

International Division of Medicinal, Aromatic and Cosmetic Plants (HGK) at the Goetheanum, Switzerland

NEWSLETTER 7

January 2022

Dear members and friends of the Division of Herbs and Medicinal Plants!

Events in the world are still being shaped by the Corona Crisis. Many things that seemed to be set in stone have become fragile. Among the people, some rifts have opened up that seemed unthinkable only a short time ago. The healthcare system is under severe strain, the financial markets are faltering, and many people are deeply unsettled...

Against the backdrop of all the current imponderables, it does us good to focus our deep connection to earth and nature. And it might also be helpful to take a step back and look from a higher perspective: What is really important? How can I contribute to the healing of the agitated situation in my very special present situation?




To care for the earth - and the connection to earth in ourselves! - even more mindful than before, would certainly already be a good start! We from the leadership team of the specialist group have also taken up this cause and in the following, we would like to present to you our plans and ideas for the further work in the specialist group.

1) First of all: There is a new name....

We have noticed that there are not only medicinal plant growers in the professional group, but also some spice and cosmetic plant growers. In addition, many plants in the three categories are sometimes multiple. Therefore, we found it useful to expand the name: From now on, we will operate as Specialist Group '*Healing Herbs, Aromatic Herbs and Cosmetic Plants*' (FG HGK).

2) and furthermore, there is a new leadership team!

The composition of the team has changed during the past year. *Michaela Spaar* already said goodbye a year ago in her last newsletter - for her pioneering work we would like to thank her again quite warmly at this point! In the meantime, the horticultural engineer *Bettina Billmann*, who has been involved from the beginning, has taken over the coordination of the specialist group together with the two other founding members *Ola Aukrust* and *Michael Straub* - here we introduce ourselves in more detail:

	<p>Ola Aukrust</p> <p>Mountain farmer between the highest mountains in Norway. Focus on herb cultivation, for beauty and usefulness! Trained teacher, study of art history.</p> <p>Natural science study year at the Goetheanum and member of the <i>Representative Circle</i> of Goetheanum for the country of Norway.</p>
	<p>Bettina Billmann</p> <p>Interested in medicinal plants since childhood, gardener, horticultural engineer, vocational school teacher and alternative practitioner.</p> <p>Over 10 years of research on organic ornamental plants and organic vegetable production at the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) in Switzerland. Publications</p>
	<p>Michael Straub</p> <p>10 years scientist, advisor and teacher for biodynamic fruit growing at the <i>Research Station for Fruit and Wine Growing (LVWO)</i> in Weinsberg (D). 23 years head of medicinal plant cultivation and research & species conservation officer at <i>Weleda AG</i> in Schwäbisch Gmünd (D).</p> <p>Book author and board member of the registered associations <i>Netzwerk Kräuter BW</i> and <i>Hortus officinarum</i>. Currently freelance consultant and scientific project manager.</p> <p><i>Recent publications</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Die magischen 11 der heilenden Pflanzen; G&U 2011 - Anthroposophische Pharmazie, Kapitel 7.2; Salumed 2016 - Wissen der Weleda-Gärtner; Weleda/ Ulmer 2019

3) New perspectives in the work of the specialist groups

In the past years, the specialist group has mainly dedicated itself to the work on mission statements. We now declare this 'general part' to be finished for the time being: What has emerged is a slide compilation with all the questions from the first specialist forum in 2018.

It will be shown in the Technical group on February 3rd – see below. The last slide of the PowerPoint presentation then clearly shows: The focus is on the topic of the current Agricultural Conference 2022: The quality!

Here we are talking about two kinds of quality: that of the cultivation process and that of the product. For both, it would make sense to have something like 'growing' instructions for action. Of course, these must first have a status quo from which to proceed. We in our specialist group would like to deal with the collection and preparation of this fundamental knowledge in the coming years.

One way of doing this, in our view, is through working groups dedicated to a specific issue or a specific culture. These could – for example – either arise locally and be dedicated to a specific culture. Or, with the help of the new networking tools such as Zoom, they could work on a supra-regional basis on more general topics such as quality issues or preparation use. We would like to start a trial with these possibilities at the upcoming Agricultural Meeting - see item 4.1.

We of the specialist group would collect the activities and - if necessary - also provide for a superordinate cross-linking. We ourselves do not yet know exactly how all this is to run in detail:

The path must emerge as we walk! And at the upcoming LWT we will start walking...!!!

4) Activities at the 2022 Agricultural Meeting.

1. The work in the technical groups - February 3 to 5 from 10:30h to 12:30h.

The work in the specialized groups will take place from 3rd to 5th February from 10:30h to 12:30h each day during the Open Space.

The structure of the three expert group meetings could look something like this:

Day 1: Detailed introduction of the participants - Who are they? What do they want from and in the expert group? What are their goals for the joint work?

Day 2: After-thought round - what ideas have developed in the minds overnight? How could the implementation look like?

Day 3: Develop actions and define steps - how can we 'ground' the ideas found on Day 2?

"Where and how can we get into regular and direct contact?"

"How can we organize joint research?"

"How can the results be fed into practice and evaluated there?"

2) The workshops "Introduction to plant observation".

The workshops will take place just like the expert group meetings from Thursday 3.2. to Saturday 5.2. - from 13:30 h to 15:00 h each day. On the **first day**, after a short round of introductions of the participants, a presentation of the research work on *Artemisia annua* is planned. *Ruth Richter* and *Nora Hils* from the association 'Hortus officinarum', Arlesheim, will report on their work.

On **Friday, February 4**, Goetheanum staff member *Torsten Arnken* will conduct an online tasting - we can look forward to seeing how that goes! Afterwards, *Michael Straub* will introduce the cognition of the relationship between plants and humans which can be recognised and described in the morphological characteristics. On **Saturday**, this methodology will be deepened. Finally, we will discuss the further procedure and the linkage with the specialist group as well as with the associations *Netzwerk Kräuter e.V.* and *Hortus officinarum e.V.*.

5) News on the website

A major concern of the specialist group is the networking of the many different medicinal plant and herb businesses worldwide. To make this possible, we started years ago in cooperation with the Section to build up an international platform for portraits of biodynamic medicinal plant and herb enterprises on the website of the Section. We would of course be pleased to receive further farm portraits - the form to fill in is provided at www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/arbeitsfelder/kraeuter-heilpflanzen/

6) Medicinal plants of the year 2022:

The stinging nettles *Urtica dioica* and *Urtica urens*

The choice of the committee consisting of members of the naturopathic association Theophrastus fell on the stinging nettles for this year. Since we are initially interested mainly in questions of cultivation and processing, you will find some facts about them at the end of this newsletter. They were taken from the book '*Die magischen 11 der heilenden Pflanzen*' by Michael Straub and Frank Meyer.

7) Events

SUMMER 2022: On June 11 and 12, 2022, an excursion to the *Terra Medica medicinal plant garden* of the *German Homeopathic Union* (DHU) will take place. The members of our specialist group HGK are cordially invited to attend. The exact program and the modalities of participation will soon be available on the website of the association *Netzwerk Kräuter* www.netzwerk-kraeuter.de

DECEMBER 2021: A report on the online symposium organized by the *Netzwerk Kräuter* and the University of Hohenheim on the topic of "*Medicinal Plant Cultivation in Times of Climate Change*" on December 3, 2021 will follow in the next newsletter.

Now we wish the whole community of biodynamic herb friends a good and invigorating herbal year 2022!

Ola Aukrust, Bettina Billmann and Michael Straub

Medicinal herbs of the year 2022: Stinging Nettles

Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and Burning Nettle (*Urtica urens*)

Sowing and cultivation:

- Optimal germination temperature: 20-22 °C. Good development depends on sufficient warmth.
- Sowing of the annual *Urtica urens* from the 2nd week of April, *Urtica dioica* also from the middle of April directly into small pots.
- *Substrate:* Mix well rotted compost with a little land soil, sand and peat.

Reproduction:

- *Urtica dioica* reproduces itself via creeping rhizomes that can easily be divided and replanted, whereas *Urtica urens* is entirely dependent on propagation via seeds.
- Direct sowing in the open is also possible from May after the "Ice Saints", thinning with a hand hoe to achieve the desired plant spacing is recommended.
- Liquid fertilization of the *Urtica* young plants with nettle liquid manure or vinasse as required.

Bed cultivation:

- From mid-May. Harden off young plants outdoors for at least one week beforehand.
- Row distance 50 cm, plant distance in the row for *Urtica urens* 25 cm, *Urtica dioica* 35 cm.
- Soils rich in humus and nutrients, especially iron, are ideal. Loosen well before planting.
- Depending on the soil condition and crop rotation, fertilization with well-rotted compost is advisable. When the leaves turn light green, fertilize urgently with nitrogenous organic fertilizer.

Diseases and pests:

In case of *Urtica urens* infestation with aphids, remedy with 2% NEUDOSAN or a home-made 2% soft soap solution applied several times. In case of *Urtica dioica* infestation by caterpillars of the day peacock - they can be collected by hand.

From the book “- Die magischen 11 der heilenden Pflanzen; G&U 2011” Frank Meyer and Michael Straub