To celebrate Nelson’s 250th anniversary we have designed and planted a typical New England colonial dooryard garden. A colonial gardener would have arranged the plants in the garden so she could put her hand on whatever she needed instantly—something to stop bleeding, freshen a drink, dye a piece of fabric, flavor a stew or help a neighbor in childbirth; something for a sick cow or an ailing horse. The colonial gardener would also from time to time pick a handful of “strewing herbs” to freshen the air in her home.

We hope that you will enjoy our small colonial-inspired anniversary garden. The flowers and herbs beloved by gardeners 250 years ago are still alive and thriving. See the back page of this brochure for a diagram of the garden.

1. Nasturtium
   *Tropaeolum majus*
   The peppery tasting leaves and bright flowers were added to salads. The seeds were pickled and used in sauces. The leaves were used as a natural antibiotic.

2. Senna
   *Senna marilandica*
   Dried leaves were used as a laxative. A paste made from the leaves treated skin infections. It was also used for dyes.

3. Foxglove
   *Digitalis purpurea*
   Used in small amounts as a diuretic. It is the source of the heart stimulant digitalis. The plant was also used for dyes.

4. Bee Balm
   *Monarda didyma*
   Used to relieve colic, soothe insect bites, and also to treat fevers and colds. Bee balm tea was used to treat mouth and throat infections.

5. Lupine
   *Lupinus perennis*
   The leaves were used in tea to treat nausea and internal hemorrhage. The seeds aided digestion and boosted immunity. Oil from the seeds was used as a skin cleanser.

6. Rosemary
   *Rosmarinus officinalis*
   Used as an expectorant and digestive aid. Also used to treat depression, headaches, and muscle cramps. If burned indoors it freshened the air.
The New England gardener of 1767 was most likely a woman. (Men worked in the fields.) She was responsible for cooking, preserving, dyeing cloth, housecleaning, midwifery, and concocting medicine for the sick, so she made sure that her gardens were chock-full of the vegetables and herbs needed for those tasks—saving many seeds from year to year to do so. To fill the herb and flower bed, she often traded cuttings and seeds with friends; commercial sources of flower seed were scarce. She learned about native plants, such as bee balm, used by Native Americans to soothe insect bites, and lupine, used as a skin cleanser. She also planted many of the favorites that the first colonists had brought from England.

A few plants that we now disdain as weeds were cultivated assiduously. Dandelions, for example, were valued as a tonic—they were boiled with lentils to stop dysentery and decocted to cure jaundice. Wild purslane was encouraged to grow in vineyards, manure piles, and garden pathways, and was consumed to cool inflammation. The bitter herbs were valued as insect repellents and deodorants. Feverfew, for instance, was used both as a moth repellent and to cure migraines; tansy, often grown in large quantities, was used to kill roundworms and to pack around corpses for burial.

Teas, salves, plasters, childbirth aids, cough syrups, and other medicines came out of the garden, as did the ingredients for culinary flavorings, fabric dyes, and perfumes. Fortunately for the 2017 gardener, most of the flowers and herbs we know and love as old-fashioned favorites were staples 250 years ago.

---Excerpted from the article How to Create Your Own 1792 Garden by Susan Peery
Garden in 1767

Garden Pointers

- New England gardeners often chose a southern exposure to take full advantage of the sun during the short growing season.
- The garden usually ran the full width of the house.
- The garden was planted away from the foundation of the house so that vegetation would not rot the clapboards.
- A fence, both to maintain privacy and to keep out animals, enclosed the garden. A gate usually marked the entrance. In urban areas, solid board fences were common; in rural areas, lattice and picket fences were favored. Hedges were also used freely, although boxwood—so prevalent farther south—was not hardy in New England.
- A border of taller plants often ran along the inside of the fence. Ornamental shrubs were rarely used, except for the few species used as hedges.
- Beds were usually raised 6-8 inches above ground level in order to more easily amend the soil, to allow it to heat up more quickly in the spring, and to improve drainage. Colonists used stone, logs and (later) sawn boards to retain the soil.

The Wattle Fence

Wattle fences were known to Colonial Americans but were soon replaced by sturdier forms of fencing. Wattle is a woven wood fence. The upright stakes are called “sales” and the saplings are called “weavers.” Willow, hazel, sweet chestnut, plum, forsythia or any long, straight, slender saplings make good weavers. Newly cut green wood is easiest to use. Weave each row of saplings alternating around the sales; the next row is woven on the opposite side of the sale from the sapling below it. Each sapling row should be firmly pressed down.

12. Calendula
*Calendula officinalis*
A tea was used to prevent muscle spasms and to reduce fever. A salve made from the flowers was used for skin rashes and small cuts and burns.

13. Sage
*Sabal officinalis*
Sage was reputed to improve the memory and aid digestion. It was also useful against snakebites. The leaves were used to make a green dye.

14. Borage
*Borago officinalis*
The plant was used to ease depressions and mood swings. It was also used for arthritis and dermatitis. The leaves have a mild cucumber taste.

15. Lavender
*Lavandula angustifolia*
Lavender was grown primarily for its scent. It was a cure for “falling sickness.” It also had antiseptic, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory properties.

16. Chives
*Allium schoenoprasum*
The herb stimulates the appetite. Its oil was used to warm cold limbs and ease rheumatism. The chive blossoms were used to make a rose-colored vinegar.
17. Chamomile  
*Chamaemelum nobile*  
A tea made from the flowers had a soothing effect and was the sole certain remedy for nightmares. It was also taken to calm a fever. The leaves were used for a green dye.

18. Love-in-a-mist  
*Nigella damascena*  
The seeds were used as a condiment and in confectionery, to flavor wines, and to make an expectorant.

19. Lady’s mantle  
*Alchemilla mollis*  
Drinking an infusion for 20 days was thought to help conception. It was also used to treat deep wounds and excessive bleeding.

20. Forget-me-not  
*Myosotis symphytifolia*  
The flowers were steeped in hot water to make a soothing tea. The plant was also a remedy for several eye conditions, including conjunctivitis. Applied externally it stopped bleeding.

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