Herb Society of Manitoba News

Winter 2024 Newsletter of the Herb Society of Manitoba

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Mark Your Calendars!

The Herb Society of Manitoba meets the third Monday of each month, or the fourth Monday if a holiday falls on the third (except December, July and August) at 7:00 p.m .Meeting room of the Mennonite University, SOUTH CAMPUS. Free admission for members. Non-members pay $5.00 per person.Each meeting consists of an array of herbal snacks, an Herbal Marketplace, door prizes, and a special speaker to end off the evening. Meetings are available via Zoom.

The Herb Society of Manitoba is dedicated to promoting knowledge, use and enjoyment of herbs through education, programs, research and sharing the experience of its members with the community.

Editors' Message

Happy New Year!

Hello and welcome back, this year's speakers will be interesting and exciting, we are looking forward to their presentations. Thank you to everyone who attended the AGM for both your generous contributions to Willow Place and your delicious treats for the evening. At the November Annual General Meeting, we collected 3 large boxes of food, toys, towels, personal hygiene items and treats, as well as $120 cash.
Kathleen delivered the donations to Willow Place at the end of November. The representative we spoke to on the phone was very appreciative and she asked us to express their gratitude to the Herb Society.

We would like to welcome the members to their new positions and thank those who have agreed to remain in their positions for another term.

Treasurer - Sherrie
Communication – vacant
Membership – Diane
Programming – Cindy
Hospitality – Dawn, Gwyn
Newsletter – Kathleen, Ellen
Herb Garden – Dawn
Secretary - vacant

Kathleen Land and Ellen Locke
Editors, Herb Society of Manitoba News

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Common Sense Warning
Any information in the ***Herb Society of Manitoba News*** is not intended to prescribe or diagnose in any way or meant to substitute for professional help in any way. The intent is to offer general information & historical use of herbs.

President's Message

I hope your activities over the past month left you with many fond memories. The December holidays are one of the few times my whole family gets together. It is a lot of work, but most good things require some work to make them happen.

The Herb Society is at a point in its history where we all need to work to get it thriving again.

Cindy L. has a great line up of interesting speakers for the next few months. Please let your friends and associates know about the programs. Invite them to come and enjoy an evening and learn from our speakers!

I was given a jar of Herbs de Provence among my Christmas gifts. (It was the herbs that are generally found in this mixture that inspired our herb of the month list for 2023 - 2024.)
I threw a bunch into a vegetable soup I made - and was surprised at the delightful difference it made to the taste of the soup!

I hope that 2024 will be a good year for all of you and look forward to seeing you at the monthly meetings!

Shelley Walker
President

Membership

There are 22 individual memberships, 1 family membership of 2 people,1 1 student membership and 7 lifetime memberships.
This month, I'll be following up with members who have not yet renewed. I hope you are all having a happy New Year so far and I look forward to seeing many of you at the next member meeting.

Diane Wall
Membership Chair, Herb Society of Manitoba

2023 Annual General Meeting

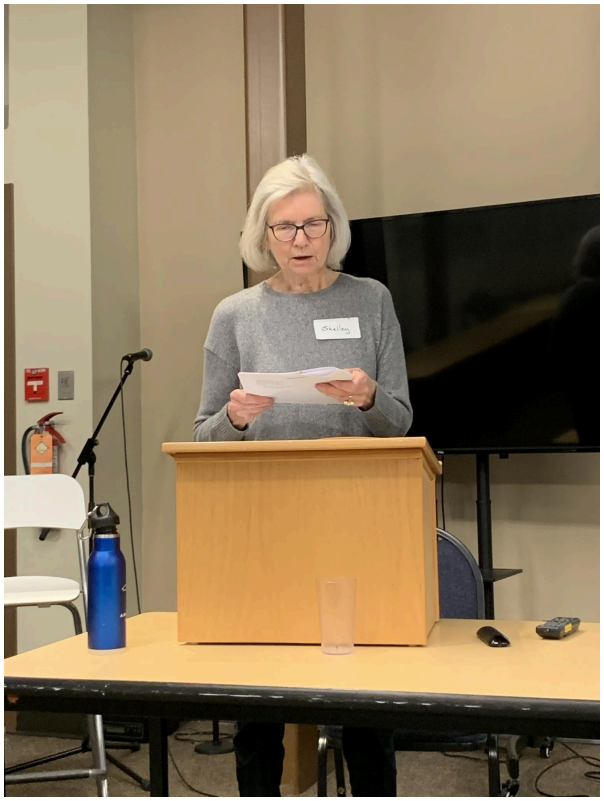
We Need You!!!

The Herb Society is looking for 2 members to step up and fill the remaining two Board positions.

Communications Chair
- recruits volunteers to co-ordinate all marketing and internal communications of the HSM, creates news releases and manages the Society's digital presence. (Web page and Facebook)

Secretary
- keeps and reports on the minutes of the Board of Directors meetings and the Annual General Meeting

If you can help out or wish to recommend someone, please contact Shelley Walker at 204-257-1327 or email sdwalker@shaw.ca













November 20 Guest Speaker - Ryan Kologinski



Biography:
Ryan Kologinski, an Integrative Herbalist, graduated in 2021 after a six year apprenticeship under Master Herbalist Chad Cornell of Hollow Reed School of Healing Arts and Herbals. Focusing on areas of traditional Chinese medicine, supplementation, longevity, and stress management, Ryan's goal is to provide people with the tools and knowledge to live a healthy and full life. When not working full time as an engineer, Ryan is continually learning and developing his herbal medicine making skills for his business Herbal Heart Botanicals.

Presentation Description:
Ryan detailed a number of selected herbs, ranging from berries and leaves, to flowers and roots. Their medicinal qualities were discussed, as well as how to utilize these herbs as daily food. Each herb has unique qualities and characteristics, allowing for healing in the body to take place. Not only are these selected herbs nutritious, but most can be found in our neighbourhoods, backyards, and the prairie landscapes of Manitoba.
The herbs discussed were

Wild Raspberry leaf and fruit	Wild Strawberry leaf and fruit
Wild Rose (rose hips)	Hawthorn
Stinging Nettle	Wild Licorice
Yellow Dock	Dandelion
Plantain	Pineapple Weed
Red Clover	Wild Ginger
Lamb’s Quarters	Calamus
Oak	Hazelnut

January 15 Guest Speaker - Dave Hansen



Speaker Bio: Dave Hanson is a gardening educator, columnist for CBC Radio Manitoba, co-host of the Grow Guide podcast, and founder of Sage Garden Greenhouses. Over the last 25 years, Dave and his wife Evelyn have established industry-leading sustainability practices at Sage Garden, including being the only commercial greenhouse in Manitoba to use zero-emissions geothermal heating and cooling, the first commercial nursery in Manitoba to discontinue plastic pots, the only local nursery using 100% OMRI organic compost-based soils, and by offering among the largest selection of certified organic herb, perennial, veggie, and ornamental seeds anywhere in Canada. Dave loves to share the many benefits of being sustainably minded as a foundation of his gardening practice.

Workshop Description: With global warming and climate anxiety top of mind in the world today, gardening offers an opportunity to participate in climate action while also grounding us and connecting us with nature. Dave shared strategies that engage with these concepts, helping gardeners enjoy greater satisfaction and success while also being Earth-focused. Some of the topics covered were cultivating living soils, planting intermingled gardens, eliminating pesticides, keeping things local, reducing our gardening footprint, and encouraging many forms of diversity in our gardening life. Everyone benefits from sustainability!

February Guest Speaker

Erica - Mossy Birch Homestead
Topic: Herbal Teas
Website: www.mossybirchhomestead.ca

HERBS AROUND THE WORLD

Gaby Miranda Campero - Mexico



Gaby was born in Mexico City and lived there until she was 18. She moved to Guanajuato and lived there for 20 years, until she moved to the Interlake area of Manitoba.

Kathleen and Gaby became acquainted during the early days of Covid isolation. Kathleen saw a question on a Facebook gardening group "What is something unusual that you will grow in your garden this year?" Kathleen answered **Epazote**. Gaby asked her where she found the seeds because she is from Mexico and likes to cook with Epazote. Kathleen offered to send some seeds and they began to correspond via Facebook.

In the ensuing years, Gaby has given Kathleen wonderful cooking tips, recommended cookbooks, products and where to buy them.

This fall, after almost 4 years, Gaby and Kathleen finally met. Gaby made a delicious ~~meal~~ feast for Kathleen while her husband Glenn generously filled her trunk with vegetables from his garden.

1. Did you have any favourite foods as a child?

Tamales!

I am going to Mexico in two days and I have a list of things I want to eat.

Tamales are the first thing on the list.

Buñuelos are a favourite of mine at Christmas time.

Rosca de Reyes (Three Kings Bread) is eaten on January 6th.

Pan de Muerto (Day of the Dead Bread) is made for the Dia de los Muertos on November 1st and 2nd.

We have a special bread for every celebration.

When I was a child I would go to the Panaderia (Bread Shop) with my mother or father. We would put our selection on a tray using tongs and take them home to enjoy them later that night with coffee or milk. There were four of us children and sometimes we would fight for the same fancy bread. I have very nice memories of the time we spent together around the table. This was before everybody watched tv and there was no internet.

2. When you moved here, how difficult was it for you to find the ingredients you used in Mexico?

At first when I moved to my small town I was worried that I would miss the food I was used to having. But then, when I found a small section in the grocery store with familiar things, I knew I would be able to cook the foods I cooked at home.

After the first year, I planted tomatillos and hot peppers so I had a good supply of ingredients to make my dishes for the rest of the year.

3. What herbs are commonly used in Mexico?

Mexico is such a big country with many regions - each has its own types of herbs. I was born and raised in central Mexico. The most common herbs used there are cilantro, epazote, and Mexican oregano. I also use a lot of coriander, cumin, cinnamon and bay leaf. Something which I enjoy cooking with is avocado leaf, but I can't find it here.

4. Are there any special tools that you use in Mexican kitchens that we don't commonly use in Canada?

There are tortilla presses but people usually buy their tortillas pre-made at the Tortilleria.

Molcajetes are similar to a mortar and pestle and are used to make salsas. But in real life people use a blender.

A comal is the best for tortillas. A frying pan can be used but a comal makes a better tasting tortilla.

We tend to use whatever makes cooking easier.

5. Is there any religious or cultural significance to any herbs in Mexico?

In the region I came from I didn't experience that.

In the markets there are ladies who sell bundles of herbs for love, luck, etc. They sell little bags of things to make tea to make you lucky or in love or whatever. If someone is sick there are traditional healing herbs that people will give you.

An important part of Dia de los Muertos is a particular type of marigold which is draped over the altars.



6. Could home gardeners easily grow the herbs you use in your recipes?

Manitoba gardeners could grow cilantro, and epazote. Be careful of epazote because it grows very big and can take over a space. Give it lots of room to grow.

I live in a small town and I don't have access to a lot of things. I haven't tried Mexican oregano because I haven't found it. I think if you live near a lot of garden centers you would be able to find more things than I can. Or you could order the seeds that will grow in your garden if the growing season is long enough.

I usually buy dried herbs.

7. Is there any misinformation that you would like to clear up about Mexican cooking?

Tex Mex is NOT Mexican food.

Taco Bell is NOT Mexican food.

Mexican cooking is complex and full of many different flavours.

Not all Mexican food is spicy. You can make it as mild or as spicy as you like.

There are lots of delicious sweet salsas.

There are so many regions and they all use different ingredients.

- Interesting fact - some peppers have a different name when they are dried.
    - Dried Jalapeno = Chipotle
    - Dried Poblano = Ancho
    - Dried Anaheim = Colorado or California
    - Dried Mirasol = Guajillo

A friendship was formed because of a herb named Epazote. With that in mind, Gaby provided a recipe for black beans which uses epazote.



Mexican Black Beans From Scratch

Valentina K. Wein

Mexican Black Beans from scratch are easy to make and great to have on hand for a delicious side dish, and for adding to all sorts of other recipes. A fine Mexican herb, Epazote, makes this recipe extra special.



INGREDIENTS

Part One

- 2 pounds dry black beans
- 1 whole (medium-sized) yellow onion, washed and cut in half
- 1 large head of garlic, washed, about ½ inch cut off top (use two heads if they're small)
- 1 bunch Epazote, washed
- water (amounts will vary, depending on the size of the pot)

Part Two

- about 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 cups finely chopped yellow onion
- about 8 cups cooked black beans (see Part One, above)
- 1½ tablespoons ground cumin
- salt and pepper to taste
- avocado slices, cotija cheese and cilantro for garnish (if desired)

INSTRUCTIONS

Part One

1. **Soak the beans.** In a very large mixing pot, soak the beans in about three times their volume of lukewarm water, for about 12 hours. Drain the beans, add them to a large stockpot, and fill the pot with enough cold water to go a couple inches above the beans.
2. **Simmer the beans.** Turn the heat to high and bring to a boil. Then reduce the heat to low, and simmer the beans for about 20 minutes. Use a large metal spoon to remove any foam that has appeared on the surface during this time. Drain the beans and return them to the pot. Again, add enough water to go a couple of inches above the beans.
3. **Add the remaining ingredients and cook the beans.** Add the onion, garlic and Epazote. Turn the heat to high and bring to a boil. Then reduce the heat to low, and gently simmer until the beans are tender, at least 1½-2 hours. (Drain if necessary.) Remove Epazote, the larger chunks of onion and skins (the halves will have separated during the cooking). Then remove the head (or heads) of garlic. Once the garlic is cool enough to handle, squeeze the soft cloves out onto a cutting board, roughly chop it, and mix it into the beans.
4. **Cool.** Cool the beans to room temperature, or move on to **Part Two** (below). Once cooled, the soaked, cooked beans can be stored. (**Refrigerator:** The beans can be refrigerated for up to 5 days in a tightly sealed container. **Freezer**: You can freeze them in a tightly sealed container for up to a month. They're best when frozen in small batches. To thaw, place them in the refrigerator two days before you want to use them.)

Part Two (You should do this part in two batches.)

1. **Cook the onions.** Coat the bottom of a large sauté pan with the oil, add the onion and place of low-medium heat. Stirring occasionally, cook until the onions are soft, about 7 minutes.
2. **Add the beans and spices.** Add the beans and cumin and sauté for about 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve with crumbled Cotija, avocado slices and/or cilantro if desired. (Here's How to Season to Taste.)

NOTES

- If the beans are not as soft as you'd like at the end of the cooking time, keep simmering them, and you can add water as needed. (If there's still excess water that hasn't been absorbed when they're ready, drain them.)

https://cookingontheweekends.com/wprm_print/41237

Meet a Member

Beverly Coutts

Bev has been a member of the Herb Society since 2020. She has a diverse background and has many interesting experiences. Thank you Bev for sharing your story with us.

1. **Please introduce yourself, background, education, position or last position .**

As a daughter of a military family we moved often, leaving little opportunities for gardening (and possibly also why I crave being grounded to one spot now). However, the flip side was living in Europe as a kid – especially seeing castles and their gorgeous gardens. My earliest connection with plants was getting great joy from harvesting and eating my grandmother's raspberries before dinner (still my favourite fruit). My uncle managed Connon nursery in Ontario, and it felt magical wandering around the aisles after close. The first time I recall being in awe of a plant was when he showed me how to feed bugs to a Venus flytrap (Dionaea muscipula).

My pathway to horticulture has not been a straight road. I found myself managing a company for a few years as one of my first adult jobs, and subsequently Health Care for many years as a Personal Support Worker. This included working in long term care on an Alzheimer's wing and complex continuing care in a local hospital, assisting also with therapeutic activities such as daily workouts prescribed by physiotherapists. Later, I switched to working with the Military Family Resource Centre and worked with children who had severe medical needs. I loved all these jobs!
I've also been a yoga instructor and had the privilege to study under two amazing instructors Glenn Mifsud (Hatha Yoga) and Bernie Clark (Yin Yoga).
I took a course on wine, only to realize that I was actually quite good at it – I ended up becoming a Sommelier and WSET-certified. I've had the privilege to work for two fabulous wineries. First was The Grange of Prince Edward https://www.grangewinery.com/, which had many firsts: the first winery to be registered with the Ontario wine board, the first female to be working on the Ontario wine board, the first winery from the Prince Edward County to win awards. Working for the owner Caroline was amazing! She opened all kinds of doors to me and let me try everything - all forms of vine maintenance, quality control, compliance with provincial guidelines, monitoring alcohol content, ensuring accurate labeling, assisting the head Vintner in all duties (from fermentation through quality assurance and storage for aging wines), harvesting the wine from picking to weighing to de-stemming, pressing and filling fermenters, cleaning and ensuring general maintenance of equipment, onsite tasting-room sales, and offsite independent marketing. The second winery was Domaine Le Cageot https://www.domainelecageot.com/, an organic vineyard in the Saguenay Region of Quebec, producing both award-winning grape and fruit (blueberry and raspberry) varieties. Here I cared for all aspects of vines and bushes, improving my French as I went along.

It was in working on the wineries and with plants that I realized horticulture gave me the most grounded version of myself. Before committing fully to this new career path, I took a seasonal contract working with Ontario's largest plant nursery, Connon Nursery https://connon.ca/. The manager warned me that I would be hooked, and he was correct. I immediately started my formal education on working with plants. Since then, I've completed a Diploma in Horticulture from Guelph University, with an area of

focus in Greenhouse management, a certificate of applied horticulture from Auburn University, a Horticulture Therapy certificate that is issued from the founder of the Canadian Horticultural Therapy Association, two Herbalist certificates, and became a Master Gardener. I could talk endlessly about all these courses, since this is for the Herb Society, I'll keep it to the Herbalist certificates.

Hathorn Herbals https://hawthornherbals.com/ was a six month in class intensive course designed to take individuals up close in the realm of plant medicine. All contact hours were with Registered Herbalist Tamara Segal RH. Topics included: Plant identification throughout the seasons, harvesting, drying and hands on medicine making of various types, an in-depth study of the properties and actions of 20 local wild plants in Prince Edward Country, meditative learning that comes from quiet, focused connection with living plants, trees and fungi. This class not only changed my life, but it also changed who I was as a person.

Appalachian Center For Natural Health https://www.phyllisdlight.com/ offered a nine-month in class program based on an organ and body system approach, with emphasis on Traditional Western Herbalism using both western and local herbs. All contact hours were with renowned Herbalist Phyllis D. Light. If you would like to know more about the history of Southern Folk Medicine then I highly recommend Phyllis's book Southern Folk Medicine https://www.amazon.ca/Southern-Folk-Medicine-Traditions-Appalachian/dp/1623171563/ref=sr_1_1?crid=2OXN35NATH2B6&keywords=southern+folk+medicine&qid=1705595230&sprefix=Sothern+Folk%2Caps%2C1195&sr=8-1





2. **Please give a brief description of your work at the Conservancy, and of your work as a Horticulturist.**

As soon as I heard we were moving to Winnipeg, I knew I had to work at Assiniboine Park! We even chose our house to be close to this amazing feature. Soon after arriving,
I had the privilege to help maintain the character of the iconic 100+ year old English Garden. Throughout my almost three years with the park, I nurtured, shaped and pruned plants within the famous Dr. Leo Mol Sculpture Garden, assisted in initial landscaping and planting the Gardens at The Leaf**,** and subsequently led the team caring for the outdoor Gardens at The Leaf. Transitioning indoors to the four indoor biomes, I worked with the gardening team planting and maintaining rare, unique plants within the Tropical, Mediterranean, and Butterfly biomes while also switching out the rotating displays. It was a gardener's dream! Beyond my duties that included media interviews and daily gardener chats with the public, I also participated in the health and safety committee. I think it's also important to highlight that, behind the scenes, there were many people working to connect with all members of the community. Beyond the roughly 1,100 acres of gardens and greenspace, the conservancy is part of a larger project celebrating Manitoba's diversity; Assiniboine Park highlighted to me that nature, gardening, and horticulture are integral to a healthy and vibrant society.

The Leaf was recognized as "Garden of the Year" at the Canadian Garden Tourism Awards at the 2023 International Garden Tourism Conference! Touted as one of Canada's most iconic horticulture destinations, it also won The Perennial Plant Association's Landscape Design Award of Excellence. Beyond the limelight, however, it was the gardener chats that were the highlight of my days – sharing specialized knowledge and horticulture practices connected me with people and grounded me in my work. Ultimately it was my time working in the kitchen garden that made me want to explore Horticulture Therapy; the conversations around food can run deep. Seeing people react while using their five senses underlined to me the power plants can have in our lives.

3. **What client groups do you work with? Do you use any specific herbs in your work? Do you use different herbs for different client groups?**

I have a small Herb business (Homespun Herbs) that I use to support mostly family and friends, with plans to do more once I've settled geographically. The herbs my circle seem most interested in at the moment seem to be anything to help menopause. Black Cohosh (Actaea racemose), Red clover (Trifolium pratense), American ginseng (Panax quinquefolius), Soy (Glycine max), Dong quai (Angelica sinensis), Wild Yam,
It goes without saying, there are side effects to everything, so care is needed. E.g. Black cohosh may cause nervous system effects if taken in large doses or with prolonged use.
I am also exploring other horticulture opportunities such as working in a local community garden, and in the Spring, I'll start helping a palliative care team build a garden and therapeutic space.

4. **Can you give some basic tips on engaging people in social activity or stress relief or rehab using herbs and other plants?**

The key to fully submerge people in an experience, where possible plants should be selected that can engage all five senses. The use of lemon balm gives a great example. We can start with passing around the plant and allowing people to engage with it, explaining that lemon balm is a particular favourite for engaging the senses. We can highlight the visual aesthetics of the plant, with its heart-shaped leaves and small but subtly-beautiful flowers. Calling attention to the smell, we can encourage people to note the pleasant and mild lemon scent, while in touching the leaves and the veined surface of the leaves we can also note how soft the hairs can feel. Pollination can be discussed, highlighting that lemon balm is great for bees, while its therapeutic uses can be introduced, such as oils for perfume or using the plant to make a great tea. We could even make fresh tea from the leaves while people work with the plants, further immersing everyone in the sensory experience. Even drinking the tea can be a multi-sensory experience, smelling it and associating memories, drinking and noting any body changes, and other similar grounded questions while also working in practical discussions about topics like propagation.

5. **Can you tell us how you, as a member of the horticulture therapy association, educate people about the benefits of Horticulture Therapy.**

This may sound simple, but I generally share my lived experience. Most people find it easy to relate to the grounding effects of working in soil and already have some form of connection with plants that can be stimulated by activating our senses. Others will benefit from learning data on all the way plants and working with plants benefits us.

There are many opportunities to help educate through other volunteer activities, even if these are not traditional teaching or presentation activities. For example, I was recently asked to help with securing grant money for a future horticulture program. In building a case for funding, I find it best to prove the benefits through the science that is already there; we're fortunate to live in a time where there is a lot of data highlighting the benefits of plants and the many health advantages of working with plants.

Volunteering for research activities further contributes to this knowledge while also educating others. For example, in 2019/20 I had the privilege to work on a university-led pilot project called Harvest for Health. This project by the University of Alabama's Birmingham's Comprehensive Cancer Centre and Alabama Extension's Homes Ground Team used backyard garden spaces to teach new, healthy habits to cancer survivors. The Extension team trained Master Gardeners to mentor cancer survivors in learning vegetable gardening. The initial results showed participants ate more vegetables, improved their strength and flexibility, were motivated to do daily exercise, and several other improvements in positive health indicators. Ultimately, teaching and mentoring doesn't have to just occur in traditional education contexts.

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3718632/
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1551714416302427
https://acsjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/cncr.31559



6. Do you have a garden at home? What are some of your favourite things to grow and why? Do you have a favourite garden that you visited that you would like to share? Do you have an herb garden? Do you have a favourite recipe to share from something you grow in your garden?

I find myself moving often because of my spouse's career. I usually keep several garden beds, but I find myself now focusing on microgreens in my own growing. Even when we don't personally have a lot of growing space or time, there are other opportunities to get involved in a community garden, work on a local project, or even to plan out garden tourism.
No matter how many times I move, Calendula is always planted!

Calendula Ointment
Calendula- a key healing oil
Lavender- beautiful smelling and relaxing massage oil
Chamomile- anti-inflammatory oil for inflamed skin

Use 2 handfuls of dried Calendula and just cover with cold pressed sunflower oil. Heat (never over 100 degrees) gently in a glass pot for 1-2 hours, then strain. Alternatively, I let mine sit in glass mason jars in a sunny location for a week.
To make the oil: **300 ml calendula oil, 24 grams beeswax, 15 drops of lavender essential oil, 15 drops chamomile oil.** (most often, I substitute the chamomile essential oil and just infuse dried chamomile flowers in with the calendula). Heat wax and calendula oil together and then add essential oils.
Notes: For ointments use 8-12% beeswax (25g to 300ml oil). Essential oils are extremely potent plant extracts and should be used with care.

Most recently, I've been lucky enough to travel to see several gardens: Reader Rock Garden in Calgary, The University of Alberta Botanic Garden in Edmonton, the Bloedel Conservatory in Vancouver, VanDusen Botanical Garden in Vancouver, Butterfly World in Comox, Nitobe Memorial Garden in Vancouver, UBC Botanical Garden, Victoria Butterfly Garden and Cominco Gardens in Kimberley.

Out of all these gardens, the Cominco Garden stuck out to me because of its horticultural therapy aspects, and is also an example of what even a small community can do. The garden is 5 hectares and set perfectly between the local hospital and special care home. The gardens were first established by Cominco Ltd. In 1927, and was a natural showcase for Elephant Brand fertilizer, a locally made product. The garden was offered as a gift to the community in 1987. They have a great Facebook page called Friends of Kimberley Cominco Gardens, that highlights all the good work they are doing within the community.

7. If there is anything else you want to share about yourself and your connections from the Herb Society?

When I first moved to Winnipeg, the Herb Society of Manitoba offered me a great way to be around like-minded people, who were very welcoming and also enjoyed healthy lifestyles and giving back to the community. It is also great that the Herb Society has such a low cost and has no other barriers to entry; a group of curious knowledge seekers naturally attracts others, and it's great to part of a group that is so welcoming and inclusive. While the lavender cookie recipe alone made it worthwhile to join the Herb Society, finding myself surrounded by so many interesting, experienced and educated people was a wonderful introduction to Manitoba!



This recent photo was taken during a hike on Meares Island, BC, to visit this 1500 year-old cedar! Yes, I hugged it 😉

December Herb of the Month - FENNEL

Growing Fennel

Fennel (*foeniculum vulgare*) is a cool-season herb that thrives in the garden. It's a perennial in some regions but often grown as an annual. Plant fennel in full sun and well-draining soil. Fennel can grow quite tall, reaching heights of up to 6 feet, so make sure to space your plants accordingly.

Varieties: Two primary types of fennel are popular among gardeners - Florence fennel (*foeniculum vulgare var. azoricum*) and common or herb fennel. Florence fennel is prized for its bulbous, edible stem base, while herb fennel is primarily cultivated for its feathery foliage and seeds.

Watering and Care: Fennel enjoys regular watering, but overwatering can lead to root rot. A layer of mulch will help conserve moisture and keep the soil cool. Fertilize every 4-6 weeks with a balanced, organic fertilizer.

Harvesting and Culinary Uses:

Harvesting Leaves: You can begin harvesting fennel's aromatic, feathery leaves once the plant reaches a reasonable height, typically about 4-6 weeks after planting. The leaves add a unique anise flavor to salads, seafood, and various culinary dishes.

Bulb Harvest: Florence fennel's bulb is the star of the show. Wait until the bulb reaches a size of around 3-4 inches in diameter before harvesting. This delectable treat can be roasted, sautéed, or sliced thinly into salads.

Collecting Seeds: Fennel seeds are a delightful addition to many dishes, lending their sweet, licorice-like flavour. Allow the flower heads to dry on the plant, then collect the seeds. Use them in baking, pickling, or for making your own herbal teas.

Garden Tips:

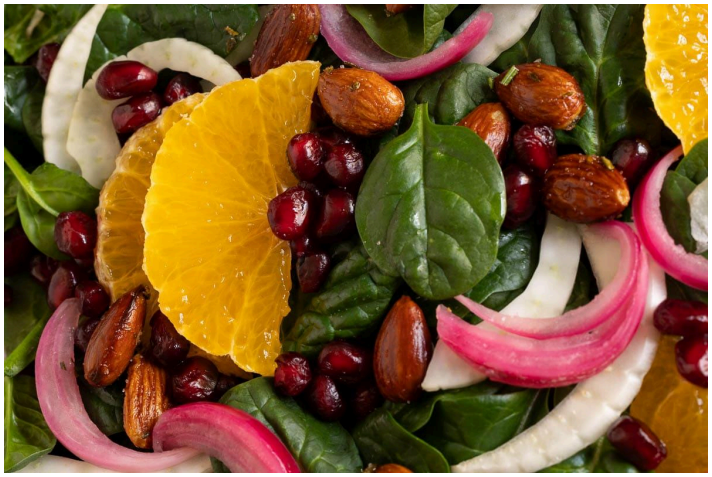
Companion Planting: Fennel is an excellent companion plant for some veggies like tomatoes and peppers but should be kept away from beans and dill.

Pest Control: Be cautious of aphids and caterpillars, which may be attracted to fennel. Encourage natural predators like ladybugs and lacewings to keep them in check.

Did You Know?

Fennel has a long history of culinary and medicinal use. It was believed to have magical properties in ancient times and was used as an herb to ward off evil.

Orange Fennel Spinach Salad with Honey White Balsamic Dressing



Ingredients

For the pickled red onion:

- 1 medium red onion *peeled and sliced into thin wedges*
- ½ cup white balsamic vinegar
- 2 teaspoons honey
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup water

For the Honey White Balsamic Dressing:

- 1 batch of this *Honey White Balsamic Dressing recipe*

For the rosemary almonds:

- ½ cup whole almonds
- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil plus more for finishing
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary *plus more for finishing*
- ½ teaspoon fine salt or table salt *not kosher salt, plus more as needed*

For the salad:

- 6-8 ounces baby spinach
- 4 medium mandarin oranges (or 3 medium navel oranges) *peeled, halved and sliced into ¼-inch slices*
- 1 small fennel bulb *stems and fronds removed halved, then thinly sliced crosswise, discarding the hard core, optional*
- ¼ cup pomegranate arils *optional*

Instructions

For the pickled red onion:

1. Combine all ingredients into a pint-size jar with a tight-fitting lid. Screw on the lid and shake, shake, shake. Refrigerate for at least 4-6 hours for really pretty color.

For the Honey White Balsamic Dressing:

1. Combine all ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Screw on the lide and shake, shake, shake. Store in the refrigerator. Can be made up to a week in advance.

For the rosemary almonds:

1. Combine all ingredients in a medium-size microwave-safe cup or bowl. Stir well then microwave on high for 1 minute. Stir and repeat x 2 for a total of 3 minutes in the microwave.
2. Remove from the microwave, stir well and turn out onto a plate lined with paper towels. Allow the almonds to cool just a bit then taste and add more fine salt, if needed.

For the salad:

1. Add spinach to a large bowl. Drizzle lightly with the dressing and toss to coat the leaves. Top with most of the oranges, fennel and half of pickled red onions.
2. Toss lightly and top with remaining oranges, fennel and as many of the onions as you prefer. You may not need all of the pickled red onions (depending on the size of your onion).
3. Top with pomegranate arils (if using) and almonds. Serve extra dressing at the table.

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January Herb of the Month - BASIL

Basil at a Glance: Basil (*ocimum basilicum*) is an aromatic herb known for its lush green leaves and distinctive, sweet fragrance. This herb belongs to the mint family, Lamiaceae, and comes in various varieties, each with its unique flavor profile. Here's a quick overview of what makes basil a garden favorite:

Culinary Excellence: Basil is a culinary superstar, known for its fresh, peppery, and slightly sweet flavor. It is a staple ingredient in Italian cuisine, particularly in dishes like pesto, caprese salad, and pasta sauces. Basil also complements a wide range of international dishes, from Thai curries to Mediterranean cuisine.
Medicinal Properties: Beyond its culinary uses, basil boasts potential health benefits. It is rich in antioxidants, essential oils, and vitamins, and some studies suggest it may have anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties. Basil tea is used in traditional medicine for its potential calming effects.
Ornamental Beauty: Basil isn't just a taste sensation; it's also visually appealing. Its vibrant green leaves and delicate flowers can add an elegant touch to your garden. Basil can be grown in containers, beds, or as a companion plant alongside other vegetables and herbs.

Growing Basil: If you're eager to grow basil in your garden, here are some essential tips for its successful growth and care:

Sunlight: Basil thrives in full sun, so choose a sunny location in your garden where it can receive at least 6-8 hours of direct sunlight daily.
Well-Drained Soil: Basil prefers well-draining soil that's rich in organic matter. Good drainage is essential to prevent root rot.
Watering: Keep the soil consistently moist but not waterlogged. Basil is sensitive to both drought and overwatering, so aim for even moisture.
Pruning: Regularly prune basil by pinching off the tips of branches to encourage bushy growth. Be sure to pinch off any flowers as soon as they appear, as they can reduce the herb's overall flavor.

Harvesting Basil: Harvesting basil is a joyous experience that releases its wonderful aroma. Here's how to do it:

Timing: You can start harvesting basil when the plant has at least 6-8 leaves and is about 6-8 inches tall. For established plants, harvest regularly to encourage growth.
Method: Use scissors or pruning shears to snip off the top leaves just above a leaf node. This encourages branching and continuous leaf production.

Preserving Basil: To savour the flavour of basil throughout the year, consider these preservation methods:

Freezing: Make basil paste by blending fresh basil leaves with olive oil, then freeze it in ice cube trays. Pop out the cubes and store them in a freezer bag.
Drying: Hang small bundles of basil stems upside down in a dry, well-ventilated area. Once completely dry, remove the leaves and store them in an airtight container.

Pesto Chicken Yield: 4 servings



This pesto chicken recipe makes an impressive and easy dinner! Basil pesto makes a quick herby sauce to pair with the juicy chicken.

Ingredients

- 2 boneless skinless chicken breasts (about 1 pound, organic if possible), butterflied or cutlets
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon salted butter
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons basil pesto
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream

Instructions

Pat the chicken dry with a paper towel, then slice it in half horizontally (if not already butterflied). Sprinkle the chicken on both sides with the salt, garlic powder, and onion powder.

Add the butter and olive oil to a large skillet and heat over medium heat. Add the chicken and cook until browned on both sides, about 4 minutes per side. When the internal temperature is 165°F or the center is no longer pink, remove to a plate and rest for 3 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a medium bowl, stir together the basil pesto and cream with a pinch of kosher salt. When the chicken has rested, gently toss the chicken breasts in the sauce and serve immediately with a drizzle of the sauce over the chicken.

https://www.acouplecooks.com/pesto-chicken/#tasty-recipes-145675-jump-target

February Herb of the Month - Oregano

Oregano is a versatile and aromatic herb that adds a burst of flavor to your garden and your culinary creations. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting out, oregano is an herb that deserves a prominent spot in your garden.

Oregano at a Glance: Oregano (*origanum vulgare*) is a fragrant herb that belongs to the mint family, Lamiaceae. Known for its pungent aroma and robust flavor, oregano has a rich history in both culinary and medicinal traditions. Here's a quick overview of the key features that make oregano a garden favorite:

Culinary Excellence: Oregano is renowned for its strong, slightly peppery flavor, and it is a staple in Mediterranean and Italian cuisine. It adds depth to dishes like pizza, pasta sauces, grilled meats, and salads. Oregano is available in several varieties, each with its unique flavor profile.

Ornamental Beauty: Oregano is not only a flavorful addition to your garden but also a visually appealing one. Its lush green leaves and clusters of small, pink or white flowers can enhance the aesthetics of your garden beds or containers.

Growing Oregano: To successfully cultivate oregano in your garden, consider the following tips for care and growth:

Sunlight: Oregano thrives in full sun, so choose a sunny location in your garden where it can receive at least 6-8 hours of direct sunlight daily.

Well-Drained Soil: Oregano prefers well-draining soil that's slightly alkaline, sandy, or loamy. Good drainage is crucial to prevent root rot.

Watering: Keep the soil consistently moist but not waterlogged. Water deeply when the top inch of soil is dry. Avoid overwatering, as oregano is sensitive to excessive moisture.

Pruning: Regularly prune oregano to encourage bushy growth and prevent it from becoming too leggy. Pinch off the tips of the stems to promote branching.

Harvesting Oregano: Harvesting oregano is a delightful task that fills the air with its aromatic essence. Here's how to do it:

Timing: You can start harvesting oregano when the plant is at least 4-6 inches tall and has plenty of leaves. For established plants, harvest throughout the growing season.

Method: Use scissors or pruning shears to snip off the top third of the stems, just above a leaf node. This encourages new growth and ensures a continuous supply of fresh leaves.

Preserving Oregano: To enjoy the flavor of oregano year-round, consider these preservation methods:

Drying: Hang small bundles of oregano stems upside down in a dry, well-ventilated area. Once completely dry, remove the leaves and store them in an airtight container.

Freezing: Freeze oregano leaves in ice cube trays with water or olive oil. Pop out the cubes and store them in a freezer bag.

Oregano is a flavorful and versatile herb that enhances both your garden's aesthetics and your culinary creations. Whether you're using it to elevate your dishes, explore natural remedies, or simply beautify your outdoor space, oregano is a delightful addition to any garden.

Lemon Oregano Dressing



Ingredients

- 1 medium organic lemon *washed well and dried*
- 4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 medium cloves garlic *minced*
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup fresh oregano leaves* *packed*

Instructions

1. Cut both ends off of lemon and discard. Thinly slice lemon, discarding seeds as you go. Stack a few slices on top of each other and chop fairly fine. I start out by thinly slicing the slices in one direction and then do the same thing in the opposite direction. After that I keep the tip of the knife on the cutting board and place the fingers of one hand on top of the knife. Holding the handle with the other hand, I just keep rocking the knife through the lemon until it is fairly finely chopped. You want the pieces pretty small, but keep some texture. (See picture in post.)
2. Place chopped lemon and all other ingredients except oregano in a small jar with a tight fitting lid and shake, shake, shake!
3. Chop oregano fairly fine and add to dressing before serving.

https://thecafesucrefarine.com/lemon-oregano-dressing/

Adapted from Whole Lemon Thyme Dressing and Bon Appetit

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Education and Resources

The University of Saskatchewan is offering many FREE online courses. They usually run about 1 ½ -2 hours and it's easy to register for them using the link below.

https://gardening.usask.ca/public-workshops/live-workshops-events.php#WebinarsLivestreamedclasses

Thursday, January 25	**Houseplants 101**
Tuesday, January 30	**Starting plants indoors: from seeds to seedlings**
Thursday, February 1	**Impatiens: Your best friend for shade**
Tuesday, February 6	**Rock Gardens**
Thursday, February 8	**Fabulous Ferns**
Thursday, February 15	**Award Winning Veggies**
Tuesday, February 20	**No till for home gardens**
Thursday, February 22	**Forgotten flowers**
Thursday, February 29	**Growing herbs in your garden**
Tuesday, March 5	**Basic pruning**
Thursday, March 7	**Pollinator friendly gardens for moths**
Tuesday, March 12	**Success with plums**
Thursday, March 14	**Success with apples**
Tuesday, March 19	**Starting plants indoors: from seeds to seedlings**
Thursday, March 21	**Exotic fruits for the prairies**
Thursday, March 28	**Native plants for short season yards**
Tuesday, April 9	**Compost 101: from scraps to soil**
Thursday, April 11	**Veggie gardens for absolute beginners**
Thursday, April 25	**Planting and caring for spring bulbs and bare root perennials**

2023- 24 General Meetings

Monday, September 18, 2023
Speaker: Gerald Dieleman
Topic: Update on The Leaf and Gardens
Website: https://www.assiniboinepark.ca

Monday, October 16, 2023
Speaker: Donna Kurt
Topic: How Mushrooms Live with Other Plants

Monday, November 20, 2023
Speaker: Ryan Kologinski
Topic: Wild Edible Herbs

DECEMBER - NO MEETING

Monday, January 15, 2024
Speaker: Dave Hanson - Sage Garden Greenhouses
Topic: Sustainable Gardening
Website: www.sagegarden.ca

Monday, February 19, 2024
Speaker: Erica - Mossy Birch Homestead
Topic: Herbal Teas
Website: www.mossybirchhomestead.ca

Monday, March 18, 2024
Speaker: Melissa Scouten
Topic: Herbs in Horticulture Therapy

Monday, April 15,2024
Speaker: Rana - Yafa Cafe
Topic: Herbs used in Middle Eastern Cuisine
Website: www.Yafacafe.com

Monday, May 27, 2024
Speaker: TBA

Monday, June 17, 2024
Speaker: TBA

DISCOUNTS FOR MEMBERS 2022-23

Membership card must be presented before purchase

1. Shelmerdine Garden Centre, 7800 Roblin Blvd.-10% on regular priced merchandise (not valid on gift cards)

2. Sage Garden Greenhouses, 3410 St. Mary's Rd. - 10% on plants and seeds only

3. St. Mary's Nursery & Garden Centre, 2901 St. Mary's Rd.- 10% on all merchandise

4. Kackenhoff Nurseries, 1317 Hwy. 75 St. Norbert- 15% off all plants, annual, perennials and herbs under 7 gallons and store items. (Does not apply to soil, landscape items or gift cards)

5. Schriemers's Home and Garden Showplace, 1505 Molson St.- 10% off plants and giftware

6. Jensen's Nursery and Garden Centre, 2550 McGillivray Blvd.- 10%

7. Jardins St- Leon Gardens, 419 St. Mary's Rd. - 10% off transplantable plants (bedding plants, individuals, annuals, perennials, shrubs, etc. until July first, unless other promotions apply to the specific item.)

8. Ron Paul Greenhouses & Garden Centre, 2641 St. Mary's Rd.- 10% on all plants and shrubs, and soil

9. Red Valley Plant Market & Landscaping, 3091 St. Mary's Rd.- for every $10.00 you spend, you receive a Red Valley Buck to use on your next purchase

10. T & T Seeds, 7724 Roblin Blvd. – Spend $50.00 and receive 10% off your purchase