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# March 2016 Newsletter



## Inside this issue:

<a href="#">Next meet</a>	1
<a href="#">Last meet</a>	1
<a href="#">In the garden</a>	1
<a href="#">Scoville Units</a>	1
<a href="#">Floriography</a>	2
<a href="#">Naughty botany</a>	3
<a href="#">Dittany</a>	3

## Next Meet

Monday, 14 Mar, 7pm

Making and Tasting:  
Pestos and other herb  
sauces.

**Herb of the  
Month:  
Okinawan Spinach**

## Last meet

Our February meet-up had buckets with herbs and flowers lining the floor, and the tables were strewn with even more greenery as we readied ourselves to make some tussie mussies & wreaths.



We learnt about tussie-mussies, nosegays, and herbal wreaths. It was great fun, and gorgeous creations came from us playing with the textures, shapes, colours and scents of the plants.

## In the Garden

The early autumn garden in many respects is just as the late summer garden, and often the two are interchanged, or grouped together as one horticultural season. Although the sun is getting up a bit later and there is an unmistakable little chill very early in the mornings, much can still be done in this productive time in the garden.

One such task is the **clearing** out of spent annual plants, and reworking of the garden beds for winter plantings. Think of how the garden space will be used over winter, and what you envision for the next growing season—perhaps you need to let it lie fallow, plant a green manure crop, or create a productive winter garden after working in some compost.

Thinking of winter produce, you can **sow** vegetables such as leeks, beetroot, silverbeet and spinach, brassicas such as kohlrabi, cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli and onions. Herbs that can be sown include parsley, coriander (which does not bolt so readily in cooler temperatures of autumn), chervil, oregano and chives. If you have a warm spot you can even try basil and chilli which could still produce well into May.

## Vitamins and Minerals

We all know that herbs are good for us! I am fond of saying that the parsley garnish on a plate will sometimes be the most nutritious thing to eat. I found a table detailing the nutrients in herbs in a book (Drugs in Pots, Anne McIntyre, Gaia 2011) in the library, and thought it was interesting enough to share, so here follow a few examples of each (not a complete list):

### Vitamins

Vitamin A: Dandelion, gotu kola, basil  
Vitamin B: Fenugreek, parsley, sage  
Vitamin C: Echinacea, rosehip, sorrel  
Vitamin D: Dandelion, rosehip  
Vitamin E: Parsley, sage, skullcap  
Vitamin K: Parsley, basil, coriander  
Niacin: Feverfew, peppermint  
Vitamin P: Cayenne

### Minerals

Calcium: Aloe vera, chamomile, oregano  
Cobalt: Parsley, Echinacea root  
Iron: Nettles, rosemary, dill  
Magnesium: Gotu kola, basil, peppermint  
Manganese: Sage, coriander, garlic  
Potassium: Fennel, wild celery, rosemary  
Zinc: Marshmallow, caraway, coriander  
Chromium: Nettles  
Copper: Sage, skullcap, dill  
Selenium: Garlic, coriander



## Floriography

"By all those token flowers, that tell, what words can never speak so well."

~Byron



The language of flowers, sometimes called floriography, is a means with which to send coded messages through the use of flowers, and their arrangements.

The language of flowers is quite often associated with Victorian times, where this form of communication was used to exchange "talking bouquets" expressing feelings, thoughts and opinions. Tusie-mussies and nosegays were popular fashion items, and with floral dictionaries, such as Joseph Hammer-Purgstall's *Dictionnaire du langage des fleurs* (1809), were used to convey special meanings.

It is not only England, and early America that has a history of floriography, but it is also noted through the ages in other parts of Europe, in Asia and also The Middle East.

Flowers and their meanings also appear in literary work, notably

William Shakespeare who explained the symbolic meanings of flowers such as pansies, rosemary, daisies and violets. There are also many artworks that feature flowers holding a particular meaning.

Naturally, with such a widespread use, and differences in interpretations by various cultures and beliefs, many flowers have come to hold more than one meaning. There seems to be a move toward a more standardised "urban dictionary" of flowers and their meanings—in particular using the blooming habits, or growing conditions of the flowers themselves as primary inspiration, e.g. *Mimosa pudica*, or the sensitive plant meaning chastity as the plant folds in on itself when touched or disturbed.

Here are a few examples of flowers and their most common meanings:



### APPLE

Temptation; Let me tempt you.



### CALENDULA

Joy.



### CARNATION

I'll never forget you; Mother's Love



### DANDELION

Happiness



**DAISY** : Innocence; Hope

**FORGET ME NOT** : Remember me; True Love

**HONEYSUCKLE** : Devoted affection; Bonded love.

**IVY** : Wedded Love; Fidelity



**LAVENDER** : Devotion

**LILY (WHITE)** : Virginity; Purity, Heavenly to be with you

**MARJORAM** : Blushes, Happiness

**MISTLETOE** : Kiss me

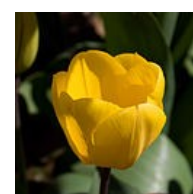


**ORCHID** : Refinement

**ROSE (RED)** : Love, I love you, Respect, Romance, Beauty

**ROSEMARY** : Remembrance

**SAGE** : Domestic virtue and immortality



**TULIP (YELLOW)**: Sunshine in your smile

**STRAWBERRY** : Perfect goodness

## Naughty names

## Dittany

### A look at some of the naughty and interesting names of flowers and plants, botanical and common...

I love unusual plant books, and have always had a fascination with language and words too, so I was doubly delighted a few years ago to find this little tongue-in-cheek read: *Red Undies & Dutchman's Trousers; Naughty plants for every occasion* (Collins, 2007), by Sacha Langton-Gilks.

Besides being hilariously presented with impeccable comedy in her descriptions and comments, and well researched in the unusual namings of plants, as a horticulturist, she gives sound growing and use advice too!

She describes plants:

- that are associated with sexual organs, e.g. Willy Lily (*Arum maculatum*) and butterfly pea (*Clitoria ternatea*),



- with names relating to general "naughtiness" e.g. *Magnolia* 'Randy' and *Hemerocallis* 'Lusty Leland',
- to give to people you hate, e.g. Mother-in-law's Tongue and Mother-in-law's Cushion,

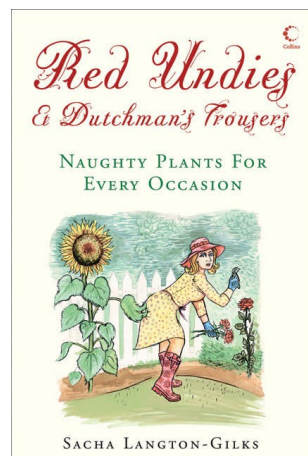
- with names associated with nobility, e.g. *Aster* 'King George' or *Chrysanthemum* 'Duchess of Edinburgh',



- with names associated with commoners, e.g. *Dianthus* 'Doris' and *Verbascum* 'Jackie',
- sounding like articles of clothing, e.g. *Begonia* 'Red Undies' and *Heuchera* 'Purple Petticoats',
- with religious titles, e.g. Bishop's Weed and Rosa 'The Friar'



Says Sacha on *Clematis* 'Horn of Plenty' - "Sports a lovely rosy-mauve head and is surprisingly compact. If you are lucky, it can repeat when you are on holiday, in August, which is a must for those regularly interrupted by small children at the weekend."



I have recently been given a few of the Dittany booklets to look through. Dittany was the Annual Journal for the New Zealand Herb Societies in the early 1980's.

I thought it might be interesting to add a note, article, recipe or discussion from these early journals to our current newsletters, somewhat marrying past and present, keeping herbal lore alive.

### Perfumed Beads by Anne Denys, Dittany 1980.

... Then last winter I was inspired to try lavender beads. My summer-dried lavender was waiting to be used, and beads would be a new outlet.

Using a recipe from our Canterbury Herb Society's newsletter for Rose petal beads, but substituting lavender for rose petals, the resultant beads were a delight to handle, smell, and use.

Take

1 cup of flour

3 Tbsp salt

2 cups finely ground blended lavender flowers stripped from their stalks.

Mix enough water to the dry mixture, to make a plasticine-like dough. Add lavender colouring (red and blue food colouring) and several drops of oil of lavender.

Knead until completely smooth and pliable. Roll into required size and shape of bead. They may be rolled in lavender flower powder to give a rough surface if desired. Thread onto fine oiled florist's wire. Leave to dry 3-4 days. Thread onto a necklace thread with a very small bead or sequin between each lavender bead.