



CHAMOMILE April 2015

Notice Board

April

Saturday 11th Visit Millennium Gardens 1.30 p.m. Entrance - Hillcrest St., Masterton. George Bain will walk with us describing garden. After walk perhaps go to cafe for afternoon tea. George 021-217-6666.

Tuesday 21st 1.30 p.m. Senior Citizens Hall, Carterton. Meeting chairman - May Brown.

May

Saturday 2nd Visit Home of Compassion garden, Island Bay - to be confirmed. 10.30 leave Masterton. Transport to be arranged.

Tuesday 19th 1.30 p.m. Senior Citizens Hall, Carterton. Andra Bramwell - Probiotics



Medieval Herbs (At our Tuesday meeting in March Agnes talked about medieval herbs. The following is a summary of her talk.)

People at that time lived communally and as there were no deodorants or proper washing facilities there were bad odours. Not only of perspiration but also cooking smells. The floors were basically dirt, well trodden because of the number of people who walked over them through the years. So the floors were strewn with herbs. Herbs were also used for scenting water to wash hands before meals at the table and to make sachets to place amongst their clothes. No one, either peasant or royal, was allowed to speak to the king or queen without having cloves in their mouths.

Herbs were also used extensively in cooking. They were lumped together with vegetables under the name *potherbs*. It was thought that the people ate a lot of meat and that vegetables weren't popular. This is because many more meat recipes than vegetable ones have been handed down. But parchment for writing was expensive and probably herbs and vegetables were simple and easy to prepare so it wasn't worth wasting the paper as everyone would know how to cook these. Although onions were looked down on as a vegetable, they were eaten extensively.

People then were religious and believed in heaven and hell, nevertheless the heads of the people at that time were full of magic spells. Witches are associated with these but they were really only medicine women. White witches were supposed to be the good healers using gentle herbs, but black witches used hallucinatory herbs like wormwood for healing. The Church didn't like this and portrayed the witches as ugly old hags when actually they were just like other people. All the witches were doing was passing on the lore that had been handed down to them over many years. When they were hunted down and burnt, much valuable medical information went with them.

Midwives in medieval times used chickweed to smooth their hands when delivering babies at breech births. Garlic was used in bouquets at weddings to ward off evil spirits and herbs were used to preserve the dead before burial. So in everyday living, eating, magic and ceremony, herbs have been much used over the centuries. And they're still useful and well loved.

Book Review (March - Marcia Davies) A Garden of Old Fashioned and Unusual Herbs by Gillian Painter

This is one of the books in the Herb Society library. It is about growing and using some old fashioned and unusual herbs and is a very comprehensive book. The author asks that readers treat the information as a guide, not a commandment as everyone's garden is different according to climate, season, soil and situation.

Most of the book contains the grouping of plants in their botanical family in alphabetical order with descriptions and illustrations to identify them, their cultivation and the historical uses of the plants and how to use them nowadays. However, as the author says, she does not presume to prescribe for any illness.

The illustrations are beautifully done and very easy to recognise. They are drawn two thirds of their real life-size.

The latter part of the book is a cross reference of the individual plant information, so there are lists of herbs and how and where they like to grow e.g. herbs grown from seed, herbs grown from cuttings, herbs grown from bulbs, herbs which will grow in dry sites, herbs to grow in hanging baskets, herbs to use in dried flower arrangements, herbs to use as dyes, herbs which provide food for bees, and even herbs which can be used for hay.

It is all served with a good general index.



There is also a literary quote for each plant family, e.g. for the plant called Hound's Tongue: *'It will tye the tongues of Houndes so that they shall not bark at you if it be laid under the bottom of your feet.'* By John Gerard (1545-1612)

Herb of the Month (March: Debbie Dittmer): Chocolate Mint



To link in with the Wairarapa Choccol'Art Festival, our herb of the month segment was titled "herbs and chocolate".

Chocolate Mint - A chocolaty, minty smell and taste. It can be used in baking, cocktails, desserts and beauty recipes.

It grows both inside and out and is easy to grow. It has a square dark brown (chocolate) stem, bright green leaves and a definite smell of chocolate.

Take care when planting in the open garden as it has been known to take over a large area of garden very quickly.

The session finished with a chocolate inspired afternoon tea of chocolate cupcakes topped with chocolate ganache and flavoured with thyme and chocolate, homemade chocolate spread, divine lavender shortbread half dipped in chocolate, a tasty chilli and salt chocolate, and flavoursome savoury scones.

Many thanks to Val, Sue and Christine for their fantastic contributions!



The **Annual General Meeting** was held on Saturday 28th March 2015 at the lovely home and garden of Di Grant. It was warm enough to hold the meeting outside in the garden.

The main topics were changes to the Constitution and electing new officers. Debbie Dittmer was voted in as our new Chairperson and we had two new members added to our committee, Shelah Agnew and Loraine Erith.

May Brown, Gail Edwards and Lyn Tomlinson stood down from the committee and were warmly thanked for their efforts on our behalf.

Our Treasurer reported that our financial position was good and over the past year several new members had joined.

Altogether the club is in good heart.

We finished off the afternoon with a shared afternoon tea and chat. Several members had a walk round Di's garden and Di gave us cuttings of our choice.

Agnes Jones

Recipe: Margaret's Square. (*Those at this year's AGM enjoyed the following savoury made by Diane Grant*)

- Put 2 oz (4 tbspn) butter or marj into a baking dish 9x13x2 inches and melt in oven (180 degrees).
- In a large bowl beat 3 eggs with 1 cup milk.
- Add and mix in – 1 cup flour, 1 tspn salt, 1 tspn baking pdr.
- Mix in 1 tbspn chopped onion, 1 cup chopped spinach and half pound grated cheese.
- Pour into baking dish, level off and sprinkle with seasoned salt or seasoned breadcrumbs.
- Bake at 180 for 35 minutes then let cool and cut into squares.
- It freezes well.

Diane comments: "This is the basic recipe given me years ago by our friend Margaret and has been very popular as a nibble. However, I have successfully 'played around' with it a number of times, including other veges (e.g. chopped celery, chives, grated carrot, silver beet, sorrel, more onion etc), also chopped ham and/or chicken. I have also used a smaller dish which makes it 'fuller' and excellent for a main dish with a salad etc."

The Wairarapa Herb Society (Estab. September 1982 and registered under the Charities Act No. C.C. 29074). P O Box 42 Masterton.

Objective: To promote and share knowledge of herbs, their cultivation and use.
The Society can accept no liability for any ill-effects resulting from information presented in this newsletter.

Meetings held on the third Tuesday of the month at the Senior Citizens Hall, High Street North, Carterton (opposite Wild Oats Café). As far as possible, Saturday meetings are held on the 1st Saturday of each month.

Annual Sub:
Individual: \$20*; Families: \$30*
*\$5 reduction on subscription if paid up member of Herb Federation.

Quarterly Newsletter

Executive Committee: Debbie Dittmer, Agnes Jones, Val Richardson, Andra Bramwell, Christine Paul, Bill Edginton, Shelah Agnew, Lorraine Erith.

Officers: Chairperson: Debbie Dittmer; Secretary: Agnes Jones; Treasurer: Val Richardson; Publicity: Andra Bramwell; News/Library: Bill Edginton.