

NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN ANTONIO HERB SOCIETY MAY 2023

HOW TO WATER

We don't often get to find out the answer to very fundamental questions, but this month's speaker is, in our opinion, a guru of watering plants. Patient, quiet and thorough, Ted Ritchie has an innate sense on how to water plants. Known for his attention to detail at all the past Rodeos, he has come very early each morning to water all of the garden displays that the Master Gardeners have installed.



With continued drought and expected longer periods of heat each summer, water has become a much hotter topic with all gardeners. Ted has an inborn sense of how much water the plants need. His eye for landscape, weather conditions and soil capabilities help him to gauge how much water to apply. We are hoping he can convey to us rank amateurs how much, when and why.

Many of us need also to know when a plant is over watered and how to prevent this. He has some opinions here, too.

We are looking forward to hearing Ted Ritchie. So take a picture of your yard/ garden/ plant and come with questions. We know this Back-To-Basics talk will help you become a much better gardener.

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OLLA WORKSHOP

Saturday, May 13 we will have an Olla Workshop from 3-5 pm. The last workshop was a big success. We have people who signed up at the Earth Day event coming to participate.

The workshop is in two parts. First (which is actually last in the process) we will decorate the lids and sides of the pots. That is because we have to put them aside to dry.

The second part will be using the glue and caulk. We will show how to pour glue to plug the hole in the bottom of the flower pot. Then how to glue the two pots together. Finally, how to seal the glued edges so that the water does not leak out. Each participant will get the complete instructions by email, so we will not waste paper. They are also going to need to bring a bag to carry their creation home.

We could use some help this week (May 4 - 10 some time) to prepare the pots. Then we will need some volunteers to help at the workshop itself. Any volunteers? I'll put the coffee on...

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Emiliano, my tutoring student, challenged me. "How long could you live just on the food from your garden?"

I had never thought about it that way. I certainly did not want to waste anything I brought in from the garden, and I mourned when things dried up or died. How much food actually came from the garden?

I am curious to know what Herb Society members bring in from their gardens. Probably should ask some of the Master Gardeners too. Goal is to have edible landscaping

I have artichokes, for decoration, flowers and eating. Asparagus, plum, lemon, tangerine, bay trees. Would like peach and pawpaw. Collard greens, onions, tomatoes both cherry and full size.

Not quite sure why people would want to go foraging. I do understand the use of mesquite beans, which are in abundance in the fall. Still waiting to find a good mill that can process them. These beans made a flour that was a staple to people who lived here for millennia. Tends to be sweet and no gluten, so you mix it with flour to keep it together.

But if you just grew food in your yard, how long would it sustain you?

Chervil- Herb of the Month

Gourmet Parsley, the real name, or *anthriscus cerefolium*, is part of the carrot or parsley family. It grows well in partial shade. Grows to about 2 feet high. If you want to see some growing, we have a nice border of chervil growing just in front of the two benches at the Botanical Garden Herb bed (pictured below). We will be seeing tiny white umbrels of flowers at the beginning of summer.

Howard Garrett in *Herbs for Texas* tells us it is a leafy annual herb that self-seeds. It has branched hollow stems and bright green, finely textured leaves that look like Italian parsley. It likes not only partial shade but cool weather and can tolerate some frost.

It will bolt during the first warm days of spring. Keep it well watered to prevent premature seeding. Has no serious problems from insects or disease. You can harvest it at any time, as with any parsley. Use it best straight from the garden.

You can use it in salads, soups (cauliflower and leek soup, use dried chervil), sauces (on roasted halibut) and garnishes (homemade pita chips). The flavor has a hint of licorice to it. It blends well with other herbs

Chervil is a mild digestive, helps circulation, and can soothe painful joints. The leaves contain vitamin C, carotene, iron, and magnesium. Chervil is also said to reduce phlegm, alleviate liver problems, and improve the skin.

It is too short lived to use in large areas for landscape.



The San Antonio Herb Society does not advise, recommend or prescribe herbs for medicinal use; Information is provided as an educational service and the San Antonio Herb Society cannot be held liable for its content. Please consult a health care provider before pursuing any herbal treatments.

Culinary Contributions



Two Chervil Recipes

Little Gem Salad with Pistachios and Herbs (pictured)

From **Bon Appetit Magazine**, adapted from *A Very Serious Cookbook: Contra Wildair* By Jeremiah Stone And Fabián Von Hauske

The best part of this dish is that the leaves here are intact, so they don't get dressed in a conventional way—kind of a more elegant wedge salad. Plus, we snuck butter into your salad, so be grateful. For 4 servings:

4 heads of Little Gem lettuce, halved lengthwise

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter

Kosher salt

1 large egg yolk

34 cup raw pistachios, chopped, divided

2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice

Extra-virgin olive oil (for drizzling)

Freshly ground black pepper

1 cup sliced chives

2 cups chervil

- 1. Remove outer leaves of Little Gems heads until you get 8 same-size, uniform little halves of lettuce; reserve outer leaves.
- 2. Melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add reserved lettuce; season with salt. Cook, stirring, until wilted, about 1 minute.
- 3. Transfer leaves and butter to a blender. Add egg yolk and ¼ cup pistachios and blend until smooth and creamy. Season with salt. (It should be the consistency of yellow mustard. You can add more pistachios if it's too thin, or water if it's too thick.)
- 4. Crush remaining ½ cup pistachios in a food processor or with a knife.
- 5. Drizzle lettuce halves with lemon juice and oil; season with salt and pepper. Drizzle pistachio cream over. Top with chervil, chives, and crushed pistachios.

Sauce Verte from The Sunday Telegraph Cookery Book by Jean Robertson, Collins 1965

A sauce verte is made by working a purée of pot-herbs into a mayonnaise For ½ pint mayonnaise allow about 2 ounces of herbs- spinach, watercress, parsley, chives, tarragon, chervil- in the proportions of 2 parts each of spinach and watercress to 1 part of as many of the others as you can find.

The whole recipe for making your own mayonnaise is rather long. If there is high demand, will publish it.

EARTH DAY AT WOODLAWN LAKE

Earth Day was a new event for the Herb Society. Two different people Spring Bloom had approached us and asked particularly that we attend. Not sure it was a good idea, we reluctantly agreed to come. The paperwork was sent. Then a week before the event they called to say the forms were all blank and we had to reapply.

Then we got the Rules! Use no paper. So we had to think of a way of giving out invitations without printing anything. We had to do some soul searching, to figure how to accomplish this. And we agreed, a lot of people take our brochures on Clean and Green or Planting Artemesia, and then they just throw them away. We chose to write out our email and other pertinent information large enough so people could take pictures with their phones. Also used a RocketBook for people to sign up. This new fangled thing comes with a QR code. You use your camera to upload notes, and if you can figure the system, it will put all notes in typed form.... We shall see how successful this is.



They also wanted something to engage children. That was easy. We had a pots that had been painted many years ago, basil seeds, instructions and basil plants to transplant. We even had potting soil, toilet paper tubes to put the soil in and shark motif lunchskins to pack everything away until you get home. Thankfully there were a number of booths giving away larger re-usable bags so people could stash stuff away.

Our main goal was to encourage gardeners to save water by using ollas (Spanish for pot pronounced 'oy yahs). Our long-term goal had been to make a poster with large color pictures showing how to make, put in the garden bed and use ollas. It took a major concerted effort to develop the idea and find enough good pictures to make the poster. The goal accomplished, we had to improvise ways of keeping the poster upright and not blowing away in the wind. A few wire plant markers and a lot of packing tape and we were good to go.

We spoke to lots and lots of gardeners who were intrigued by the idea of underground watering. We offered three different alternatives. People could buy an olla, and we would send them complete instructions by e-mail for how to make more, how to plant and use and connections to recent research worldwide about success in various applications. Or they could come to the workshop on May 13 and get all the hands-on instructions. Make one olla. Paint and decorate a second olla to take home and be given (by e-mail) all instructions. Or they could just google "olla" and do their own research.

We sold a number of ollas. We also had enough people sign up for the workshop that we shall have to go out to find more terra cotta pots. Also for sale was "Cat Grass" which we had grown in 4 inch pots. This

Save the Earth, it's our only source of chocolate!

was a big hit. Many cat lovers took home a pot. There were also pots of mint, that many people also purchased. We chose mint because it is easy to grow and has great results. Our competition, the Master Gardeners had a huge plant-filled booth. We think we did pretty well, considering it was our first attempt. As we were loading the tent, tables and chairs we realized that almost all of our boxes were empty.

The weather could not have been more beautiful. People were so happy to be able to go for a lovely walk in the park. There was a tree give away with a long line. There were many products to find out about. There were face painting for children, and our Plant a Seed booth. We are definitely putting Earth Day on the calendar for next year. April 22, 2024.

So many people came by and said "I did not know that there was an Herb Society" Dear Members, we need to get the word out!

Upcoming Events

Our next General Meeting will be the second Thursday on May 11, 2023 at 6:30 Members whose last names begin with M to Z are tasked with bringing refreshments.



OLLA WORKSHOP ON May 13 from 3-5

To be held at 110 W. Brandon. We will be hosting gardeners who signed up for the workshop at the Earth Day event. Our last workshop was a lot of fun. We hope a few of you can come help with building and decorating the ollas. We will build one with each attendee and then there will be one already made that they can decorate. They will take home their creation, as well as complete instructions for building more.

BASIL FEST Saturday May 20 at the

Pearl 9-1

We always have lots of people walking past the booth, but many of them are just having a nice walk with their dog, or going out for coffee. We will have a booth to attract shoppers. Parking is best on the E. Elmira parking lot. Expect to walk a little way to the booth.



FESTIVAL OF FLOWERS June 3 9 -5 AT SHRINERS ON 1604.

We are so pleased that Brunella Bruni has brought this great event back to north San Antonio. We can set up the night before, will be right across from the culinary kitchen and Nature's Herb Farm booths to sell our Herb Society goods. The event is indoors and air conditioned. There is a big plant exchange, lectures, lots of interesting booths with all sorts of stuff for sale. Plan to come to shop as well as volunteer to help at the booth.



SIGN-UP TO HELP AT ONE EVENT OR MORE We will have sign-up sheets for each of these events because they all occur <u>before</u> the June meeting. Let's divide our numbers to cover all events. Our fundraisers are the thing that bring in new members and make us visible to the public.

WEED AND GLOAT

The day was overcast and a chilly 56 degrees for a high. Much colder than last month, oddly.



The flat leafed parsley has reached the end of its two year cycle. It is now almost three feet tall and beginning to make beautiful umbral flowers that turn to seeds. We will leave them for now in hopes of catching the seeds to resow in the garden. The curly leaf parsley is really at its peak: a beautiful bouquet of green leaves. Make a note to use more curly leaf parsley just for show.

The mint has grown up to about a foot high and is shading other plants. Ruthlessly we cut back, unearthing roots to keep the relentless mints from taking over even more territory. We wonder whether it has had a detrimental effect on the rosemarys by the fence. They look rather yellow and puny. Usually rosemary is robust and green. Curious.

The sage is blooming yellow blossoms. Good for the pollinators. Marsha notes that ours is a Jerusalem Sage,

which is the hardiest variety.

We admired the fancy broom that Mary Jo brought. It had beautiful woven details both handle and broom. "Scriveners" many years ago. We all were missing that fine hardware/cloth/ stationery/ restaurant store. What a wonderful emporium that store was.

The chervil that we put in last month is now forming a beautifully curved border. The Bot Gardeners have gone through the whole garden pulling down all, all, all the poppies. So the chervil, hiding behind poppies is now out front, just as we planned, full and lush.

Basil moved around the garden trimming here and there. He did his part also by using the narrow spade to lift up the deep rooted weeds. Becky joined us for the first time. Did a magnificent job of weeding. Patti helped identify some of the new growing



plants in the garden. Cindy, Marsha and I did our best to pull back the mint and other weedy areas. Mary Jo cleared all the area around the north end of the garden. Satisfied, we sat and

admired our work, and talked about all sorts of subjects The soil was very wet. At least one of us went home with mud-

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Minutes April 13, 2023

Because of the meeting format we did not have a zoom connection to our meeting.

Meeting was called to order a 7:10 by President Robin Maymar who welcomed our guest Michael Murphy and Becky Barnes. She thanked Cindy and Sandra for setting our table all ready for Fiesta.

Robin reported Spring Bloom a success. We sold 87% of our stock, including all of the ollas. The remainder herbs were sold later to the Garden Center for their plant sale. They had no herbs and were delighted to have ours to sell.

In spite of the good maps that had been distributed to volunteers, there were snafus. St. Mary's Street had been blocked off by the police department. They had funnelled all traffic up the access road to Tuleta, the Zoo street, so that large crowds attending the zoo events would be guided into the parking there. Our volunteers had to follow down to St. Mary's to get to parking, or park on an upper lot and go down lots of stairs to get to the event. This cut down on the number of people coming to Spring Bloom. Juan Solis, the organizer from SAWS running the event was not aware of the change by the police until the morning of the event!

Many thanks to Becky, Annette, Bill, Cindy and Loretta for writing *Herb Blurbs*. We posted these short articles about some of the herbs we were selling. The poster was hard to access, and people could not see it well. Next sale we will attempt to make it more visible, and phone-photo friendly.

Recycle black pots to Bot - gallon size only, please

What is Weed and Gloat? When is Weed and Gloat Monday April 24 Robin explained in more detail that the Weed and Gloat team goes once a month to the Botanical Gardens, the last Monday of the Month, to weed and put new plants in. She explained that we have a lot of independence on what goes into the garden and can ask for herbs we would like to feature. The Gardens have a budget just for our little patch. They also assign a number of gardeners to watch over us, bringing mulch or compost as needed. Members who would like to join us need to contact Robin so she can put you on the e-mail list. We enjoy cleaning up the garden and we spend a lot of time talking about everything. Then we often go for coffee or lunch and talk some more.

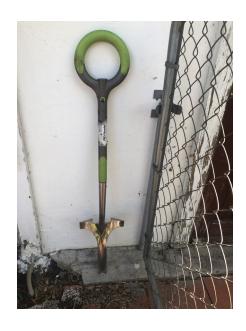
Our unit at Public Storage has been paid through June

The rest of the meeting was devoted to a round table discussion of needs, the primary two were a committee to help prepare programs for our meetings; the second need was people to help with notifying members of meetings, and publicity to the public. Both of these things require that members have some skills using the computer. A number of brave but hesitant members offered to help.

It was suggested that members carpool. Some cannot drive at night but would still like to attend. It was suggested that members invite family or friends to come to the meeting, and drive.

Which brought us to the major 'elephant in the room', speakers. We discussed the process of looking for and asking for speakers. It is easier of one person does this whole job, but it is also more burdensome. Many members expressed interest in a variety of topics and offered to follow up. We have yet to get a coordinator for this task, but got a little closer during the meeting

Because the editor will be out of town on the first of May, the newsletter will be published on May 2.









* * * * * * TOOL TIME * * *

Everyone still wants to know about the tools. I will try to bring to the meeting all three of the ones that we use on a regular basis.

The paint scraper is used to attack weeds between flat stones, seams in driveways and tough crevasses. We sharpen it so all the edges will cut. Found in the paint section rather than in the garden tools, but definitely a good tool to have. Available at

The narrow spade is a new ergonomic invention. We discovered this by accident. We had tried to design a good narrow spade and were looking on the internet for something we could cut down to make the tool we were imagining. While cruising through garden tools, found this near perfect form. The narrowness of the blade makes it very easy to dig in hard soil, the pedals on either side give good leverage, the round handle seems fine- neither better than nor worse than other. Do like the plastic handle over metal form. It has stood up to years of mud and dirt without deterioration. Buy from

Grandpa's Weeder is a new/old tool. We had never seen one before Melanie showed us an old one she had. The simplicity of the concept is excellent. Kids seem to gravitate to it and want to go around unearthing all sorts of weeds. We like it because you can pick up the weed without bending over. It also hangs nicely on the peg board.

TO DO IN THE MAY GARDEN

2023

IN OUR HERB GARDEN Start harvesting herbs as many perennials bloom this month. 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. Or use a dehydrater. Once dry, store them in airtight containers away from sunlight and they should last for several months. Place label and date on the jar. Continue to plant basils.

Plant summer everlastings (examples are globe amaranth, sweet Annie, cockscomb, salvias, tansy, etc.). Plant lemon grass.

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.

Feed container-grown plants with a balanced fertilizer such as 20-20-20. Be sure to water before fertilizing.

FLOWERS Columbine seeds are mature. Plant them in containers in potting soil now and they will be ready to transplant in fall.

Do not let Amaryllis or Daylilies form fruits. Cut them off! Seed production takes away food from future flowering.

Fertilize container plants every week or two with liquid fertilizer.

Use scissors to thin out flowers you're growing from seed. Thinning will improve the quality of the flowers and cutting scissors will not disturb roots.

New plants require frequent watering to establish their roots. Prolonged dry soil can cause permanent damage. Perennial selections in nurseries are excellent. Choose vigorous summer and fall blooming plants.

If you want to encourage BUTTERFLIES in your garden, do not use insecticides, especially products with Bt which will kill the larvae (caterpillars).

It is more than just an old wives' tale but also good practice to place a small piece of charcoal in each vase of cut flowers. The charcoal draws bacteria and keeps the water fresh and free of odor.

The red powdery spots on the bottoms of snapdragon leaves are rust. It is time to relegate snaps to the compost pile.

IN OUR ROSE GARDEN The first week or two of May usually is the lowest point of the entire blooming season. Watch for spider mites. Take action at the first indication. They are not too hard to control if we do not let them get a head start. First-year gardens often escape mites if they were planted with clean stock, but before long the birds, the wind or whatever will bring them in.

Keeping spent blooms cut will make the garden look better, reduce thrips and improve the growth of the bush. If one is short of time, simply snapping off the faded bloom at the peduncle is quite acceptable. It may even make for better growth of young plants.

Keep beds well-mulched. In our area a heavy mulch has proven very beneficial. Almost any organic material can be used that lets the rain and air through, yet minimizes evaporation from the soil. A good mulch keeps down the weeds, keeps the soil cooler and adds hu-

mus to the soil. Better growers in our area do not neglect it. Fluff it up from time to time with a fork to maximize its insulating quality.

Green wood cuttings can be made now, using one of the many rooting methods available. May is the best time to bud and now is a good time to learn how. Most serious rose growers will want to learn to bud the varieties not readily available commercially.

IN THE GARDEN 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.

If you fertilize your tomato plants heavily with a nitrogen fertilizer at planting time, you will likely get very large plants but few tomatoes. Instead, wait until your plants have produced small tomatoes (about the size of a large marble) and then apply a handful or so of fertilizer to each plant every week during the growing season. You may not have 10-feet-tall plants but you should have buckets of vine-ripened fruit to enjoy and share with friends and neighbors.

Protect vegetables such as squash, eggplant, okra and tomatoes from harsh direct sunlight to keep them from burning or wilting.

Earthworms are one of the most 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.

BIRDS Goldfinches have migrated back up north! Watch feeder and take it down if not in use. 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.

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 (they like the fermented drink, that's why they fly like they do!) To attract songbirds to your yard during dry weather, place a bird bath in an "open" area that is about 6 ft. from cover. You can enjoy their songs while helping to meet their water needs.

YARD If 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). Fertilize your lawn with a slow-release lawn fertilizer. Choose a fertilizer that is high in nitrogen and low in phosphorous and potassium. Many soil test are showing high amounts of phosphorous and potassium. Some of the common formulas are 19-5-9, 20-5-10, 21-7-14, 27-2-2, 21-0-0 and 9-1-1. (The "right" formula depends on your soil conditions, have it tested every 3 to 4 years or just watch the weeds in your yard, they can signal deficiencies or excesses. Add compost around newly planted trees and shrubs.

Sharpen mower blades. Dull blades tear the grass, which makes plants more susceptible to disease. Mulch those shrubs.

Water lawns only when blades first show signs of wilting (when your footprints do not spring up as you walk across it) in the morning. Avoid watering in the evening.

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, these are perfect conditions for fireflies (Fireflies can be seen arising in the evening out of meadow grasses or kneehigh 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

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, May 29
We meet at 8 A.M.
Contact robinmaymar@gmail.com for simple safety measures and directions for parking. See you then.

Herb Society Board

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Robin Maymar

robinmaymar@gmail.com

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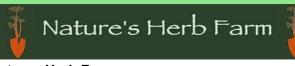
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