

PLANTS FOR A STILL ROOM GARDEN

The following is a listing of the plants that we hope to include in our exhibit at the 2010 Boston Flower and Garden Show. Some plants may not show up – it all depends on our success with overwintering and forcing them. We may even run into space problems – it is an extensive list, and we may not be able to fit them all in to our limited area. We decided on these particular plants based on the list from the 1935 exhibit, plus a few that seemed to beg to be incorporated, based on research and ease of procurement.

A seventeenth century garden would include many more plants than these – it is amazing to discover the uses that people had for many of the plants we now consider to be decorative. Lady Allen's Water, a popular formula, for example, used 33 flowers and herbs, and must have been extremely time consuming to create. Some plants may have grown outside the boundaries of a garden and would have been gathered as needed, much as some plants are wildcrafted today.

APPLE - *Malus* - Tree, to 30' - We are including an espaliered "Liberty" apple in our garden as a decorative accent. However, apples were truly considered a cure-all for many ailments, and were also the key ingredient in cider, an important drink especially for rural people. The juice was fermented, as well, and made into vinegar, a chief element in cooking and preserving.

APPLE MINT - *Mentha rotundifolia* - HP 2'-3' - Mint was an aromatic, and used for strewing on floors. Rubbed on the teeth, it gave one a sweet smelling mouth (most essential with the non-existent oral practices of early times) and was also good for a toothache. It was antiseptic, antispasmodic, and antifatulent, and was used to flavor food. Today we use it as a flavoring in foods, cosmetics, body care items and as an aid to digestion.

BAY - *Laurus nobilis* - Tree, to 20' - Bay was used as a flavoring for many soups, meats, and wines. It also kept clothes smelling sweet, when leaves were placed in the chests that held clothes. It was considered an antiseptic and guarded against disease. The Oracle at Delphi purportedly chewed bay leaves, producing the narcotic effect that put one into a trance. It could purge a man of phlegm and cholera, and was supposedly effective for deafness. Today we use it mainly as a flavoring for food, such as soups, sauces and pickles, but it is also useful to keep moths out of flour (a leaf or two in the flour bin does the trick).

BETONY - *Stachys officinalis* - HP 1'-1 1/2' - Also known as Lousewort and Devil's Plaything, this herb was deemed to be magical, and a valuable aid against witches, the bite of mad dogs and venomous serpents. It was a component of herbal tobacco and snuff and used for ailments of the head, including fearful visions and dreams. Eating leaves of betony would prevent drunkenness. Today we use it primarily as a decorative plant.

BORAGE - *Borago officinalis* - HP 3' - To eat Borage was to impart courage. It was also used to flavor wine, giving a cheering, invigorating result. It is a diaphoretic, meaning it will induce sweating, and was used for cleansing and other healing processes. Today, we use the chopped leaves in salads, and the blue flowers to garnish drinks, custards, etc.

BURNET - *Sanguisorba officinalis* - HP 1'-2' - Drumsticks and Old Man's Pepper are a couple of the more unusual monikers for this pretty plant. Sanguis - meaning blood - is a clue to its use - as a plant to staunch wounds. Today, it is sometimes used to aid digestion, and for hemorrhoids and diarrhea. It makes a wonderful vinegar with a clean, cucumber flavor.

CHAMOMILE - *Chamaemelum nobilis* - HP 4" - Used for diseases of the liver, headaches and migraines, it also was added to honey to anoint the face and remove acne. Today, we enjoy its apple scented leaves, and use it as a tea to promote gastric secretions and improve appetite. Many swear by its calming effect when used as a tea.

CHIVES - *Allium schoenoprasum* - HP 1' - Known as Rush-Leeks, it was used as an antidote to poison and to stop bleeding. Today, it is used mostly as a flavoring to add a mild onion-like taste to food, but it also stimulates the appetite and aids digestion.

CLARY SAGE - *Salvia sclarea* - B 3' - Clary was used mainly as a pot-herb (flavoring) in things such as omelettes, drinks, etc. It was also known as Oculus Christi (tears of Christ) and especially useful for diseases of the eye. Today it is mostly found as a fixative in perfumes, or as a flavoring for liqueurs.

CLOVE PINKS - *Dianthus caryophyllus* - HP 6" - 12" - Known by many names, including Gillyflowers, this flower was a key ingredient in many receipts of the day. It was usually combined with other flowers, and either distilled or steeped in spirits and sweetened. One old variety was known as "Sops in Wine" and the flowers were strongly scented, so their flavor was probably enjoyable. They were often included in tussie-mussies, again, their strong scent being useful to mask the smells of the streets. Today it is used as a nerve tonic and a lovely edging plant.

COSTMARY - *Tanacetum balsamita* - HP 3' - Also known as Bible Leaf and Alecost, this plant was used to clear and preserve beer. It was kept as a fragrant bookmark in hymnals and bibles, as its scent was useful in keeping one awake through long Sunday sermons. A tea made from its leaves was used to ease the pain of childbirth, and for stomach upsets and cramps. It had moth repellent qualities. Today, try rubbing the leaf on a bee sting or horsefly bite to relieve the pain.

DILL - *Anthemis graveolens* - A 2'-5' - Dill was prized as a defense against witchcraft. It also functioned to calm infants and ease whooping cough. Added to wine, it was said to increase passion. Our uses today include culinary, especially pickling, and it can be effective in cases of flatulence and colic. It is the Herb of the Year for 2010.

FOXGLOVE - *Digitalis purpurea* - HP 3' - Two very different names assigned to this plant are Fairy Fingers and Dead Men's Bells. This plant has been used for over 200 hundred years as a heart stimulant, but it is very toxic and should only be handled by professionals.

GARLIC - *Allium sativum* - HP grown as an annual 16"-24" - This ancient herb was given to Roman soldiers to sustain their strength. It was used as a culinary herb which also had antifungal and antibacterial properties. Today we know it is valuable for lowering blood pressure, as well as a pungent flavoring.

HEARTSEASE - *Viola tricolor* - HP 6"-12" - Kiss Me Quick and Herb Trinity are two of the many names for this cheerful plant. Some know it as Johnny Jump-Up, as it quickly self sows seemingly everywhere. It was known as a cure for a broken heart, and infusions were useful for facial problems such as acne and eczema. Now we use it as an edible flower, brightening salads or drinks with its colorful petals of purple, yellow and white.

HOUSELEEK - *Sempervivum tectorum* - HP 2"-10" - You may know this plant as Hens and Chicks. This was referred to as Jupiter's Beard in the Middle Ages. It was believed that planting this on the house roof would protect the structure from fire and lightning. It was helpful in ointments for burns, inflammation, hemorrhage and headaches. Another name, Erewort, was adapted as the plant was used for cases of deafness. The juice from the plant smeared on nettle burn is supposed to ease the prickling sensation.

HYSSOP - *Hyssopus officinalis* - HP 2'-3' - This herb was noted as long ago as in Hippocrates' time, who claimed it beneficial in chest complaints. It functioned as a bitter culinary herb, for soups, pickles, meat pies, etc. Its bitter taste was probably what caused it to be known to heal "all manner of evils of the mouth" according to Bancke's Herbal. It is an ingredient in many liqueurs such as Chartreuse.

LADIES MANTLE - *Alchemilla vulgaris* - HP 1'-2' - The dew collected from this plant was considered healing and magical. The plant was used for many female complaints, such as regulating the menstrual cycle, easing menopause, and reduce the inflammation of female organs. We enjoy it now as a charming garden plant.

LAVENDER - *Lavendula vera* - HP 1'-2' - Soothe, sedate and suppress are the attributes of lavender. Used to ease stiff joints and relieve tiredness, it was also one of the strewing herbs, adding a lovely fragrance when trod upon. Today, many use it as headache relief, and it is antibacterial, too.

LEMON BALM – *Melissa officinalis* – HP 30" – It was often referred to as Balm, or Melissa. This plant had many uses, from soothing tension, to dressing wounds, for baldness, and as a lucky love charm. It has use now as a tonic for melancholy, but its lemon taste is good in fruit salads, etc.

POT MARJORAM – *Origanum onites* – HP 18" – Many of the marjoram and oreganos were used as flavorings. This one was essential as a disinfectant and preservative, and binding it on the head would cure a cold. It was used in place of hops in the brewing of beer and ale. It is known to be very antiseptic nowadays, but is still an excellent flavoring for stuffings, soups, etc.

POT MARIGOLD – *Calendula officinalis* – A 18"-24" – One of its many names is Mary's Gold. Its petals were used to give color and flavor to soups and drinks. It was greatly respected as a healing herb, and one source notes that even to look on it would draw "evil humours" out of one's head. At present, it is known to be antiseptic, antifungal and antibacterial, being used in ointments and salves.

PENNYROYAL – *Mentha pulegium* – HP 6" – Also known as Pudding Grass, this member of the mint family was used for seasickness (mixed with wormwood, oil and vinegar and smeared on the body), to induce abortion and as a flea repellent. This is not an herb to be ingested, and in our day, it is used as an insect and mosquito repellent.

ROSE – *Rosa*- Perennial Shrub – Through the Middle Ages, the rose was "the flower of flowers". It appears frequently in receipts, both in cooking and in cosmetic use. A syrup of honey and roses was good for those who were sick and feeble. Rose water was used for washing hands and as a wash for the complexion and eyes. At present, roses are savored for their scent and used primarily for perfumes and lotions. Many still use them in food and drink, especially in the Near East.

ROSEMARY – *Rosmarinus officinalis* – TP 3' – This herb, with its fresh scent, was often carried by judges into courtrooms to protect them from the vermin and other scourges that prisoners might be harboring. It was burnt in sick chambers to refresh and purify. It was also put to culinary use in many receipts, and the traditional Boars Head at Christmas was garlanded with it. Many appreciate its culinary applications to this day, and it is useful as a gargle, due to its antibacterial qualities.

RUE – *Ruta graveolens* – HP 2' – The name Herb of Grace shows how important this herb was in antiquity. It was a powerful protector against evil and witchcraft, and as an antidote to poison. It was applied as an eye wash to improve sight, and was another herb used for protection from "jail fever". In our time, it is a useful ornamental, with unusual shaped leaves, but be careful, as a contact dermatitis can occur when the leaves are touched under certain conditions.

SAGE – *Salvia officinalis* – HP 2' – Another plant considered to have healing powers, sage was said to be good for the brain, senses and memory. It was used as a gargle and a mouthwash for colds and sore throats. Its culinary use was vast, too, being used for stuffings, salads, for flavoring wine, etc. It was thought to be good for general health – a popular saying in medieval times was "Why should a man die whilst sage grows in his garden?" Its use as a popular seasoning remains to this day.

SOUTHERNWOOD – *Artemisia abrotanum* – HP 2'-3' – Lad's Love or Old Man were common names for this herb. Strongly scented, it was thought to be useful for bites of venomous beast, destroying worms, and even to drive out snakes. The French called it garter, and employed it for protecting clothes from moths. Many use it now as a pleasant addition to moth bags.

SPEARMINT – *Mentha spicata*- See apple mint above.

SPOTTED LUNGWORT – *Pulmonaria officinalis* – HP 1' – Lady Mary's Tears and Jerusalem Cowslip are two of the more interesting common names of this herb. It is a good example of the Doctrine of Signatures, which was the idea that each plant revealed by its very nature to what use it could be put for the benefit of man. The

leaves looked like lungs, and so it was used in conditions concerning the lungs. Interestingly, it is sometimes beneficial now as a soothing expectorant.

SWEET WOODRUFF - *Asperula odorata* - HP 6" - This shade loving herb was also known as Ladies in the Hay and Kiss Me Quick - I'm not going to venture a guess as to how those names came about! It was, however, used as a strewing herb, to perfume linens and to stuff mattresses. Its scent is not released until the leaves are dry. Combined with brandy, it is made into a delicious punch called May Wine, with strawberries and its little white flowers floating on top.

TANSY - *Tanacetum vulgare* - HP 3' - Bitter Buttons and Stinking Willy are names that are indicative of the bitter taste of this herb. It was rubbed on corpses to spare them from worms, and was also a chief ingredient in preparations such as fly, mice and ant repellents. It was eaten in many ways, such as tansy cakes and to purify the body after eating large amounts of salted fish. Today we know it is not for human consumption, but use it as an ant repellent, or dry the flowers for ornamental use.

THYME - *Thymus vulgare* - HP 1"-12" - This strong antiseptic herb was another used by judges to prevent jail fever. It was also considered magical, as it allowed you to see fairies. Thyme was an important cooking herb, as it is today. We regard it as antifungal and antibacterial, and it is used in mouthwashes and gargles, as well as a cure for hangovers.

WHITE FLEURDELEUCE - *Iris florentina* - HP 2'-3' - This herb is known to some as orris root. The powdered scented roots of this herb were used against coughs, and for those chilled and stiff with cold. A sleep aid and effective against the bites of venomous beasts and sunburn, it also was noted for its use as a perfume. Today, its use is as a fixative for perfumes and potpourris.

WINTER SAVORY - *Satureja Montana* - HP 1' - Savory was useful as a strewing herb, due to its disinfectant nature. It eases tired eyes and indigestion, and was added to food when a peppery flavor was desired. Added to wine, it "make thee a good meek stomach". Its culinary use is less well known today, as the annual herb, Summer Savory, is used more frequently as it is milder in taste.

WORMWOOD - *Artemisia absinthium* - HP 3' - Wormwood was hung by the door to keep away evil spirits. It was employed as a strewing herb to repel fleas. This quote is from Thomas Tusser, in his Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry:

*While wormwood hath seed, get a handful or twaine,
To save against March to make flea to refraine:
Where chamber is sweeped, and wormwood is strowne,
No flea for his life dare abide to be knowne.*

Wormwood forms the basis for the drink absinthe, a powerful drink that was formerly banned due to its supposedly hallucinogenic and addicting effects.

YARROW - *Achillea millefolium* - HP 1'-3' - This herb with small white flowers (millefolium means thousand leaf) was also known as Nosebleed and Woundwort, having been used for centuries to staunch blood and control hemorrhages. It was a sacred herb to the Druids, who drew on it to divine the weather. It was associated with magic and utilized to repel evil. It is not really used medicinally today, but we can enjoy the flowers in dried arrangements.

