

NEWSLETTER 8
January 2023

Dear members and friends of the Division 'Medicinal, Aromatic and Cosmetic Plants'!

Events in the world still are strongly influenced by the Corona crisis - even if it has receded somewhat into the background in view of the Ukraine crisis. Fortunately, measures have been increasingly being withdrawn and regulations relaxed. What remains, however, is a deep sense of insecurity among many people - and often more or less severe after-effects following an illness: Health - or even just the feeling of health - often remains battered. Long after they have recovered from acute symptoms, some people still suffer to a greater or lesser extent from Long Covid symptoms that are difficult to get under control. And for almost all people, the horror runs deep about what has happened in the past years and is still happening at present. How can we overcome this and regain our balance?

Sometimes a look at the principles of crop protection can help. From my point of view, the most important one is 'Before you diagnose a plant disease, rule out nutrient deficiency!' This does not necessarily require complex laboratory tests in healthy people. It is often sufficient to integrate more consciously medicinal and wild plants in the nutrition. Here a nettle tea, there a green Smoothie with celery and the first fresh wild herbs can already work miracles. In addition, Hildegard von Bingen recommends 'Quenched Wine' - you can read more about this below at the end of this newsletter.

Bettina wishes health for you and many happy moments in your gardens!
And of course Michael and Ola send their regards too!!!

1) First of all: Nothing has changed in the leadership team!

We are still a team of three, consisting of Bettina Billmann, Michael Straub and Ola Aukrust. At the homepage of the division, we introduce ourselves as usual. However, Bettina and Michael would like to turn to other tasks in the course of the next years. Therefore, we would be very happy to find new herb enthusiasts who are also interested in giving new impulses to biodynamic medicinal plant cultivation. Perhaps people from the circles of spice and cosmetic plant growers would also feel called to work together with the agriculture team at the Goetheanum? We would be very happy to have you with us!

2) Literature from the team that might be helpful for medicinal herb enthusiasts

Publications from Bettina Billmann et al.

- FiBL Leaflet *Cultivation and Sales of Organic Ornamental Plants*, Frick 2012.
 - FiBL Leaflet *Plant Protection in Organic Ornamentals Crops*, No.1573, Second revised edition 2020
 - FiBL Leaflet *Organic Beekeeping*, No. 1402, Frick 2022
- (The language of all leaflets is German. All three are available for free at www.fibl.org)

Publications Michael Straub et al.

- 12 Magic Medicinal Plants, Ulmer Verlag 2022.
- Anthroposophic Pharmacy, Chapter 7.2; Salumed 2016
- Knowledge of the Weleda gardeners; Weleda/ Ulmer Verlag 2019

Further publications from the environment

- Status quo and potentials of ecological cultivation of medicinal, cosmetic and spice plants in Baden-Württemberg, University of Hohenheim 2022
- How herbs and plants heal: 'The power of green resilience', Karin Mecozzi 2023

In addition, a 'publication' from the cultivation of medicinal plants may not be missing, of course: Here is an impression from the herb garden of Ola Aukrust in northern Norway!



Experiment "Species-appropriate cultivation of medicinal plants" in the Norwegian mountains: Anise hyssop in the developing rock garden (Photo: Ola Aukrust)

2) Perspectives in the work of the section

In the early years, the specialist group devoted most of its time to mission statement work. We concluded this 'general part' with a slide compilation containing all the questions from the first specialist forum in 2018. A look at how they fit into a larger system showed clearly: The focus is on the topic of 'quality'.

This is about the quality of the growing process as well as the quality of the product. For both, it would make sense to have something like 'growing with' instructions for action. These, of course, must first have a status quo from which the work can begin. With the collection and preparation of this fundamental knowledge, we would like to concern ourselves in the coming years.

In our view, one means of doing this is through working groups that are dedicated to a specific issue or a specific culture. These could either arise locally, being dedicated to a specific culture, for example. Alternatively, with the help of the new networking tools such as Zoom, they could work on a supra-regional basis on more general issues such as quality issues or preparation use. We do not yet know exactly how all of this will work out in detail ourselves: the path must emerge as we go! Please get in touch if you would like to participate - you are very welcome!

Activities at the Agricultural Conference 2023

3.1) Program of the Expert Group Meeting

Thursday 2 February 15:15-16:30

- Short round of introductions
- Report on last year's activities
- Book presentation/reading "12 Magic Medicinal Plants" German and English
- Questions and discussion about the book
- Final round and preparation for the 2nd day, wishes of the participants

Friday 3 February 15:15 -16:30

- After-thinking round: Which ideas have developed overnight in the thoughts? How could the implementation look like?
- Reading of another chapter "12 Magical Medicinal Plants"
- Artistic exercise with Torsten Arncken
- Further collaboration of the specialist group in the years to come
- Contribution of the specialist group to the Goetheanum anniversary: joint plant observation and cultivation observation *Calendula officinalis* in the course of 2023
- Next expert group meeting in June at Andreashof and linking of the expert group with the associations Netzwerk Kräuter e.V. and Hortus officinarum.
- Final round/ dates etc.

3.2) Report from the two technical group meetings

After an extensive round of introductions in the Glass House, in which the 31 guests from 11 countries gave their names, origins, activities and wishes for the group, the participants devoted themselves to the book "12 Magic Medicinal Plants". On the first day, Michael Straub presented the chapter in which Steiner's encounter with the herbalist Felix Koguzki, who was an expert in healing and inspired Steiner to work with folk medicine. On the second day, to get in the mood for the workshop with Torsten Arncken, the group read the bookchapter "*From essence to effect*", in which the polarity of the plant between the luxuriantly growing, watery, almost proliferating stem-leaf area dominated by vegetative image forces and the strongly structured flower was worked out using the example of *Calendula officinalis*.

Afterwards, the participants tasted leaves from plants of *Salvia officinalis*, which were differently illuminated during the growing season. They expressed their perception in colored pictures, which were then evaluated and clear differences were found. Steiner describes this method as a path from sense perception to imagination.

Finally, we asked the group, if somebody would like to join the initiative group to take over the leadership in the medium term. Gratifyingly, two of the participants came forward:

1. Jennifer Ruge, garden manager Weleda UK
2. Raphael Balboni from Brazil, farmer and musician.

4) News at the website

A major concern of the specialist group is the networking of the many different medicinal plant and herb companies worldwide. To make this possible, we have already years ago - in cooperation with the Section - started to create an international platform for portraits of biodynamic medicinal plants and herbs companies at our website. Of course, we would be very happy to receive further portraits of farms – you can find the form to fill in with the title 'Biodynamic farms introduce themselves' at

<https://www.sektion-landwirtschaft.org/arbeitsfelder/kraeuter-heilpflanzen>

5) Medicinal plants of the year 2023

For this year, the members of the 'Naturheilverein Theophrastus' chose the vine *Vitis vinifera* for this year. The 'Studienkreis Entwicklungsgeschichte der Arzneipflanzenkunde' at the *Institute for the History of Medicine, University of Würzburg*, selected the sage *Salvia officinalis*.

Since it fits into the season - and perhaps, also regarding the present political situation - here a prescription for 'Quenched Wine' from the fundus of the *Hildegard von Bingen*:

"A particularly joyful, the anger and sadness eliminating effect has the slaked wine, which one should drink warm and sip by sip (...) It contains hardly any alcohol (residual alcohol content about 3%). Take a glass of white or red wine and heat it to boiling point until bubbles appear. In this process, the alcohol leaves the wine, because it already boils at 80°C. When you see the bubbles, you immediately pour a shot of cold water into the heated wine, take the wine off the fire and drink it warm and sip-by-sip. If the whole family has been angry, the extinguished wine immediately brings peace back into the house." Let's prove it... ☺ ...

(Strehlow, W.: Die Ernährungstherapie der Hildegard von Bingen, Weltbild 2007, p. 114 f).

6) Reports & Events

December 2021: The Herbs Network, in collaboration with the University of Hohenheim, organized the online symposium "Medicinal Plant Cultivation in Times of Climate Change" on December 3, 2021. A report on the conference is available on the [website of Netzwerk Kräuter](#).

June 2022: Excursion of the Network Herbs to the medicinal plant garden Terra Medica of the DHU in Staffort near Bruchsal. The 2022 excursion report is also available on the website of Netzwerk Kräuter.

Save the date - Summer 2023: On the evening of June 23, the specialist group 'Medicinal, Spice and Cosmetic Plants' will meet at Lake Constance - the location to be announced. Then on June 24 and 25, 2023, there will be excursions to the medicinal plant garden Andreashof - where the Lichthyam is cultivated - and to Mainau Island. More information will soon be available on the homepage of the Netzwerk Kräuter.

7) Regular online meetings of the expert group

We would like to initiate a more intensive online collaboration. However, we have found that this is not feasible by us alone! Whoever has ideas and resources in this regard is very welcome: Please get in touch!

8) And last but not least a request on our own behalf

If all goes well, this newsletter will be one of the last that Bettina, Michael and Ola will launch together. Bettina and Michael would like to pass on the baton to younger people with new ideas after the Goetheanum anniversary next year. Of course, this should not happen without some kind of induction or 'background accompaniment', if that would be desirable. We look forward to hearing from you and are of course always open for non-binding discussions!

And now, we wish the whole community of biodynamic herbalists a good and invigorating herb year 2023!

Warm greetings from

Bettina Billmann, Michael Straub and Ola Aukrust