



Happy New Year!

Arizona Herb Association

Dec. 2024-Jan. 2025

A Publication for Members & Friends

<http://www.azherb.org>



Dear Herbies,

As we step into a new year, I find myself reflecting with a full heart on the incredible journey I've had as part of our gardening club. Since 2015, I've had the honor of serving as president, then vice president, and even both roles at times. Each position has deepened my love for this community, and the friendships I've made here are among my most treasured.

This club isn't just about gardening; it's about connection, support, and the simple yet powerful act of growing together. Thank you for allowing me to serve, for sharing your laughter and knowledge, and for making this club such a welcoming "Herbie Family."

I am thrilled to pass the torch to Tammy Aragaki, who will step in as our new president. Tammy brings a wealth of knowledge, enthusiasm, and dedication to our group, and I am confident she will guide us into an exciting new chapter. Please join me in warmly welcoming Tammy and supporting her as she takes on this role.

Here's to a wonderful new year and many more adventures together.

With all my love and gratitude,

Liz Lonetti
Outgoing AHA President

"A garden requires patient labor and attention. Plants do not grow merely to satisfy ambitions or to fulfill good intentions. They thrive because someone expended effort on them." – Liberty Hyde Bailey

Calendar

January 2025

Thursday, January 2: General Meeting
Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.
Topic: Blue Sky Organic Farms
Speaker: Shay Emmers.
Herb of the Month: Horseradish
Presenter: Kathy Eastman



Saturday, January 4: Weed & Feed
Time: 8:00 a.m.

Saturday, January 18: East Valley Citrus Clinic
Location: Greenfield Citrus Nursery, Mesa
<https://extension.arizona.edu/events/2025-east-valley-citrus-clinic-maricopa-county>

Saturday, January 25: West Valley Citrus Clinic
Location: Truman Ranch, Surprise
<https://extension.arizona.edu/events/2025-west-valley-citrus-clinic-maricopa-county>

Saturday, January 18: Grow Bag Gardening
Location: The Arizona Worm Farm
Time: 11:00 a.m. to noon
[https://app.squarespacescheduling.com/schedule/038c2ee8/?categories\[\]=Class](https://app.squarespacescheduling.com/schedule/038c2ee8/?categories[]=Class)

Saturday, January 25: Culinary Event
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Theme: New Year, New Flavors
Hosts: Liz and Dan Lonetti
Sign up at www.azherb.org



February 2025

Saturday, February 1: Weed & Feed
Time: 8:00 a.m.

Thursday, February 6: General Meeting
Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.
Topic: TBA
Speaker: TBA
Herb of the Month: TBA
Presenter: TBA

Saturday, February 8: Sunset Library Seed Swap
Details on page 5

Saturday, February 15: Culinary Event
Theme: Foods of Love
Hosts: Susan and Eric Adamczyk
Time: 6:00 p.m.



January General Meeting

At our general meeting on Thursday, January 2, 2024, current President Liz Lonetti will turn the gavel over to incoming President Tammy Aragaki! We wholeheartedly thank Liz Lonetti for her commitment and leadership, not only as President for the past several years, but also for the many other roles she has undertaken. You will find a list of AHA officers and board members on page 3. Please contact Tammy Aragaki if you would like to fill an open board position.

Our January presentation is titled "Blue Sky Organic Farms -- A Journey Through the Mind of an Organic Farmer. Come learn about the opportunities and challenges of a local farmer in Litchfield Park, Arizona." The talk will be presented by AHA 1st VP and Herb of the Month Coordinator Shay Emmers.



In 2025, our Herb of the Month theme is "**Invigorate the Senses.**" We look forward to engaging our senses--sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell--as we learn and share knowledge with our presenters. To kick off the new year, January's Herb of the Month speaker is Kathy Eastman, and she has chosen the herb **horseradish**.



Snacks are always appreciated for our meeting break; a recipe or ingredient list helps those with dietary concerns. You might consider bringing a snack with the featured Herb of the Month: horseradish. And bringing your own table service helps reduce our carbon footprint!

If you can't attend in person, you can join us via Zoom at the link below.
Topic: January AHA General Meeting
Date: Thursday, January 2, 2025
Meeting begins promptly at 7:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89028660279?pwd=NHN0RitrZEFHTnAwc3I2dFhHTTdGdz09>

Meeting ID: 890 2866 0279
Passcode: 965232

From the Membership Chair...Did you know?

Did you know that ALL memberships expire on December 31 with one exception - if you joined in October or November, your membership expires 12/31 of the **following** year. You essentially get 13 or 14 months for the price of 12. For all of the rest of us, regardless of the month you joined, your membership will come up for renewal January 1st.

This is especially important since we now have an automated membership system. A 60-day grace period has been programmed in, but after that time you will not be able to login to the members only portion of the website to view or register for any events that are restricted to members.

To easily renew online go to www.azherb.org, login to your account and scroll down to "renew." You may also renew by mail or in person at any Herbies meeting. Do it now - we have a wonderful lineup of events for 2025 and you won't want to miss a single one.

Tammy Aragaki, Membership Chair

Welcome New AHA Members:

Eddie Dauenhauer
Zip Code: 85038

Colleen Eaglehouse
Zip Code: 85282

Elizabeth Ferguson
Zip Code: 85041

Lana Schmitt
Zip Code: 85013

Maria Morris
Zip Code: 85295

Linda Raish
Zip Code: 85018

Caleb Johnke
Zip Code: 85260

Jacinda Contreras
Zip Code: 85020

Eric Yu
Zip Code: 85020

Tammy Aragaki, Membership Committee



2025 Officers and Board Member Nominations

President	Tammy Aragaki
1st VP – Programs	Shay Emmerson
2 nd VP – Ways and Means	Katherine Tarr and Lauren Espinosa
Treasurer	Chris George
Secretary	Janet Coleman
Tours	Teri Thorpe
Herb of the Month	Shay Emmerson
Workshops	OPEN
Sourcing	OPEN
Fundraising Events (formerly Festivals)	OPEN
Board Member at Large (MG Liaison)	Maureen Tonn
Board Member at Large (AZFGC Liaison)	Kim Rosenlof
Tech	Jacinda Contreras
Scholarships/Memorials	Michele Spiller
Marketing	Liz Lonetti
Membership	Tammy Aragaki
Hospitality Lead	Drew Templeton
Demonstration Garden	Mike Hills and Pam Perry
Webmaster	Tammy Aragaki
Newsletter	Lee Ann Aronson and Sandy Cielaszyk
Social Media	Mike Hills and Lee Ann Aronson
Historian	Kathleen McCoy
Culinary	Drew Templeton
Holiday Party	Jess White
Refreshments	Diane Knudsen
Demonstration Garden Signage	Donna Lorch
Board Member at Large (Raffles)	Timorie Coleman
Board Member at Large (Membership Assistant)	Bernie Arnecke
Board Member at Large	George Reconco
Board Member at Large	John Barkley

Banner Photos (left to right): Roselle, *Hibiscus Sabdariffa*, continues blooming in our demo garden in December due to unseasonably warm weather, our holiday potluck table of herbal delights prepared by our herbie members, herbal holiday wreath made by Emily Heller with myrtle trimmings from our demo garden, holiday party dessert plate extravaganza, and early blooming borage with late blooming zinnias.
We wish all a happy, healthy, herbal New Year!

Photos by Mike Hills

November Herb of the Month – Cilantro By Tammy Aragaki



Cilantro or *Coriandrum sativum*, also known as Coriander, is in the family *Apiaceae* (along with dill and parsley and carrots) and is grown as an annual cool weather herb for its leaves and seeds in our Sonoran desert.

Many people sense that cilantro has a tart, slightly citrus taste. However, due to variations in the human gene OR6A2, other

people perceive cilantro to have a soap-like taste they HATE.

Cilantro has a long history of use. As early as 6,000 BCE, cilantro was cultivated in the Nahal Hemar cave in Israel. Seeds were found in the tomb of King Tut. Spanish conquistadors brought the plant to Mexico and Peru by 1500, and the British brought cilantro to North America in the 1670s. The plant is native to Southern Europe and Asia.

Culinary Uses:

When a recipe calls for cilantro, usually we use the leaves, BUT if you don't mind the taste, all parts of the cilantro plant are edible: leaves, stems, roots, flowers and berries (which when dried we know as coriander). The leaves are delicate and should be added at the end and used as fresh as possible for the best flavor. Stems have a stronger flavor and should be chopped finely. Roots, having the most flavor, can be added at the start of the cooking process. Cilantro is used in the dishes of many cuisines, including Thai, Mexican, Chinese, Caribbean, Indian, Arabic and Vietnamese.

Health Benefits:

As an herb, Cilantro offers many health benefits. It is a natural and potent antioxidant. The leaves contain dodecanal, which has an antibacterial effect against salmonella. The plant is a diuretic and helps against nausea. The plant contains many vitamins, mostly in the leaves, and minerals, most of which are in the berries or seeds we call coriander.

In Ayurvedic traditions, this herb might be used for its antihistamine properties to calm a rash or as a carminative to prevent gas. It is used to detoxify, as it can soften stool and clear inflammation from the urinary tract. Additionally, it calms Pitta, directly in the liver, and is known for improving eyesight.

	Cilantro (% RDI)	Coriander (% RDI)
Dietary fiber	1.1	16.8
Vitamin A	13.5	0
Vitamin C	4.5	3.5
Vitamin K	38.8	0
Manganese	2.1	9.5
Iron	1	9.1
Magnesium	0.6	8.2
Calcium	0.7	7.1
Copper	1.1	4.9
Phosphorus	0.5	4.1
Selenium	0.1	3.7
Potassium	1.5	3.6
Zinc	0.3	3.1

Growing Cilantro:

Cilantro is notorious for bolting quickly if at any time our "winter" weather gets warm. Plant cilantro from seed in October or as the weather starts to drop below 80 degrees. Successive plantings will lengthen the growing season. You may plant from transplants, but seed will yield better results. Cilantro prefers neutral to slightly acidic soil. It can be grown in pots as well.

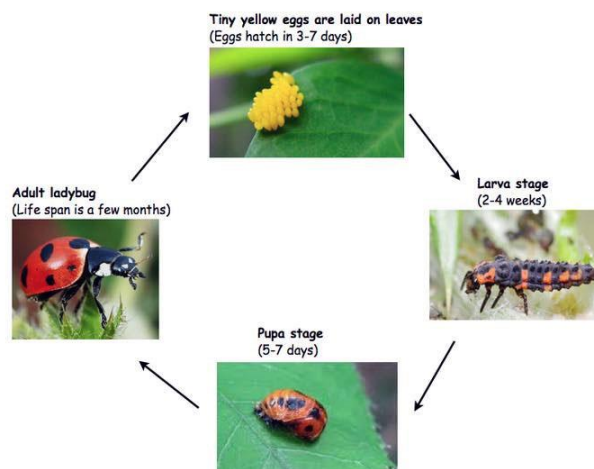


Benefits to the Garden:

Allow some plants to bolt and produce seed. Cilantro may attract aphids, which, in turn, attract all kinds of beneficial insects, such as ladybugs, lacewings, hover flies and parasitic wasps, that can help control other pests in your garden. Get to know what the ladybug and lacewing larvae look like so that you don't kill them off!

As cilantro bolts, the center stalk elongates and the leaves become more feathery. Photo by Mike Hills

Lifestyle of the Ladybug:



Chandler Sunset Library Spring Seed Swap

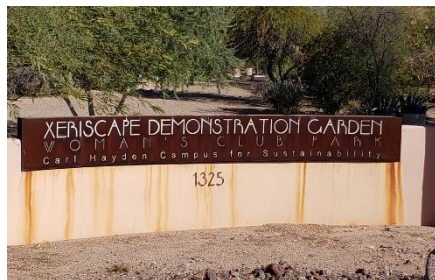
Details: February 8th
4930 W Ray Road
Chandler, AZ 85226
9:30 to 11:30 a.m.



Spring planting season is fast approaching! Visit the Chandler Sunset Library on Saturday, February 8 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. and share seeds, seed starts, and plant cuttings with your neighbors. Meet local gardeners, Master Gardeners, and other community members with the expertise to help you start or maintain your desert garden, conserve when and where you can, and more! You can participate even if you do not bring seeds. It's the perfect opportunity for new Arizona residents who want to establish a garden of their own. Envelopes and markers will be provided. Everyone and all ages are welcome! There will be a prize raffle to win a desert gardening book! Kathy Eastman and Lee Ann Aronson will host a table for AHA.

Tempe Woman's Club Garden Tour

On Saturday morning, November 23, 2024, a group of herbies met Ryan Wood, Water Program Specialist with the City of Tempe for a tour of the Tempe



Woman's Club Xeriscape Garden. Formerly known as Marlborough Park, this park was built in 1989 as a mini park and was named after Tempe's first women's organization, the Tempe Women's Club. In 1995, the garden was converted into a xeriscape demonstration garden to promote low water use plants and good desert landscaping practices. As part of his job, Ryan meets with Tempe homeowners to help resolve problems of excess water use, usually caused by toilet, pool or irrigation issues.

And so, we began with a discussion on putting together a good irrigation system.



Using information from the old standby handouts "Landscape

Watering by the Numbers" and "Guidelines for Landscape Drip Irrigation Systems," the three main

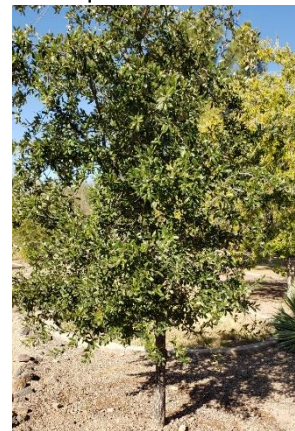
steps are 1) Knowing how much water your plants need; 2) Knowing how much water each part of your watering system applies; and 3) Matching your system's output to your plants' needs. As a matter of practice, Ryan recommended using pressure-compensating drippers that deliver the same known amount of water all along the tubing. He said that while "flag" drippers are okay, we should avoid using adjustable drippers, as you never know exactly how much water is being delivered. There is a display area at the park where tubing has been left exposed for observation, but burying lines helps protect it from degradation.

We then began our walk through the garden, which is divided into sections including Plants of the Outback, Succulent Trail, Desert Tree Walk, Sonoran Desert Habitat and Mediterranean Garden.

Plants along the various trails are well labeled, with signage giving both botanical and common plant name, where the plant is native, mature size, and sun and water requirements. There are also larger informational displays on the grounds, covering topics like proper planting practices and basics of converting a lawn to xeriscape.



Ryan gave us copies of the new AMWUA "Landscape Plants for the Arizona Desert" booklet which was published in honor of Kirti Mathura and Kent Newland, "two landscape professionals who left a lasting legacy of passion, knowledge, and a collection of beautiful plant photos to be adored." As we toured the garden, Ryan answered questions about the plants we viewed, which included wild cotton, a semi-deciduous shrub that was dropping leaves but still had a bloom or two; Hong Kong or Anacacho orchid tree (*Beuhinia lunarioides*) with twisted seedpods and leaves shaped as butterflies; canyon hackberry, a small tree (pictured right), and desert hackberry, a large shrub; pink and red flowered fairy dusters, leatherleaf acacia and more.



Ryan mentioned that, because of our lack of monsoon rains, even indigenous trees now need some watering. In addition, plants struggle when summer night time temperatures don't go below 90 degrees, and after two "hotter than average" summers, many plants are struggling.

You can learn more about this garden at <https://www.tempe.gov/government/public-works/water/water-conservation/xeriscape-demonstration-garden>

Many thanks to Teri Thorpe for arranging this informative tour.

Write-up and photos by Sandy Cielaszyk

Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs News

The Arizona Federation of Garden Clubs is proud to host two conventions in April 2025 at the Wyndham Phoenix Airport/Tempe, 1600 S. 52nd Street, Tempe, 85281.

The AFGC state convention will be held on Sunday, April 27, 2025. The Pacific Region Garden Clubs convention will happen immediately following on Monday, April 28th through Wednesday April 30th, 2025. Save the dates!

Garden club attendees will travel from several states to this event, looking forward to excellent educational breakout sessions and interesting keynote speakers. The convention will offer pre, daily and post garden tours. Herbie Kim Rosenlof is organizing these conventions for AFGC. Registration opens in January: <https://azgardenclubs.com/conventions/>

Weed & Feed, November 2, 2024

The day dawned cool and clear, with below normal temps for the first time in months! With seasonal energy, Herbies and Master Gardener volunteers tucked in a couple of thyme plants, some violas, and French tarragon. Seeds of dill, cilantro and parsley were scattered in freshly prepared spots as well...and the places marked for future weeders to avoid. We were able to identify a few welcome seedlings from prior seedings, including several small rue seedlings from our plant that perished this past summer. We planted a couple young rue plants into that general location as well.

We found milk thistle seedlings making a seasonal appearance, always welcome for pollinators and for the healthy seeds. Calendula seedlings are popping up quickly, with warm soils and cool air temperatures. Some as yet to be identified cilantro or parsley sprouts are also up and will add to the bonanza for spring pollinators.



The sweet peas, undaunted by the warm October, are now four inches tall and doing just fine! Very few coreopsis or black-eyed Susies are showing, and we are not sure yet of seedling ID's among some of the seed mixtures we planted last month. Time will tell. We have planted a few more pollinator/butterfly friendly natives as well. The gomphrena, a summer success story, still look great, holding their own all summer, now into November, and giving us some seeds to collect and package for future events!

The *Iris pseudacorus* (Yellow Flag Iris) has been very unhappy all summer. We removed the plant from its pot and discovered that irrigation had ceased to work months ago, explaining its less than stellar appearance! The surviving rhizomes were replanted in freshened, moistened soil with new drip lines to help them along. We look forward to seeing this water loving plant recover.

The queen's wreath hummed with native bees and honeybees, but was trimmed some to allow us to use the stairs. The shrubby growth at the base of the pomegranates and myrtles was snipped, and an overgrown aloe was reduced in size. We stopped to admire the recovery of our lemon grass planting. It has taken a while for it to get going after the last lift and divide session, but it will prevail into the fall. Spanish lavenders were looking seasonally chlorotic, and French lavenders were beginning to bloom. Skip the Spanish Lavender in your own home garden; it has just a short bloom season and always seems to struggle, never looking great any month.

We sold a flat of salad-ready, lush Bloody Sorrel (*Rumex sanguineus*) at our booth for the Metro Tech Fall Festival. Selling points for this plant include not only that it is a readymade harvest for several meals, but also that it is a perennial herb, returning year after year, once the heat of summer has passed. The one in the garden is substantiating this by reappearing for yet another year; happily living under the pomegranate, it returns faithfully each season. It is rewarding to find plants breaking dormancy, even after one of the hottest summers on record!



It was a good day of fall chores, pleasantly cool, and gardeners enjoyed time in the garden together, learning hands-on and making new friends. We left a full dumpster, a tidier garden, and with hope for all that the next cooler seasons shall bring.

Mike Hills and Pam Perry
Co-Captains, AHA Demonstration Garden

Weed & Feed, December 7, 2024

As I arrived at the garden, trying to wrap my head around the likely chores of the day, I realized Mike was there ahead of me, figuratively and literally. Always the first to arrive and the last to leave, he had plants, fertilizers and soil mixes, amendments and seeds, mulch, seed bags, tools, stuff from the shed, the plan for setting up seed cleaning, not to mention his intro to whatever is seasonally happening around us, all in hand, **and** snacks to wrap up the day's efforts! That is no small feat for the crew boss of the day. Today he was ready to take on winter pruning. Our plants are larger than in previous decades. He brought ladders, as well as pruning tools, for volunteers to access the upper reaches of the chosen targets of the day. I cannot thank you enough, Mike, for all you do!



December Weed & Feed volunteers tackle the winter pruning. Photo by Mike Hills

Volunteers gathered to tackle annual winter pruning in the demo garden. With gardeners pruning both the east and west sides of the twisted myrtle (*Myrtus boetica*), the canopy was thinned and sculpted, not only to reduce encroaching shade, but also to maintain the structure of this signature plant. It no longer looms over the vegetable garden shed, the north side of the garden and the parking area.



Pam Posten (left) and Emily Heller with bay leaf wreath
Photo by Maureen Tonn

Winter pruning is a collaborative effort with Emily Heller, who repurposes the green material into holiday décor. She had begun thinning older stems of our ever-larger bay tree. By selecting and making rejuvenating cuts on older stems of the

bay tree (*Laurus nobilis*), we opened up the canopy, perhaps reduced a little height, and provided Emily with material for seasonal wreaths. She demonstrated the steps to wrangling the bay stems gently and weaving tops to bottom and 'voila' a lovely wreath and a practical way to store and dry a supply of bay leaves for culinary endeavors. No wire ties, no pins, just careful manhandling!

The dwarf myrtle also was pruned, opening up that canopy, allowing less shade into the vegetable garden, and making the space on the east side more accessible! Shorter days and cool nights reduce rapid growth, and, as the days get longer after the first of the year, new growth will appear. We will do this again next year!

Pomegranates have shed their leaves, making it easier to find crossing or rubbing branches and to select those that should be removed, as well as to shape the plants away from the pathways they border. It is so much easier to make pruning decisions if foliage is not visual clutter!

The past couple of workdays, we have distributed seed into open spaces in the garden. We see seedlings emerging for cool season herbs, annuals, and perennials. Over time we may learn which is which. Last year a surviving *Ruta graveolens* flowered. It made viable seeds, and we now have five teeny-tiny rue seedlings emerging! Old standbys like the larkspur and black eye Susies appear; poppies and coreopsis, too. It will be interesting to learn to recognize seedlings of the many wildflowers seed packets Mike has contributed this year!

Even the beloved red flax is up and recognizable! Tucked in behind a tall evening primrose was another primrose, blooming with that signature jewel tone 'primrose yellow' flower. There are many native *Oenothera* included in various wildflower mixes. It will take a better botanist than I am to figure out exactly which one this might be. We did not find many of the seasonal weeds, warm or cool, emerging yet. Some of my least favorites have yet to make appearances elsewhere as well. The unseasonable warm temps may have had a positive impact for a while on which weeds grow!

Thank you all for your energy, interest and enthusiasm. The garden has come through a very hot summer in good shape and is well into a productive winter season!

Pam Perry, Demo Garden Co-Captain



Myrtle wreath made by Emily Heller for her company "Bene Vivendo"

AHA December 2024 Holiday Party

On December 5, herbies gathered at the Maricopa County Cooperative Extension office to celebrate the holiday season. The tables were decorated with beautiful poinsettias and garlands. We feasted on a sumptuous variety of herbal potluck dishes and, like last year, a mocktail competition was held. Holiday Party Chair, Jess White, coordinated the revelry, and we enjoyed a fabulous evening of festivities!



Jess White and Shay Emmers greet guests as they sign in for our Holiday Party!



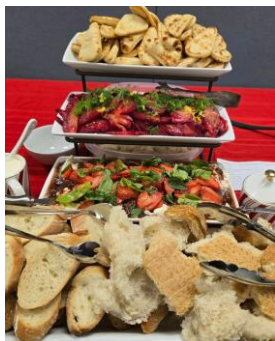
Decorations were beautiful and desserts abundant!



The food was, of course, herborally delicious!



Herbies judging the delicious mocktails!



Pictured above Liz Lonetti, Jo Setliff and Michael Clow enjoy our holiday potluck offerings.

Chris George was, for the second year in a row, our mocktail champion and her winning recipe follows.

Blueberry Lavender Chamomile Mocktail

2 cups blueberry juice (100% organic is best)
1 cup of brewed Traditional Medicinals Chamomile & Lavender tea
1/4 cup 100% pure maple syrup
2 tablespoons (1/8 cup) fresh squeezed lemon juice, strained with a fine strainer to remove floaty bits

Brew the tea, using 2 teabags to 1 cup of filtered water. Squeeze all the goodness from the teabags before composting them. Add the maple syrup to the warm tea so it dissolves thoroughly.

Add the blueberry juice and lemon juice.

Serve, garnished with fresh blueberries and lemon slices. Depending on the time of year, add a rosemary sprig to the glass as garnish in the wintertime or fresh mint in the summertime.



This winning Mocktail Competition entry was prepared by Chris George. It is based on the mocktail recipe found here: <https://www.orchidsandsweettea.com/blueberry-lavender-chamomile-mocktail/>

November Culinary 2024

On Saturday, November 16, eighteen Herbies gathered at Diane and Chris Knudsen's Paradise Valley home to celebrate cooking with The Three Sisters: Beans, Corn and Squash. Conversations were lively, and, as always, the food was excellent and we created a delicious evening repast.

Diane and Chris Knudsen made Cowboy Caviar, served with tortilla chips for an appetizer. Diane also treated us to her grandfather's Tucson recipe for Mexican Spoonbread served with salsa. Janet Coleman and Zac Thayer prepared an Autumn Soup with Cornbread Croutons, while Drew Templeton made her grandmother's Brunswick Stew.

Chris Lueck brought a Southwest Bean, Quinoa and Mango Salad, while Kathy Eastman made amazing Honey Miso Glazed Sweet Potatoes with miso made from beans. Vesna Boscovic created Stuffed Squash served with blue corn muffins.

Mike Hills brought his Calabacitas Tres Hermanas (Three Sisters Squash) featuring squash, corn, Tepary beans, cheese and tasty Mexican spices. Mike's sister Louise joined us too, and brought incredible Smoked Cream Cheese with Mexican Spiced Corn.

Pam Perry and Henry Harding made a nostalgic "Vermont Saturday night suppa" of Baked Beans and Corn Bread. Todd Templeton brought a spicy Channa Masala with Squash, and Mary Parke baked a luscious Zucchini Lasagna.

We even had desserts! Pam Schuler made delicious Black Bean Brownies, Katherine Tarr brought Pumpkin Pie, and Timorie Coleman and Caleb Johnke created incredible Cranberry Masa Pear Tamales with Caramel Sauce.

Join us on Saturday, January 25, at 6:00 p.m. at Liz and Dan Lonetti's home in Central Phoenix for our next culinary event - New Year/New Flavors! Sign-ups are open in the Membership calendar at www.azherb.org. Don't forget to click on the Goggledocs link to let everyone know what dish you're bringing!

Drew Templeton
Culinary Chair



Our November culinary hosts, Diane and Chris Knudsen
Culinary Photos by Drew Templeton



Mexican Spoonbread

Preheat the oven to 375° degrees

1 can creamed corn
1 cup cornmeal
1 cup milk
1/3 cup oil
2 eggs
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
cheddar cheese
fire roasted hatch chilis



Combine first seven ingredients in a bowl and mix thoroughly. Pour half the batter in an oiled pan. (Note: I always double the recipe and need a pan larger than 13" x 9"). Lay chilis on top of the first layer. A large can of chilis works nicely if you double the recipe.

Sprinkle grated cheddar cheese on top of chilis, and pour the rest of the batter on top. Bake for about 50 minutes or so, if doubling recipe. The single recipe will take perhaps 35 to 40 minutes baking time.

Prepared by Diane Knudsen, November culinary

Calabacitas Tres Hermanas (Three Sisters Squash)

NOTE: Spice and Herb ingredients can be reduced or increased for level of heat desired; Makes 12 to 20 servings

4 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium sweet onion, chopped
5 cloves garlic, chopped fine
1 fresh Poblano or Pasilla pepper, de-veined & chopped
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
4 teaspoons sea salt
1 teaspoon dried ground roasted Poblano pepper
2 tablespoons dried ground oregano (Mexican oregano is better)
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon ground coriander



1 can (7 oz) diced roasted green Poblano peppers
1 can (4 oz) diced roasted green chiles
1-1/2 cups roasted sweet corn
4 large Roma tomatoes, chopped
6 medium Mexican gray squash and/or zucchinis, sliced
1 to 2 cups pre-cooked and drained Tepary or black beans

Heat large pan with the olive oil over medium heat. Add onion, garlic, Pasilla/Poblano pepper to pan and cook, stirring, until tender.

Add salt, pepper and dried spices, plus canned Chile peppers and cook 5 minutes, stirring.

Add tomatoes and roasted corn and cook 8 minutes, stirring.

Add squash and Tepary or black beans and cook 5 minutes, stirring.

Lower heat to simmer and cook for 10 additional minutes before serving.

Recommended side accompaniments: shredded Mexican white cheeses, chopped cilantro

Prepared by Mike Hills for November culinary

Brunswick Stew

1 quart vegetable broth or water
1 can (14 oz) fire-roasted tomatoes with liquid
1 can (14 oz) white beans with liquid (originally lima beans)
1 cup frozen or canned white corn, preferably "Shoe-peg" corn
1 onion, diced
2 cloves of garlic, pressed or minced
1 tablespoon onion powder
1 tablespoon lemon zest
1 teaspoon Liquid Smoke
1 tablespoon Worcestershire Sauce, or to taste
Salt and flaked red pepper to taste.



Combine all ingredients, bring to a simmer, and serve! Freezes well.

Prepared by Drew Templeton, November culinary

The Holiday Cactus: A holiday trifecta

Holiday months can be as frenetic as they are joyous. A welcome “take a breath plant” is the stunning holiday cactus, a gift from nature complete with its own floral decorations. The name “holiday cactus” refers to three similar family members of *Schlumbergera*. These simple plants, numbering over 300, have significant similarities as well as differences. All are adaptable and low maintenance, thrive with minimal care, and none is a true cactus.



A cherished family tradition: a Christmas cactus obtained in 1908 is still going strong in 2025. Photo by Matt Bohn, an herbie friend

Commonly referred to as the Christmas cactus (*S. bridgesii*), the Thanksgiving cactus (*S. truncates*), and the Easter cactus (*S. agaertneri*), they are named for the specific time in which their blossoms appear. Bud production is all about a particular combination of temperature and length of day. Christmas cactuses bloom late November to late January, and, if the day is shorter, twice in spring. Thanksgiving cactuses produce blooms from late October to the end of November, and Easter cactuses blossom around Easter. Luckily, over 300 years ago, thanks to the discerning botanical eye of an unnamed Spanish explorer, the holiday cactus found its way to monastery gardens in Spain. As the story goes, the monks tended to the plants, which miraculously burst



Drew Templeton's charming Christmas Cactus

into brilliant red blossoms just in time to decorate chapels for Christmas.

The tip of the leaves, which are actually modified stems, are the point at which the buds burst into various shades of red, pink, white and fuchsia, or a rare yellow or orange blossom. Stunning in any display, older forms can stream downward-facing flowers with grace and elegance from hanging baskets, flower boxes or whatever moves the spirit. In contrast, some of the newer hybrids are predisposed to showcase their upward facing flowers with a slightly more erect posture.

The stem is the key to identification among the three holiday cactuses. If the plant has a flattened stem, then welcome the Christmas cactus. If the stem looks like a lobster or crab claw with pointed hooks on the outer margin, then the Thanksgiving cactus is present. Bristles at the end of each stem and between segmented joints is the field marker for the Easter cactus.

Hailing from the jungles of South and Central America and living at about 3,000 to 5,000 feet elevation, the holiday cactus is an epiphytic cactus. Not a desert dweller, this member of *Cactaceae* is found in moist verdant rainforests, and, although not quite drought tolerant like most succulents, it does store water in its stems. In its natural state, it grows on other plants or rocks, and this interaction benefits both.

Cultivated plants are often grown in pots with well-draining cactus mix. In the proper habitat, the holiday cactus can live outdoors (but out of direct sunlight in the summer): the plant must be slowly reacquainted when moving it back into the house. If the desired end is flower production, expose the plant to more light. Dry roots and moist air are two other musts for healthy growing plants. Ironically, holiday cactuses prefer cooler temperatures to warmer ones. Drafts from hot air can cause unopened flower buds to drop from the plant. [More detailed information](#) about the cultural needs and how to stimulate blossoms for the holiday cactus can be found at the above link.

Kathleen McCoy
Herbie, Master Gardener and Master Naturalist

Don't forget to go to our website www.azherb.org and renew your membership. Login to your account and scroll down to “renew.” You may also renew by mail or in person at any Herbies meeting.

Harvesting, Preserving & Using Herbs

By Liz Lonetti



During our November 7th general meeting, Liz Lonetti presented a talk focusing on how to make the most of the herbs we grow, sharing ways to use them not only as we harvest, but also by preserving them for future use. She referenced AZ1922 Publication by the University of Arizona Cooperative

Extension titled "Growing Herbs for the Health of It," which emphasizes that using herbs not only helps us have healthier food by reducing salt, sugar and fat, but also adds flavor and antioxidants and gives anti-inflammatory benefits.



az1922

October 2015

Season For Health: A Guide For Using Herbs and Spices For Your Home Cooking

Kiah J. Farr, Yuri Nakagomi and Nobuko Hongo



Harvesting Herbs

The rule of thumb is to harvest herbs in the early morning; however, Liz suggested harvesting anytime you can get to it! Her suggestion is to "grab" herbs whenever you can. Throw them into everything, including your water bottle. The best time of the year to harvest depends on the herb. The best local reference guide for knowing when to plant and when to harvest herbs would be our own "[The Low Desert Herb Gardening Handbook](#)" available online at our website (azherb.org) or often sold at our meetings or events. This booklet has 40 pages with month-by-month, easy-to-follow guidelines on watering, propagating, transplanting, and pruning. Written, designed, and edited by longtime AHA member Anne Fischer, with assistance from AHA past President Mike Hills, it is a must-have for every desert herb gardener!

When harvesting woody perennials, avoid cutting back more than 1/3 at a time. Use sharp, clean pruners to make clean cuts, rather than just tearing off leaves and branches. Ideally, cut just above a node for harvesting.

Tender annuals herbs may be cut back 50 to 70%. Using a pair of sharp scissors is usually enough to harvest these plants. At the end of growing season, cut the entire plant back at base to maximize harvest.

Pinching back leaves throughout the growing season can also help you maximize harvest because plants like basil double the leaf output when it regrows. Once basil is cut, it is best kept in a vase of water on the counter much like cut flowers, not in the refrigerator, as the leaves will turn black below 40° F. Other tender herbs may be best kept in a damp cloth in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. They will usually last for at least one week and sometimes up to one month.

Most herbs should not be cut much during the hottest months of July and August, in order to give them cover to protect from our brutal summer sun. Basil may be an exception to this rule.

Preserving Herbs

A good way to use up fresh herbs before they go bad is to fry them in oil and use as garnishes for food.

For longer storage, dry fresh herbs for later use. The simplest and easiest method is to hang up small bouquets of fresh herbs to air dry indoors out of sunlight. Low tech drying techniques can include placing herbs on the countertop in your kitchen on paper towels, using a drying rack (commonly sold in Asian markets), using a solar oven outdoors or placing herbs on a tray and leaving them on the dashboard of your car until dry. High tech methods of drying involve a microwave or dehydrator machine. Once dried, the herbs can be saved for long term use. Reuse saved silica packets with your dry herbs to maintain freshness. Silica packets may be "refreshed" by placing them in a 300° oven for up to 3-1/2 hours.

Using Herbs

Other long-term ways to preserve herbs include infusing or freezing. Use only dry herbs when steeping to flavor olive oil for cooking or making salad dressings to prevent botulism. Minced fresh herbs may be frozen in ice cube trays with olive oil and kept frozen until needed for making soups or sauces, or topping vegetables. Liz's favorite way to store frozen herbs is made up as pesto or in mixtures such as lime juice



and cilantro. She put the prepared mixes in Ziplock bags, labels and dates them. They freeze flat and then can be stacked next to each other, placed upright in the freezer (see photo). Break off and use chunks as needed when cooking:

When making herb flavored vinegars, always use a good quality vinegar. Fresh herbs may be used safely with vinegars of at least 5% acidity. If using fresh herbs when making an herbal vinegar, make sure they are washed free of dirt and patted dry. Don't skip the patting dry step! Excess water can dilute your vinegar and cause bacterial growth inside your extract.



Balsamic vinegar combines nicely with herbs like tarragon, rosemary, or basil. Rice wine vinegar extracts a beautiful color from plums. Apple cider vinegar tends to be a good "all around-er," imparting a complementary flavor

to a variety of herbs. To make an unheated herbal vinegar extract, check out this link: <https://blog.mountainroseherbs.com/how-to-make-herbal-vinegar>.

Flavored herbal vinegars may be used in "shrubs" (a drinking vinegar). Here is a fun recipe to try:

Lemon Verbena & Rose Geranium Shrub

2 cups of tightly packed lemon verbena & rose geranium leaves. (use more verbena as the geranium is a strong flavor)
2 cups organic cider vinegar
2 cups sugar
1 cup water

Instructions here:

https://www.naturallyatthewrensnest.com/my-blog/2020/8/16/how-to-make-a-herbal-shrub-and-the-benefits-to-your-health?srltid=AfmBO0oaWd0QVrCOg9y_Gok5KPcTZ_0Fu-cpvcI9ZcqX4LCcZ5ek7iss

To use your shrub, take a spoonful straight from the bottle or add a splash of it to sparkling or still water for a super refreshing drink. It can be used as a base for a cocktail, a dressing for salad leaves, or even drizzled over veggies for roasting.

One of the most versatile ways to use herbs is to incorporate them into herb butters, an "easy decadence." And, they make a great gift! Liz's basic recipe for herb butter is:

1/2 cup butter
1-2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh herbs
1-2 teaspoons lemon zest, optional

Kosher salt/pepper to taste, optional

Soften butter, stir in minced herbs of choice. Roll into a log or press into a mold and refrigerate, covered or wrapped until used. Herbal butters keep for two weeks in the fridge, or up to six months in the freezer.

Find more inspiration and information on herb butters at Whip and Wander website by opening this QR code:



Another fun way to preserve herbs is in honey:



For making herbed salts, you may layer whole leaves in layers of salt, or mince herbs and combine in salt.

To candy herb leaves in sugar, dip in egg white, sprinkle with sugar and leave to dry completely, as when making candied flowers. For a vegan variation on candied herb leaves, paint them with aquafaba (the liquid found in canned beans), then dredge in sugar and leave to dry completely.

Liquors may also be used to preserve herbs. The easiest to use are vodka, tequila, rum, whiskey or gin. Guidelines for liquor infusions:

1-2 hours: Hot peppers, but test often as different peppers will add their spicy flavor faster and the spirit can easily be burned and unpalatable.

3-4 days: Intense flavors such as basil, citrus, dill, cucumber (3 days, skinless), garlic, mint, oregano, peppers, tarragon, thyme, and vanilla beans.

1 week: Moderate flavors such as most berries, cantaloupes, lavender, mangoes, peaches, pitted cherries, and rosemary.

2 weeks: Mild flavors such as pineapple, ginger, or lemongrass.

Making the most of your herb harvest can be fun and easy. Herbs may be used in a myriad of ways for tasty treats, memorable meals and scrumptious additions to your culinary adventures. So harvest, preserve and use your herbs. Bon appetite!

Arizona Herb Association
PO Box 63101
Phoenix, AZ 85082
www.AZHerb.org
Facebook.com: Arizona Herb Association



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November & December Weed & Feeds

AHA's 2025 Officer Nominations

"My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant's point of view."

---Fred Dale