

Lectures and Workshops with Judith Sumner
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Birds' Nest Botany

A slide illustrated talk on birds' nests, their construction, plants used in nest building, zoopharmacognosy (use of medicinal plants by animals) in nest building, and what gardeners can do to help bird populations to thrive.

Botanical Names for the Fearful

A slide illustrated talk on plant names and botanical Latin, the origin of binomials and the work of Linnaeus, the names of cultivated varieties, why names change, pronunciation, and sources of information on botanical nomenclature; includes comprehensive handouts on plant names and their history.

Botany for Gardeners

A slide illustrated talk on basic botanical topics, from seed germination and light requirements to pruning and soil nutrients; this talk answers the “why” about many aspects of plant growth and horticultural practices.

Flowering Plant Families

A slide illustrated talk on many of the most important horticultural plants families, including the rose family, lily family, composite family, orchid family, and several others; this can offered as a workshop with specimens to dissect and identify using a basic key.

Ecology for Gardeners

A slide illustrated talk on garden ecosystems, soil structure (including invasive earthworms), composting, companion planting, dormancy, cultivating native plants, pollinators, and several other topics of ecological interest

Herbs, Herbals, and Herbalists

A slide illustrated talk on early herbals and the botanists who wrote them, including Dioscorides, the Renaissance herbalists, John Gerard, and others; the curious Doctrine of Signatures and various ancient and modern herb and spice uses are part of the herbal story.

The Natural History of Medicinal Plants

A slide illustrated on the role of plant compounds in nature, the evolution of natural toxins and their use as medicines, the cycling of medicinal compounds in habitats, and zoopharmacognosy (use of medicinal plants by wild animals).

Pollination: Birds, Bees, Flowers, and Seeds

A slide illustrated talk on pollination and pollinators, the importance of bees as pollinators, butterfly and hummingbird plants for gardens, how to support and promote pollinators in nature

In a Pickle: The Science, Art, and Lore of Pickling

In this illustrated talk and demonstration, we will investigate the origin and discovery of vinegar, the anti-microbial properties of herbs and spices, pickling lore, and historical and modern pickling methods; the program includes tasting of several homemade pickle varieties.

Household Botany: Various Useful Plants in American Homes

A slide-illustrated lecture on historical plant uses as foods, medicines, tonics and bitters, dyes, household herbs and diverse other uses in colonial and 19th century American homes.

Canebrakes to Cotton Fields: Botanical History of the Civil War

As the first comprehensive botanical history of the Civil War, Judith Sumner's recent book *Plants in the Civil War: A Botanical History* examines military and civilian uses of plants, from plantation landscapes and agriculture to slave medicine, prosthetic limbs, and military engineering. Plants provided both the cash crops at the heart of the conflict and the raw material used in waging war. This illustrated talk will emphasize the key topics of crops and enslavement, plantation life, Civil War medicine, and southern landscapes and war—all illuminated from a botanical perspective.

Herbal Medicine and Magic: Sorting Facts from Fancy

Plants are the most reliable sources of effective medicines, but herbal botany is comingled with fanciful tales and magical lore; in this slide-illustrated lecture, we sort out fact from fancy, legends from legitimate cures; we trace the evolution of modern drugs from traditional herbal and ethnobotanical origins.

World War II Botany: How Plants Won the War

A slide illustrated talk on plants in wartime, from victory gardens and English County herb committees, to antibiotics, agriculture, camouflage, malaria, timber, typhus, and bocage warfare; based on Judith's book *Plants Go to War: A Botanical History of World War II* (McFarland, 2019), the first botanical history of World War II.

Victory Gardens: How a Nation of Gardeners Helped to Win the War

Victory gardens provided food and promoted morale during World War II; in this slide illustrated talk we will trace the victory garden movement, including urban gardens, school gardens, food preservation, and ration book cookery; we will also look at the British Dig for Victory campaign, Hedgerow Harvest program, and Women's Land Army.

The Herbal History of World War II

From the County Herb Committees in England to South American cinchona (quinine) missions, plants played essential roles in treating wartime illnesses and conditions. We'll examine the botanical origins of treatments for ailments ranging from bacterial infections and tropical parasites to vitamin deficiencies and bombing-induced stress. The talk will also include historical perspective on the cultural and medicinal role of herbs in the Third Reich, including the cultivation of extensive herbal gardens at concentration camps.

Garden Herbs: Their Cultivation, Cookery, Cures, and Caveats

A slide illustrated lecture that traces the European herbal tradition among plants carried by early settlers to the New World; many of these species escaped dooryard gardens and naturalized in our local flora, which now includes many plants once used in cookery and food preservation; we examine a range of medicinal and culinary species—from use in ancient traditions to gourmet cookery, military history, and modern medicine.

Potions and Potables: The History and Chemistry of Herbal Drinks

From fruit wines and colonial punches to quasi-medicinal herbal bitters, plants have been preserved and extracted in alcohol for centuries. Beginning with the natural history of yeast fermentation, the slide illustrated talk investigates the various herbs, spices, and alcohol that since ancient times have been combined into desirable beverages for both the sickroom and in the parlor.

Vernacular Gardens: The How and Why of Dooryard Horticulture

In this slide illustrated talk, we will examine the plants found in dooryard gardens, the easily cultivated and propagated "passalong plants" common in vernacular gardens in both northern and southern communities. Many of these species are imports with unique traits and horticultural appeal but adaptable and easy to cultivate. The talk includes the traditions of African-American and recent immigrant gardens.

Ladies in the Field: The Victorian Pastimes of Botany and Gardening

From Wardian cases to wildflower gardens, Victorian women collected and studied plants at home and afield. Botany and horticulture were appropriate pastimes for the young and old alike. School girls learned the Linnaean system of classification and the romantic symbolism of flowers; women decorated their homes with greenery, mounted algae, and cultivated flower beds of garish annuals. Some also pursued serious careers as botanists and landscape gardeners, no doubt encouraged by the fashionable passion for plant study.