

## “HOPS at HOME”

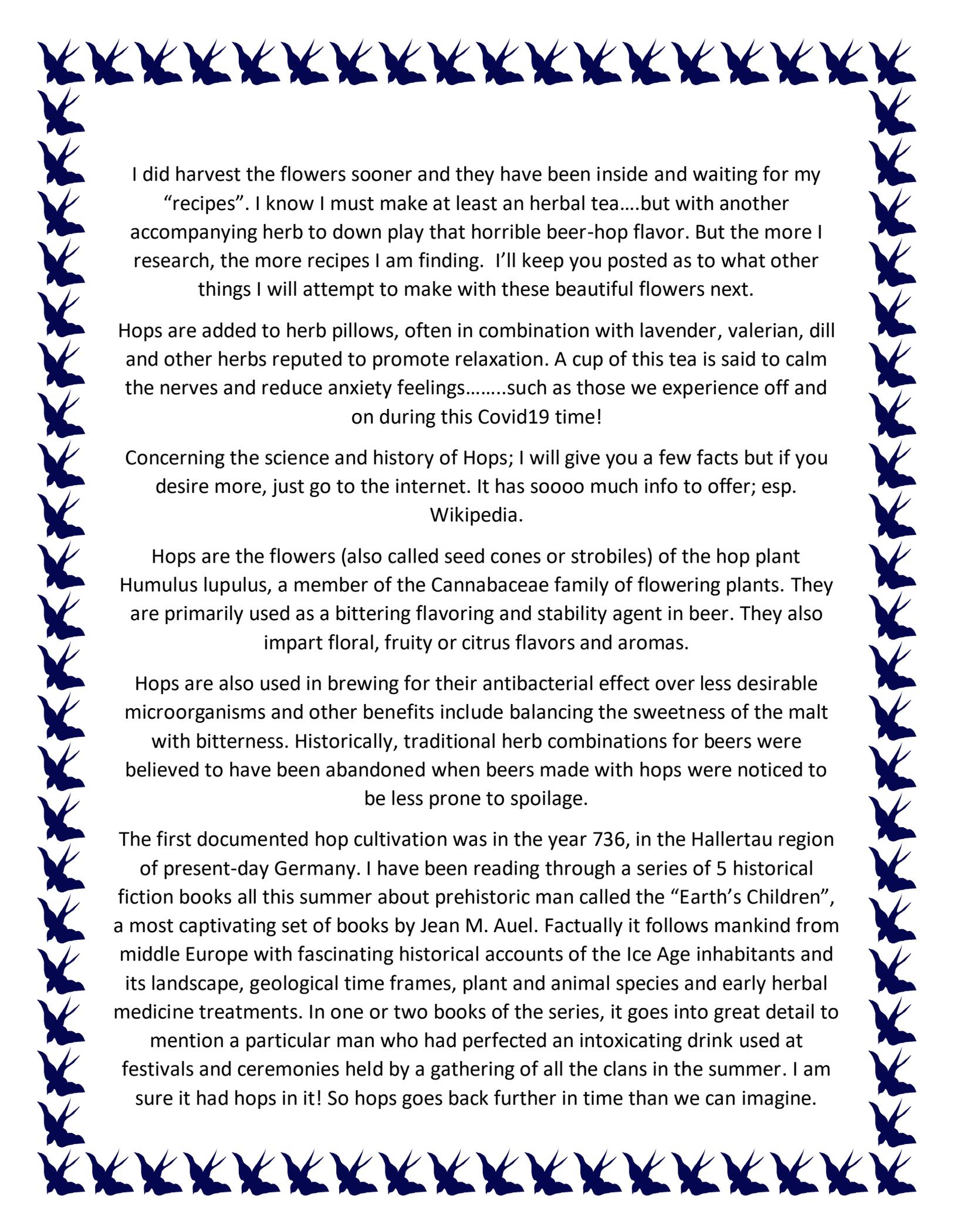
.....Experiments by Devah Brinker

You will think this is ‘CRAZY” but I do NOT like BEER! So, “why is this woman growing HOPS?” you ask? Well, not for the BEER! It started out with the flowers of the HOP Bine....so beautiful....so dangly....so delicate..... so layered in a downward form...almost like a lantern! Well, that was short lived because when they started blooming last year, 2019, they were not the two- toned colors-pink and white- that I thought I had ordered. They had a kind of two-toned white and pale green color. I may have mistaken the variety I ordered or maybe a genetic folly came in and it did not bloom in the color I thought I picked out.

WELL, SO MUCH FOR THAT.

This HOPS bine grew so very well without much help from me the first year. I almost forgot to read up on the harvest until a wee bit too late. It was end of September/early October when I clipped the flowers from the vine and spread them out to dry in my garden shed. Upon reading harvesting notes; online mostly, I discovered it was probably too late for harvesting because they may have dried out too much. Wanting to treasure them and hoping it was not too late, I put them in a quart freezer bag and popped them into the freezer in late November. And then, off I went south for the winter.

Fast forward to this year 2020; Pandemic and all, I arrived home to New Jersey early in Mid-March. I really had a head start on my garden duties and was well prepared, weeds and all, into the growing season by May. I starting looking around and saw my HOPs going great guns!! Up and over the tunnel hoop and awry in different directions! It was a Godzilla of a plant! Not like last year. I constantly pruned it for shape and direction all summer. I found out later I should have really kept it back to 2 main binds. Oh well, you grow and you learn, Next year it will not get the upper hand! I am determined to master this thing!



I did harvest the flowers sooner and they have been inside and waiting for my “recipes”. I know I must make at least an herbal tea....but with another accompanying herb to down play that horrible beer-hop flavor. But the more I research, the more recipes I am finding. I’ll keep you posted as to what other things I will attempt to make with these beautiful flowers next.

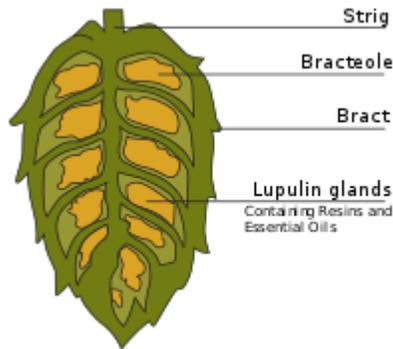
Hops are added to herb pillows, often in combination with lavender, valerian, dill and other herbs reputed to promote relaxation. A cup of this tea is said to calm the nerves and reduce anxiety feelings.....such as those we experience off and on during this Covid19 time!

Concerning the science and history of Hops; I will give you a few facts but if you desire more, just go to the internet. It has soooo much info to offer; esp. Wikipedia.

Hops are the flowers (also called seed cones or strobiles) of the hop plant *Humulus lupulus*, a member of the Cannabaceae family of flowering plants. They are primarily used as a bittering flavoring and stability agent in beer. They also impart floral, fruity or citrus flavors and aromas.

Hops are also used in brewing for their antibacterial effect over less desirable microorganisms and other benefits include balancing the sweetness of the malt with bitterness. Historically, traditional herb combinations for beers were believed to have been abandoned when beers made with hops were noticed to be less prone to spoilage.

The first documented hop cultivation was in the year 736, in the Hallertau region of present-day Germany. I have been reading through a series of 5 historical fiction books all this summer about prehistoric man called the “Earth’s Children”, a most captivating set of books by Jean M. Auel. Factually it follows mankind from middle Europe with fascinating historical accounts of the Ice Age inhabitants and its landscape, geological time frames, plant and animal species and early herbal medicine treatments. In one or two books of the series, it goes into great detail to mention a particular man who had perfected an intoxicating drink used at festivals and ceremonies held by a gathering of all the clans in the summer. I am sure it had hops in it! So hops goes back further in time than we can imagine.



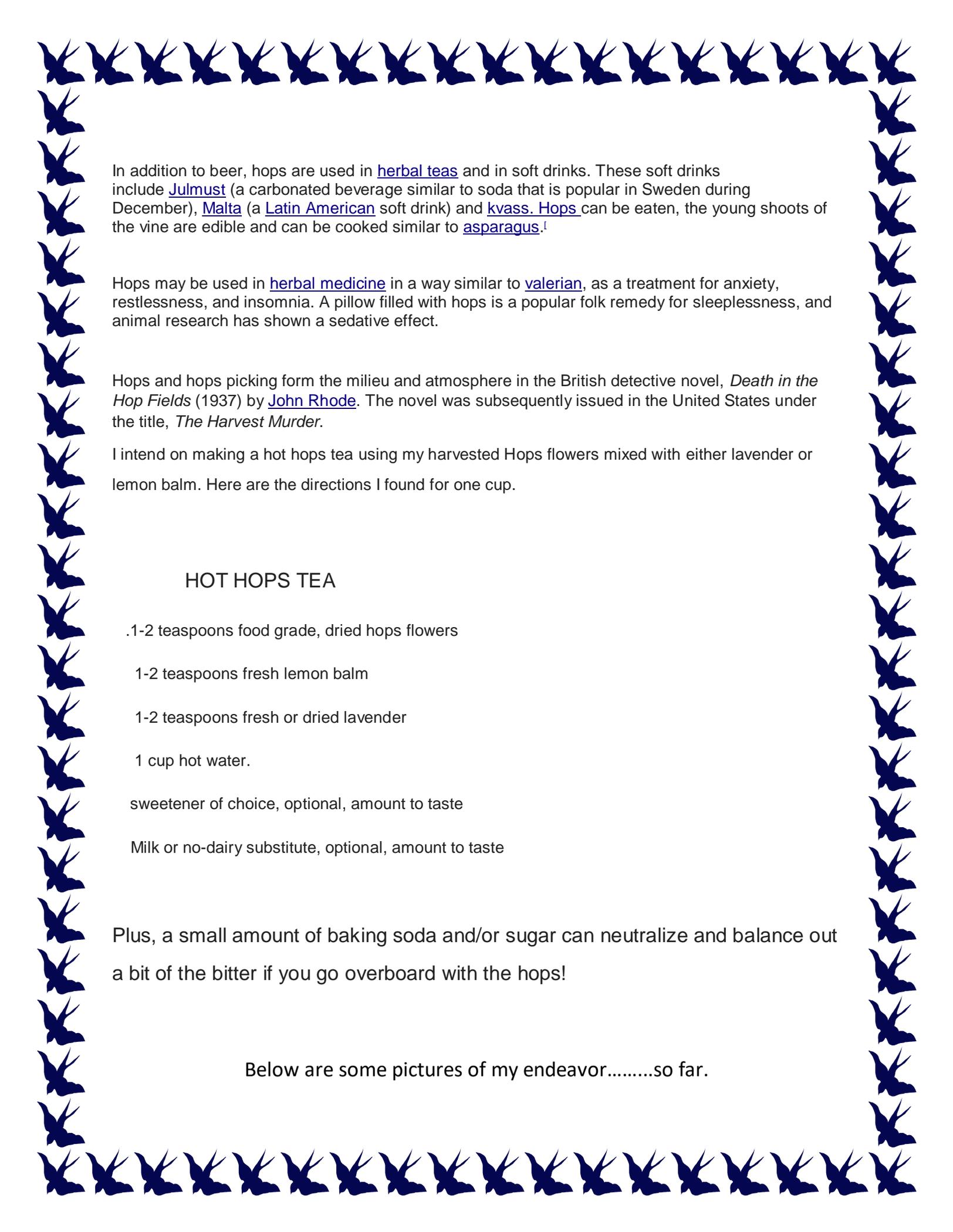
The cones grow high on the bind (Unlike vines which use tendrils, suckers for attaching themselves, bines have stout stems with stiff hairs to aid in climbing), and in the past, these cones were picked by hand. Harvesting today is done with a mechanical hops separator.

Harvest comes at the end of summer when flowers are taken to a hop house or oast house for drying. Hop houses are two-story buildings, of which the upper story has a slatted floor covering with burlap. Here the flowers are poured out and raked even. A heating unit on the lower floor is used to dry the hops. When dry, the hops are moved to a press, a sturdy box with a plunger. Two long pieces of burlap are laid into the hop press at right angles, the hops are poured in and compressed into bales.

Hops tend to be unstable when exposed to light or air and lose their potency after a few months storage.



Full size Hop binds in cultivation



In addition to beer, hops are used in [herbal teas](#) and in soft drinks. These soft drinks include [Julmust](#) (a carbonated beverage similar to soda that is popular in Sweden during December), [Malta](#) (a [Latin American](#) soft drink) and [kvass](#). [Hops](#) can be eaten, the young shoots of the vine are edible and can be cooked similar to [asparagus](#).<sup>1</sup>

Hops may be used in [herbal medicine](#) in a way similar to [valerian](#), as a treatment for anxiety, restlessness, and insomnia. A pillow filled with hops is a popular folk remedy for sleeplessness, and animal research has shown a sedative effect.

Hops and hops picking form the milieu and atmosphere in the British detective novel, *Death in the Hop Fields* (1937) by [John Rhode](#). The novel was subsequently issued in the United States under the title, *The Harvest Murder*.

I intend on making a hot hops tea using my harvested Hops flowers mixed with either lavender or lemon balm. Here are the directions I found for one cup.

### HOT HOPS TEA

.1-2 teaspoons food grade, dried hops flowers

1-2 teaspoons fresh lemon balm

1-2 teaspoons fresh or dried lavender

1 cup hot water.

sweetener of choice, optional, amount to taste

Milk or no-dairy substitute, optional, amount to taste

Plus, a small amount of baking soda and/or sugar can neutralize and balance out a bit of the bitter if you go overboard with the hops!

Below are some pictures of my endeavor.....so far.



## HOPS BLOSSOMS

Mid-Summer 2019



My Hop Hoop

SUMMER 2020



## Close up of extra strong twinning bind

They furiously holdfast; very hard to prune or remove. I can't imagine eating them like asparagus!



“Closeup of dried hops flowers from this summer 2020”

Still a work of art!

PS: By the way, that vine is STILL growing and its Autumn.....yikes!  
Something like Jack and the Beanstalk...yes? More adventures wait.

Additional recipe for a cold drink using Hops flowers

## HOPPED LEMONADE



Lemonade is such an easy thing to make, and works so well with a multitude of hop varieties. We prefer Citra® hops, but any citrus, fruity or floral hops work really well for a complex, but still mostly traditional lemonade taste. Feel free to try other flavor profiles if desired! Because lemon works well with almost anything, you really can't go wrong using your favorite hop varieties. Because the hop variety we prefer for lemonade is a high acid hop, this recipe includes a little baking soda to tone it down a little. If you're using a low acid hop, feel free to skip the baking soda. For single-use lemonade, strain syrup into a jar, cover and refrigerate for up to two weeks. To serve, measure about 3 tablespoons of lemonade syrup into a tall glass, top with cold water and stir gently to combine. If you'd like to use fresh hops for this, use about 1 ounce.

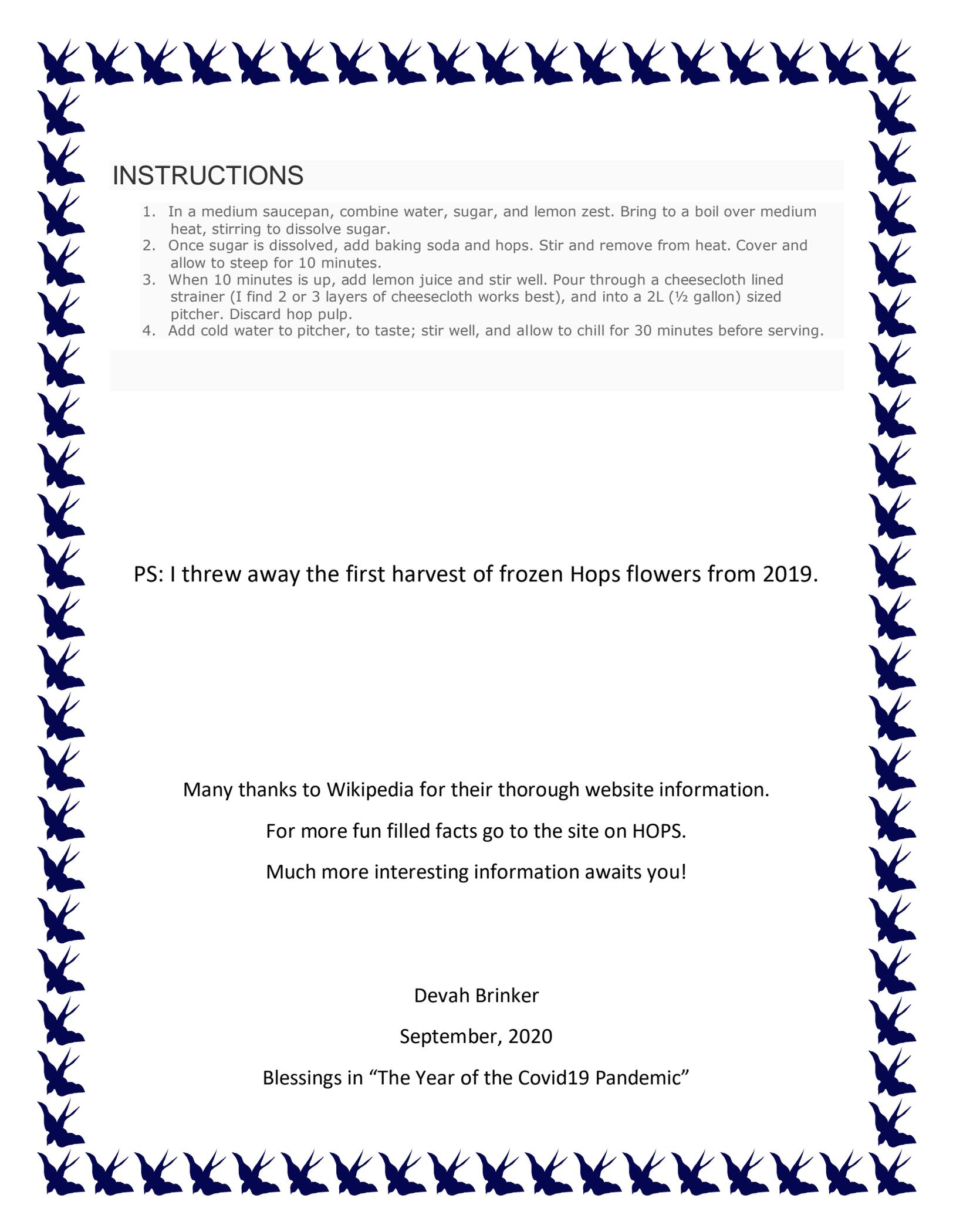
Author: Marie Porter & Michael Porter

Recipe type: Beverage

Serves: About 2L finished lemonade

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup Water
- 1 cup Granulated sugar
- 1 Lemon, zest of
- Pinch Salt
- ¼ tsp Baking soda
- ½ oz Dried hops
- 1 cup Freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Cold water

A decorative border of blue birds, possibly swallows, arranged in a rectangular frame around the page. The birds are facing outwards from the center.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a medium saucepan, combine water, sugar, and lemon zest. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring to dissolve sugar.
2. Once sugar is dissolved, add baking soda and hops. Stir and remove from heat. Cover and allow to steep for 10 minutes.
3. When 10 minutes is up, add lemon juice and stir well. Pour through a cheesecloth lined strainer (I find 2 or 3 layers of cheesecloth works best), and into a 2L (½ gallon) sized pitcher. Discard hop pulp.
4. Add cold water to pitcher, to taste; stir well, and allow to chill for 30 minutes before serving.

PS: I threw away the first harvest of frozen Hops flowers from 2019.

Many thanks to Wikipedia for their thorough website information.

For more fun filled facts go to the site on HOPS.

Much more interesting information awaits you!

Devah Brinker

September, 2020

Blessings in “The Year of the Covid19 Pandemic”