

## Lillian Dutton's Herb Garden at the Job Lane House

The plan of the herb garden is based on an early design, but as there is not a great amount of information on Colonial gardens, no claim is made that this is the way herbs were grown in those days.

While we are still growing many of the same plants in name, the varieties have undergone hybridization and change, and appear today in different forms. Therefore, restoring an early garden is almost impossible.

Most herbs would have been grown in garden rows, and some would have been gathered in surrounding fields and woods. The herbs which might be picked daily, or that required special attention, were planted in the dooryard garden, which was fenced to exclude wandering cattle. Some plants are native to this country. Others are descendants of plants or seeds brought over with early settlers.

Gathered as they are here at the side entrance to the house, these herbs help to illustrate the life of the housewife in those early times.

Most plants were utilitarian; vegetables, herbs, and flowers that had a use as food, medicine, or refreshment.

The thrifty New England housewife harvested every useful leaf, blossom, and root, for the survival and health of the household depended on their availability. Until the advent of the pharmaceutical industry, herbs provided the basic ingredients for most medicines.

The "stillroom" was usually a little room at one side of the kitchen, slightly lower to insure coolness. It was used as a combination brewery, dairy, and apothecary. It was here that the early housewife made her cheeses, started her wines and beers, set dyes, dried herbs for flavorings and seasonings, and concocted syrups, salves, and remedies for treating ills, aiding in childbirth and laying out the dead.

The Bedford Garden Club financed, planted, and now maintains the Herb Garden as a memorial to Lillian Dutton, the last owner and occupant of the house. She was a renowned "Herb Lady" who grew and sold a variety of herbs.

In Adelma Simmons' book "Gardening in Five Seasons," she mentions that some of her very first herbs came from the garden of Lillian Dutton (Garrison House Garden) of Bedford, Mass.

Some of the plants in the garden were found still growing in the fields surrounding the house. The roses by the stone wall were probably used in her potpourri, and the bricks in the shed floor are from her old greenhouse chimney.

The carved wooden memorial marker in the Herb Garden was a gift of the Bedford Arts and Crafts Society.

We hope you will enjoy this typical New England Herb Garden.

The garden is maintained by the Bedford Garden Club ladies headed by Josephine Champney.

~ Josephine Champney, Bedford Garden Club, May 1986