

STU Officers/ Committee Chair reports 2024-25

Vice Chair (Programming) - Karen Cottingham

2024- 2025 EVENING PROGRAMS AND LAGNIAPPES

July Lagniappe “Savor the Taste of India”, a Summer Sunday Brunch with Anita Jaisinghani, Executive Chef at Pondicheri Café

August Evening Meeting (Members Only) “Herb Fair 2024 Kickoff” presented by Stephanie Calloway, Herb Fair Chair

September Evening Meeting “Preparing for the Fall Garden - Biocharged Biochar for the Best Garden Ever” presented by Danny Wilson, CEO of Farm Dirt

October Evening Meeting “Tagetes - Stinky Weed or Sacred Flower...or Both?” presented by STU Member Karen Cottingham

November Evening Meeting "Family Herbalist Program" presented by STU Member Catherine O'Brien

January Evening Meeting "Eyes on the Garden" presented by Stewart Zuckerbrod, MD.

February Lagniappe “Eco-Printing on Paper with Molly” Enjoy creating art from nature at the home and garden of STU Member Cynthia Card

February Evening Meeting "Journey to Wellness" Sarah Gallander, BS Nutrition & Dietetics, Stephen F. Austin State University; Board Certified Functional Nutrition Practitioner (AADP, AANWP, ANWPB); Founder of The Wellness Matrix and Co-Founder of Functional Nutrition Collective

March Evening Meeting "Accidental Sisters: Refugee Women Struggling Together for a New American Dream” presented by Kimberly Meyer, Farm Manager, Shamba Ya Amani (Farm of Peace),

April Evening Meeting "The Art of Pysanky - Traditional Ukrainian Easter Egg Writing” presented by Iryna Petrovska Marchiano, PhD, co-founder of HTX4ukraine

May Evening Meeting (Members Only) “The Herb Society of America - South Texas Unit Annual Meeting”

May Lagniappe “Join Kimberly Meyer for a Tour of Shamba Ya Amani (Farm of Peace)”

June Evening Meeting “Secrets of Successful Container Gardening” presented by Stephanie Gray, County Extension Agent - Horticulture (Commercial/Green Industry), Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

June Lagniappe “Mocktails and Mysteries - Enjoy an Herbal Cocktail/ Mocktail at the LIT BookBar”, hosted by STU Member Stephanie Calloway

Day Group - Benée Curtis

We had a great year of programs and excellent participation for all meetings.

August - Planning meeting

September - "Green Cleaning" presented member Janice Dana

October - Field trip to Mercer Arboretum to tour the Vines Herbarium

November - "Drying Herbs and Blending Teas and Tisanes" presented by members Benée Curtis and Julie Fordes

Book group discussion for "Gardening Can Be Murder: How Poisonous Poppies, Sinister Shovels, and Grim Gardens Have Inspired Mystery Writers" by Marta McDowell led by member Joan Jordan.

December - "Holiday Mocktails, Cocktails and Punches" presented by members Stephanie Calloway and Benée Curtis at the home of member host Elayne Kouzounis

January - Adventure lunch to Lemongrass Cafe

February - "Herbal Electuaries" presented by member Ro Jones

March - Potluck Picnic and plant swap at Smither Park

April - Field trip to the Houston Dairymaids and the Houston Farmers Market

May - "Saffron: The Gold of Spices" presented by member Ro Jones

Book group discussion for Kate Khavari's "A Botanist's Guide to Parties and Poisons" led by member Jimmie Keddie.

June - Field trip to Chappell Hill Lavender Farm

Membership - Janice Freeman

Membership Year July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

STU membership enrollment is 80, based upon STU on-line directory as of 5/13/2025. This enrollment consists of 8 non-voting members: (1) honorary, (4) affiliated and (3) sustaining. Enrollment includes 6 Life members and 10 new members. The total voting membership is 72. Annual membership volunteer hours are submitted (end of June) to the Membership chair, totaled and submitted in full (start of August) to The Herb Society of America. Membership Orientation is under review.

New Members:

- ● E. Guerrero
- ● S. Sims
- ● D. Maly
- ● S. Pruitt-Orr
- ● S. Shapiro
- ● M. Allaham
- ● N. Hoard
- ● E. Abraham
- ● D. Garrett-Gailliard
- ● G. Frisk

Education - Angela Roth, Cynthia Card

No scholarships were awarded during the 2024-2025 calendar year.

Publications (Newsletter and MailChimp) - Janice Freeman and Linda Alderman, co-editors

The South Texas Unit newsletter, Herbs Make Scents is a monthly publication distributed to 1284 subscribers (members + non-members subscribers) using MailChimp *. Two members act as co-editors and alternate responsibilities composing the monthly newsletter. Our newsletter includes Unit Chair communications, herb related information, field trip activities, announcements, meetings and events. All content is submitted by members. Additional messages to members only may be distributed via e-mail or MailChimp.

*MailChimp is a computer communication platform utilized by the South Texas Unit to distribute the monthly newsletter and other communications. This communication platform is utilized by the editor and managed by our web page manager, Benée Curtis. 12 newsletters and 24 announcements were sent via MailChimp from May 2024 – May 2025. MailChimp cover page designs were completed by J. Freeman and K. Cottingham.

Herb Fair - Stephanie Calloway

The 51 st annual Herb Fair was another success with \$16,130 (plus a little more from November meeting sales) in gross revenue! As always, this event is possible thanks to many hands and shared leadership among the HSA-STU family. Being my first year as Chair, I was grateful to rely on the example provided by Catherine O'Brien, previous Herb Fair Chair, and the support of Ro Jones who stepped up to chair the craft team. Review of the activities:

- Monthly newsletter articles and notes beginning in May kept members informed and offered opportunities for leadership and engagement through events and harvesting/collecting items for the various committees
- Rearranging the cashier station in the large Southside Place Clubhouse room was effective at managing the line and having STU volunteers pre-tally the sales receipts kept things moving for Maria Treviño's cashier team
- Virginia and her publicity committee did an excellent job promoting through facebook ads, flyers, and articles. Donna Yanowski was able to facilitate a connection to the Houston Life television program where Stephanie Calloway and Angela Roth shared their tips on growing herbs and promoted the event. We hope to leverage that relationship again next year!
- Yvette Darnell and Donna Wheeler reimagined the book sale/garage sale as a Twice Found Shop, beginning to collect items throughout the summer months between their travels
- Debbie Lancaster and Donna Yanowski coordinated a great selection of baked goods which were a hit for visitors of all ages
- Ro Jones helped to coordinate the inventory and creative juices for our craft volunteers who came through with a host of great gifts, crafts, and herbal products
- Dena Gaydos chaired the culinary blends team again – preparing everything ahead of her maternity leave so other volunteers could make sure things were packed and labeled appropriately
- Faith Strunk and Julie Fordes worked together to create a host of green cleaning products and accessories
- Janis Teas upped our plant inventory this year including a few more native plant varieties. The weather was a bit unpredictable so we had to make a last minute shift and pull the plants under the awning, but in the end the skies stayed clear for us!

- Karen Cottingham's Herbal Broom-making table was a big hit and guests left the event with some gorgeous fall décor for their home
- Benée Curtis' jelly making team again stepped up sell almost all of the jellies made – delicious!
- Janice Stuff coordinated a scaled-back version of Pre-orders this year but another successful run with close to \$1,300 in revenue
- Catherine O'Brien stepped in to chair Vinegar blends this year – selling nearly all of the bottles by the end of the day
- Janice Freeman stepped up to manage the membership table and ensure current members received their HSA apron – thank you!
- Thanks to Mary Sacilowski for hosting the Kitchen again and keeping our volunteers well-fed and nourished throughout the weekend. Thanks again to Bobby Jucker from Three Brothers Bakery for a generous donation of breads, bagels, and Halloween cookies
- Dalisa Garret-Gailliard (D's Elderbeez) joined Nicole Burger (Bee2Bee Honey) as another vendor this year

I will be reaching out to committee chairs in the coming weeks and may request additional support as some chair leaders have expressed interest in passing the torch. Stay tuned!

Herb Day - Virginia Camerlo, Benée Curtis

We had another very successful Herb Day 2025: The Herb Gardner's Gamut From Plot to Plate to Pantry. Regarding participants, we had 125 paid registrations (40 members, 85 guests) attend the event. Early bird registration was very successful and we hope to continue offering it for our next HD. Our speakers were well received, as were the refreshments, lunch and Herbal Marketplace. This was reflected in the 40 survey responses that overall were very positive. Even though we will not have HD next year (2026), I suggest that the budget for the event increases from \$5,500 to \$6,000/6,500.

Chair - Dena Gaydos

Unit Chair Report:

- During my second year as STU Chair, I was active July - September 2024. I then took October - December off for maternity leave.
- **I organized and led 4 Board Meetings** during my 9 months.
- **Our group has continued our relationship with Westbury Garden**, harvesting herbs from our beds to use in items for Herb Fair and Day.
- Members from our unit, as well as many others from around the country are in the early stages of planning for EdCon 2026 which will take place in San Antonio. Seeing that there is not a unit in that city, our members will be contributing a lot of time and talent to the cause.
 - **As a board, we have decided not to host an Herb Day event next year, so that more resources can go to EdCon.**
- Our Vice Chair and Publications committee, along with additional member volunteers, worked to reformat and edit the newest edition of our unit's directory. They were printed and passed out in early 2025.
- None of this would have been accomplished without our STU members!