



POTOMAC POTPOURRI

The Newsletter of THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA. POTOMAC UNIT
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I know that spring will come. Before this snow storm outside my window, daffodils were popping up everywhere. Snowdrops and crocus were blooming, maybe a month late, but they were blooming. Winter weeds were very happy. But it was cold so I have put off pruning the roses and doing fall clean-up. Leaving plants in the ground over winter for the birds and animals is just fine until spring comes and then there is a ton of work to be done and not enough warm days. It is almost time to plant peas and greens. Barbara Damrosch, in a long ago Washington Post article, said the time to plant peas is when the daffodils bloom. Suzy Bakshian doesn't wait that long and it has been noted that she has the best luck with peas in the community garden, though that luck may not be spectacular except when it comes to her sweet peas. Damrosch also says the time to plant tomatoes is when you can sit bare bottomed on the ground. I have not tried that and it will not be allowed in the community garden. I hope March 16, when we have our Spring unit meeting at American University is a nice spring like day. The campus is now an arboretum, as those of us who were at last March's meeting there and saw pictures of the campus know. It would be wonderful if it were warm enough to walk around.

I attended the February Herb Study on Juniper Berries. As usual, it was an interesting and fun session, but sparsely attended. Mary Schwegler always does a lot of research, as does Pat Kenny and Betsy Reece. I do a little but know I can depend on them. And of course there is interesting food, some using the topic of the day (lots of gin and gin tasting this time) and sometimes not. I know we all have so many activities, but this is a worthwhile one. And don't feel you have to bring food. Only twice during my time as a Potomac Unit member was there a minimal amount of food and no one seemed to notice or complain.

I have not been in the National Herb Garden since early December. I was on my ski trip the one beautiful Tuesday, not a bad trade off, but I look forward to getting back there. I hope some of you will join us for an Under the Arbor Program this year. A multi-unit program is scheduled for May 18 on based loosely on teas. I hope the Unit will participate. We could bring something from an herb study or other topic that unit members would like to demonstrate. The chile celebration will be October 12. I am keeping my eye out for an interesting recipe to spice up the event. Pat Kenny brought me some interesting tomatillo seeds so maybe there will be a different slant to Tommy's smoked tomatillo salsa this year. Kim Labash and I will be at the Arboretum this weekend. We have been invited to a Friends of the National Arboretum Plant Sale committee meeting. We were supposed to be members of the committee, but I doubt that this is the first meeting. We are hoping to be treated better by FONA than last year. They may not realize it but they need us as they hold many events in the herb garden and our support of the garden keeps it looking good.

Hope to see you in March and at the Herb Garden!

Penni

National Herb Garden Activities

May 17 - NHG Committee work day. All welcome
May 18 - Multi-Unit Under the Arbor Program
June 22 - Philadelphia Unit Tussie Mussies, probably
June 29 - Lavender
September 7 - South Jersey Lemon Herbs
September 21 - Botanical Brews
October 12 - Chile Celebration

OUR NEXT UNIT MEETING is Saturday, March 16th, 2019, 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. We will return to the **Katzen Art Center** at American University, Room 210. Our speaker will be **Erin Holden**, who was an intern for the National Herb Garden 2013 to 2014. She holds a Masters of Herbal Medicine from the Maryland

University of Integrative Health and is a Certified Herbalist. She is now the gardener for the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum at the U.S. National Arboretum.

In addition to working at the Arboretum, Erin, as a clinical herbalist, has served as a teaching assistant for different herbal medicine graduate courses, and recently helped launch *Herban Lifestyles*, an herbal workshop series at the Arboretum that teaches people how to incorporate herbs into their everyday lives.

As our March speaker Erin has chosen the title "Herbal Bitters - A spring tonic for any time of the year". She says, "bitters are currently a hot trend in the world of cocktails, but their use is much older and broader than just adding flavor to tasty beverages." Erin will explore the history of bitters and current research behind their medicinal use. Find out how they can support a healthy digestive system, and learn how to make your very own bitters at home. A variety of hand-crafted bitters will be available for tasting.

Free parking on weekends in the garage under the Katzen Art Center makes this Unit Meeting venue favorable, so let's enjoy it. 4400 Massachusetts Avenue (Massachusetts and Nebraska Avenues), Washington, D.C. 20016. See you there!

SPEAKING OF THE PLANT SALE

There is good winter-thinking and plant-planning time ahead. Soon will be the time to order, start thinking about germinating (in February and March), and growing some different herbs to contribute to the plant sale. We are going to need as many pots of the native 2019 Herb of the Year Anise Hyssop as we can provide. We used to have more members who potted up some of their spreading perennials such as garlic chives, the beebalms, the mountain mints costmary, and catmints, early enough in late autumn or March so that they look spiffy for our April customers. Mary Lou Winder is a champion of the native plant section; see if you can help her be of further service this season. Although the National Library of Medicine Herb Garden workers already diligently worked on diminishing the overflow of many of their herbs, call Ermona McGoodwin in March to see if winter has created a potential abundance of something of which they do not need.

ROSE BEAD WORKSHOP. MARCH 22

Our last bead workshop before the plant sale is scheduled for Friday, March 22, at the Arlington home of Eugenia Yang. We'll follow our usual pattern of meeting at 10, working for a couple of hours, then finishing with a potluck lunch. If you plan to attend, let me know so I can tell Eugenia how many of us to

expect. By then we shouldn't have to worry about snow, I hope!

Mary Lou Winder

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HORTICULTURAL/BOTANICAL NEWS

From the 116th Issue of the 2017 *HerbalGram*, American Botanical Council, Austin Texas, comes the following:

"The United Plant Savers (UpS) is a non-profit, grassroots membership organization that was founded in 1994. Its mission is 'to protect native medicinal plants of the United States and Canada and their native habitat while ensuring an abundant and renewable supply of medicinal plants for generation to come'. Construction of the organization's new Center for Medicinal Plant Conservation will begin soon"; "soon" happened and the dedication will be this September 2019.

"The center, which will be about 1,600 square feet and open to the public, will sit at the entrance of the 379-acre UpS Sanctuary in Rutland, Ohio [and] will be dedicated to revered ethnobotanist James A. Duke, PhD. and his wife, Peggy, a botanical artist".

Several of the members of the Herb Society of America, the National Herb Garden Committee, and International Herb Association are also members of UpS and are planning to attend this dedication. The International Herb Association is planning to locate its annual meeting at a nearby conference center so all can attend. If there are any Potomac Unit members who would also like to go with us, please let me know.

Pat Kenny

ANNUAL UNIT MEETING AND PICNIC

Save the date Sunday, June 2nd, 2019, 11:00 am. to 2:00 pm. for our annual Unit meeting and picnic at the home of our Treasurer Barry Eigen and his lovely bride, Rosemary. We were welcomed there last year, and the event was delightful. Details and directions to the lovely suburbs of Ellicott City, MD, will be published in the next newsletter.

HERB STUDY PROGRAM UPDATE

Hello Herbsters!

Next Herb Study will be held **Sunday, April 14** from 2-4 pm, at **Jo Sellers's** home in Annandale.

Topic: RUBUS spp. (Blackberries, Raspberries, et al.). Please confirm attendance to me if you can.

We had a great meeting Sunday February 17. Convening at 2 pm, we circulated sample berries and fruited boughs of the genus *Juniper*, and discussed its history and medicinal and craft uses. While we discussed the history and manufacture of gin, for which juniper is the defining herb, Betsy treated us to an aperitif of Maine sarsaparilla, a root beverage made from a member of the Ginseng Family.

We were anxious to begin our tastings and tried Hendricks and The Botanist premium gins, Tanqueray, and for those who dared, rotgut Aristocrat, neat and with various tonics. The Botanist is formulated with 22 botanicals, their names impressed on its unique bottles, and typifies some of the newer “herbal” craft gins. Delicious! Members provided snacks of herbed walnuts and kimchi dip with peppers to complement the tastings. Then we dined on Betsy’s refined cabbage soup with sausage and juniper berries, and on gin marinated olives. Dessert was more gin with other mixers, and Mother’s Ruin Cake, basically a glazed lemon cake with gin and limes added. “Mother’s Ruin” refers to an old epithet for gin, which was blamed for the corruption of women in the times of Hogarth’s etchings depicting the notorious Gin Lane.

Many thanks to Betsy Reece for her gracious hospitality, and to Betsy, Penni, Jo, and Pat Kenny for their generous and enthusiastic participation. Pat gave us samples of the Hunt Country Marinade from the HSA website to take home and try with our grilled meat or poultry. We soberly closed the meeting at 5:20 pm.

At our next meeting, at Jo Sellers’s house on April 14, we will study the “brambles,” members of the genus *Rubus*, the 2020 Herb of the Year. These include raspberries and blackberries. Get your recipes out to show off your specialties! Our brambles discussion will continue the theme of “woodies in our backyards,” woody plants, typically natives to Virginia, Maryland and/or the District, that have herbal uses. Bramble berries (aggregate fruits) and their plants have medicinal and craft uses as well as their delicious culinary applications. In late summer we will study sassafras, its relatives, and other “root beer” herbs, and in the autumn we will study cranberries, blueberries and other members of the vaccinium tribe. We discussed the possibilities of assisting the multi-unit Under the Arbor event on Tea (both *Camellia sinensis* and *tisanes*), or presenting our own Under the Arbor, featuring the herbs scheduled for study this year.

Please stay tuned and plan to join us and share your ideas, research and/or cookery. All we ask is that you bring your curiosity and love of things herbal. We are a jolly bunch of students!

GIN MARINATED OLIVES

<https://lydiasflexitariankitchen.com>

The gin is said to be optional, but “gives a nice flavor.” To me, that’s what the recipe is about. We served this at our Herb Study February 2019.

Ingredients

8 ounces mixed olives, drained
1 or 2 cloves of garlic, smashed
several stems of thyme or oregano or rosemary, or dried herbs
1 small lemon, sliced thinly
½ cup good olive oil, more or less
½ cup decent but ordinary gin, more or less
(dash of Chinese hot chili oil, optional)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Mix the olives, garlic, herbs and lemon in a small mixing bowl with the olive oil and gin. Transfer to an oven proof dish, deep enough to hold the olives. Add more gin and olive oil if needed. Bake for about 30 minutes to an hour. Refrigerate leftovers in marinade for later use.

I doubled up the recipe and it took about all of a 15 oz. net weight jar of pimento olives. This recipe transforms cheap olives into something special. Enjoy in hand, or as part of a cheese plate or in canapes. Would be a nice fast addition to stovetop braised chicken thighs or chopped as a topping to fish, potatoes, or other savory foods.

HOT GIN TODDY: A STEAMING CUP OF BOTANICALS

<https://www.thespruceeats.com/>

I haven’t tried either of these warm drinks but they sound wonderful for these cold and wet nights. The real beauty of this toddy is claimed to be how the botanicals open up when the hot water hits them. The site recommends a juniper-heavy gin like Tanqueray. Good “Navy Strength” gin would also be fantastic.

The warmth of the botanicals may indeed be an ideal way to soothe a sore throat ... hearkening back to ancient uses of the herb juniper for all kinds of throat and chest problems. The alcohol is a bonus!

Ingredients

1 1/2 ounces London Dry Gin
3/4 ounce lemon juice
2 ounces hot water

Build the ingredients in a wine goblet, brandy snifter, or glass mug. Stir well. Garnish with a cinnamon stick. Adjust the toddy to your taste.

MULLED GIN AND GINGER BEER WINTER WARMER

<http://www.foodiequine.co.uk>

Another beverage that sounds good for this lingering on again/off again winter weather. Online, the beverage variations using gin are limitless, including both hot and cold combinations with regular tea. Citrus and tropical spices are typical flavorings for the hot beverages. 2 generous servings.

Ingredients

500ml Fentimans Ginger Beer and Muddled Lime, or equivalent
100ml Gin
2 lime wedges, each studded with 3 cloves
2 cinnamon sticks
2 star anise
2 slices of fresh ginger
1Tbsp golden caster sugar (or white or light brown)

In a small saucepan, simmer all ingredients on low heat for five minutes. (DO NOT BOIL.) When ready, place one lime wedge, cinnamon stick, star anise and ginger slice from the saucepan into each serving mug/glass. Pour the hot mixture on top and serve immediately.

Cheers!

Mary Schwegler 703.774.6631

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE HERB GARDEN EVENTS

Thursday, April 25, the garden will participate in "Take Your Kids to Work Day"

Monday, June 10, the garden will have open house from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

ENDNOTE

We encourage all our members to help get the word out to all plant interested friends and colleagues that the Potomac Unit is 'here and happening' and eagerly awaiting new people with a similar interest. We now have a variety of membership levels - \$15 (for the Unit newsletter). \$25.00 for an interim (trial) one year Unit membership as well as the traditional \$ 60.00 HSA membership. We also have over half of our Unit meetings scheduled on an evening or weekend day time to better accommodate those with a customary 9-5 work schedule.

Opinions expressed in the Potpourri are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Herb Society of America (HSA) or the HSA Potomac Unit. Responsibility for the safe use of any herb or herb product lies with the reader.

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The content deadline for the next issue of the Potpourri is April 20, 2019.

News of member and civic or nonprofit horticulturally themed events is welcome. Publication is at the sole discretion of the editor, who reserves the right to edit for brevity or any other reason. Neither the Potomac Unit nor the Herb Society of America endorses any product or event unless the product or event is specifically sponsored by the Unit or Society.

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