



Diann's Herb Newsletter

SUMMER 2010

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 3

The International Herb Society selects the Herb of the Year. Here is a list of the ones from the first decade of the 21st century:

2010 Dill
2009 Bay Laurel
2008 Calendula
2007 Lemon Balm
2006 Pelargonium
2005 Oregano
2004 Garlic
2003 Basil
2002 Echinacea
2001 Sage
2000 Rosemary

Sweet Herbs Abound

As I was trying to think of a topic for this newsletter, it occurred to me that many herbs are named 'sweet.' So I thought you would be, as I am, interested in why these herbs are considered 'sweet.'

Sweet Herb or stevia, *Stevia rebaudiana*, is certainly at the top of everyone's 'sweet' list because of its sweetening characteristic. As a matter of fact, I devoted the Summer, 2009, newsletter to stevia, which is 300 times sweeter than sugar.

Sweet Annie or sweet wormwood, *Artemisia annua*, is a sweet-scented Chinese herb. Anti-malarial properties are attributed to the compound artemisinin. Drying actually seems to enhance the wonderfully sweet fragrance. It is often used in decorative crafts.

Sweet Cicely, *Myrrhis odorata*, like stevia is a sugar substitute. It has sweet, anise-scented leaves and stalks (fresh or dried), which add a delightful flavor to sweets and desserts, saving about half the sugar. The botanic name for this plant is from the Greek word for perfume.

Sweet Clover or melilot, *Melilotus officinalis*, is an important forage crop. It is used medicinally to prevent blood clotting. Salve or poultice made with it has been used for swellings, boils, arthritis, and rheumatism.

Sweet Marigold or Mexican tarragon, *Tagetes lucida*, has sweet-smelling leaves and flowers with a flavor similar to tarragon. In warm areas where French tarragon will not grow, this is an excellent substitute. It makes a stimulating tea.

Sweet Marjoram, *Origanum majorama*, adds a strong, spicy flavor to soups, sauces, stuffings, and stews. It adds a special flavor to sausages and meatloaf. If oregano is too strong for your taste buds, sweet marjoram is a milder substitute. Sweet marjoram is also a dye plant, yielding shades of yellow, orange, brown, and gray.

Sweetgrass, *Hierochloe odorata*, is a traditional Native American ceremonial grass used in peace and healing rituals. It has a vanilla-like scent, especially when burned.

To have nothing here but Sweet Herbs, and those only choice ones too, and every kind its bed by itself.

--Erasmus

Sweet William, *Dianthus barbatus*, has edible sweet clove-scented flowers. Striking red, pink, and white flowers add color to salad, fish dishes, tea, marmalade, and sorbet.

Meadowsweet, *Filipendula ulmaria*, is an attractive European wildflower with sweet almond-scented yellow-white or reddish flowers. It contains salicylic acid and has been used to treat flu, gout, rheumatism, arthritis, fever, etc. At one time it was added to herbal beers and wine.

Hillary's Sweet Lemon Mint, *Mentha 'Hillary's Sweet Lemon,'* was developed from apple and lime mint. It has the sweet, fruity aroma of applemint lined with a citrus edge. It's an assertive female mint with lavender flower spikes. And, yes, it was named for Hillary Clinton.

Sweet Pear Mint, *Mentha 'Sweet Pear,'* has an unmistakable hint of ripe sweet pears. Mature leaves are downy, ovate, and silvery gray in color, and the flowers are light pink to purple. The growth habit is upright and robust. The delicate flavor is recommended for wherever mint is called for.

Sweet Basil, *Ocimum basilicum*, is the familiar sweet-scented type of basil. Sweet basil has a particular affinity for tomatoes, and no tomato dish should be served without it. A few leaves of fresh basil in tomato salad or sauce will bring out the best flavor in the dish.

Sweet Bay or bay laurel, *Laurus nobilis*, is a foundation flavor of French cuisine. Meat, fish, and poultry dishes almost always have a touch. Bay was the Herb of the Year for 2009 and is featured in my Winter Herb Newsletter for 2009.

I've run out of room, but there are more. Once I started looking for 'sweet' herbs, I realized there are too many to include all of them here. This is probably a partial additional list because I kept finding more: sweet almond, sweet flag, sweet gale, sweet Joe Pye, sweet rocket, sweet violet, and sweetbrier rose.

2010 Herbal Workshops

There are still openings in the three remaining workshops this year. I'd love for you to come:

July 16, Enjoy Herbal Teas and Desserts

September 11, Make Herbal Oils and Vinegars

October 7, Pamper Your Skin with Herbs

Check www.diannsgreenhouse.com or call me (931-648-8701) for details or to sign up for these herbal workshops.

Recipes

Here is the recipe many of you have been waiting for. Susan Belsinger shared her cookie at the 2009 International Herb Association Conference in Huntsville, Alabama.

Lemon, Dill, and Pistachio Sharing Cookie

Makes one large 9 ½ inch cookie

1 ½ cups unbleached flour
½ cup yellow cornmeal
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 cup unsalted butter, softened
½ cup sugar
1 tablespoon lemon zest
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ teaspoon lemon extract
½ cup loosely packed fresh dill, chopped
1 cup pistachios, coarsely chopped
1 to 2 tablespoons vanilla sugar or plain granulated sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Very lightly butter a 9 ½ to 10-inch tart pan with a removable bottom. In a bowl, or onto a sheet of waxed paper, sift flour, cornmeal, baking powder and salt.
2. Beat butter at medium speed with an electric mixer for 2 to 3 minutes or until creamy. Gradually add sugar, zest, and vanilla, and lemon extracts, continue beating for 2 minutes. Add flour mixture and beat on low speed just until a soft dough has formed, stopping to scrape bowl as needed. Stir in dill and pistachios.
3. Press dough evenly into tart pan and prick with a fork. Sprinkle the top lightly with the sugar. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until the top is golden-brown and the cookie is set.
4. Remove from oven and cool in pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove the tart ring and cool completely. Slide cookie off the base with a metal spatula onto a serving plate and serve whole. Let your guests break the cookie apart.

Contact me at
Diann's Greenhouse

www.diannsgreenhouse.com

diann@diannsgreenhouse.com

931-648-8701 or
931-237-3698 cell