work/ Cell (circle one)

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Alt. E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one:     New member     Renewing member

Membership Category :  Student (\$15)     Single (\$35)

Dual (45)     Business (\$50)

How did you hear about the San Antonio Herb Society?

What programs would you like to see in the coming year? The more details the better.

I would like to be a GREEN member, receive newsletter & other information vial email

I do not want my personal information to be shared on the SAHA membership list

I am interested in helping with:

Banquet Committee     Spring Banquet     Winter Holiday Banquet

Hospitality Committee (decorate refreshment table, make tea, etc.)

Greeter/ Membership (a great way to meet people and welcome everyone)

Chairperson for plant sales or other events. (help keep the lights on)

The booths at  Spring  Summer  Plant  Book Sales  Herb Market in October

Being a Board Member (please list your skills) \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletter "The Yerba Buena": write articles; help coordinate regular features, etc.

Speaking at one of our meetings- your topic(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Maintaining the herb garden at San Antonio Botanical Garden (Weed & Gloat)

Maintaining a SAHS sales table at monthly meetings

Leading a Special Interest Group (SIG)- your interest area(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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Office Use Only

CASH     Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_     PayPal

Date received \_\_\_\_\_ Date \$ given to treasurer \_\_\_\_\_

Green member ? Y N Date information entered into data base \_\_\_\_\_

**This form also available at [www.sanantonioherbs.org](http://www.sanantonioherbs.org)**



## BUSINESS MEMBERS

WE THANK OUR BUSINESS MEMBERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

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



### Natures Herb Farm

7193 Old Talley Road Lot #7  
San Antonio, Texas 78253

Email: [naturesherbfarm@att.net](mailto:naturesherbfarm@att.net)

Website: [naturesherbfarms.com](http://naturesherbfarms.com)



### Rainbow Gardens

8516 Bandera Rd,  
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