



Gulf Herb Society Coast Newsletter

February
2025

Mailing Only: 109 Grand Blvd • Mobile, AL 36607 • www.gulfcoastherbsociety.org

Rosemary for Remembrance DATES

- **February 25th.** GCHS Meeting at MBG (Social time begins 5:00pm following with the meeting at 5:45pm).
- **March 14-15th.** MBG Plant Sale
- **March 25th.** GCHS Meeting at MBG (Social time begins 5:00pm following with the meeting at 5:45pm).
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See calendar page at the end of the newsletter for complete details.

Thymely NOTES

[Click Here to find us on Facebook!](#) Read herb tips, recipes, and see pictures from our latest events.

- Please **volunteer** in the herb garden whenever you can. Contact Pat Ivie peivie@comcast.net, 334-315-5874 for info.
- A membership form is at the end of the Newsletter. Make checks payable to GCHS - \$25.00.

Did You KNOW

HERB OF THE MONTH: Juniper
hoosiergardener.com

Most of us grow this common juniper as a landscape plant. We enjoy its habit, the blue needles and the icy blue berries. We cut branches to decorate our pots or the mantle. We appreciate the shrub's value to wildlife, too. In researching this plant, I learned that the berries are actually juniper cones. I had no idea.

In case you didn't know, those berries are to gin like grapes are to wine. If you've ever crushed a berry, you'll recognize an aroma associated with gin.

"Juniper berries are what gives gin its distinctive taste and are, in fact, so important to the spirit that they are required by law to be the core botanical in any drink that wants to call itself gin. The aroma and taste of juniper is – or at least should be – the signature note in any gin, both on the nose and on the palate. Only once this flavour base is established can distillers add their signature touches: Citrus, herbs, black pepper, spices, roots... the list is quite

long," said Neat and Shaken.

A North America native plant, grow junipers in sunny locations with decent drainage. Like the common juniper, most other junipers are shrubs. However, a relative, the native Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) is almost always a tree. It's berries are edible, too.



Juniper

Juniper shrubs tend to be more wide than tall. They rarely need pruning if planted for their mature size. Keep an eye open for bagworms, which are pretty good at camouflaging themselves to look like whatever conifer or other plant they are on.

Be selective when cutting juniper branches for arrangements. Spread the cuts throughout the shrub...a snip here, a snip there, rather than all in one place. Make the cuts deep in the shrub to avoid rough looking branches.

Nature Now! Bagworms: The Misunderstood Insect
naturalsciences.org

The Evergreen Bagworm – The Evergreen Bagworm (*Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis*) is a highly misunderstood insect found in the Eastern United States. Worldwide, there are over 1,350 different species of bagworm inhabiting conifer trees such as cypress, juniper, spruce, and pine to name a few. The Evergreen Bagworm may even be in your backyard! Bagworms or bagworm moths are included in the family Psychidae. This family is characterized by being found in case-like structures called bags. Although a fairly small species, bagworms are tiny but mighty. Spending the winter in their mother's bags as eggs, these insects wait for their grand debut during the summer months. Emerging as caterpillars, they construct their own case made of silk, fecal matter, and debris from the tree in which they are feeding. This creates their own sort of camouflage and protection from predators such as vespid wasps

(yellowjackets and hornets) during development. The bags in which they reside also serve as the pupal case in which they metamorphose into adults.

Mature male bagworm moths are black and fuzzy-looking with a wingspan of around one inch. Females at maturity, on the other hand, are wingless, dark brown grub-like insects with sparse hairs. Females also have non-functional antennae, eyes and legs. In late summer, the males will emerge from their bags and seek out females in order to mate. Seeing as the females are wingless, they stay in their bags and mate through the bag openings. The bags also serve as an overwintering case in which the female can store her eggs. The following spring, the eggs develop and the larvae hatch from their mother's bag and begin to make their own bags!

Pinecones or Bagworms? – Once independent, it's time to build a bag! The process starts with a long silk strand that the larval bagworm adds leaf and stick debris to that will eventually completely encase them as they dangle from a limb. An opening is left at the top of the bag so the caterpillar can find food, and a small hole is left at the bottom to get rid of excrement until anchoring the bag to get ready for pupation.

The Real Truth – In an interview with Dr. Colin Brammer of the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, I was able to chat about the process of rearing bagworms, preserving them for research, the harsh weather conditions they face and how they deal with them. In regard to rearing these insects it is super easy! Dr. Brammer states, "Literally, pluck some larvae (preferably different ages) off of trees and make sure they have food." As far as preservation methods are concerned, Dr. Brammer suggests freezing the males to kill them and "simply pinning them like any other Lepidoptera." For females, it is a bit different as they do not have wings. One must freeze them in their bag and then "put them directly into EtOH or isopropyl alcohol" to prevent decaying. These insects are really easy to find and study, so go outside and try it!

As mentioned before, these insects are tiny but mighty! In harsh weather conditions their silk is so strong, they have the ability to stay attached to their host. For the unfortunate ones, windy days can simply take them to their next host...they just have to hang on for the ride!

Bagworms are very misunderstood insects. Many sources label them as major pests killing different types of conifers in urban areas all over the world! This is taken way out of context. When speaking with Dr. Brammer, he mentioned that he "cannot

estimate a single bagworm's damage but would not believe it is that much." Dr. Brammer goes on to say that these insects do not "skeletonize" leaves, but can certainly make a tree "not look award winning if populations are large." All in all, Dr. Brammer has never seen a tree die due to a bagworm infestation, and that it would be a lot more common if it was a serious issue. Therefore, always make sure you are careful when reading about these little buggers. They really get a bad reputation!

Herbs That Grow in Wet Soils gardenguides.com

Don't despair if your wet soil seems to prohibit a classic herb garden. It's true that Mediterranean-style plants like sage and lavender grow best in sun-baked, dry soil. But you'll still find a wealth of culinary, medicinal and ornamental herbs that love boggy conditions and are hardy to at least USDA Zone 4. Many of these herbs grow so vigorously that it's best to stick with two or three unless you have a truly large wet area to plant.

Mint – Mints often arrange themselves along stream banks and other wet places in the wild, making them a safe bet for wet spots in the home garden. Choose from low-growing Corsican mint or creeping pennyroyal or taller peppermint or spearmint, which grow about 2 feet tall.

Other mint species include lemon mint, ginger mint, and Bowles mint. The plants thrive in sun or shade. Don't despair if your wet soil seems to prohibit a classic herb garden.

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Bee Balm – This member of the mint family delights gardeners with its citrus-mint scent and fuzzy, colorful flowers. Grow it in the back of a border; depending on the species, bee balm reaches between 3 to 5 feet. Flower colors range from scarlet to pale pink. These herbs will flourish in part shade or sun. The leaves and flowers make excellent teas and potpourris.

Marsh Mallow – This bog dweller sends up tall spikes of lovely pink flowers and stately foliage. Reaching up to 6 feet in height, marsh mallow prefers full sun. Its seeds, flowers and leaves are edible, while its root contains the gelatin-like substance once used to make marshmallows.

Enthusiasts of home-grown beauty products prize the roots and leaves for this mucilaginous quality,

using marsh mallow infusions for moisturizing skin creams and hair treatments. This member of the mint family delights gardeners with its citrus-mint scent and fuzzy, colorful flowers.

Sweet Joe Pye – A tall flowering herb with large, dusky purple blooms and vanilla-scented leaves, Sweet Joe Pye comes into its own in late summer. The plant towers over other plants, reaching up to 9 feet in some gardens and wild places. The dried roots were once used to treat fever and rheumatism. (Joe Pye was a Native American healer who used this plant to treat typhoid sufferers.)

Chameleon Plant – Prized in Asian cuisine, the low-growing chameleon (*Houttuynia cordata*) spreads vigorously in all soil conditions, including wet. Plant the variegated variety for a truly stunning display of pink, orange and green leaves in midsummer. The plants tolerate sun or shade. Use the young leaves in salads, stir fries and pickles.

Comfrey – One of the most useful--but most aggressively growing--herbs around, comfrey boasts vivid purple or blue flowers on bushy, tall stems. Organic growers cut the leaves continuously through the growing season for mulch and for breaking down plant material in the compost pile. The leaves also make excellent skin-care aids when infused in hot

water and used in cream or lotion recipes. Plant comfrey where it has room to spread. It tolerates sun or part shade.

Meadowsweet – Meadowsweet's frothy cream-colored flowers and fragrant leaves have been used for everything from flavoring wine to scenting rooms with their sweet almond fragrance. The plants grow 2 to 6 feet tall and are happy in moist or wet soil, in sun or part shade.

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Additional Herbs – Other foliage and flowering herbs worth seeking out for wet gardens include purple aster, boneset, bugbane (also known as black cohosh), jewelweed, lungwort, meadow rue, milkweed, Solomon's seal and sweet flag.

Myrtle's MUSINGS

- We're moving apartments soon and we'll have a rooftop patio. Of course, we're planning a garden! We just have to figure out how to water it.
- Qjuana and Richard Cooney

“DILL”-ICIOUS Juniper Berry Icing: Recipe ~ backyardforager.com

Juniper is a familiar spice in savory dishes like sauerkraut, and it's also what gives gin its distinctive flavor. But it works equally well in sweet dishes, especially when paired with other strong flavors. The taste of juniper berry glaze is strong, sweet, warm, and slightly bitter. Use your favorite gingerbread cookie recipe, then finish with this icing.

- 1/3 cup juniper berries
- 3/4 cup half & half
- 1 lb. confectioners' sugar

1. Use a mortar and pestle to lightly crush the juniper berries. You may also use a spice grinder, but don't go overboard. You don't want a powder, you just want to break the berries up a little. Exposing more surface area (by breaking up the berries) makes it easier to infuse the juniper flavor into the cream.
2. Combine the berries and half & half in a saucepan and heat to a simmer, whisking to avoid scorching. Remove the liquid from the heat at the first sign of bubbles, then allow it to steep and cool for four – five hours.
3. Strain the half & half and discard the berries.
4. Measure the confectioners' sugar into a bowl, then stir in the cream bit by bit, until the icing reaches the desired consistency. You may not need the whole 3/4 cup, but you'll probably come pretty close. Transfer the icing to a squeeze bottle to drizzle the icing in patterns, or frost your cookies with a spatula. Extra icing will keep in the refrigerator for several weeks.

GCHS Officers 2024 – 2025

President ~ Beth Poates • President-Elect ~ Joy Harrison • Membership ~ Lydia Criswell
Hospitality ~ Priscilla Gold Darby • Treasurer ~ Annie Daniels • Historian ~ Vacant • Ways & Means ~ Alicia Davis
• Newsletter Editor ~ Qjuana & Richard Cooney

GULF COAST HERB SOCIETY Calendar of Activities 2025

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MOBILE BOTANICAL GARDENS Calendar for 2025

EVENTS/ SOCIAL (for more info [CLICK HERE!](#))

PLANTASIA. Spring Plant Sale 2025! at MBG. March 14. 9am - 3 pm. You won't want to miss Mobile Botanical Gardens' Spring Plant Sale 2025. where you will find the best plants and advice for your Gulf Coast Garden! Preview Party Tickets Available Now! (Thursday, March 13). More info will be revealed soon, but we can tell you that Plantasia Spring Plant Sale 2025 will include an enormous selection of native azaleas (also reblooming azaleas and more types of evergreen and deciduous azaleas), a wide variety of camellias, special rose cultivars, hydrangeas, perennials, many types of trees and a lot more!

CLASSES (for more info & Registration [CLICK HERE!](#)).

First Friday February: Camellias with Seth Allen. Starting February 7. 10am - 12pm. Join us for the first presentation in our First Friday series of 2025 as MBG Horticulturalist, Seth Allen, shares an introduction to growing camellias, the Queen of winter flowers! Besides touching on care and culture, Seth will share details about the camellias that MBG will offer during Spring Plant Sale. If the weather is cooperative, he will also lead a tour of the K. Sawada Winter Garden here at MBG, which is one of only six Camellia Gardens of Excellence formally recognized by the International Camellia Society in North America. Don't miss this event, which is FREE for MBG members and with the cost of admission for not-yet members.

Introduction to Qi Gong and Tai Chi. Tuesdays & Fridays. 9am - 10am. This course focuses primarily on basic breathing techniques and movement practices to improve concentration, balance, and overall health. We will employ visualization and meditation. Of course, these practices help us to achieve relaxation, reduce stress, and aid the natural healing processes of the body.

MBG Docent Training Class. February 4, 11, 18 & 25; 8:30-12am. Classes and activities will take place at the Mobile Botanical Gardens, in the Larkins Classroom, at Magnolia Hill outdoor classroom and throughout the Gardens. Participants are expected to attend all sessions. A training manual and reference handouts will be provided. Participants will become familiar with the various garden collections, the facilities and regular program offerings through guided walks and activities.

Sketch Club in the Gardens. Every Friday, 2-4pm. The Larkins Classroom OR at Magnolia Hill Studio. Cost: FREE for members. A Casual sketch club experience with oversight from Derek Norman, our MBG Artist in Residence.

PRESENTATIONS (for more info [CLICK HERE!](#))

GCHS Food Team Duties

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| • Make sure kitchen tables and counters are clean | • Clean spills from floor | • If table and chairs are to be put up we will let you know - if not they can be left out | • Make sure all doors are locked |
| • No food left in fridge | • Take out garbage & place new - bags in cans bags are on to fridge | | • Thermostats must be left as you found them |
| • Pick any trash off floor | | | |



GULF COAST HERB SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP FORM

New Member? Y N

Name: _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Email _____ (to receive our Newsletter and updates)

Committees I am interested in: _____ Herb Garden _____ Membership _____ Herb Day

Yearly dues are \$25 and payable in August.

Please make check payable to GCHS and mail % Annie Daniels, 1355 Carson Rd W, Mobile, AL 36695

Or bring your check or cash to one of our meetings

Date _____ Amount \$ _____ Paid by Cash _____ or Check # _____

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS

Welcome to the Gulf Coast Herb Society! We meet at the Mobile Botanical Gardens from 5:30 to 7:00pm the fourth Tuesday of the month, unless otherwise announced in our newsletter, emails and Facebook.

Refreshments are served at each meeting, it's optional to bring something to share.

Meetings start at 5:30p.m., program will follow, work days in Herb Garden TBA

Questions? Email Beth Poates at poates57@gmail.com or

Annie Daniels, at mbdmobile@aol.com.

Check out our website www.gulfcoastherbsociety.org Like us on Facebook!

The Plain Garden Planting Cycle

May Sow corn

June Sow tomatoes, eggplants and peppers in pots

July Sow peas

August Sow beans

September Sow winter squash

October Sow winter pumpkins

November Sow winter carrots

December Sow winter garlic

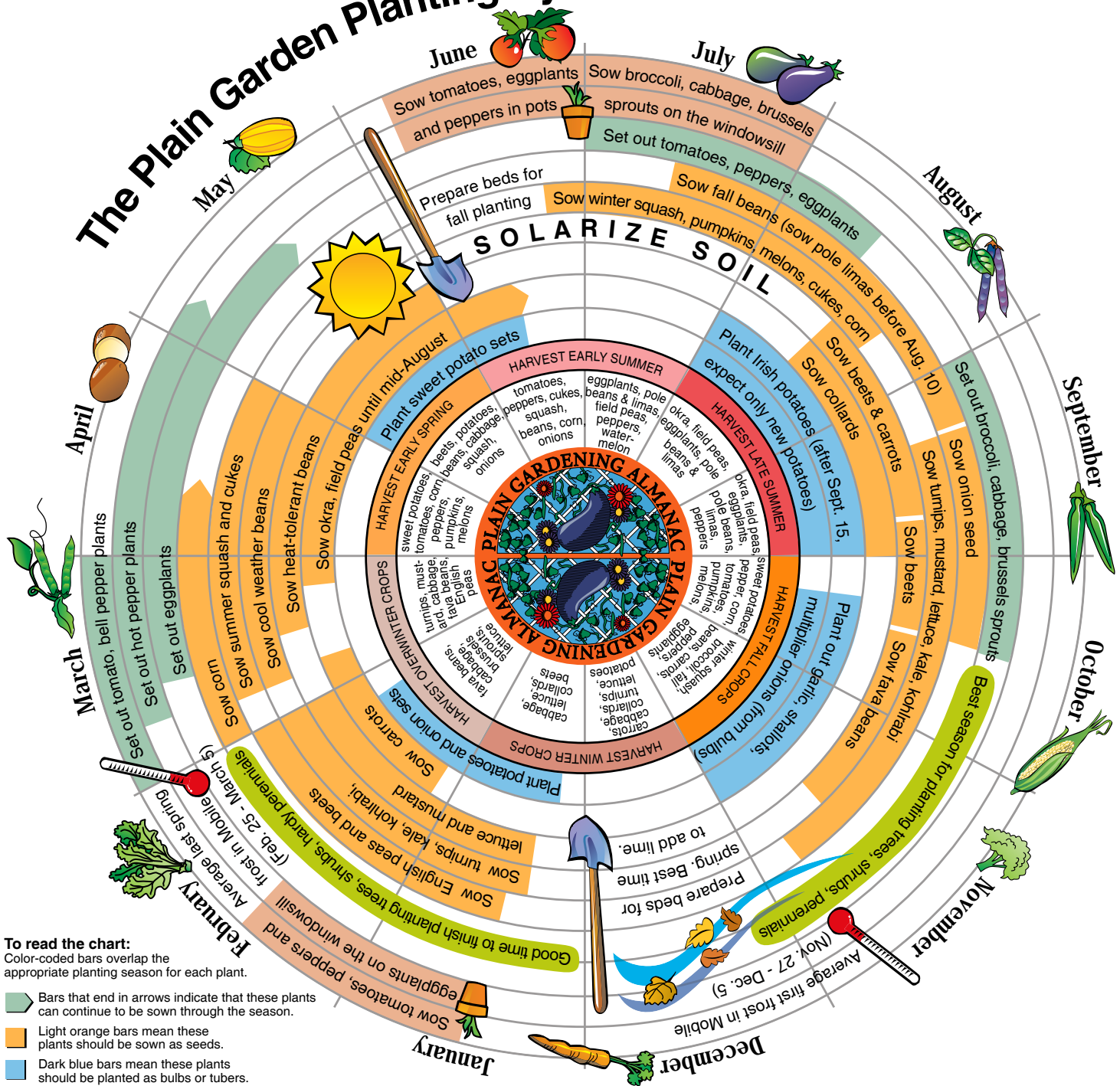
January Sow winter onions

February Sow winter potatoes

March Sow winter asparagus

April Sow winter broccoli

SOLAR



Color-coded bars overlap the appropriate planting season for each plant.

- Bars that end in arrows indicate that these plants can continue to be sown through the season.
- Light orange bars mean these plants should be sown as seeds.
- Dark blue bars mean these plants should be planted as bulbs or tubers.
- Green bars mean these plants should be 6-inch-high transplants when put in the garden.
- Brown bars indicate that these plants should be sown in pots in a cold frame or inside the house.