

Herb Garden Plant Uses

Herbs played an integral part in every aspect of daily life for the colonists: savory herbs cooked in soup pots; dried herbs hung in sheds and kitchens, herb fragrance freshening homes; herbs in the dye pot hung steeping for the next length of cloth; herbs used for medicine and healing were preserved and put away for future use; strewing herbs masked the foul smells of unsanitary lifestyles and foul food. Planted in the farmyard, herbs provided forage for bees to flavor honey while others herbs provided aromatic oils to perfume soaps and cosmetics. Superstitions surrounding the herbs were their powers to drive away evil spirits, bring wisdom and courage, enhance memory and clarity, etc., and were important belief systems brought with the colonists from Europe along with the practical attributes of the herbs.

Angelica

Medicinal: remedy for coughs, colds, pleurisy, wind, colic, rheumatism, fevers, typhoid.



Culinary: candied stems.

Bee Balm

Medicinal: infusion for colic, fevers, colds.

Household: oil for soap or perfume; planted for nectar for pollinators - bees and hummingbirds.



Tea: used as a substitute for imported teas after Boston Tea Party on Dec 16, 1773.

Betony

Medicinal: all maladies of the head, dyspepsia, and scrofula, jaundice, convulsions, dropsy, consumption, toothache, vermifuge (worms), and bites of mad dogs.

Culinary: substitute of black tea.

Textiles and dyes: leaves dye wool a fine yellow.



Bloodroot



Textiles & dyes: red dye for cloth and hair (by Native Americans)



Borage

Medicinal: internally to carry off feverish catarrhs; externally as poultice for inflammatory swellings and an eyewash; when drunk with wine: to drive away melancholy; sorrow (depression); bring joy to the mind and "engender good blood, especially to those that have lately ben sicke"

Culinary: leaves eaten raw taste like cucumber; flowers edible & candied.

Catnip

Medicinal: tea for digestion and mild sedative for sleeping.

Household: planted for forage for bees.



Chamomile



Medicinal: tea for indigestion, headaches.

Chives



Culinary: seasoning for soups, stews, eggs, cheese.

Household: edging for garden beds.

Dill



Culinary: disguises tainted food, flavoring for cabbage.

Medicinal: dispels gas, digestive aid.

Elecampane



Culinary: flavoring liquors.

Household: used in farmyard for healing cutaneous wounds in sheep and horses.

Medicinal: coughs, bronchitis, pulmonary disorders of all

kinds; wheezing in lungs; pestilential fevers; plaque; drives away worms in belly; externally a wash for itches, scabs, and putrid sores.

Feverfew



Medicinal: compress for hot inflammations and swellings; destroys worms; headaches and migraines.

Hearts Ease Pansy (Johnny Jump Up)



Culinary: edible flowers.

Medicinal: good for diseases of the heart; inflammation of the lungs and chest; topically for ointment or poultice for eczema; cutaneous eruptions and skin disorders.

Hollyhock



Medicinal: thick mucilage for cough syrup; digestion.

Textiles & Dyes: dried flowers for pink or red coloring agent.

Houseleek



Medicinal: ointment for shingles; ulcers; bruised leaves strong astringent to stop bleeding, soothe burns and scalds.

Lavender

Household: used in soaps and oil to perfume and ward off evil smells of poor drainage and sanitation as well as poor hygiene and the long time between baths.

Medicinal: tea for headaches, stress reducing; oil for skin parasites, burns.



Lemon Balm



Culinary: dried leaves added to jams and jellies when lemons were scarce; flavoring tea and desserts.

Household: important forage for bees.

Medicinal: fevers, melancholy, stings of poisonous insects and mad dog bites.

Marshmallow

Culinary: confections of roots-marshmallows.



Medicinal: leaves and roots for easing and softening of a digestive nature; ease pain and bloody flux; soothing internal and external inflammation and irritation.

Mint

Culinary: flavorings for drinks, meats - especially putrid.



Medicinal: tea for indigestion; cooling for fevers.

Mullein

Medicinal: leaves for tea for coughs and lung complaints; flowers for ear oil and salves are anti-microbial, anti-septic and anodyne-pain killers.



Oregano



Culinary: flavoring for savory dishes.

Medicinal: tea from leaves relieved spasms, colic, and indigestion; ease toothache when chewed; leaves mixed with honey to relieve black & blue marks.

Textiles & Dyes: flowering tops gave purplish to wool and reddish-to linen.



Parsley

Culinary: flavorings for soups, stews, herb omelets; high in vitamin & minerals; was

appreciated as a healthy addition to many foods. Plymouth colonists grew it in their first gardens.

Pot Marigold (Calendula)

Medicinal: tea for fevers, measles, jaundice (anti-viral); juice of petals for toothaches; salve for skin infections.

Textiles & Dyes: Plymouth Colony used it for dyeing fabric yellow; still used today to color margarine and cheeses.



Rose

Medicinal: Vitamin C for Scurvy; infusion; syrup for sore throats; loosens the belly and gently brings out color and phlegm; rose water for skin.





Rue

Aromatic: disinfectant strewing herbs to prevent "jail fever" in courtrooms.

Household: moth repellent in closets and linens; household strewing for herbs as disinfectant.

Medicinal: bites of mad dog, disinfectant, antidote for bites of venomous creatures.

Superstitions: sprinkled in churches as "holy water" as herb of grace; tea prevented nightmares; wash for eyes to give "second sight."

Sage

Culinary: flavorings for savory dishes.

Medicinal: good for head, headaches, memory, restored health to those with palsies, teas for colds and fevers.

Superstitions: tea for immortality, wisdom and to mitigate grief.



Self-Heal

Medicinal: carpenter's wort, wound healing, vulnerary, internal and external; salves and direct topical applications.



Tansy

Culinary: young leaves ground with mortar and mixed with eggs called a "Tansy;" customary spring tonic to digest and purify after a long, poor winter diet.

Medicinal: tansy tea for gout, cramps, colic, and plaque. In the colonies nearly every farmyard had a clump.

Textiles & Dyes: leaves picked before blossoming to dye wool a clear yellow.



Thyme

Culinary: used widely in foods: soups, stews, sauces, and salads.

Household: valuable stewing herb (disinfectant); honey from thyme blossoms was prized by colonists.

Medicinal: So useful it was a "must" in colonial gardens. Best medicine for nightmares; nervous cases; gout; pain in the loins and hips; palsy; epilepsy; old coughs and splitting blood; earache; toothache; treatment for hookworms.



Valerian

Household: root used as bait for rats - Pied Piper used it!

Medicinal: to ease cramps and painful spasm; headache and intestinal gas; nervous strain resulting in sleeplessness; anti-convulsant; and used for plaque.



Vervain

Medicinal: opens obstructions; helps yellow jaundice; dropsy and gout; helps coughs and wheezing; expels worms in the belly and consolidates wounds; stops bleeding and heals ulcers and fistulas in the legs. Distilled water of the herb dropped into eyes cleanses them of films, clouds, darkened sight, and strengthens optic nerves.



Yarrow

Medicinal: used since 1000 BC for stopping hemorrhage and for blood clotting. Achilles used it in battlefield to stop the blood flow from arrow wounds in his men. All housewives had it on hand for accidents.

