



The Arizona Herb Association

November 2026 A Publication for Members & Friends https://azherb.org

Autumn Greetings to the Herbies,

November is a natural time to express “thanks” to all who make Arizona Herb Association a longstanding success. From the front lines to the back-end members, and to the incognito volunteers in between, let’s give “thanks.”

Did you attend October’s general meeting? Triumphant! Liz’s presentation on Día de los Muertos (i.e. Day of the Dead) and Miriam Segura’s Herb of the Month “Maize” were superb. Their presentations were thoughtful, well-researched, ethnobotanical, historical, and real. We connected, not just as a group of gardening members, but as kindred spirits in this journey called life. Did you feel it, too?

And so back to gardening … autumn is that time of year to plant cool season crops like radishes, lettuce, kale, and broccoli. Herbs can thrive too! Plant seeds of chives, dill, chamomile, or even beautiful pansies! Planting seeds and realizing the satisfaction of thriving plants is a great trade-off after the protracted summer heat.

On cold nights, be prepared to cover more sensitive plants with shade cloth or an old pillowcase or bedsheets. Cooler weather means less water. And how we’ve been blessed with rainfall! Do you collect rainwater? A great Master Gardener publication to read or download is “Passive Water Harvesting.” Search for publication AZ1564 on the University of Arizona website.

Soon we’ll meet again at our November general meeting. Our returning Southwest Institute of Healing Arts (SWIHA) students will present Medicinal Mushrooms to the Herbies. Kim Rosenlof will present the Herb of the Month - Chiltepin Pepper. This meeting includes the business of electing new board members for 2027. Members, please come prepared to vote.

Beautiful blessings,

Shay Emmers, President

Calendar

November 2026

Thursday, November 5: AHA general meeting
Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.
Topic: Medicinal Mushrooms
Speakers: Carly Madison, SWIHA student
Herb of the Month: Chiltepin Pepper
Presenter: Kim Rosenlof



Saturday, November 7: Weed & Feed
Time: 7:00 a.m.

Saturday, November 14: Nature Fest PHX 2026
Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area
2801 S 7th Avenue, Phoenix 85003
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Saturday, November 14: Kombucha Workshop
Presenter: Rachel Diament
Location: Bernie Arnecke's home
Time: 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. Cost: $20
Details on page 3
Sign up on the AHA calendar at https://azherb.org

Saturday, November 14: Culinary Event
Theme: Thanksgiving Favorites…Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme
Hosts: Drew and Todd Templeton
Sign up on the AHA calendar at https://azherb.org

Saturday, November 21: AHA Field Trip
Location: Liberty Wildlife
2600 E Elwood Street, Phoenix, 85040
Time: 10:00 a.m. Cost: $15
Tour is limited to 10 people
Details on page 3
Sign up on the AHA calendar at https://azherb.org

See a list of Fall plant and seed events on page 3

December 2026

Thursday, December 3: AHA Holiday Party
Location: MCC Extension; Time: 7:00 p.m.
Herb of the Year 2027: Flax, *Linum* spp.
All members and guests are welcome!
Watch your emails for more details.



Saturday, December 5: Weed & Feed
Time: 8:00 a.m.
Come, enjoy the cooler weather and get some hands-on learning!

November 2026 General Meeting

Each fall we welcome students from the Southwest Institute of Healing Arts (SWIHA) to present at our general meeting. This November we look forward to hearing Carly Madison speak on "Medicinal Mushrooms." Let's support SWIHA and each other as we gather together on Thursday, November 5, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. to hear about this fascinating topic.

The Herb of the Month – Chiltepin Pepper – will be presented by Kim Rosenlof.





Left, herbie Kim Rosenlof to present Chiltepin Pepper.

Photos by Lee Ann Aronson and Mike Hills

Plants left over from the Metro Tech Fall Festival and Plant Sale will be available for purchase, including some scented geraniums. Katherine Tarr will also have quart size bags of worm castings for $5. A recipe for a planting mix will be provided with each bag sold. Garlic and elephant garlic will be available to buy, along with a selection of seeds appropriate for fall planting.

If possible, please bring your own plates, bowls, beverage holders and utensils to help us reduce waste! Snacks for our meeting break are welcomed; a recipe or list of ingredients for your dish is also appreciated, as it helps those with dietary concerns make their choices.

If you can't attend in person, you can join us via Zoom at the link below.

Meeting begins at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85141170155?pwd=2bEbsoHmiH0kevN1sMvablfM8j45qG.1

Meeting ID: 851 4117 0155

Passcode: 383611

Welcome New AHA Members:



Kylie TenBrook
Zip Code: 85254

Joy Zelmanovich
Zip Code: 85255

Torie Moore
Zip Code: 85298

Diane Knudsen, Membership Chair

Fall 2026 Plant and Seed Events!

Event: Great American Seed-UP
Where: North Phoenix Baptist Church
5757 N Central Ave, Building B
Phoenix, AZ 85012
When: Friday, November 6, 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
When: Saturday, November 7, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

This is an opportunity to purchase adaptable, non-GMO, and heirloom seeds in bulk.
More info & tickets:
https://greatamericanseedup.org Under "events"

Event: Arizona Rare Fruit Growers Sale
Where: Lehi Montessori School
2415 N Terrace Circle
Mesa, AZ 85203
When: Saturday, November 7
Time: 9:00 a.m. to noon

This is a chance to get plants and trees propagated by AZRFG members.

Event: Nature Fest PHX 2026
Where: Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area
2801 South 7th Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85003
When: Saturday, November 14
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.



Event: Herb and Veggie transplants for sale
Where: Arizona Worm Farm
8430 S 19th Avenue, Phoenix, 85041
When: During regular hours of operation

Fruits & veggies are available for purchase anytime we are open; supplies are always limited because we only sell what we can't eat ourselves.
Transplants are available during regular hours of operation.
https://arizonawormfarm.com/

Kombucha Workshop

Date: Saturday, November 14
Time 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Location: Bernadette Arneke's home
Cost: $20
Workshop presenter: Rachel Diamant



During the workshop, attendees will receive a quart size jar with a SCOBY and starter sweetened tea for fermenting, and a 12-ounce glass bottle with starter Kombucha liquid, with your choice of a 100% juice (no sugar added) for making your own bottle of kombucha to take home. (see photo). Attendees will be able to sample some kombucha flavors to make their selection. In addition, attendees will receive a printed set of directions and information about kombucha.

You can sign up for the workshop at the AHA website https://azherb.org on the calendar under the heading "For Members Only" or at our November general meeting.

Join us for a Tour of Liberty Wildlife!

The mission of Liberty Wildlife is "to nurture the nature of Arizona through wildlife rehabilitation, natural history education, and conservation services to the community." You can learn more about their work at https://libertywildlife.org/

Date: November 21, 2026
Time: Meet in lobby at 10:00 a.m. Tour starts at 10:15 a.m.
Location: Liberty Wildlife 2600 E. Elwood St, Phoenix AZ 85040 (just north of Broadway and east off 24th Street)
Cost: $15, pay by cash or card when you arrive
Limit: 10 people
Sign up on the AHA calendar at https://azherb.org

The tour lasts for 45 minutes, followed by a flight and eagle program. Remember to wear a hat, solid pair of shoes or sandals since walkways are gravel and bring water and a snack.
Local questions?
Contact Teri: teriinthegarden@gmail.com or
Rachel: rbdiajaht27@gmail.com

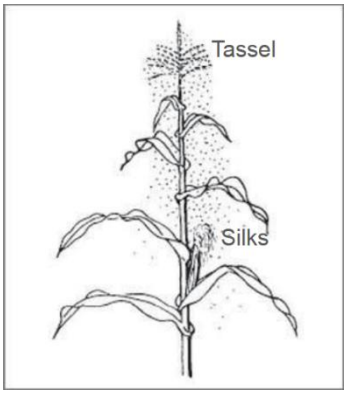
October Herb of the Month
A Global Journey: A-MAIZ-ing Maize
By Miriam Segura



Maize was first domesticated in the Central Balsas River Valley in southwest Mexico 7000 years BC. Its wild ancestor was a grass called Teosinte with small hard seeds. For over 1,000 years, humans selected plants with softer seed casings and larger clusters of seeds. These seeds were saved and planted, resulting over these many centuries in the ears of corn we savor today.
I
Science today tells us that maize uses C4 carbon fixation, one of three known methods of photosynthesis used by plants. C4 plants capture carbon dioxide efficiently in hot, dry, and bright environments. Plants using C4 photosynthesis are about 40% more water efficient than plants using C3 photosynthesis. Other C4 plants are sugarcane, sorghum, millet, switchgrass and amaranth. (Plants utilizing CAM photosynthesis, including cacti, pineapples, agaves and jade plants, are up to 83% more water efficient than C3 plants).

Indigenous people learned that dried corn, soaked and cooked in a solution of water mixed with an alkaline powder made from limestone or ashes, and then washed and hulled, released bound-up Vitamin B3 or niacin. This preparation method was called nixtamalization; the wet, treated corn, now called nixtamal, was ground into fresh dough or masa. This resulted in prevention of the disease called pellagra, because the process made calcium and iron more bioavailable to the human body. It also eliminated harmful toxins like mycotoxins and aflatoxins from the grain.

When maize was first exported to what are now European countries, people became sick from eating maize without nixtamalization. The disease was called “Mal de la rosa” (today called pellagra) due to reddish, rose-colored scabs that formed on sun-exposed areas like the hands, feet, and neck—the latter famously known as “Casal’s collar.” Left untreated, death often followed.



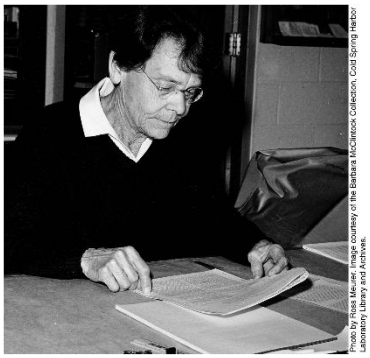
In order for corn to complete the pollination process, each kernel must be fertilized by a single grain of pollen which travels down the corn silk, resulting in one kernel of corn. One corn silk produces one kernel of corn. Since corn is wind pollinated, planting corn in solid blocks rather than single rows helps corn cobs be completely pollinated as pollen is released from the corn stalks’ tassels.

There are 64 types of maize cultivated in Mexico, of which 59 are native. Varieties include dent corn, popcorn, sweet corn, and flint corn; hominy is a flint corn, also called calico or Indian corn, that is characterized by a hard, glassy outer layer surrounding a soft starchy center. In the United States, only six strains are utilized, of which 99% is yellow dent corn and 1% is a sweet corn variety. Most is grown in the “corn belt” - Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky.

Over 99% of cultivated corn is Yellow Dent #2. Humans grow more corn than any other single plant variety on Earth, covering massive portions of global agricultural land. Maize is now used as binders in over 3,000 food products, in plastics, and in animal feed. Although it is used as animal feed for many different animals, Miriam cautioned that it should only be used to feed chickens and pigs, as other animals cannot digest it properly.

Intentionally cultivated and prized as a gourmet delicacy in Mexico but called a pest in parts of the USA and worldwide, Huitlacoche or “Corn Smut” in English is a fungal disease that turns corn kernels into galls. This fungal disease (*Ustilago maydis*) can affect field, pop, and sweet corn, as well as the corn relative teosinte (*Zea mexicana*). High in protein and amino acids, Huitlacoche is often used in quesadillas and omelettes. It has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties and is thought to help with gut health and cholesterol management.





Barbara McClintock, cytogeneticist who discovered "jumping genes" by studying maize kernels

More than 30 years after making the discoveries for which she was honored, Barbara McClintock, an American cytogeneticist, received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine at the age of 83, for her discovery of mobile genetic elements or "jumping genes" that she discovered by closely studying color patterns in maize kernels. She found that genetic codes are not stationary and small pieces of DNA can move within chromosomes, switching genes on or off. This discovery of "transposable elements" paved the way for exploring how genes interact, leading not only to insights in solving genetic diseases in humans, but also to ways of increasing crop resilience and yield through genetic modification.

Concerns and Controversies: Today, genetically modified corn is used to feed chickens and to sweeten sodas (high glucose corn syrup), and the runoff of fertilizer from irrigated mono-cropped fields of the USA "Corn Belt" has created a 6,000 square mile dead zone in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. There is also concern that Monsanto/Bayer GMO seeds kill insects and bind farmers into contracts that no longer allow them to save seeds as they historically had.

Mexico declared corn to be an element of national identity and banned by constitutional amendment the domestic cultivation of GMO maize and the use of the herbicide glyphosate to preserve their native corn, but was forced to revoke its import restrictions due to legal challenges from the USA.



Numerous national and institutional seed banks have been established to preserve and steward the native corn seed bank. Canasta de Semillas & Regional Reserves operates community seed houses and regional reserves across states like Tlaxcala, and the Valles de Jalisco maintain a revolving loan system where farmers borrow native seeds and return harvested replacements. Organizations like Native Seeds/SEARCH distribute seeds at nominal prices.

Many thanks to Miriam for sharing her story of corn – which began for her with her father in a cornfield in Illinois! – with us.

Delightful Vegetarian Comfort Foods

The October Culinary Dinner had the theme of Fall Vegetarian Comfort Foods. Fifteen Herbies gathered at the home of Hazel and Les Davis, where we celebrated the cool weather and Les' retirement! What a beautiful night looking out over Paradise Valley!



Our October hosts, Hazel and Les Davis.

Culinary photos by Drew Templeton

Hazel Davis provided a cheese and nut board, Drew Templeton invented a Sweet and Smokey White Bean Dip, and Eric Adamczyk created amazing Elote Corn. Donna and Keith Lorch brought Arugula Salad with Almonds and Goat Cheese.

Todd Templeton recreated a Butternut Miso Soup he'd had in Chicago last week, while Shay Emmers and her husband Steve Heiserman brought Vegetarian Lentil Stew and Shay's delicious first attempt at homemade sourdough! Hazel and Les Davis made an amazing Spinach Pesto Vegetarian Lasagna.

Pam Perry and Henry Harding brought lovely Glazed Carrots and Parsnips, Kathy Eastman created Moroccan-Style Shepherd's Pie, while Susan Adamczyk whipped up Cauliflower Rice.

For desert, Nancy and Jerry Greenberg brought brownies, and Hazel also made Honey and Apple Cake!

The spinach pesto lasagna, Elote corn, and cauliflower rice were elected top favorites.

Join us on November 14th at Drew and Todd Templeton's, when our theme will be Thanksgiving Favorites...Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme. Note that this is a change in location.

Drew Templeton
Culinary Chairperson

Spinach Pesto Lasagna
16 servings



16-20 no-boil lasagna noodles
2x12 oz. bags frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
5 cups ricotta cheese (can use full- or low-fat, or a combination)
1 cup pesto, homemade (see below) or store bought
2 cloves garlic, minced
Freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided
1/3 cup toasted pine nuts
4 cups marinara sauce
2 1/2 cups grated mozzarella cheese, divided

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly oil a 10x14-inch baking pan.

Combine the ricotta, spinach, pesto, garlic, pepper, 1/2 cup of the Parmesan, and the pine nuts. Mix well. Spread 1 cup of marinara sauce on the bottom of the pan. Place a layer of four or five uncooked noodles (depending on the size) over the sauce. No-boil noodles will expand as they bake, so some space between them is okay. Spread 1/3 of the spinach-ricotta filling over the noodles, and sprinkle with 2/3 cup of the grated mozzarella.

Repeat layers twice more. Cover with a final layer of noodles, and then the final 1 cup of marinara sauce. Sprinkle the remaining 1/2 cup of grated mozzarella and 1/2 cup of Parmesan over the top.

Cover the pan tightly with foil that has been well sprayed with olive oil to minimize sticking. Bake for 45 minutes, uncover, and bake another 10 to 15 minutes until the top is browned. Let rest for at least 10 minutes before cutting.

May be assembled the day before and refrigerated. Bake just before serving.

Prepared by Hazel Davis, October Culinary 2026**.** Adapted from Lasagna el Pesto, by Mollie Katzen.

Mollie Katzen's Pesto
3 packed cups fresh basil leaves
3 cloves garlic
1/3 cup pine nuts, lightly toasted
1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in a food processor or blender and process until smooth. Taste and add salt and pepper as needed. Makes 1 cup.

Classic Mexican Street Corn (Elote)



5 ears fresh corn on the cob, husked
1/3 cup mayonnaise
1/3 cup Mexican crema (or sour cream)
2/3 cup Cotija cheese, crumbled (plus extra for garnish)
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 lime, freshly squeezed (plus lime wedges for serving)
chili powder and Tajín to taste
1/4 cup fresh cilantro, finely chopped
Salt and pepper, to taste

Preheat a grill and grill the corn in the husk, turning occasionally, until lightly charred on all sides (about 10 – 15 minutes).

In a small bowl, combine the mayonnaise, Mexican crema, minced garlic, fresh lime juice, chili powder, Tajín seasoning, salt, and pepper to make the topping. Add chopped cilantro to taste.

Cut the corn off the husk and mix into the topping mixture. Serve with tortilla chips.

Prepared by Eric Adamczyk for the October Culinary



Mediterranean Cauliflower Rice
By Cookie and Kate and prepared by Susan Adamczyk for the October Culinary.
Find the recipe here:
https://cookieandkate.com/mediterranean-cauliflower-rice-recipe/ https://cookieandkate.com/mediterranean-cauliflower-rice-recipe/print/27742/

Recipes from the September Culinary Event "Sharing Family Recipes and Family Stories"

Mary Alice's Pumpkin Bread
1-1/2 cups sugar
1/4 teaspoon baking powder
3/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon cloves
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1-2/3 cup flour
1/2 cup oil
1/2 cup water
1 cup pumpkin
2 eggs
nuts, optional



Combine all ingredients in one bowl and beat well. Bake at 350° F. about 1 hour in a loaf pan. Can double the recipe to make 2 loaves or 3 to 4 small loaves.

Prepared by Susan Adamczyk

Nancy's Tomato Doodle Soup
Adapted from a More-With-Less recipe for Cream of Tomato Soup



Soup Ingredients:
A few tablespoons avocado oil
1/2 onion, chopped
1 zucchini, chopped
3 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
2 teaspoons sugar
Dash of garlic, basil, oregano, thyme
2-3 cups tomato juice or purée
2 cups low-fat lactaid milk (or any milk you choose)
Doodle Ingredients:
2 eggs, beaten
2 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon salt
Flour to make a very thick batter

Soup directions:
Sauté the veggies in oil until they are soft.
Blend in flour, sugar, salt and pepper, stirring until well blended. Lower temperature and gradually stir in tomato juice.

Bring to a boil and stir constantly for 1 minute.
Stir in milk and heat almost to a boil until the soup thickens. Follow directions for Doodles below.
Doodle directions:
Combine eggs, water, salt, flour. Lower heat and drop doodle batter by teaspoonfuls into soup, coating spoon with hot soup each time.

Turn off heat, cover pot until serving time.

Nancy Greenberg served this at the September Culinary

Weed & Feed, October 3, 2026

Finally, a fall day! The day added up to seeds and plants into the garden, weeds pulled, biscuits to indulge in, 25 busy happy gardeners, and a full dumpster. Butterflies *and* caterpillars; we are making headway on the wasps! We trimmed myrtles, planted fat sassy lavenders and found a stuck solenoid that had gotten away from us, now repaired. All parts of the big garden project. Our haphazard collection of containers, designed to encourage folks to plant in what they have on hand as long as it is a decent size, was replenished and replanted. The yerba mansa got a real shakedown last month and is well on a road to recovery. More seedlings went home with volunteers; some we hope will reappear at a plant sale in the foreseeable future.





Pumice was added to the 'Jane Haynes' rosemary shrub to protect it from too much dampness.

Photos by Mike Hills

We learned this year that if we pollard the moringa in mid-winter it does not make as many seeds but grows quickly enough to provide filtered shade. This means we do not spend time pulling volunteer moringas and collecting the dry drumsticks as they disperse seeds everywhere in afternoon summer breezes…Good to know.

We found lots of grape ivy, *Cissus trifoliata*, seedlings that had formed transplantable, we hope, tubers under the dwarf myrtle. Spadefoot Nursery suggests this plant is larval food for the mournful sphinx moth (*Enyo lugubris*), the satellite sphinx moth (*Eumorpha satellitia*), and the vine sphinx moth (*Eumorpha vitis*). Fruits are consumed by birds and other critters, and are subsequently spread throughout the garden ready to sprout under trees the birds roost in. Naturally found in riparian areas, the plant is also found in agricultural and waste areas, and along roadsides.

Cissus is from the Greek -ivy- and trifoliata refers to the trifoliate leaves. The Cissus genus is diverse, with 295 species; *Cissus trifoliata* is native here. Described as a very good groundcover, it only climbs when something is close enough to offer a way to reach a sunnier exposure and we planted it under a dwarf myrtle. Ours has indeed found the myrtle a great means of reaching sunnier exposures. This could be an alternative to bare rock in landscapes.

We reined in the *Myrtus communis* 'Compacta' or dwarf myrtle, and the elephant tree, *Bursera microphylla*, and the moringa as they were each overreaching boundaries. We began weeding the NW corner of the Demo Garden, only to find we were annoying wasps, again. Mike to the rescue. We will try again next month…but the oregano did get a haircut!

With gentle pruning, we organized our hop plant *Dodenaea viscosa*, trimmed the *Lippia* on the south side, and snipped at the licorice threading its way among the other plants. Salvias, thymes, lemon balms and lemon verbenas found homes in the garden. Seeds for many annual flowers to bloom in early winter and spring got planted. And the dumpster got filled.

The *Oenothera speciosa*, or Mexican primrose has competition from nutsedge. Warmer winters have allowed this weed to spread further afield into the herb and bulb gardens. Lovely.

Volunteers began collecting tools, sweeping, and loading bits of this and that into their vehicles, as we made the rounds one more time to ensure all plants were planted, seeds labeled, tools collected and put away. Donna and Keith Lorch worked on labels and irrigation. The garden is recovering nicely from summer's heat. A couple annual sweet peas are braving the heat to sprout!



Many new plant selections were among the cool weather seeds started in the demonstration garden. Photo by Lee Ann Aronson

Kathy Tarr and her helpers worked on seed prep; we have two big events upcoming for which we must be ready! We adjourned to share snacks, cool a bit, rehydrate and enjoy some of the best biscuits ever! Leftover from a 4-H class led by program coordinator Christina Denise, we benefited greatly. Light, fluffy, flavorful, everything one wants in a biscuit, accompanied by honey butter or strawberry jam: we indulged! Thank you! We ran a little behind time, and Christina was unable to join us for compliments. Recipe follows. I would have loved to be a fly on the wall while these were being made. There was real skill to be learned. All biscuits are not created equal!

Thank you all for your help, diligence, energy, skill and enthusiasm. We will do this again next month and look forward to seeing you again.

Pam Perry and Mike Hills, Past Presidents and Demo Garden Co-Captains

Homemade Biscuits



Biscuits made by 4H program coordinator Christina Denise were enjoyed by October's Weed & Feed volunteers.

Ingredients:
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled, plus more as needed
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup unsalted butter, (cut into 1/2 -inch cubes and kept in the freezer until needed)
1 cup + 2 tablespoons cold buttermilk, divided
2 teaspoons honey

Optional Topping:
2 tablespoons butter, melted
1 tablespoon honey

Instructions:
Preheat oven to 425°F.

Place the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl or in a large food processor. Whisk or pulse until combined. Add the cubed butter and cut into the dry ingredients with a pastry cutter or by pulsing several times in the processor. Cut/pulse until coarse crumbs form.

If you used a food processor, pour the mixture into a large bowl. Make a well in the center. Pour 1 cup buttermilk into the well and drizzle honey on top. Using a large spoon or spatula, fold until it begins to come together. Do not overwork the dough. The dough will be shaggy and crumbly with some wet spots.

Pour the dough and any dough crumbles onto a floured work surface and gently bring together with generously floured hands. The dough will become sticky as you bring it together. Have extra flour nearby and use it often to flour your hands and work surface as needed in this step.

Using floured hands, flatten into a 3/4-inch-thick rectangle as best you can. Fold one side into the center, then the other side on top. Turn the dough 90 degrees, so it is now horizontal. Gently flatten into a 3/4-inch-thick rectangle again. Repeat the folding again. Turn the dough horizontally one more time. Gently flatten into a 3/4 -inch-thick rectangle. Repeat the folding one last time. Flatten into the final 3/4-inch-thick rectangle.

Cut into 2.5- or 3-inch circles with a biscuit cutter. (Tip: Do not twist the biscuit cutter when pressing into the dough because this seals off the edges of the biscuit which prevents them from fully rising.) Re-roll scraps until all the dough is used. You should have 8 to 11 biscuits.

Arrange in a 10-inch cast iron skillet or close together on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Make sure the biscuits are touching.

Brush the tops with remaining buttermilk. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes or until tops are golden brown.



Remove from oven. If adding the optional topping, whisk the melted butter and honey. Serve warm.

Cover leftovers tightly and store at room temperature or in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. Baked biscuits freeze well for up to 3 months.

https://sallysbakingaddiction.com/flaky-buttermilk-biscuits/

The Jewels-of-Opar: A Treasure in the Garden

The Jewels-of-Opar (*Talinum paniculatum*) is a whimsical name for a relatively unknown fantastic leafy green that has been reported to perform miracles and deter black magic. This amazing plant with the exotic name lived with the *Portulaca paniculata* until 1791, when a more fitting and permanent home became the genus *Talinaceae* in the portulaca or purslane family, where it remains today.

Many names have been assigned to this low growing ground cover, e.g., pink baby's breath or flameflower.* Native to the new world, this perennial herb/shrub has spread worldwide. This robust plant's native distribution area extends from the southern United States through Mexico and most of tropical America.

Botanically, *Talinum* is a fleshy, erect herb, growing to 20 inches in height. Hairless leaves are fleshy, glossy, and lean toward chartreuse. Very delicate 5-petaled, star-shaped flowers on branched inflorescences undulate on wiry, almost translucent reddish woody stalks. The petals on these tiny flowers are pink or white and only about 3/16-inch long. The flowers are late afternoon bloomers with a noticeably short window. Closed in the morning, the buds begin to open in the middle to late afternoon, unveiling for the evening show.



Photo from Wikipedia
Creative Commons license

Due to size and availability, flowers are easily missed, but the bright red-orange seed pods grab attention like jewels sparkling in the sun. The plant is self-seeding, producing oval shaped, sesame-sized seeds. At maturity, the pods burst, and the plant is ensured of another generation, although competition from pollinators which dine on the seeds is always a factor, as are the humans who target the stems for craft projects like dried flower arrangements.

Debating the plant's form is an exercise in frustration. Depending on the growing zone, *Talinum* switches botanical hats. Want a perennial succulent? Visit zones 9 and 10 and maybe 8, which are defined by their warm, mild winter temperatures. Zones which are subtropical growing climates feature long, hot summers and short, mild winters where freezing temperatures are rare. Annual forms of *Talinum* frequent zones 4 to 7, where the plant can withstand specific sub-freezing roots and structural temperatures without dying out. Some cultural flexibility can be attributed to the three varieties of *Talinum*. Two varieties, 'Kingwood Gold' and 'Variagatum,' are tropical cousins, in contrast to 'Limon' which adapted to the arid, hot clime found in the Sonoran Desert. Limon needs at least partial shade in the afternoons.

Talinum is well-known for medicinal and edible properties worldwide. Every part of the plant could be found on your dinner plate. Move over, Popeye. *Talinum*, eaten raw or cooked, is reputed to taste a lot like Malabar spinach. Succulent leaves add a little crunch to sandwiches, and leaves and stems give a little pizazz to green salads and soups. Additions of *Talinum* provide vitamins, antioxidants, and calcium to meals. This nutritional powerhouse is rich in antioxidants and can be used as a preventative, addressing inflammation and related disorders. Many herbal recipes use *Talinum* for enhancing vitality, treating diabetes, and much more. Young *Talinum* roots (from one to three years old), can be dried and preserved to make wine or tea. Cheers!

*For the purposes of this article, *Talinum* will be used for all references.

Kathleen McCoy
Herbie, Master Gardener, Master Naturalist

Herbies Represent!

Cool, beautiful weather greeted the AHA Set-Up Crew on Friday, October 23, as they arrived at Metro Tech High School to prepare for the annual Metro Tech Fall Festival and Plant Sale, our biggest sales event of the year. Tents, tables, plants, and four bins of supplies were unloaded and assembled, as volunteers transformed our usual spot in the grassy courtyard into a welcoming AHA booth.

On Saturday, October 24, Herbies joined Metro Tech students, Master Gardener volunteers, and other vendors to share their knowledge and showcase AHA's offerings. Our booth featured an attractive selection of scented geraniums, desert-adapted plants from the Center for Native and Urban Wildlife, heavenly blue milkweed, barbecue rosemary, African blue basil, feverfew, dianthus, saffron crocus and lemongrass cuttings.



Perry Green (left) and Bernie Arnecke and Heidi Maxsom (below) were some of the many volunteers who represented AHA at October 24's Metro Tech Fall Festival and Plant Sale.
Photos by Sandy Cielaszyk



Sales were brisk throughout the day, with plants, lemongrass cuttings, and seeds proving especially popular. We also sold several copies of Kirti's book, along with garden sleeves, worm castings, cooling towels, and other garden-related items. About an hour after the sale began, a steady stream of customers arrived and kept our volunteers busy. Herbies rose to the occasion, answering questions, sharing gardening advice, and keeping transactions running smoothly.

The pleasant weather stayed with us for most of the day, although a brief rain shower made an appearance just as it was time to pack up. Undeterred, the crew dismantled the booth, packed supplies, and completed the final round of schlepping with their usual good humor.

A heartfelt thank-you goes to all the Herbies who helped set up, sell plants and merchandise, answer customer questions, manage sales, tear down, and haul everything away. Your enthusiasm, teamwork, and dedication made the event both successful and enjoyable.

We had a wonderful time, represented AHA proudly, and showed the community what Herbies are all about!

Bernie Arnecke
AHA Fund Raising

A Garden of Remembrance
Plants, Fragrance, Food, and the Living Traditions of Día de los Muertos

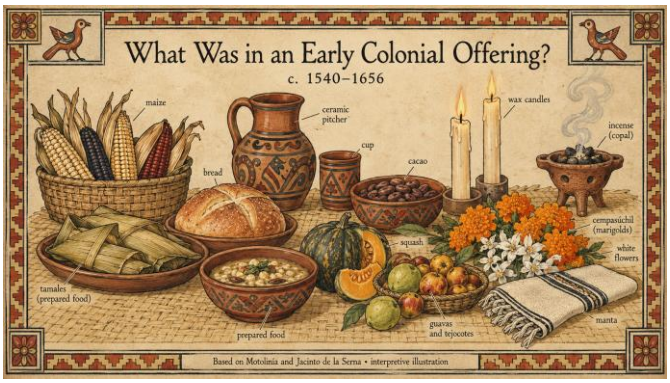


At the October general meeting, Past President Liz Lonetti led the Herbies on a botanical journey into Día de los Muertos — from pre-Hispanic ideas about death and the afterlife to the modern family ofrenda. She emphasized that Día de los Muertos is not one ancient holiday preserved unchanged, but rather a living Mexican tradition built in layers and shaped over centuries by Indigenous beliefs, Catholic observances, regional customs, family traditions, and plants and foods that make remembrance tangible.



The program began with the Mexica, the people commonly called the Aztecs, and their understanding of death, not as an ending, but rather as a journey. For many people, that journey led to Mictlan, the underworld, and could take years to complete. Dogs could serve as companions and guides on the journey, and surviving codices show death as a realm with rulers, geography, and ritual meaning.

The Spanish conquest brought the next layer, a very different religious framework, which included All Saints' Day on November 1 and All Souls' Day on November 2. Rather than one tradition simply replacing the other, Indigenous and Catholic practices overlapped, adapted, and changed. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, colonial accounts were already describing household offerings of food (both original and prepared), drink, candles, maize, cacao, bread, flowers (particularly marigolds), and incense for the dead.



The plants tell the story
For the Herb Association, the natural way into the subject was through plants. Cempasúchil - usually *Tagetes erecta* - is the brilliant orange marigold most closely associated with Día de los Muertos. Its color and strong fragrance are traditionally said to help guide returning souls, and petals might be strewn on paths toward the altar.

Liz also mentioned *Tagetes lucida*, Mexican mint marigold or pericón, a familiar Herbie plant with culinary, medicinal, aromatic, and ceremonial history. Cempasúchil is the star, but ofrendas are not botanically monochrome. Flor de terciopelo, or cockscomb, adds deep velvety reds and purples, while flor de nube, baby's breath, brings clouds of white and was used when remembering lost children.



A presentation you could smell — and taste
This was not just a visual presentation. The Herbies passed around fresh branches of *Bursera fagaroides* and *Bursera microphylla* so everyone could experience the aromatic character of living members of the Burseraceae, the Torchwood Family. That family connection led directly to frankincense and myrrh: Boswellia, the genus that gives us

frankincense, and Commiphora, best known for myrrh, are botanical relatives of Bursera.

Copal, a natural aromatic tree resin, is not the name of a single tree, but refers to the scent that was believed to help guide returning souls from the spirit realm back to the physical world and to their family's memorial altar. In Mexico, several Bursera species provide aromatic resins, while other regional incense traditions use different genera and even different plant families. Sources of copal resin may come from *Bursera bipinnata, Bursera linance, Bursera glabrifolia*, pine, or *Protium* copal. Because incense was not burned at the meeting, smelling the fresh plants and unburned resins offered a practical way to experience how central fragrance is to the atmosphere of an ofrenda.

Fresh rosemary, bay, and basil from our demonstration garden reinforced the importance of aromatic herbs in regional altar traditions. Chamomile was also discussed as another aromatic herb used in some traditions. These plants helped make the point that an ofrenda is experienced not only with the eyes, but also through scent.

Bread, hibiscus, and hospitality

The history could also be tasted. Pan de muerto from La Purísima Bakery gave everyone a chance to sample one of the most recognizable seasonal foods. The bread itself is another example of the tradition's layered history: wheat and European bread-making arrived with the Spanish, while Mexico already had long traditions of ceremonial foods made from maize and amaranth. Anise and orange flavors are traditionally used to flavor these seasonal breads.



Liz Lonetti and the Día De Los Muertos ofrenda she prepared for the Arizona Herb Association's October 1 meeting.

Photo by Lee Ann Aronson

Hibiscus tea, or jamaica, added another sensory connection. Food and drink on an ofrenda are not generic decorations; they are acts of hospitality. Families may offer a loved one's favorite meal, coffee, sweets, tequila, hot chocolate, tobacco, or any small item that says, "We remember exactly who you were." Water was typically included because the journey is long.

The ofrenda at the meeting included photographs, remembrances, herbs, and personal objects for departed Herbies. Liz Lonetti made posters and pictures to honor herbies Kirti Mathura, Peter Kennedy, Jane Haynes, Cheri Czaplicki and Jim DiMaria. Other herbies brought pictures and mementos of their loved ones to share. Liz also made and brought Oaxacan Style Hot Chocolate for us to enjoy and shared the recipe for this that she learned from her foreign student exchange "mother" who would make it for her every morning when she lived in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Oaxacan-Style Hot Chocolate
Chocolate Con Leche

Makes 1 gallon

1 gallon whole milk
1-1/4 cups natural cocoa powder (such as Penzeys)
1-1/3 cups cane sugar (adjust to taste)
4 cinnamon sticks (canela – Ceylon or Mexican if available)
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)

Make a smooth chocolate base. In a large pot, whisk together the cocoa powder, sugar, and salt. Gradually add about 2 cups of the milk, whisking until completely smooth with no lumps.

Pour in the rest of the milk and add the cinnamon sticks. Heat gently over medium-low heat, stirring frequently.

Allow the chocolate to get hot and steaming, but DO NOT boil. Let the cinnamon infuse for 10 to15 minutes.

Use a molinillo, whisk, or immersion blender to froth the chocolate until it is light and bubbly.

Taste and adjust, adding more sugar if you like it sweeter or a bit more cocoa if you'd like a stronger chocolate flavor. Add vanilla, if desired. Serve and enjoy!

For a subtle botanical twist, you might try adding a fresh sprig of Mexican mint marigold (*Tagetes lucida*), also called Mexican or Spanish tarragon, while the chocolate is hot. Let it steep 10 to 15 minutes, then remove the sprig. This adds a gentle anise like flavor that pairs beautifully with the chocolate.

NOTE: a molinillo is a traditional, hand-turned wooden whisk with loose outer rings that move freely. It is used in Latin America and the Philippines to mix, aerate, and froth hot chocolate, cacao, atole, and champurrado.

A living tradition
The evening ended by returning to the modern ofrenda, where centuries of history can sit together in one place: Indigenous crops beside wheat bread, cempasúchil beside family photographs, copal beside candles, ancient symbols beside Coca-Cola, beer, favorite shoes, candy, or something for a beloved pet. Día de los Muertos remains recognizable precisely because it also leaves room for families and communities to make it their own.

"The ofrenda today is part garden, part pantry, part perfume cabinet, and part family album." **It is a joyful remembrance and celebration honoring the departed.**

At our next meeting on November 5, garlic and elephant garlic will be among the items available for sale. Bring cash or your "Herbie Bucks."

Feeding the Soil Life, Not Just the Plant

This article, printed with permission, is an excerpt from an article by Stephen Scott from Terroir Seeds. Find more at https://underwoodgardens.com/soil-health-insights-protecting-your-living-foundation/

For generations, the customary approach to gardening often focused on directly feeding plants, a sort of nutritional quick-fix with synthetic fertilizers. Think of it like offering energy drinks to athletes – a temporary boost, perhaps, but it lacks the sustained nourishment that builds true, long-term health.

Beyond just covering the ground with mulch, the real magic of a thriving garden takes place in the ecosystem underneath. Healthy soil isn't just dirt; it's a teeming, living community.

The true engines of long-term fertility are the billions of largely unseen workers that make up the Soil Food Web. This complex community – bacteria, fungi, protozoa, beneficial nematodes, earthworms, arthropods, and more – functions as your garden's dedicated recycling crew. When you add finished compost or let organic mulches like straw or shredded leaves decompose, these diverse organisms digest the organic matter and essentially prepare and serve a balanced, slow-release meal tailored for your plants!



The magic of how soil life transforms this food into garden gold truly begins with the "Poop Loop," a concept from soil science luminaries like Dr. Elaine Ingham and Jeff Lowenfels. Bacteria and fungi are incredible at breaking down organic matter, but they are also very good at hoarding those nutrients. For your plants to truly benefit from that wealth, another team of allies must enter the scene: the tiny microbial predators—protozoa and beneficial nematodes. They graze on the bacteria and fungi, excreting waste rich in plant-available nutrients, like nitrogen, right in the root zone!

Actionable Steps:
1. Top-dress beds lightly several times each growing season, layering it under mulch.
2. Let organic mulches decompose**.**
3. Practice "Chop and Drop" gardening. When healthy plants finish their cycle, chop them down and leave the residue on the soil surface as future food for microbes.

Banner photos: (left to right) our abundant rain triggers our delightful 'Prairie Sunset' rain lilies to bloom; Teri Thorpe and Kathy Eastman give helpful information to a customer at the AHA booth at Metro Tech Fall Festival and Plant Sale, and capers in our demo garden are at their best.
Caper and rain lily photos by Mike Hills. Metro Tech photo by Sandy Cielaszyk

Herbies, a reminder that your herbal articles or photos may be submitted to the newsletter editors by the 15th of each month for inclusion in the following month's newsletter. Please email submittals to both Sandy Cielaszyk and Lee Ann Aronson.

Arizona Herb Association
PO Box 63101
Phoenix, AZ 85082
https://azherb.org
Facebook.com: Arizona Herb Association

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Metro Tech Fall Festival Review

Gardening is quietly showing gratitude to plants.

- Michael P. Garofalo