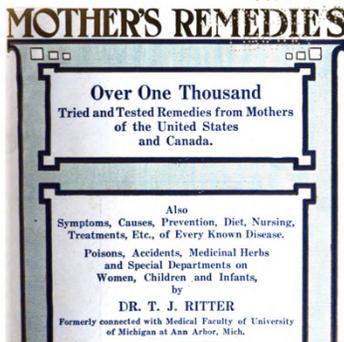


New Herb Garden at the Mill: Cure, Cook, and Sing

Ready?! Sing along with me: “Oh-Oh-Oh zempic! Oh-Oh-Oh zempic!” For those spared the singing commercial for the hottest drug against diabetes and obesity, you are blessed. I, being not so fortunate, am hounded by the tune and rush to press “mute” on the remote. Drug advertising is relatively new, but breaking into song to combat an affliction?



Medicine (and advertising) have come a long way in the last hundred years. In the 1910 classic *Mothers' Remedies: Over One Thousand Tried and Trusted Remedies from Mothers of the United States and Canada* the imparted wisdom was that diabetes had no cure and obesity was just a matter of overeating. Still, the book's preface rings true today: “Medicine is not an exact science....” And mothers, “must turn to the remedy at hand” in any emergency.

Forty of the tome's 900 pages are devoted to how to grow and prepare herbs to treat common ailments. Instructions include how to make teas (steep, don't boil), ointments (blend dried herb with hot Vaseline or lard then let it cool), plasters (place the herb between two pieces of cloth), powder, syrups, and tincture (steep in water and alcohol for two weeks).

The Millard family, who lived at Colvin Run at the turn of the century, may have had a copy of *Mothers' Remedies* or another such book and planted an herb garden for curing and cooking. If an herb is beneficial in sickness and tastes good, why not consume it while in good health?

Larry Herman, the master gardener on the board of the Friends of Colvin Run Mill, designed an herb garden using *Mothers' Remedy* for guidance. Planted earlier this month, the garden will add yet another dimension to the educational aspects of the park.

When did the use of herbs begin?

Medicinal plants were used over 5,000 years ago in Mesopotamia, India, and China some of which we would recognize today, such as ginseng, cinnamon, nutmeg, pepper, cloves, pomegranate, aloe, coriander, and juniper. The Roman Dioscorides was the first to catalogue medicinal plants. Seven hundred years later, Charlemagne, the father of a re-united Europe, founded the medical school at Salerno in Southern Italy. He ordered about 100 medicinal plants to be grown on the state-owned lands including sage, rosemary, and marsh mallow.

I know what you are thinking. Do marshmallows grow on plants to be plucked before roasting? The mallow plant that grows predominately in marshes has a tasty root used by Egyptians to make a sweet, halva. The French puffed up the confection with sugar, rose water, and egg whites (meringue). Et voilà! *Pâte de guimauve*, the inspiration for our beloved marshmallows.



CULPEPER'S COMPLETE HERBAL



The advent of the printing press widely spread knowledge of herbal treatments. Nicholas Culpeper, an herbalist, sold his books cheaply for popular consumption. *The English Physician* (typically known as Culpeper's Herbal) was printed in Boston in 1708—the first medical text and the first book on herbalism printed in America.

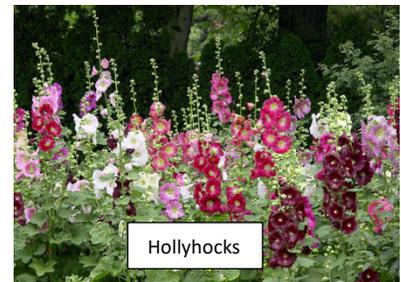
Around this time a curious cult arose: the Doctrine of Signatures which held that God had given plants “signatures” on their usefulness. In other words, how a plant looked indicated what body part or affliction it could cure. In *Paradise Lost* the Archangel Michael uses eyebright, which has striped petals that look like bloodshot eyes, to restore Adam's vision. A Swiss chemist determined that flowers with a “burning color,” like the rose, can treat “the color of a face heated by wine [and] obviate drunkenness.” Note to self: pick up six pack of rosewater.

Herbalism acquired new depth in the New World. Recently arrived herbalist were taught about uses of local flora by Native Indians who had worked with these plants for centuries. A uniquely American herbal movement took root. Enter the American Medical Association in 1904 to set uniform and high standards for medical education. Herbal treatments withered. But they revived in the 1960's and 1970's and continue to flourish.

Rather than running through the possible medicinal uses of all the herbs in the Colvin Run Garden (**in bold face**), space allows just a fun fact or two about their history and culinary uses.

Yarrow is cosmopolitan. The Chinese consider it good luck. Native American Indians applied crushed yarrow to heal wounds as did Achilles at Troy from which it derives its Latin name, *Achillea millefolium*, “Achilles of a thousand leaves.” The Oneida Nation regards **bee balm**, used to soothe fevers, as the sixth medicine supplied by the Creator. The seeds of the **Echinacea cornflower** were rubbed on Native Indian men's' hands as a love charm. Love potion #9?

From the 6th century Kyoto, Japan has hosted an annual **hollyhock** festival honoring the plant for its protection against storms and evil. Stems of the **clematis** were used to make rope to bind sheaves of grain because mice won't gnaw on it.



Fresh smelling **lavender**, that derives its name from the Latin, *lavare*, “to wash” or “bathe,” helps keep insects at bay. **Feverfew**



also has Latin to thank for its name: *febrifugia* or “fever reducer,” the “aspirin of the 18th century.” **Chamomile**, a relative of the coneflower, from the Greek *chamomaelaor*, meaning “ground apple,” has a refreshing, apple-like scent and makes a relaxing tea. Recall that Peter Rabbit's mother comforted him with a cup after his close escape from Mr. McGregor's Garden.

Marjoram symbolized love in ancient Rome and Greece and was planted by Aphrodite around Mount Olympus. Its botanical name, *Origanum*, is from the Greek words *oreos* (I know what

you are thinking) which means “mountains,” and *ganeos*, “joy and beauty.” Cooling **peppermint**’s mythology stems from Minthe’s love affair with Hades, lord of the underworld. After Hades was married his wife, Persephone, was jealous of Minthe’s beauty and turned her into a common weed. Hades took pity and gave Minthe a calming scent so all would know her when walking by.

Parsley, in Greek mythology, sprang from the blood of hero Archemorous, imparting both a sacred and evil connotation. Warriors fed on its leaves before battle, not to cleanse their breath (which it does well) but to give them strength. On the other hand, parsley was placed on graves and cutting parsley was thought to kill love. **Sage**, from the Latin, *salvare* meaning “save”, “cure,” was known as the salvation plant.

“There’s **rosemary**, that’s for remembrance; pray, love, remember” implores Ophelia to her brother in Hamlet. Shakespeare knew his herbs. Rosemary, from the Latin *ros* and *marnus*, “dew of the sea,” was worn as garlands by Greek students to aid their memory during exams. A symbol of happiness, loyalty, and love, it was strewn on church floors during weddings. **Thyme** might come from the Greek *thumus*, “courage” and “strength.” The phrase “to smell of thyme” didn’t mean something was old, but that it was praiseworthy. Ladies in medieval times would sew a twig of thyme on their gallant knight’s scarf.



Most all these herbs have culinary uses. **Lovage**, “mountain celery,” is a bit more bitter than regular celery, and parsley or *Petroselinum*, Greek for “rock celery,” has a stronger taste in the flat leaf Italian variety (*Neapolitanum*) than the more recently developed *crispum*, curly leaf one. Essential oils of **hyssop** are used as flavoring agents in chewing gum, ice creams, and the French liquors Benedictine and Chartreuse. **Horehound**, from the Old English *hoar* or “white” and *hune* meaning “plant” has been used in candies since Egyptian times.

Nasturtiums in cooking? Their taste is peppery, like garden cress, with a chive-like texture. Nasturtium based hot sauce, as an alternative to spinach, or just a garnish illustrates its versatility.



During medieval times the Scarborough Fair in Yorkshire hosted scores of vendors and hundreds of visitors. A 17th century song



made popular in the 60’s by Simon and Garfunkel, spoke of the mythical and mystical rather than the medicinal powers of parsley (love lost), sage (to heal), rosemary (remembrance), and thyme (courage). Ready?! Sing along with me: “Are you going to Scarborough Fair? /Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme/Remember me to one who lives there/She once was a true love of mine.” Much better.

