



Diann's Herb Newsletter

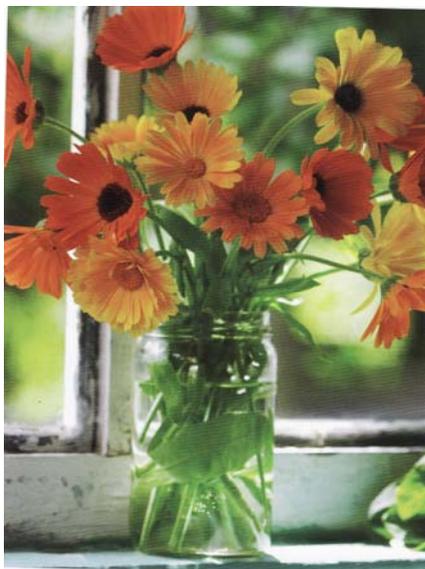
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The International Herb Society selects the Herb of the Year. Here are a few from the past plus the new one:

2008 Calendula
2007 Lemon Balm
2006 Pelargonium
2005 Oregano
2004 Garlic
2003 Basil
2002 Echinacea
2001 Sage
2000 Rosemary

2008 Herb of the Year: Calendula



You may think of calendula, or pot marigold, as simply a pretty flower and wonder why it would be chosen as an herb of the year. The fact is that calendula is an incredibly versatile and useful plant. For thousands of years it has soothed pains, brightened clothes, flavored food, attracted lovers, and added a cheerful spark to gardens. It has been cultivated so long that there is some uncertainty about whether it actually originated in the wild. It may have simply escaped cultivation and is native to North Africa, Europe, and Iran where it grows easily in the wild,

especially in disturbed land.

While calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) is chiefly an annual, it occasionally overwinters in mild climates. It prefers cooler weather, surviving early frosts and even snow. As a matter of fact, several of my plants are still blooming today on December 27. Although some pests and diseases can affect pot marigolds, they can be grown in relatively poor soil. Because it is easily grown from large, uniquely shaped seeds and has a fast germination and growth rate, it's a wonderful plant for children to grow. In addition it has bright flowers which are edible. Deadheading will help to keep the plants blooming all summer and into fall.

I have read that the roots of calendula emit monoglucoside which is known to reduce the growth of some plants. This could be good or bad. It reduces the weeds around calendulas; however, be cautious about planting a desired plant within a foot of calendula. Its growth may be inhibited.

Because the flowers open around 9:00 in the morning and close around 3:00 in the afternoon, and because of its yellow to orange color, many legends sprang up associating calendula with the sun. Despite some superstitions associated with calendula, it has been used medicinally and cosmetically with some success. More

**Diann's Greenhouse
now has a web site:
<http://diannsgreenhouse.com>
Check it out.**

Here's flowers for
you,
Hot lavender, mints,
savory, marjoram,
The marigold, that
goes to bed wi' th'
sun.
And with him rises
weeping.
-Shakespeare

scientific research is needed to prove its efficacy. One of the superstitions was that planting calendula in the footsteps of one's loved one would bind him or her to you. Another was that garlands of calendula flowers were hung on doorways to keep away evil spirits. Medicinally, calendula was used by doctors during the Civil War and World War I to staunch bleeding of soldiers' wounds and to ward off infection. Today calendula is used primarily in skin treatments and cosmetics.

The petals of calendula add both flavor and color to salads, breads, stews, butter, cheese, custard, sauces, rice dishes, biscuits, omelets, and tea. The fresh petals are rich in carotene, iodine, and manganese. The flavor is described as "sweet and saline," "slightly pungent," "tangy," and "pleasant spicy."

Even though it has not attained the fame of other herbs such as rosemary, thyme, and lavender, calendula deserves our attention because of its rich and varied history and its potential contributions to our future as more research into its uses is completed.

--source: Robin Siktberg, *The Herbarist*, #73

Stevia: In Coke, but not in the USA

Herbs in Diet Coke? Who would have thought it? "The soft drink giant recently announced plans to begin making some of its drinks with stevia, a calorie-free herb that is 300 times sweeter than sugar. The company has partnered with agribusiness giant Cargill to grow the herb, which this company is marketing under the trade name Rebiana.

"Because the United States Food and Drug Administration doesn't approve stevia for use in food and beverages, Coke will be debuting its stevia-sweetened drinks in countries like Brazil and China, where the herb is permitted as a food additive. Cargill plans on petitioning the FDA to begin the lengthy process of getting the herb approved."

--reprinted from *The Herb Quarterly*, Winter 2007

Herbal Chatter

With winter upon us there's time to reflect and plan that ideal herb garden. There are many great web sites for information on herbs. Here is one that has many visitors to give you their experience and insight about any questions you may have about growing and using herbs:

<http://forums.gardenweb.com/forums//herbs>

Recipes

Golden Corn Muffins with Calendula Petals

Calendula petals add a bright color accent to these hearty, wholesome muffins.

1 cup stone-ground cornmeal
¾ cup unbleached white flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
2 extra large eggs
1 cup milk
3 tablespoons corn or vegetable oil
¾ cup grated cheddar cheese
1 cup corn kernels, fresh, or frozen and thawed
¼ cup calendula petals

Butter a muffin tin and preheat the oven to 375 degrees. In a mixing bowl, combine the cornmeal, flour, baking powder, and salt. In another bowl, beat the eggs and add the milk and oil, blending well. Stir the cheese and corn into the wet ingredients.

--from *The Herbarist*, #73

Spicy Parmesan 'Pennies' with Rosemary

Perfect for an impromptu cocktail party (You can make the dough ahead and freeze it for several weeks.), these zesty little cheese wafers are infused with the piney fragrance of dried rosemary.

1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon dried rosemary
1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper (more to taste)
¾ teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
6 ounces Parmigiano Reggiano, in chunks
4 ounces sharp white cheddar in chunks
1 stick cold unsalted butter, in small pieces

Pulse the flour, rosemary, cayenne, salt, and pepper in a food processor until blended. Add the cheeses and butter and pulse until the dough just begins to clump together. Divide the dough in half and shape into two logs about 1 ½ inches in diameter. Wrap each log tightly in waxed paper and twist or tie the ends securely. (Dough may be frozen at this point.) Refrigerate the dough for two (2) hours.

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Using a sharp knife, cut the dough into 1/8 inch slices and arrange them an inch apart on parchment-lined baking sheets. Bake 6 to 10 minutes until lightly browned. Cool slightly on a rack before serving. Makes about 40 wafers.

--from *The Herb Quarterly*, Winter 2007