

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows  
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,  
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine:  
A Midsummer Night's Dream

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Terry Yemm's cotton plants are well sprouted in the field at the corner of Botetourt and Nicholson. Although it is late for cotton, he hopes to hasten the harvest with a late season spray of herbicide after the bolls have formed. The green traps that you see are required by the USDA to trap boll weevils. They are baited with a sex hormone which lures the weevils into the trap. According to Encyclopedia Britannica the boll weevil spread from southern Mexico or Central America, entering the U.S. in the 1890s. Our cotton is a commercial variety, planted with seeds saved from the previous year's crop.

Charles Leach, in his research report Colonial American Fiber Crops discusses cotton cultivation.

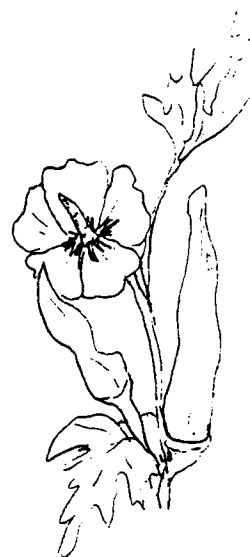
"When other staples were bringing good prices, fiber crops were usually limited to the expected needs of the farm family. Colonial cotton was sown in hills in May. The hills were set about five feet apart and sown with seeds as would be done with garden peas. Once germinated, the fields were cultivated frequently with a hoe. Cotton needed to be topped and suckered like tobacco. Landon Carted noted in his diary, however, that while topping and suckering thickened the leaves, thinning the bolls on a given plant was the only way to increase the size of the bolls."

The origin of cotton varieties today is still being debated by botanists, since there are both old and new world species of cotton that have been cultivated and crossed for centuries. Arlene's drawings this month illustrate members of the cotton family--how many do you recognize?

Congratulations to Terry for the environmental tour he has developed with Ann Schone. Participants learn about erosion, pollution, recycling, deforestation, and other environmental concerns, which were of little apparent interest to colonists. "One horse produces 22 pounds of manure a day. That's a nice source of fertilizer, but if you have 100 horses in a city, it becomes a solid waste disposal problem," Terry observes. Peer teachers involve young people in discussing the history and future of our country's environment.



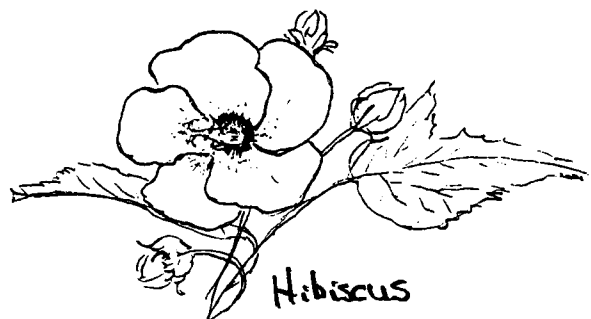
Hollyhock



Okra



Althea

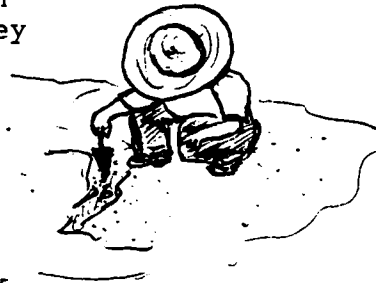


Hibiscus



Mallow

Be sure to point out the archeology in progress behind the St. George Tucker. Mary Catherine Garden says excavations have revealed the outlines of the Shurcliff path which lines up with the back door of the house. It is on top of the original traces of the Tucker path. Nearby they have found mortar and rubble, yet unexplained, and an exciting piece of black basalt stoneware, possibly Wedgewood, only the second piece found at CW.



Post holes indicate a fence on the property line, adjacent to a path. A drainage ditch or possibly a planting bed was also uncovered, with lots of artifacts including delft sherds. It's fun to point out garden research in progress, and encourage visitors to come back later and see the "after" garden.

New plantings in front of the Capitol provide a screen from the noise and disruption of busy Francis street. This was one of the suggestions made by the History Initiatives team. Species in the hedge include holly, cherry laurel, althea, and buckthorn. Landscape Director Gordon Chappell hopes to achieve a planting reminiscent of an old hedge row.



The hedgerow will also provide habitat for wildlife. In conducting bird walks for Elderhostel last winter, Dale and I found our most productive birding areas were hedgerows around parking lots and tennis courts. Many of our visitors are interested not only in architecture, political and social history, but also in natural history as it can be observed in our landscape.

A recent publication by the Virginia Native Plant Society gives specific suggestions for hedgerows.

"Whether you manage a small back yard, a 10-acre homestead or a 500-acre farm, it's possible to walk more lightly on the land by allowing natural communities of wild plants and wildlife to thrive here and there.

Patches, corners and strips of natural diversity - a meadow let go, a wet field bottom, a part of a yard - can achieve a wonderfully rich succession of habitat. As native plants grow or are encouraged by deliberate planting, the native songbirds, insects and mammals will return to enjoy food, shelter and nesting places amid the natural tangle.



Hedgerows and unmowed edges are wildlife's highways as well as its homes and supermarkets. Natural areas provide vital travel corridors for birds, insects, toads and others amid the expanses of empty green lawn that act as barriers to animal movement and native plant dispersal."

I hope you will be able to share some of these important ideas with your garden tours. If you would like more information on hedgerows, with specific plants, I will be glad to give you a copy.

Wishing you sweet musk-roses and eglantine.

*Cynthia*

