

The Herbarian

The Herbal Lure of Love



Lovers Tristan and Isolde sip upon a love potion in this 1867 Rossetti watercolor.

A love potion can be a very dangerous thing- just ask Tristan. Having defended his country against the Irish, and killed Morholt, their champion, he fled to the countryside to tend to his wounds. There he encountered the fair Iseult (Isolde), before fleeing to the court of his uncle, Mark, King of Cornwall. Remembering her beauty and grace, he returned to Ireland in disguise to seek Iseult as a bride for his uncle. While together, they accidentally imbibed a love potion meant for Iseult and Mark, and fell madly in love with each other. Ever after, the ption

compelled them to seek each other out as lovers. Their deceit was found out in the end, and both perished of grief, thinking the other had died before them.

This story, known today as part of the Prose Tristan, written in the early 13th century, now exists as part of the Arthurian legends.

Historical records from the Middle Ages are full of stories of love potions and

love magics, because many court cases included accusations about their use! The lore and legend surrounding plants and their meanings for lovers, built up over centuries, still exist today.

Tempted to try one? Periwinkle was believed to cause two people who ate the leaves together to fall in love; a traditional love potion combined powdered periwinkle with houseleek and earthworms.

Starting Seeds Indoors

To start your herbs indoors this winter in preparation for the spring to come, keep the following tips in mind:

- Use a lightweight growing medium (either a commercial or seeding mix).
- Containers can be as simple as paper egg cartons or yogurt cups; fiber or peat cups should be well-soaked before adding soil.
- Seed packets may have specific growing information, but germination time may vary in winter; some herbs may take up to a month to germinate (e.g., parsley).
- Soak seeds overnight to speed up germination.
- Fill pots to 1/4 in. from the top with moistened planting medium.
- Use a fine spray to water seeds, and keep them moist until germination.
- Fertilize with a solution when seedlings are about 1 in. tall.
- Transplant to larger pots as needed; most can go in the ground after the danger of the first frost has passed.

Source: The Herb Companion (Online)

<http://www.herbcompanion.com>

HERB OF THE MONTH: OREGANO

Oregano (*Origanum*) is one of the best-known culinary herbs. Its popularity and use in a variety of different cuisines makes this herb an indispensable addition to any kitchen garden. A member of the mint family (Lamiaceae), it is a perennial herb in most climates; however, should winter take its toll upon the herb, successive growths will not retain the strong flavor of the original plant.

The herb is native to warm-temperate climates, most notably the Mediterranean regions. The word 'oregano' is thought to be derived through Latin from the Greek *origanon*, 'an acrid herb'. An alternate explanation of the etymology of the word comes from the Greek for 'delight of the hillside'.

The pungent, spicy taste of oregano pairs superbly with tomato-based dishes; it carries a strong scent which works well with pasta and rice. America became enamored with the herb (and the Italian cuisine it featured in) during World War II, as soldiers returned home from southern Italy.



New studies on oregano have shown that the herb contains one of the highest concentrations of antioxidants available. It has four times the antioxidant activity of blueberries, and forty-two times that of apples – between three and twenty times more than any other herb. (Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture)

Friday night 'pizza night' just became a lot healthier! *Buon appetito!*

MONTHLY MEETING TOPIC: PAIRING CHOCOLATE AND HERBS



In 1753, Carl Linnaeus classified the cocoa tree as *Theobroma cacao*: Chocolate, Food of the Gods. Rumor has it he was rather fond of the hot, frothy drink which had become fashionable amongst the aristocratic classes of Europe.

The long history of chocolate, from its origins in prehistoric Mesoamerica to the innovations of the 20th century in chocolate manufacturing, is as rich, deep and tempting as the substance itself. Over the centuries, it has been used in ritual, for medicine, as currency, and most of all, as a food source.

With the present availability of fresher products, fusion-style cuisine, and the general public's open acceptance of new and different flavor combinations, chocolate is being discovered, or rediscovered, in the most unlikely of places. Herbs and spices are infused into heavy creams to subtly flavor ganache or truffles; cocoa powder lends bittersweet depth to smokey barbeque rubs, chili mixes and Latin American favorites such as *molé* sauces and spiced chocolate drinks. Light floral flavors such as lavender and rose lend their perfume well to chocolate desserts, and a natural beauty to their presentation. Even the deep, sweet piney-green flavors of rosemary and basil hold up well against the darkest chocolates. And who could overlook the classic wintertime treat: chocolate and mint?

SUB ROSA

One of the first references to the rose in literature is in the Greek poet Anacreon's Ode 51, which was written sometime in the 6th or 5th century B.C. This poem associates the creation of the rose with the birth of Aphrodite (Venus). (Anacreon may be best remembered today for the 1778 English drinking song "To Anacreon in Heaven". With new lyrics, the tune later became "The Star-Spangled Banner")

LENDING LIBRARY REVIEW

Cooking with Herbs

Emelie Tolley and Chris Mead

Cooking with Herbs is a visually-appealing volume which highlights herb-infused recipes from all over America to culinary destinations worldwide. Written in 1989, it was one of the first books which brought herbs and edible flowers to the forefront of recipes, instead of relegated into the category of ‘flavoring accents’.

While some of the recipes are daunting for the home cook (Chesapeake Bay Bluefin Crab Strudel), most are quite approachable and, more importantly, ‘cookable’. Tolley goes beyond the standard culinary herbs, and highlights those such as rose geranium, sweet woodruff, elderflowers, and sorrel.

The book is divided regionally by cuisine, and Mead’s photography highlights both the plated dishes and the countryside from which it was born. A breezy writing style introducing the regions and their cuisines complements the structure.

Overall, Cooking with Herbs is an interesting collection of uncommon herb and food pairings, and of flavors and culture. For anyone with an interest in culinary pursuits, Tolley’s work (this being one of many) is a nice sampling of the versatility that herbs bring to everyday meals.

UPCOMING AREA EVENTS

Gardening Insight Series: 2/18, Inniswoods Metropark. Entry fee.

North Market Fiery Foods Weekend: 2/18-2/19 at the North Market.

Central Ohio Home & Garden Show: 2/25-3/4 at the Ohio Expo Center. Entry fee.

Submissions Accepted!

Would you like to write an article for an upcoming newsletter on your favorite herbal topic, or an experience you’ve recently had in the garden? E-mail it to wkwinkler@columbuscounsel.com

Calendar

All meetings begin at 6:30

March 13 -

Lasagna Gardening
Herb of the Month: Oregano

March 24 -

Spring Walk at Gahanna Woods; free (registration required)

April 10 -

Spring Cleaning w/ Essential Oils
Herb of the Month: Parsley

April 21 -

Fairy Gardens & Leprechauns
2-3p (Sat.) \$15/\$20

May 8 -

Herb of the Month: Tarragon

Making Scents

Information from Judith Fitzimmon’s Aromatherapy through the Seasons

Lemon

The scent of Lemon is found to be joyful, light and purifying. Think of it as the golden gift from the sun, which can be especially helpful during this month.

Lemon oil (*Citrus limon*) has a strong citrus scent that helps to revitalize and uplift the spirit. The oil is derived from the peel, which is cold-pressed. It takes over 3000 lemons to produce 2.2 lbs. of expressed liquid.

Using lemon to scent the home will make it feel a brighter, more productive place.

Nostalgic Furniture Polish

- 4 oz. linseed oil
- 4 oz. white vinegar
- 24 drops Lemon Essential Oil
- 12 drops Lavender Essential Oil

Mix, and shake before each application. Spray onto furniture, or apply with a soft cloth.