

## Geddy Garden News

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Lately my mornings have been beginning with a greeting from my garden. My Morning Glories have climbed up the fence which surrounds the garden and they smile at Williamsburg from within their blue and pink bonnets. What aptly named flowers -- they are truly glorious! I have also planted dipper gourds along the fence. Gourds are among the earliest of plants found here. They were being grown by the Indians, but never eaten by them. They were used as cups and flagons, and sometimes called calabashes. Gourds served as powder flasks for the early hunters and were also used domestically as seed pots or containers by the colonists. The early colonists, like the Indians, existed not along side of nature, but as part of nature.

Archaeological records tell us that the bottle gourd (*Lagenaria seceraris*) was in Florida as early as 7000 B.C. It was one of two of the earliest known domestic plants found through archaeology in North America.

The second of the two early domestic plants was the squash, also known as **simlins** in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Squash was enjoyed for its tasty flesh. This summer I planted white Bush Scallop squash, also known as Patty Pan squash. I have always before grown the crooked neck type, so this was a new venture for me. I followed the advice of John Josselyn and prepared my squash quite simply. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century he wrote of squashes, "All of the pleasant food boyled and buttered and seasoned with spice."

In Robert Beverly's 1705 book, Present State of Virginia, he tells us quite a bit about the habits of the Indian and wrote that the Indians eat no leaves or "any sorts of herbs." This was quite the opposite of the colonists who enjoyed salads and herbs on a regular basis. They even ate some flowers in their salads along with the leaves. Redbud blossoms were mixed in salads, Nasturtium and John Wesley wrote that Marigolds should be eaten to prevent the plague. He said, "eat marigold flowers, daily as a salad, with oil and vinegar." I have not yet tried Marigolds, nor do I plan to, unless we are suddenly threatened by the plague.

The usual activities of summer seemed to have passed us by this summer. July was practically rainless. In past years we experienced frequent summer thunder showers, which I find refreshing. I was forced to draw more water from our well as a result of the dry weather and it seems even our well bucket felt the added strain, causing it to simply fall apart. The bottom fell completely out of the bucket and Jim Pettengell and Lew LeCompte came to my rescue and made the necessary repairs.

I had the pleasure of joining Rob Warren in the persona of Mark Catesby on his program, a walk through the woods at Bassett Hall. On this well-paced nature walk Rob gracefully combined a first-person interpretation with pertinent facts about the flora and fauna of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Virginia. This is a creative way of using some of Williamsburg's beautiful woods and property to its best advantage and informing our guests at the same time about the important contributions made by Mark Catesby. On the tour the conversation ranged from sea shells to Paw Paws with a lot of interaction from curious visitors. I highly recommend this program to all.

We are currently undergoing a difficult time of change and uncertainty in our workplace and we should all seek our own methods of coping during stressful times such as these. I wish to make a suggestion to some of my colleagues. If you have never tried to grow a little garden, now is a great time to start. Begin by planning for next

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year's garden. Start selecting which plants you would like to grow and forming your ideas of what you want your garden to look like. The benefits received from gardening are numerous.

The planning and designing of your own garden puts you in control of the situation. Lack of control in parts of our lives can be a contributing factor to feelings of depression. Gardening can combat that. A sense of freedom can be gained in the garden. Sometimes we all feel a need to escape from our worries and concerns and by becoming involved in the positive experience of growing things, it helps to put things in perspective. Growing a garden is a wonderful, rewarding hobby in a positive, stress-reducing environment. Start planning one now and by so doing you will be planning on the future instead of dwelling on the past.

*Janet Guthrie*

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