

COLONIAL DAY HERBS

HISTORIC HERBS – THE KITCHEN GARDEN

In the early days in Holliston if a family member had a headache or an upset stomach, the housewife would go outside to her kitchen garden and pick the herbs that would help take away the pain. Most often they were made into a tea to be drunk or a wet, warm compress to be applied to the painful area of the body. Most itches, cuts, bruises, and even broken bones, were treated at home.

The kitchen garden also consisted of herbs necessary for making cloth, dying it, and cleaning the homespun clothing. Herbs helped keep insects out of screen-less windows, prevented non-refrigerated foods from spoiling quickly, and provided sweet smells to freshen the air in stuffy rooms.

Culinary herbs and some vegetables grew side by side in the kitchen garden for easy accessibility. The daily preparation of the teas, meats, stews, broths, and breads so commonly eaten depended upon these spices and vegetables to make them tasty.

The kitchen garden was located at the side or rear of the house, within easy reach of the kitchen door. It was often surrounded by a fence to protect it from the wandering animals.

INDIAN POPCORN

The American Indians introduced early Colonists to popcorn. Brought to Plimoth Colony in deerskin pouches, the Indians showed the Colonists how to heat the kernels over an open fire until they “popped.”

It proved to be such a favorite food that children were often allowed to eat the popped corn as we do cereal, in a bowl with milk and honey.

The Colonists soon set aside areas in their gardens to grow sweet corn and popping corn.

A SELECTION OF HERBS

- Tansy**
- Very aromatic—can smell from a few feet away.
 - Keeps ants and flies away from food.
 - Tiny yellow (button-like) flower used as a dye for wool.
 - Not used often internally because it can be poisonous.
 - Embalming—leaves used to put around body before burial.
- Folklore* – Because tansy’s flowers don’t fade easily, the name originally came from the Greek word for immortality.
- Lambs Ear**
- Called Band-Aid plant- leaf very soft and pliable. Short hairs would help close wounds.
 - Native Americans showed how to line moccasins (mullein).
- Catnip**
- Member of mint family.
 - Used as a tea for stomachaches- works by relaxing cramps.
 - Mixed with honey for colds.
 - Cats are attracted to oil in leaves.
- Mint**
- (Tummy ache tonic) Peppermint, spearmint, Lemon Balm, Bee Balm.
 - Flavorful tea to soothe headaches, stomachaches and cramps- works by increasing blood flow.
 - Cool and refreshing properties. Grows 2-4 feet high.
 - Today—used to flavor toothpaste, soap, candy, syrup, gum, and tea.
 - Ancient Days—branches strewn on floor to refresh the air.
- Sage**
- Toothpaste plant—used as toothpaste and as deodorant.
 - Used as a remedy for colds, sore throats.
 - Helped cover gray in aging hair.
 - Antiseptic/astringent qualities—used to wash cuts and sores.
 - Culinary uses.
- Dandelion**
- Called Lion’s Tooth (Dent-de-Lion) because of jagged shape of leaves.
 - Spring tonic—high vitamin content helps to fight anemia.
 - Leaves and roots made into a tea or tonic (bitters).
 - Roots—coffee substitute.
 - Young leaves as greens.
 - White sap for wart removal.
- Folklore* – To carry your thoughts to your sweet heart, blow the seeds of the puffball. To dream of a dandelion is supposed to be bad luck.
- Bee Balm**
- War tea.
 - During Revolutionary War—substitute for English Tea.

HERB GARDEN CLASS OUTLINE

1. Arrange two big containers of potpourri, muslin bags, strings, popcorn containers, scoops, crayons, and herb coloring books on the table.
2. Outside presentation — Stay on pathways. Children may sit on the grass or, if raining, you may take the group inside the shoe shop.
 - Pass around leaf (to touch, smell, see...)
 - Show herbs growing in garden.
 - Talk about qualities and how the herbs were used in 18th century.
 - Story: Eliza's Garden (in red folder). You may read this to the class, time permitting.
3. Inside presentation — Read chart.
 - Touch, smell, see samples of herbs on the table.
 - Use 2 scoops (or enough to fill muslin bag $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ full) —**this potpourri needs to last all week**. Tie muslin bags with string and take home.
 - Coloring booklets can be read and colored, then take home with herb bags.
4. Pack all items up at end of day. Clean table.

Have a great time. Enjoy the herbs. Maybe you can plant an herb garden too!