



Children's Garden Club  
 Volume # 9, Sheet 8  
 August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008  
 In Celebration of Useful Plants  
 Queeny Park – Greensfelder Recreation Complex  
 550 Weidmen Road

Welcome to the August Meeting

Welcome to Queeny Park – Greensfelder Recreation Complex! How many were with us last month at Missouri Botanical Garden? How is you Caladium doing?

This month I would like to explore all the ways of How are Plants are useful to Us. First lets look at Breakfast today - What did you have for breakfast? Cereal with fruit, or some toast. Beyond thinking of food plants are used in making Clothing, Medicine, Furniture, Building, Cleaning the Air We Breathe! This Topic is larger than life itself, so I would like to stay with things that have to do with the Garden. In researching for this topic I also learned a lot and realized there are books and lots information if you wish to go further for a research or Science fair project.



As a horticulturist, gardener some what herbalist, and cook, I especially value the deep and meaningful connection that we are going to discuss today between our Natural resources and Natural - World History, Use of Plants.

Since Prehistoric times, we have lived botanical lives, dependent on plants as sources of essential foods, medicines, timber, and fibers. Reliance on green resources is art the human conditions. We still use many plants in practical ways to provide nutrition, shelter, and clothing. The basis of plant productivity is photosynthesis in which green plants use carbon dioxide and water to make simple sugars, and these can be linked to make complex carbohydrates such as starch and cellulose. Flowering plants provide food in the forms of edible seeds, fruits, and vegetables and without the unique flowering plant life cycle, human cultures based on Agriculture would be an impossibility. Grains such as wheat, corn, and rice contain the seeds of grasses, flowering plants that historically have provided the staple, storable core of human sustenance.

As time has progressed we have learned of more plants from around the world as we explored new counties and the New World came about. During the Four hundred years of European settlement in the North America, Native American and skill combined with Old World Agricultural and herbal traditions to yield a unique blend of plant knowledge.

American gardeners still grew many of the same vegetables and “Kitchen herbs” that grew in English kitchen gardens. Familiar weeds such as tansy, and dandelions are also botanical immigrants from Europe that have naturalized into the American landscape.

One of the best Historical – Celebration of Useful Plants happened with Plymouth colorists and Wampanoag’s shared days of feasting after the harvest in 1621, the American Thanksgiving. The foods that were eaten no doubt included corn in various forms, probably prepared with the flint corn, flour corn, squash, pumpkins and melons beans, equal to familiar modern varieties include pea beans, kidney beans, pinto beans green beans, navy bean, and shell beans.

The first settlers carried seed with them, dried and saved form their own garden form they originated. Nevertheless, Food preferences and household gardens remained essentially English in nature through the next century, evolving slowly with the inevitable commingling of traditional English plants with the New World species and explorers

Seventeenth century sallets were both hot and cold dishes of vegetable or fruits and sallet herbs and various edible leaves were the origin of the modern word salad.

New World explorers, travelers developed a unique sense new plants of interest in agricultural / edible plants and Medical. There is doucumentation in 1630 of sassafras roots becoming a valuable commodity and later it was used as a floring for Root Beer and tea. In 1638 – 1663 a English herbalist Josselyn, who visited his bother in the region that is now know as Maine, made careful observation of potentially useful use of tropical spices such as ginger, nutmeg, mace, cinnamon, and pepper and Prunes, currence and raisons. In 1873 Persimmons are the newest attraction from North American of use after frost how it would covert the astringent, tannin-rich persimmons into sweet fruits that could be eaten with impunity.

Puritan Colonist by 1639 were motivated gardeners whose survival depended on the productivity of their plots depending if it was just a kitchen garden or a more extensive ones. Colonel George Fenwick second governor of the Saybrook Colony in Connecticut wrote “We both desire and delight in that primitive employment of dressing a garden”.

In the colonial days vegetables and herbs were grown in raised rectangular beds that were enriched with all available household human and animal waste. The Recycle or Composting of today was learned way back in History.

American gardening moved beyond mere subsistence during the eighteenth century, at least for prosperous urban dwellers. Yet even gardeners with the small utilitarian plots had vast new options selecting plants to cultivate and consume. Eighteenth century gardeners could also select vegetables to supply their kitchen plots.

As the tradesmen, explorers found more new exciting plants the allure of the foreign exotic fruits became know to gardeners and cooks alike, and foods brighten the landscape and the palate, and the desire sparks curiosity for the unique and or unfamiliar in both kitchen and garden. The Citrus Fruit type is know botanically as a hesperidium, contained in a leathery rind with pocket of aromatic oils that characterize members of the citrus family (Rutaceae). Of course the citrus was a source of vitamin C. Lemons were valued for their rind and juice, and during the nineteenth century they were used to flavor creams and puddings and elaborate deserts. Like citrus the Pineapple plants have a high vitamin C content and are part of the bromeliad family (Bromeliaceae) with large spiky rosettes of fibrous leaves, and they are particularly adapted to dry conditions. Coconuts are the massive drupes (stone fruits) (*Cocos nucifera*) a species that likely evolved in the western Pacific region and has been carried worldwide by ocean currents and human migration. Inside the fibrous mesocarp/ leathery exocarp is a hard endocarp and papery seed coat the white coconut we eat.

The mesocarp fibers, are used for brushes, matting, in hanging baskets or wrought iron planters, and a nineteenth century household notes that of using the coconut shells as to make hanging pots for plants. Tea, coffee, and chocolate are stimulating beverages each derived from plants. Tea leaves have been used in China for nearly three thousand years. Tea first appeared in America about 1650, carried by Dutch trader. Coffee originated in Ethiopia and was domesticated by Arabs and by the eighteenth century the trees a were cultivated in Central and South America. Cacao trees (*Theobroma cacao*), the source of chocolate, were cultivated since ancient times in Central America.

Households require a diversity of botanical products. Colonial dwellings and furniture which is constructed of wood, and wood also served as a fuel for cooking and heating.

By the late fall, many gardeners started the process of harvest into the root cellars and kitchens transformed the bounty into pickling, bottling, canning drying, jellifying, preserves, vinegar, and wines.

# In Celebration of Useful Plants

C K X U X G P H V T F I P D W  
 A I R I R R W O Y L A Q L L C  
 H F B A S G U R L G J A A R K  
 Z I I V W M B T R C R G N O I  
 T N S E R U T I N R U F T W P  
 S N L T D N C C S E O M S E E  
 I Z E O O U Q U J E X Y N Z T  
 O U O D L R P L Z G V I X T P  
 L F K T N B Y T O N C I G C V  
 A R U V S E G U N I X H L P U  
 N R B K A Z P R D D R A F R E  
 E G N P R T B E G L K C T F P  
 N T R B S W M U D I S B R E H  
 F L O W E R S T U U I I R W X  
 P A I B V Q X L L B M P W V R

AGRICULTURE  
 DEPENDENT  
 FURNITURE  
 HISTORY  
 MEDICINE

AIR  
 FLOWERS  
 GRAINS  
 HORTICULTURE  
 PLANTS

BUILDING  
 FOOD  
 HERBS  
 LIVES  
 WORLD

15 of 15 words were placed into the puzzle.

Solution