



NEWSLETTER OF THE SAN ANTONIO HERB SOCIETY
JUNE 2023

Lavender! Lavender! Lavender!

There is a lot to be said about lavender. Our speakers will help us understand how essential oil is distilled, some of the issues with growing lavender here in South Texas, the various varieties, culinary uses for lavender and some wonderful herbal applications. Our refreshments will center around lavender. There will be recipes. And salves, and all things dealing with lavender.



Lavender is finicky and hard for new gardeners to grow. It does not like to have its feet wet, and with our feast and famine rain patterns, any lavender with poor drainage has a hard time surviving. So, come to our meeting to get the low-down on drainage, soil, sunshine and growing.

We also challenge you to use lavender. In a salve or a balm or a recipe or even just in a flower arrangement. Come and bring your lavender ideas.

There are a number of fancy cocktails that involve lavender. Do we have few designated drivers, so we can sample? Who knows. And, of course, you know what color to wear for our meeting?

**SAN ANTONIO
HERB SOCIETY**
Mark your calendar for
Thursday
June 8, 2023
3310 N. New Braunfels
San Antonio, 79209

Social at 6:30 N-Z bring refreshments
Meeting at 7

Meetings are free and open to the public.
sanantonioperbs.org

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FESTIVAL OF FLOWERS—IS SO FUN!

Festival of Flowers is a day long event, Saturday June 3 at Shrine Auditorium. It has returned after a three year absence. There is an indoor mall for plants, gardening supplies and a farmer's market with local produce, eggs and honey. Exhibitors include nurseries, landscapers, growers, artisans and us! Non profits.

There will also be a large plant exchange. Really large. The largest plant exchange in Texas.

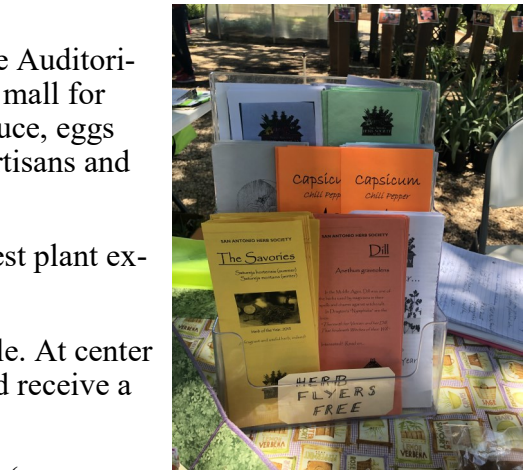
There will be how-to gardening seminars and Organic Roundtable. At center stage, children can work with plants, soil and gardening tools and receive a potted plant to care for at home.

Stop by SAWS Conservation Station for a free WaterSaver plant (one per adult) while supplies last. And gather some water-saver information as well.

Address 901 N. Loop 1604 at Stoneoak Parkway The event is from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m Admission is \$8, children 10 and under get in free.

See p 6 for more details We will have sign ups for groups at meeting.

Downsizing? We have been looking at our first-floor storage unit. Half of the volume is taken up with large totes of paperwork from previous years. Marsha Wilson and Robin Maymar spent time going through two totes. They determined that much of the paperwork was not necessary to keep as it was old receipts and bank statements. So, we are considering moving to an upper story and smaller storage area. We are very pleased with the cleanliness of the storage units and the accessibility.



The move will be on our agenda for the June 8 meeting. A simple vote with an explanation of the costs and volunteers who can help us physically move. The most important part is to glean information from records of previous meetings.- what was important to the society? What activities were good fund raisers. What drew the interest of the members. As we go through the archives, it would be nice to have members help us with this project.

Urban Herbal Please Note: William Varney, one of our Business Sponsors, is now in San Antonio 137 E. Woodlawn, 78212 by appointment , (830) 456-9667

LAVENDER— HERB OF THE MONTH

Lavandula is a genus of 47 known species of flowering plants in the mint family, *Lamiaceae*. It is native to the Old World and is found in Cape Verde and the Canary Islands, and from Europe across to northern and eastern Africa, the Mediterranean, southwest Asia to India (Wikipedia)



Ellen Platt, in her book *Lavender: how to Grow and Use the Fragrant Herb*, suggests “Plant a fragrance garden where you will enjoy the benefits: the late-spring and summer-blooming plants around a patio; earlier fragrant plants on a path or at the entranceway, where you can enjoy the perfume coming and going. Plant creeping thyme between the flagstones that you tread upon entering and leaving your home. Include a bed of narcissus varieties and hyacinths early in the season, some lavenders like *L. angustifolia* or *L. x intermedia*, lily of the valley, a well-behaved mint like mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum pilous*), summer lilies like rubrums, scented geraniums or lemon verbena, a fragrant heliotrope, peonies (won’t grow here in San Antonio), bee balm, roses, and for late appeal. Sweet Annie (*Artemisia annua*)”

She explains that her romantic idea was to be able to open the windows and have the fragrance of the garden waft through the house. Unfortunately, the windows were terribly hard to open and the plants were not blooming when she wanted to open the windows. “Pay attention to the bloom time,” she writes. “Select plants with a sequence of bloom that you can enjoy for at least eight months of the year”

Or grow lavender in hedges. “Where lavender grows in abundance, linen are still draped over the small shrubs to dry. The evaporating oils infuse the linen with fragrance. Imagine a closetful of sheets, warm from the sun and redolent with the aroma of lavender.” We will have lavender spritzers for sale at our meeting. Nothing beats using this when ironing linens. We wonder if you could use it on sheets tossed into the dryer.

Attract butterflies, Add to a mixed perennial border, Add to a rock garden. Plant in a container. Even make a topiary or bonsai. There are a lot of gardening ideas where we could include lavender.

You can even add lavender into your moon garden. The concept here is to choose a variety of blooming plants that all bloom white. In the moonlight, these show up better than any other color. Lavenders with their whitish leaves are a great addition to the garden. There are varieties that are white or soft pink that will enhance the moon garden.

Although fragrance comes to mind first, lavender can also be used in the kitchen. Lavender sugar is used for topping on cookies or in our London Fog tea on the foamed milk. “In the Provence region of France, lavender may be selected for a *bouquet garni* of *herbs de Provence*, a bundle of herb sprigs tied with a string for easy removal from the pot. The fines herbes traditionally include parsley, chives, tarragon, thyme and chervil, to which are added one or more stems of basil, fennel, sage, saffron, or lavender. The flavor of the herbs is designed to enhance the main ingredients and shouldn’t dominate the dish.

As many who watch The Great British Baking Show, a little lavender goes a long way when using it in cooking. If ½ teaspoon of dried lavender imparts a subtle and delicious flavor, 3 teaspoons in the same dish may be overwhelming. Release the oils of lavender by gently bruising the buds, rubbed between your fingers before dropping them into the pot.

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

LAVENDER HERBED POTATO SALAD (*From Lavender How to Grow and Use the Fragrant Herb* by Ellen Spector Platt, 1999)

A tasty but low-fat contribution to a cookout or picnic is always appreciated. Rather than using low-fat mayonnaise, I substitute yogurt, which imparts both moisture and tang to the dish.

Boil unpeeled potatoes till soft but not mushy. Drain and let cool. Slice with skin or cut in half, depending on size; leave small ones whole. Mix the herbs and seasoning with the yogurt, and gently stir into the potatoes. Garnish with edible flowers. Refrigerate till serving time. Serves 6.

Ingredients

3 pounds flavorful small potatoes, like Red Bliss or Yukon Gold

1 cup low-fat plain yogurt

2 cups chopped young loveage or celery with leaves

½ cup chopped chives or green scallions

1 tablespoon fresh lavender flowers or ½ tablespoon dried buds

Salt and pepper to taste

2 tablespoons Dijon-style mustard

½ cup borage flowers, calendula, chive, dill, or other edible flowers, add purple basil leaves for garnish.



Weed and Gloat Journal

9 a.m. 78 degrees or so.

The Bee Balm has exploded! Standing over three feet tall it dominates the south garden. It is covered with purple flowers. Looks like a firework explosion that has frozen in place. You can eat all the leaves, stems and flowers. So we trimmed it back, ready to experiment with drying it upside down and making a beautiful purple tea. More on Bee Balm next month.

Basil and Mary Jo arrived just in time for Basil to trim back the invading rose canes finding their way in from next door. Mary Joe set to work on the mint, which, again, has taken over everything. We are considering consigning it to a barrel.

The parsley, which was ready to go to seed last month, has hundreds of umbrels and is also almost three feet tall. We surveyed for all our missing plants and found them under the parsley. Patsy and Marsha both set out to pull back all but one stand of the parsley. Our thinking is that the seeds will sow themselves and we may find new parsley around the edges, where we want them to grow. We revealed two rosemarys, three very robust fenels, two meagre looking calendulas, and two lemon grasses.



We were enviously looking at a “Knot Garden” in a book and realized that if we placed our plants just so we could easily make one for ourselves... but only if this rain keeps up. We expect it will end soon and we will be headed into heat and dry days.

The germander, placed by the fence to form a small hedge has not disappointed. It is beginning to bush out, looking shiny and green. We will try a piece or two for propagation, to fill in the whole space we planned on.

We worked for an hour and a half. The timer went off to remind us to begin cleaning up. Took another half hour. We had had so many visitors on the holiday that we had spent less time than we planned. We sat on the benches and looked at our good work. There are three blank spaces in the front that either need some hardscape or some low-growing herbs. Began drafting a request to the gardeners. Would love to see some creeping thyme, but, so far, have not had any personal success with it. Must do more research...



Upcoming Events

Our next General Meeting will be the second Thursday on June 8, 2023 at 6:30 Members whose last names begin with A through Maymar are tasked with bringing refreshments.

• * * * * *

Festival of Flowers : Saturday, **June 3rd** from 9-5 at Alzar Shrine Auditorium 901 N Loop 1604 at Stone Oak Parkway This is the 23rd Festival of Flowers. We need more volunteers to help at our booth. The parking is free. The building is air conditioned. There will be seminars, plant exchanges, flower shows and lots of very interesting vendors. This is usually a fun-filled experience. Plan to attend and bring a friend.

Volunteers need to have tickets for admission, so be sure to contact Robin by Friday morning so she can include you in. (830) 459-8415. We will have a booth featuring our Ollas, cookbooks, flyers and all sorts of herbal things.

Lavender Festival Friday June 9, Saturday the 10th and Sunday the 11th. Blanco Texas at Hill Country Lavender Farm 8241 Farm to Market 165. From the Blanco Town square: take 163 (4th Street) East, go 0.5 miles The farm is located on the right side of the road. Friday 9 am to 5 pm Saturday 9-5 Sunday 10-4



BASILFEST RECAP

We met so many new friends at the BasilFest, in spite of wild weather all night and our hidden location. BasilFest seems to keep shrinking. Mary Dunford brought herbs for sale and there were a few vendors. Access to vehicles was extremely limited and required turning around in an alley, staying with your vehicle while it was unloaded. Parking for vendors was tiny (four spaces) and two hour free parking had no attendant, so you could not pay cash. We ended up paying thirty dollars for parking. A number of customers said they missed the “Good old Days” when we met at an Aggie Park on West Avenue.

Elliott was one of the first customers to come by on Saturday. We had set up the table but still had the tri-fold picture display on Ollas to set up. “Why don’t you fill that Olla with water and put it on that white square so everyone can see how it works?” he asked. Great Idea! We found an empty plastic bottle, filled the olla and just like in the picture small sweat drops of water began slowly forming. It was fascinating to watch, because it gives you a sense of how slowly the water is released. Just the right speed for the plant. Just as the leaves sense the sun and grow toward it, the nearby roots sense the water and grow toward the pot. When they reach the surface they grip ahold and in my imagination, they begin to gently suck the water off of the wet surface. A scientist could probably describe it in better terms. The essence is that the water goes directly to the root and then throughout the plant.



We cobbled bungee cords and hooks to put up the poster on a cart behind the olla. This was the hit of the sale. Many, many people came by; some took pictures, some bought ollas or wrote down information. We are thinking that this may be a new staple for sales. I don’t think saving water will go out of style any time soon. The more we use the ollas, the more water we save, and the more we realize how flexible and simple this watering system is.

TO DO IN THE JUNE GARDEN

2023

In Our Herb Garden: Divide, replant and share Mexican mint marigold (*Tagetes lucida*) and chrysanthemums so you will have more flowers in fall.

Shape plants by pruning gently, pinch back blossoms to save plants from going to seed and cross-pollinating. Maintaining 2" of mulch is the key to saving water, discouraging weeds and cooling the soil. Check watering system(s). Drip irrigation is ideal. Water early in the morning and deeply, check on a regular basis. Caution: do not over-water, keep water-thirsty plants separate from more tolerant plants (this makes watering chores much easier). It is easy to kill sage, rosemary or lavender by being too kind with water. During periods of high heat and humidity, check and apply "earth-kind" treatments for pests, such as spider mites, white flies, aphids and mealy bugs.

Preventing "Takeovers". Flowers like feverfew are pretty- but they can take over your garden if you allow them to set seed. It is best to cut off most of the flowers as they fade, leaving just a few to self-sow. Keep mints and others from "takeovers", by keeping them containerized or cutting them back to avoid layering.

A YEAR IN THE ROSE GARDEN: by A. J. "Pop" Warner

It is the same song; only let us slow down the tempo a bit. It is time now to relax a bit; the days are long and there is no hurry to get through before dark.

Some things never change, however. Roses need lots of water in hot, windy weather. Unsprayed roses get blackspot. Light colored roses turn brown with thrips if not misted with *Orthene* or *Cygon*(?). Winter damage continued to show up all through May. Weeds love warm weather and are a problem in un-mulched or lightly mulched beds.

The initial effort in establishing good mulch pays off all summer long. It lessens the need for watering, cuts out most of the weeding, keeps the beds cool and provides a continuing source of organic matter. In addition it prevents splashing on to the leaves, minimizes water run-off and helps distribute fertilizer evenly. We recently read in a bulletin from another state, where the writer hated mulches and did not use them. No doubt he had good roses because roses are tolerant plants, but we wager they would be 100% better with good mulch. Besides, he wouldn't have to work nearly as hard.

DO NOT spray any insecticide until insects appear. Most insecticides approved for use nowadays have a very short residual, so wait until the guests arrive to feed them.

Make a Spray Chart if you are using poisons in the garden Review your Spray Chart every time you spray. Memory plays tricks, even on the young and young-at-heart. It is suggested you do not vary from the specified dilution. Leaves are more susceptible to spray-burn in hot weather, but there is no reason to believe the pests are.

VEGETABLE GARDEN If BIRDS are attacking your tomatoes, try harvesting them when they turn from green to white. They will be nearly as good as vine ripened in a day or two. Or put a large plastic snake draped over the plant. Even a small snake will scare birds away.

Don't put pine needles or wood chips in the compost pile unless you add lime (here in S.A. you can with no problem). Better to use them just as they are - a perfect mulch for blueberries, azaleas and other acid-loving plants. It is time to compost squash, Brussels sprouts and other vegetable plants that are at the end of their productive life and infected with powdery mildew (if you can find a good "clean cutting" from your old plant, you may be able to root in a pot and prepare it for fall planting)

Keep in mind that companion planting can help enhance kitchen flavorings while at the same time discouraging pesky insect population. Plant garlic to deter red spider mites.

2nd week Solarize your vegetable garden, if appropriate, for the next three or four weeks Start tomato and pepper seeds now so you can be ready for fall planting. Pull or hoe weeds before they mature and produce

seed.

FLOWERS Remove spent flower spikes from all salvias. Blue salvias, zinnias, vinca and esperanza are good summer blooming plants that the DEER do not eat (when given a choice!!!) Plant iris, spider lilies, gloriosa lilies and caladiums. Sun-loving flowers such as portulaca (moss rose) and purslane still can be planted. If you had a good season with flowering sweet pea, inspect and pull dried seed pods and save for sharing and fall sowing. Bougainvillea don't like to be pampered. Let them get rootbound and let them dry out to 1" below the soil line between waterings. Fertilize every 4 weeks with hibiscus food for a bountiful bloom. Rotate houseplants so each side receives adequate light for even growth and balanced shape.

If container plants such as geraniums are declining despite regular watering, move them to a less sunny spot. Be careful to gradually decrease the amount of light they receive.

For dry, sunny beds now is the time to plant vinca for summer bloom. Water in the mornings or use drip irrigation (sprinkling over the top causes fungal dieback). Mulch beds.

To encourage more flowers on annuals and perennials, remove faded flowers before plants set seed.

Remove faded flowers from zinnias and roses for a longer bloom season. Get the same effect on verbena and lantana by skimming the plants with a string mower/ trimmer every four weeks.

Place firebush in a container to attract hummingbirds to the patio. The plant needs full sun. If you have a shady patio, use firespike instead.

Select day lily varieties this month as the plants reach their peak bloom.

Now is the time to plan for next spring. Consider digging and dividing any crowded spring bulbs. Once bulbs have matured and the foliage has turned brown, it is time to spade them up and thin out the stand. Crowded bulbs produce fewer and smaller blooms. They usually need thinning every 3 to 4 years (taller ones need support from each other to stand, so use discretion when dividing). Replant immediately in prepared soils.

YARD Consider Mexican dwarf petunia (*Ruellia brittoniana* "Katie") as a ground cover for the shade. The flowers are violet-blue. "Bonita" is a pink version of the mounding plant with dark green foliage. Prune actively growing shrubs, such as elaeagnus and pyracantha, frequently.

4th WEEK: Check lawn condition, repair/ replace. Apply a foliar iron spray to chlorotic St. Augustine grass (and other plants) showing signs of chlorosis- yellow leaves with green veins.

WATER Water left over from cooking (unsalted) vegetables is perfect for watering houseplants since it contains lots of nutrients. Old water from an aquarium is rich in oxygen and nutrients that are good for most houseplants.



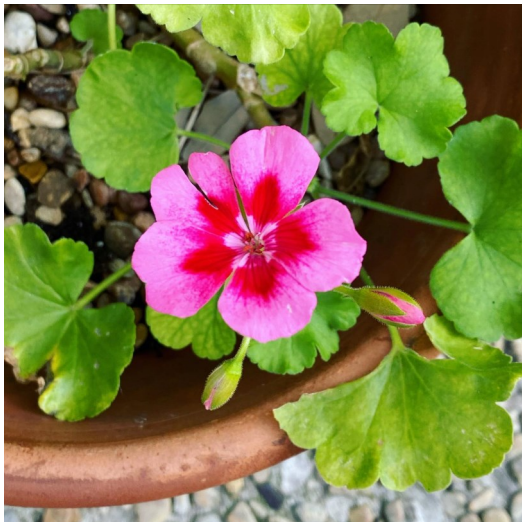
Interesting Friend

Dutchman’s pipe is not an herb. This little plant arrived one day about three years ago in the Botanical Gardens Herb Patch. When we did the research, local nurseries were offering them for a high price. We decided to keep it, which has been hard because every new weeder sees it as a weed and pulls it up.

Today it is blooming. It is hard to find because all the Mexican mint marigold has grown up around it. But it seems not to mind, and has grown to the top



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, June 26
We will really meet at 8 A.M. this time
Contact robinmaymar@gmail.com for simple safety measures and directions for parking. See you then.



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