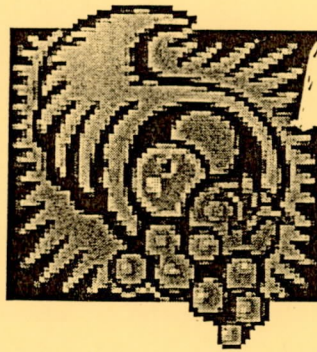


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GEDDY GARDEN NEWS

*"November sky is chill and drear
 November leaf is red and sear."*

Walter Scott

A cold November signifies a mild winter. So far, November has not been especially cold here, which might indicate a cold winter! November was known by the Saxons as the wind month. Some think of November as a dismal month, but not all feel that way. In a letter to Rev. John Newton in the 18th century, William Cowper expressed his feelings about autumn. He wrote, "My greenhouse is never so pleasant as when we are just upon the point of being turned out of it. The gentleness of the autumnal suns, and the calmness of this latter season make it a much more agreeable retreat than we ever find it in the summer; when the winds being generally brisk, we cannot cool it admitting a sufficient quantity of air without being at the same time incommoded by it. But now I sit with all the windows and the door wide open, and are regaled with the scent of every flower, in the garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it."

We celebrated Veterans Day on November 11th. The fife and drum corps marched from the Capitol building to Market Square along with other local military groups and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. There was a very emotionally moving moment when all the guests and employees who had ever served in the military of this Republic were invited onto the field as the national anthem was played. It was so symbolic of what this museum is all about.

November 11th also happens to be Martinmas Day, or the feast of St. Martin, who is the French patron saint of many. He represents beggars, wine growers, reformed alcoholics, and tavern keepers. The traditional food eaten on Martinmas Day in Europe is goose. Because it falls at the end of harvest season, it was celebrated in France with feasts and wine. Harvesters paraded through the streets singing and carrying lanterns. Saints days were closely linked to farming and the seasons, and thus became traditional ceremonies celebrated and practiced by the communities.

We will soon be sharing with our guests some of our own traditions here in Colonial Williamsburg. Although we normally concentrate on interpreting the history of the third quarter of the 18th century, we depart from that period with our Christmas decorations – at least with our outdoor decorations in the Historic Area. Since the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg began, certain traditions of our own developed and they have become part of our museum history. The decorating of our buildings, which began in the late 1930s and 40s, is such a popular tradition with our guests that it is closely associated with Christmas at Williamsburg. We make an effort to explain

to everyone that this type of decorating was not done by the colonists in the 18th century, and they understand that and enjoy that we have established some customs of our own in our present century. It is all history.

The residents in the Historic Area, most of whom are employees, have fun if they choose to participate in a decorating contest of their residence. They are restricted to using specific plants and materials. The list also excludes the use of electric colored lights, plastics, tinsel, and Santa and friends, of course. Some of the Colonial Williamsburg employees are very creative and include tools or materials that are related to the particular trade in which they are employed. Very unusual, original, and unique displays are presented. Tours describing the plants and decorations are offered by our tour guides and thoroughly enjoyed by our guests. Some people travel here specifically at this time of year to see Williamsburg at Christmas.

In recent years the landscape department also offered instructions about the construction of our Christmas decorations and have made available for purchasing the appropriate materials. These lectures will be offered this year at the Hennage Auditorium. The first one will be on December 4th, and again on December 6th, and after that there will be three sessions a week up until Christmas. The Hennage Auditorium can accommodate quite a large number of people and I'm sure there will be a large audience taking advantage of the demonstrations.

The floral supplies will be offered for sale in the gift shop at DeWitt Wallace Museum.

Some local garden clubs voluntarily decorate seven of our buildings in the Historic Area. There is a \$20 charge to see those buildings, or \$5 per site. One of those that you might enjoy seeing is the stable on Franklin Street. In the stable fresh and dried flowers will be used and careful protection of the animals must be taken; therefore, no plants such as yew, mistletoe, poinsettia, rhododendron, or azaleas will be used due to their poisonous properties, and only artificial berries used at that site. Vignettes will be presented in the open animal stalls and the themes being used are A Virginia Countryside, On the Farm, and Colonial Williamsburg Then and Now.

I'm sure our animals: the Leister sheep, Devon cows, pigeons, and chickens will become full of the spirit of Christmas in such an environment. This community effort will include eighty-five arrangers from professional florists and greeneries, as well as the Garden Clubs. Even the Williamsburg firemen are sharing in the Christmas spirit by hanging the garlands in the stable.

Christmas traditions in Colonial Williamsburg continue in the present as well as the past, and for that we are thankful. Happy Thanksgiving to all.

Janet Guthrie