



Herbal Seasons

Sharing Knowledge about Growing and Using Herbs to Inspire Fellow Herb Lovers

Spring 2009

Winter arrived cold and wet and spring is almost here! Let us hope that we will soon be able to start our gardening. What a pleasure it will be after all the ice and snow this year.

From The President's Desk

At my house it is cold, there's a little snow on the ground, the winds are blowing, more shingles are probably coming loose and I'm inside keeping warm and being thankful for a couple of winter projects: ...attending the beekeeping class offered by the Eastern Panhandle Beekeeping Association is my first project this year. Honey has so many uses and I don't know enough to truly appreciate how hard the bees work – but I'm thankful for them and their products. If you want to know more look up the Eastern Panhandle Beekeepers Association of West Virginia, <http://www.wvepba.org/>, or the WV Beekeepers Association, <http://www.wvbeekeepers.org/>. I'll bet that each of you has a special recipe or use for honey – why not share those with us? Email them to me and we'll get them into the next newsletter.

This past weekend I attended a sustainable gardening presentation about bio-intensive gardening. Just thinking about a garden plot and fresh herbs makes me actually want to start planning a garden plot. My weed garden – mugwort, tansy, apple mint and whatever else wants to show up doesn't take a lot of care and attention but that small raised bed will need some love and affection to make room for the thyme to come back up. And I really do want a container of basil to keep the tomatoes happy on the plate next to the mozzarella cheese and the olive oil. Hope I've made each of you smile and think about the days ahead when we can go outside and work on our farmers' tan.

Green Blessings, Kathryn

Changes to the Newsletter:

At the fall conference, Ann Schenk asked to be relieved of the editorship of the newsletter. Ann has done a great job with the newsletter and will continue to maintain the WVHA website. Thanks, Ann for the hard work.

Lynn Lassiter has agreed to be the new editor. After this faulty start, we hope to keep the newsletter coming out per Ann's schedule: January 1, March 1, June 1 and September 1.

Herbal Seasons

We would love to have your contributions to this publication. Articles you would like to see, questions you need answered, recipes to share, letters to the editor, etc. Herbal Seasons Newsletter is a forum for all members of the WVHA to use and enjoy.

Departments

From The President
Herbal Spotlight
Herbal Tips
Herb Gardening
Herbal Cookbook
Association News
Congratulations
Internet Resources
Letters to the Editor
Of Interest
Calendar of Herbal Events

From The Editor

Send or e-mail us your articles, calendar items, and news of interest to Association members.

If you have anything to contribute in any of the following categories, please see the following information for how to submit. If you can think of a Department we missed or would like to see, please let us know. Thanks to everyone who submitted articles and calendar events for this issue! – Lynn Lassiter

Items for the Calendar of Events need: Date, Time, Event, Name, Place (City, State), Cost, and Description, Contact. Limit – 30 words

The schedule for submitting all items is:

January Issue – Deadline is December 2nd

March Issue – Deadline is February 2nd

June Issue – Deadline is May 2nd

September Issue – Deadline is August 2nd

Submit by e-mail to lynnlassiter@hughes.net, put WVHA Newsletter in the subject, and your ad or article in the body of the e-mail if possible. **Or mail to:** Lynn Lassiter, HC 50 Box 198, Arnoldsburg, WV, 25234.

Articles over 250 words may be edited. We reserve the right to decide what is appropriate for the newsletter. We apologize in advance for any typos, mistakes, and omissions – let us know where we goofed and we will make a correction next time!

WVHA Board of Directors: (304 Area Code)

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aschenk2@mac.com

Need Member assistance? Contact Judy McConnell, 605 Sand St., Ravenswood, WV 26164, 304 273-3562, and jtmc4@earthlink.net

Advertising Rates

Members may list calendar events for **free**, 30 words limit each event. Business card size ads are \$5 for members. Double size ads are \$10 and so on.

Non-members may list one calendar event free and any additional events for \$5 (30 word limit each event). For non-members, business card size ads are \$10, double size ads \$20 and so on.

If we have to do any scanning of photo, etc. there will be an additional \$5 charge.

Free calendar events can be e-mailed to: lynnlassiter@hughes.net

Mail ads, events with check payable to WVHA, to newsletter editor, Lynn Lassiter, HC 50 Box 198, Arnoldsburg, WV, 25234. Be sure to have it to me by the deadline. Make checks payable to

2009 Herb of the Year: Bay (Laurus Nobilis)



From www.herbcompanion.com; February/March 2009; By Susan Belsinger

Bay laurel has been a part of the herbal repertoire for at least as long as people have been keeping written records. Also known as sweet bay, this evergreen herb makes a great addition to the kitchen garden and easily can be grown on a patio or deck. Bay plants charm cooks with their uniquely flavored, waxy green leaves, and the herb's medicinal qualities cover a wide variety of complaints and conditions.

Because of its many, varied uses, the International Herb Association has chosen bay (*Laurus nobilis*) as its 2009 Herb of the Year.

Legend and Lore

Classical legends mention bay in relation to the nymph Daphne, who transformed into a laurel tree during her pursuit by the Greek god Apollo. Apollo was so astounded by the tree's beauty that he claimed the laurel as his own and dedicated it to reward the highest achievements of Greek civilization.

Bay was first an herb of poets, but also of oracles, warriors, statesmen and doctors. The leaves were made into wreaths for illustrious poets (thus the term *poet laureate*) and the ancients used the leaves to crown heroes. Bay laurel was the symbol of wisdom, both acquired and intuitive. *Laurus nobilis* is believed to derive from the Celtic word *laur*, meaning green, and the Latin *nobilis*, signifying noble.

Indoors, Outdoors and in Pots

A tender perennial native to the Mediterranean, bay prefers well-drained soil and full sun. It does best if pruned on a regular basis, which encourages new growth. It does not tolerate cold winters—Zone 7 is about the limit for outdoor cultivation. If you live in a colder climate, it needs to be grown in pots and moved indoors for the winter. I do know gardeners who grow bay trees outside in a protected area, often with southern exposure. The gardeners wrap the bay in Reemay (a polyester material) or burlap to protect the plants from freezing weather and drying winds. Some of these plants reach heights up to 20 feet. Bay laurel most often is propagated from root cuttings.

Medicinal Virtues

The medicinal uses of bay have been recorded throughout history. These uses range from easing headaches and stomachaches or encouraging menses to treating wounds and insect bites. Considered an anti-rheumatic, it traditionally was drunk as a tea and used in baths; today it is used externally for muscular aches and pains as well as arthritis. The essential oil is sometimes rubbed on sprains and bruises. Because the leaves are bactericidal and fungicidal, bay is used to combat colds, congestion, influenza and viruses. Some of bay's other actions include a variety of uses for digestion (stimulates the digestive tract, settles the stomach and relieves flatulence); helps regulate menstrual flow; helps soothe inflammation and increases perspiration and cleansing through the skin; fights infection with its antimicrobial and antiseptic characteristics; stimulates the elimination of body wastes through the kidneys and bladder; and calms the nervous system by reducing stress and relaxing the body.

Fragrance and Flavor

It is an essential herb in the cuisines surrounding the Mediterranean. In earlier periods when people appreciated stronger herbal flavors, bay was commonly ground fine and sprinkled over fresh vegetables, then cooked. It was also marinated in fruit compotes. Today's cooks employ it with every variety of meat and most kinds of fish and shellfish. Bay leaves are found in the stuffings of or simply alongside many roasted fowl dishes. Its sweet balsamic aroma wafts from freshly baked breads, puddings and custards. It is essential to *bouquets garnis* (savory spice bundles) for soups and stews, sauces and ragouts (to make your own bouquet garni, see next page). Tom Stobart, author of *Herbs, Spices and Flavorings* (Overlook, 2000), praises bay's essential nature, writing that "No kitchen should exist without bay leaves, and they should be used as a matter of habit." Based on personal experience, I believe that bay adds depth and warmth to most kinds of sweets and savorys.

The major contribution of bay to foods is its fragrance; sweet but not cloying, pervasive but not overpowering. If you are fortunate enough to have walked through a forest with many bay trees, you will understand the incredibly refreshing power of bay's scent. Its blend of balsam and honey, with hints of spices like nutmeg and clove, are predominant in the first inhale. These scents are followed by just a suggestion of orange and/or lemon, sometimes followed by faint, flowery tones described as vanilla or rose, and occasionally a hint of mint. The fragrance can be heady; these subtle combinations and other more ethereal echoes must be an ideal of master perfumers.

Bay's aroma peaks between three days and a week after it has been picked; this brief drying time concentrates the oils. I keep freshly harvested bay leaves in a loosely rolled, unsealed zip-close bag in the door of my refrigerator; they stay green for months this way and are far superior to dried leaves.

Although the taste is complex and aromatic, if overdone, bay can be sharp, slightly peppery, or even a bit bitter. Most cooks use the whole leaves and remove them before serving, though in my family tradition, the guest who had the leaf in his portion was due some minor or major fortune. Crumbled or crushed bay leaves have very sharp edges; they should be enclosed in a bouquet garni bag or contained in some way so unsuspecting diners don't encounter them.

In general, the leaves should be added when the cooking begins. Aside from cooking with the leaves, for centuries bay leaves have been placed in foods (such as flour, dried beans and grains) to deter insects and meal moths. Commercially dried bay should be bought carefully, as leaves can be old and fairly tasteless.

Growing your own bay and using it fresh or drying it yourself eliminates this problem and will provide you an aromatic, attractive addition to your garden or patio for years to come.

Look Out for Dangerous Bay Varieties

Picking bay in the wild is not recommended, as some plants commonly called bays or laurels are highly poisonous. Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), bayberry (*Myrica pennsylvanica*), loblolly bay (*Gordonia lasianthus*) and West Indian bay (*Pimenta racemosa*) are highly toxic and should not be ingested.

California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), which I picked when I lived in California, has an aroma much like *Laurus nobilis* but the taste is much more concentrated and bitter. It should not be used in cooking (its principal constituent, umbellulone, can cause sinus irritation, convulsive sneezing and headaches), though many cooks still use it. Red bay (*Persea borbonia*) and swamp bay (*P. borbonia* var. *pubescens*) grow in the southern United States and the plants' spicy leaves are successfully substituted for *L. nobilis*.

Potato Corn Chowder with Bay

Serves 8 to 10

This soup is relatively quick to prepare, and we like to make a lot so we have leftover soup for lunch or a cup before dinner later in the week. It is hearty enough to serve alone, especially when accompanied by homemade bread.

- 2 large celery ribs, diced
- 3 large leeks, white and tender green parts, sliced
- 4 large potatoes, peeled if desired, and diced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1½ quarts vegetable or chicken stock
- 3 cloves garlic, pressed or minced
- 3 to 4 bay leaves, preferably fresh
- 4 ears corn, husked, or 2 cups frozen corn kernels

- 2 cups half-and-half or whole milk
- 1/3 cup chopped parsley
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- Few pinches cayenne pepper
- About ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1. Add celery, leeks and potatoes to a soup pot and sweat them in the oil and butter over low heat for 10 minutes. Add stock, garlic and bay leaves. Bring soup to a boil, then reduce heat to a simmer; cover and cook for 10 minutes or so.
2. Remove kernels from fresh corn and add them to the soup, or add frozen corn kernels. Cook for 2 or 3 minutes, then stir in half-and-half or milk and parsley. Season with salt, pepper and cayenne.
3. Heat soup over low until it just reaches serving temperature. To make a thicker soup, puree about a third of the soup and return it to the pot. Just before serving, stir in Parmesan cheese. Serve in warmed soup bowls with extra Parmesan for passing.

Roasted Squash with Bay

Serves 4

Squash can be steamed, sautéed or oven-roasted—the latter creates the best flavor. If steaming or sautéing, just toss a few bay leaves—fresh or dried—into the pan.

- About 2 pounds winter squash and 8 bay leaves, preferably fresh
- Water

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Cut squash into quarters. Carefully cut a 2- to 3-inch slit in each quarter of squash and insert a bay leaf into the slit.
3. Place squash cut-side down in a baking dish with about an inch of water (to cook more quickly, cut squash into eighths or sixteenths) and place a few bay leaves under the squash.
4. Smaller pieces bake in about 30 minutes; for large pieces, bake 30 minutes, turn over and bake 30 minutes more. Pierce with fork to test for softness. Add more water as needed—don't let the pan get dry.
5. Remove squash and let cool a bit; remove skins while squash is still warm. Peel skin off with knife or lay squash on cutting board, skin-side down, and scrape pulp off with a spoon. The squash can now be chopped, mashed or pureed, depending on your recipe.

Savory variation:

In the last 15 minutes or so of roasting, turn the squash cut-side up and drizzle a little olive oil over each quarter; season with salt and pepper. Serve hot as a vegetable side dish.

Sweet variation:

In the last 15 minutes or so of roasting, turn squash cut-side up and drizzle a little maple syrup (or brown sugar) and coarse-chopped pecans, pumpkin seeds or walnuts in the cavity. A dash of cinnamon or nutmeg and/or a pat of unsweetened butter also are tasty. Serve warm out of the oven or at room temperature, with a meal or as dessert.

Please see www.herbcompanion.com for more information and additional recipes.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

April 4th: Botanical Sanctuary – Green Comfort Herbal Apothecary; Washington, VA

10 AM – 1 PM; \$45.00. Harvesting and transplanting of wild native medicinal plants as well as plant identification, and actions/uses of plants. For more information contact Teresa Broadwine at 540-937-3362 or green.comfort@gmail.com

April 4th & 5th: Lawn, Garden and Forestry Expo, WV Interstate Fairgrounds, Mineral Wells

9 AM – 5 PM both days. Admission: \$3.00/ children under 12 are free. For more information contact Kelly Sweeney at 304-422-9088, ext. 32 or Ksweeney@wvca.us

April 18 – Vandalia Garden Festival- Charleston WV

Contact - Pat Cowdery - 304-558-0220 Ext 130 or Pat.Cowdery@wvculture.org
www.wvculture.org/eventdetail.aspx?Id=874

April 18th & 19th: Leesburg Flower & Garden Festival - Leesburg VA

Contact - Rachael Goodwin - 703-737-7156 or RGoodwin@leesburgva.gov
www.idalee.org/parks/events/Flower-Garden/

April 25th: Annual Spring Clinic in Clarksburg

9 AM to 4 PM; FREE. Sponsored by the Harrison County Master Gardeners. Plants for sale, educational sessions. For more information contact Linda Hogue at 304-624-7017 or LndHogue@aol.com

April through October: "Nature Connections"

A seven-month experience of self-renewal through herbs and nature. Held the 3rd Saturday of each month, April through October, 10am-5pm each day. Contact: Anne Romance at 304-783-5271 or anmari@mailstation.com

May 1st- 3rd: WV Master Gardener Conference – “Cultivating Our Mountain Roots”

Morgantown. For details and registration, see <http://www.wvu.edu/~agexten/hortcult/master/index.htm>

May 3rd, 4th, 10th and 11th: Green Heron Gardens Annual Spring Plant Sale and Open House

10am-5pm each day. Featuring culinary, medicinal, and aromatic herb plants and perennial flowers. Contact Anne Romance at 304-783-5271 or anmari@mailstation.com

**May 16th & 17th: UPS 's Talking Forest
Medicine Trail**

For more information visit: www.united-plantsavers.org or call Betzy Bancroft at 802-476-6467

**June 28th, Saturday: Wild Herb Walk -
10am-3pm.**

Identification, harvesting and use of the wild growing herbs. The cost is \$35. Pre-registration is required; participants are asked to bring a sack lunch; herbal tea provided. Contact Anne Romance at 304-783-5271 or anmari@mailstation.com

**June 28th, Saturday: Lavender Fair
2009: Love & Learn**

La Paix Herb Farm in Alum Bridge.

Admission is \$5/person, \$10/family. Some workshops request a small fee for materials. For more information email lapaix@westvirginia.net www.lapaixherbfarmproducts.com/lavender_fair_2008htm.htm

July 27th – August 1st: "Herbs" workshop at the Augusta Heritage

Augusta Heritage at Davis & Elkins College, Elkins WVHA member Marion Harless will be teaching an intensive 5-day hands-on workshop at the Augusta Heritage at Davis & Elkins Col-

lege, Elkins in July. This will be her 31st year of teaching at Augusta. For more information on her workshop check out www.augustaheritage.com

**October 31st – November 2nd: WVHA
Fall 2009 Conference**

Days Inn at Flatwoods.

Note to Members: For the folks that don't have an email address we will continue to send you a hard copy of the newsletter. For those that have an email address we will send you a link to the newsletter online. Please make sure that we have your current email address listed. The newsletter will be available in Adobe Acrobat format. If you do not have acrobat it is a free download from www.adobe.com or you can download a copy from our website. If you wish to be put on the list to receive the newsletter online send an e-mail to lynnlassiter@hughes.net put in the header 'Seasons PDF' and make sure that we have your current email address.

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Herbal Seasons

1289 Smoke Camp Road
Weston, WV 26452

Moving? Please return your Mailing label along with your new address. Thank you!

www.wvherb.org

The mission of the West Virginia Herb Association is to promote the ethical and environmentally sound propagation, cultivation, harvest, and use of herbs in West Virginia.

Membership Form, Change of Address Form

Yes, I would love to join the West Virginia Herb Association **WVHA**! I am very interested in:

Growing Herbs, Cooking with herbs, Continuing Education, Improving my Health with Herbs, Creating Herbal Art. **Note:** CEU's available.

Volunteering sounds like fun! Have my Regional Coordinator contact me.

There is a change in my contact info. This is a renewal of my dues.

Name: _____

Address: _____

County: _____

Phone, Fax: _____

Email, Website: _____

Business Name: _____

Member Dues

- Individual \$20 Family \$30
 Professional \$50
 Corporate \$100

Please return your completed membership Form and check or money order to:

WVHA c/ o Judy McConnell
605 Sand St.
Ravenswood, WV 26164