

“THE MECHANICK’S ADVISER”

For August 4 - 10

Apothecary – “Here is an update on the herb botrys that the Millinery found in a primary source for keeping moths out of clothes. We had mentioned earlier that we suspected that the spelling was phonetic as we did run across a plant referred to as botrys, but we ran out of time looking for more details. Teal Brooks, one of our Historic Garden experts, wrote back with more information:

‘I love a good plant mystery, so I did a little digging. The Latin genus and species for the plant is listed as either *Chenopodium botrys* or *Dysphania botrys* (and for a while, it was categorized as *Ambrosia mexicana*), and it is commonly called Jerusalem oak or oak of Jerusalem (the latter seems more common in the 18th century). The 1640 printing of John Parkinson's *Theatrum Botanicum* contains the following in the entry for Botrys, Oke of Jerusalem, "It is much used to be laid into Wardrobes or Presses, not onely to kill or drive away mothes, but for the sweet scent to perfume the garments." It is native to the Mediterranean and has naturalized in the United States. It's not in our Garden currently, but maybe it could be! I haven't tracked down a firm date of introduction yet, but there's at least mention of Jerusalem oak in “An Account of the Weather and Diseases of South-Carolina” by Lionel Chalmers.’

Here's some links to the relevant pages pulled from google books:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=pFcfNkN8QGYC&lpg=PA89&ots=gIopg6WoOQ&dq=john%20parkinson%20%22botrys%22&pg=PA89#v=onepage&q=john%20parkinson%20%22botrys%22&f=false>

https://books.google.com/books?id=_FMIDhiM5HkC&lpg=PA71&ots=AsSNNtHxcX&dq=An%20account%20of%20the%20weather%20and%20diseases%20of%20South-Carolina%20%22jerusalem%20oak%22&pg=PA71#v=onepage&q=jerusalem%20oak&f=false

“Thank you, Teal!! I love the way fellow Trades and Skills colleagues help each other!! Margaret, one of Teal’s colleagues that is here for the summer, spent part of an afternoon here. We went through a primary source domestic medical reference for uses of botanicals that are in their Garden.

- In the last few weeks, we sat down with Meredith from Archeology and shared a little about the 18th-century system of medicine for a presentation that she wants to do this winter on some research for fellow archeologists.
- Mark, our summer Intern, found info, a picture, and a description of an 18th-century syringe to make syringe biscuits. We are hoping Foodways will have a chance to make some and share the results. If they are a big success, maybe some syringes with the recipe can be reproduced for sale to guests?
- We found info for Deirdre for her interpretation on how an enslaved individual might treat a burn.
- One of our Volunteers has been invited to do a presentation on smallpox for some of his fellow military historians. We started collecting for him a small stack of primary source documentation as well as recently completed work on cowpox to prevent smallpox, which was done for Coach and Livestock.
- We have had several guests that asked for info to be sent to them as well.

“Sharon is excited as she is working on the index for the only ledger book that we have ever found for our site. There are a good number of day books (all of them are post- Revolutionary War era), but to date only one ledger book.”

Armoury:

Blacksmith – “As the constellation of Leo takes its place in the sky, Aislinn and Alex prepare to celebrate their birthdays, and all the children of Hephaestus are as lions at their work. Mark has finished his trivet for the Weavers, with the Apprentices not far behind, and has taken up modifying a tiller from the Carpenters, not to steer a boat but a saw. Aislinn has finished up her key swivel, which will cause heads and keys to turn wherever it goes, and continues work on locks, pipe tamps, and scrolls. Tim has mostly worked on compasses, but his run circles around the rest. There’s a lion’s den at the foot of the anvil.”

Tinsmith – “The Tin Shop updated the transcribed list of items from the original daybook, so a few more items were added to the bench, including a variety of pans and bowls. Steve has spent the week perfecting a bowl from a single sheet of tin – since tin doesn’t stretch very far, it has to be made in sections. He used a scaled down version of a larger pattern to achieve this. Joel started work on some tinderboxes for Prentis. Jenny made a few more coffeepot lids in an effort to even out the rim around the band but without the waste of an entire pot. Now she will have quite a few extra lids (and potential tiny funnels).”

Colonial Garden – “Melons, melons, melons! The Garden has been producing a whole host of cantaloupes this season, four different varieties, in fact! Our musk melons and watermelons are not ripe yet but are coming along nicely. The melon frames have been papered over and waterproofed with linseed oil and are now over the watermelons. This will shed excess water away from the roots, preventing split fruit and keeping the melons from getting too large, thus preventing the sugars from diluting and producing a less sweet melon. The first pawpaw fruit of the season has ripened, as have some elderberries, and the tomatoes are in full swing, as are the squash and parsnips. We’ve potted up persimmon, pawpaw, and calacanthus seedlings that we successfully planted from seed in fall.

“All of our tadpoles are now frogs and have gone on to live in the Garden proper. We are so proud! A second nest of house wrens is in the bird bottle, and the babies have hatched. On a more pressing note, if anyone has lost a deer, please come and retrieve it from the Garden. It has been munching away at our sweet potato leaves and dancing all over the Garden beds. We will throw in the rabbit free of charge.”

Farming – “Ghislain d’Humieres, Senior Vice President, Core Administration, using a shovel plow. Experiential history in action!”



Gunsmith – “Here in the Gunsmith Shop, we have been spending time with Brad helping him with forging techniques and helping him make his initial tools. Brad is now working on the tedious task of forging screws. Darrin has set a number of sand molds and cast brass a few times recently, making components for rifles. Darrin is also putting the last small touches on his round-faced English flintlock, which is just about finished.”

Military Programs – "The State Garrison has nothing to report."

Milliner and Mantua-Maker – “As I feel it is the duty of this author to share with my readers the most curious happenings of this city, I shall endeavor to continue to bring you the best news about town. Three milliner's apprentices are relieved to have learnt that the mysterious search for limbs discussed with Mistress W--- of M.H---'s millinery was not, in fact, a request for limbs from the living but rather an appeal for an artificial limb to be made up in linen so that students of Physic and Surgery might practice without harm to those in their acquaintance. It should be noted, however, that it does seem that this fear of dismemberment encouraged these same apprentices to become incredibly productive. (This author supposes they were attempting to earn favour with their mistress by vying for the coveted spot of ‘apprentice who most needs their limbs’.)

“In fact, Mrs. J--- and Miss H--- were seen in the company of Mrs. MW--- (in her riding chair, no less) attempting to gain the endorsement of that most beautiful and sweet tempered lady, while Miss S--- was seen entertaining a rather well known M.J. who had come to the shop for a fitting of a gown suitable for entertaining at the Governor's House and was quite delighted with the result.



“Not to be outdone, Miss H--- completed the shifts she had been stitching for a total of five and twenty hours a piece, but was then seen leaving off work on Saturday to accompany two fellows about town who bore a remarkable resemblance to the apprentice herself. I have it on two separate accounts that said gentlemen were her brother and father (although another claims they were cousins - in this case I defer to the quantity of reports indicating the first set of relations to be accurate.)

“Mrs. J--- of that same shop appears to have been industrious in the way of economy and used a few scant scraps to cut out a total of 3 caps of varying styles, two sets of sleeve ruffles (straight and shaped), and a tucker, with fabric to spare. She was also seen cutting the shapes of two bodices for Miss H---, though this author has not received any more intelligence on this subject.

“As always, I rely on your continued generosity in sharing your observances about this city and will continue to collect missives from my agents at the usual place, on Thursdays and Sundays each week.”

Weaver – “As two of our fair staff head off to the distant lands of southern Pennsylvania, they have been carefully planning dyeing and weaving demonstrations. The kind and proficient Blacksmiths have generously given of their time to create, with the labor of their hands, three strong tripods for the dye pots during this esteemed demonstration.

“Within the walls of the Shop, Ellie diligently tires over the Welsh bed rug reproduction, knot by knot, building the design with courage and integrity. The other loom is occupied with plain linen sacking fabric. The trick of this project lies in its double weave technique: two layers of cloth are forming one on top of the other with connections on each side. The sacks will be complete as soon as the yarns are cut to release them from the loom.

“Thanks to the fine Milliners, the Weavers have been able to recently wear more of our own product than ever before. The Weavers are grateful for this sharing of skill and friendship.”