

Diann's Herb Newsletter

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The International Herb Association selects the Herb of the Year. Here is a list of the ones starting from the beginning of the 21st century:

2015 Savory 2014 Artemisia 2013 Elder 2012 Rose 2011 Horseradish 2010 Dill 2009 Bav Laurel 2008 Calendula 2007 Lemon Balm 2006 Pelargonium 2005Oregano 2004 Garlic 2003 Basil 2002 Echinacea 2001 Sage 2000 Rosemary

Through the open door
A drowsy smell of flowers,
Gray heliotrope,
And white sweet clover
And shy
mignonette
Comes faintly in.

--John Greenleaf Whittier

The Fragrant Garden

Gardeners through the ages have tended to focus on different elements. The Persians included three essential elements in their gardens, running water, shade, and scent. They accomplished the latter by planting aromatic trees, herbs, and flowers. This blending of aesthetic elements was an attempt to create heaven on earth—a place to transport the visitor from an often less-than-perfect environment into a sanctuary or refuge. Remember the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Later during the Middle Ages, gardens in monasteries focused on food and health, which included culinary, medicinal, and fragrant herbs. The garden was a place for gaining knowledge and spiritual contemplation. As gardens became popular among the rich, fragrance was still part of the ambiance.

By the 18th century, however, scented plants had lost their popularity as the influence of the contemporary formal landscape movement took hold. Fortunately, modern gardeners are reviving the interest in fragrant gardens. There are many options for nose-leaning gardeners from sweet-smelling vines to sharp, musky groundcovers. Here are a few herbs that will add aromas to your garden:

Bergamot (Monardo fistulosa) According to Troy Marden of Volunteer Gardener, this variety of the native North American plant is not assertive like its relative Monardo didyma. It is easily recognized by its sweet and stimulating lemon-mint scent. It's also a favorite of hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees.

Borage (Borage officinalis) Borage has a cool, cucumber scent and has a historic reputation as a plant that "maketh a man merry and joyful." Its edible blue flowers and grayish foliage form a lovely contrast is the garden.

Calendula (Calendula officinalis) Used extensively during the Civil War and the $\mathbf{1}^{\text{st}}$ World War to treat wounds, calendula is still used today to keep pests away. The entire plant gives off a sharp, green, earthy scent. Calendula has many cultivars to choose from.

Dianthus (Dianthus coryophyllus) With more than 300 species in a rainbow of colors, dianthus is one of the most popular flowers grown today. Commonly known as carnation, it has a rich, spicy, and exotic aroma which boosts the mood.

Lemon Balm (Melissa officinalis) Native to southern Europe and the Mediterranean, lemon balm is the most common of the lemonscented plants found in the garden. Bees and gardeners alike love its strong uplifting scent—similar to lemon furniture polish.

--some information from Katherine Weber-Turcotte, Herb Quarterly, Spring, 2011

Diann's Workshops Available at Tree of Life

Many of you are familiar with The Tree of Life located on Crossland Avenue just up the hill from Riverside Drive. If you are not, I recommend that you discover it. You will find many products there that otherwise are not available locally. But better than that, there are many workshops and demonstrations available. I will be doing monthly herbal workshops there in addition to the workshops at my greenhouse location. Each of the Tree of Life workshops will be $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours in length, and the cost of each workshop will be \$29.

Growing Herbs March 18, Wednesday Noon to 1:30 PM I will demonstrate several ways of propagating herbs. You will start a small pot of herbs to take home.

Gathering and Using Herbs April 15, Wednesday Noon to 1:30 PM
I will bring several herbs to demonstrate harvesting and using herbs.
You will taste herb dishes and take home a sample of herbs and recipes.

2015 Herb of the Year—Savory May 20, Wednesday Noon to 1:30 PM We will study several varieties of savory and their uses. You will help to make and taste a sampling of dishes made with savory. Recipes will be available.

Preserving Herbs June 24, Wednesday Noon to 1:30 PM I will demonstrate several ways to preserve herbs for later use. You will take home some preserved herbs.

Herbal teas and desserts July 15, Wed. 3 to 4:30 PM I will demonstrate the difference between teas and infusions. You will help make herbal desserts to accompany the tea. Recipes will be available.

Herbal Breads August 5, Wed. 5 to 6:30 PM
I will demonstrate basics of yeast bread and
quick bread making. You will assist in making herbal breads to take
home. Recipes will be available.

Lip Balm and More September 16, Wednesday Noon to 1:30 PM Learn how to make your own skin care products. I will demonstrate How to make lip balm. You will take home a sample and recipes.

Herbal Salts and Sugars October 21. Wednesday Noon to 1:30 PM Flavored salts and sugars add a wonderful flavor dimension to your flavorings. Learn how to season salts and sugars with savory and sweet herbs. You will take home samples.

Herbal Workshops and Symposium

The Schedule of **2015 Herbal Workshops** that will be at Diann's Greenhouse is posted on my website www.diannsgreenhouse.com.

I will be presenting at the **Herb Symposium** April 25 at the Riverview Inn. More information about the Herb Symposium is available at www.naturalchoicesbotanica.com.

Market News

The **Winter Market** at Smith-Trahern Mansion continues each Friday from 9 AM to 1 PM. I will be there as often as I can.

The **Clarksville Downtown Market** opens May 16, 2015. I hope to see you there.

No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn.

--Hal Borland

And Spring arose
on the garden fair.
Like the Spirit of
Love felt
everywhere;
And each flower
and herb on
Earth's dark breast
Rose from the
dreams of its
wintry rest.

--Percy Bysshe Shelley

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Recipes

Grilled Fish and Herb Salad (4 servings)

Here's a great fish dish whether you are abstaining for Lent or not.

2 medium shallots, peeled

2 tablespoons sherry vinegar, or champagne vinegar

Thinly sliced zest of 1 lemon (removed with a zester)

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 pounds medium firm fish fillet, such as halibut, snapper, or salmon, with or without skin

5 tablespoons Chive Oil (See recipe below.)

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Herb Salad

1/4 cup fresh small spearmint leaves

¼ cup fresh French tarragon leaves

¼ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

½ cup watercress leaves

¼ cup torn sorrel leaves, or additional watercress

Optional: 8 to 12 nasturtium flowers

Shallots: Cut the shallots in half from root to tip and remove the dense core as the base with a small V-shaped cut. Very thinly slice the shallots, again from root to tip, using a sharp thin knife or a mandoline. Toss the shallots with the vinegar and lemon zest and let sit at room temperature for at least 30 minutes to soften and mellow.

Fish: Build a hot fire in a charcoal grill or preheat a gas grill on high. Make sure your grill rack is very clean and lightly oiled. Check for and remove any bones in the fish and cut it into 4 equal pieces. Place the fish in a shallow bowl with 2 tablespoons of the chive oil, ½ teaspoon salt, and a few grinds of pepper. Turn the fish to coat each piece evenly. **Finishing the salad:** Stir 2 tablespoons of the remaining chive oil into the shallots. Add the herb leaves, nasturtiums if using (inspect first for insects), a large pinch of salt, and a few grinds of pepper; toss gently. **Grilling the fish:** When the coals are asked over and glowing or the gas grill is very hot, grill the fish 4 inches from the coals until the bottom is well marked, 3 to 5 minutes. Turn the fish and grill it on the other side until the fish is barely translucent at the inside center, 3 to 4 minutes longer. Transfer the fish to warmed dinner plates. Loosely arrange the herb salad in a band across the fish and drizzle the remaining chive oil on the plates.

Chive Oil

(Makes ½ cup)

1 cup coarsely snipped fresh chives

3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Blending: Put the chives and oil in a blender and puree until the oil begins to warm, 2 to 3 minutes.

Straining: Pour the oil into a very fine strainer, or a coarse strainer, lined with a double layer of cheesecloth, set over a bowl. The oil that drips out can be used immediately, but let it continue to drip for about 1 hour to extract as much as possible. Let the oil drip at its own pace for the clearest oil. Discard the contents of the strainer and store the oil in a covered container in the refrigerator. It will keep for up to 1 month.

--Jerry Traunfeld, *The Herbfarm Cookbook*, 2000