



JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR. LIBRARY *GEDDY GARDEN NEWS*
COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG FOUNDATION

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*"All my hurts
My garden spade can heal."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

How the world has changed since my last newsletter. Our freedom has been challenged by the inhumane attack by terrorists on our soil on September 11. The song, The World Turned Upside Down has as true a meaning for us now as it did for the British at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781. The 272 million citizens of America have been reduced in number by several thousands due to the actions of the cowardly terrorists.

But now we must find ways of getting back to normal. That is very difficult in our state of shock. But it is important that we must do all that we can to carry on.

Although my newsletter seems trivial and insignificant at this time, it is my work and my endeavor to regain my equilibrium and get on with the matter of living my life. By doing our work we will all help ourselves to recover.

I will soon be planting the fall plants in the Geddy Garden – cabbages, lettuces, and other greens. I presently have in my garden a few of the plants from Larry Griffiths 2001 Annual Research Project. Larry has been collecting data on plants which can be found in primary sources such as Gerald's Herbal, Phillip Miller's Dictionary and Garden Kalendar, Lady Skipwith's papers, etc.

One of these plants which might have made it to the colonies is the Unicorn plant. It is mentioned in Miller's work and it appeared in England in the 1730s. It has large attractive flowers. I am enjoying watching this unusual plant grow in my garden.

Larry gave me some seeds that I planted of another interesting plant, the Blessed Thistle (*Cnicus benedictus*). This is an ancient Renaissance healing plant. It was written about by Cogan in Haven of Health. He wrote, "*So worthily named for the singular virtues that it hath...it Sharpeneth parts of the bodie, quickenth all the senses, comforeth the stomacke, procureth appetite, and hath a special vertue against poyson, and preserveth from the Pestilence, and is excellent good against any Kinde of Fever being used in this manner: Take a dramme of the powder, put it into a good draught of ale or wine, warme it and drink it a quarter of an hour before the fit doth come, then go to bed, cover you well with clothes and procure sweat, which by the force of the herbe will easily come forth and so continue until the fit be passed...For which notable effects this herbe may worthily be called Benedictus or Omnimorbia, that is a salve for every sore not knownen to Physitians of old time but lately revealed by the speciall providence of Almighty God.*"

According to the Doctor's Guide to Natural Medicine, written in 1998 by Paul Barney, M.D., Blessed Thistle serves as a remedy for many of those same ailments named by Cogan in ages past. He even included some new ones. He lists over a dozen reasons for taking the herb. Another good reference is in the Prescription for Nutritional Healing by Dr. James Batch.

It can be taken as a tea, which you can make yourself by drying the yellow flowers and making an infusion of them in a pint of boiling water.

Another useful aspect of Blessed Thistle is as a soil improvement in your garden due to its trace elements of copper.

And last, but not at all least, is the idea of growing Blessed Thistle for the pleasure you receive from doing so. The American Goldfinch likes to gather thistle-down when making their nests. The pleasure that can be gained by watching those beautiful birds in that activity is reason enough. We must do the things that give us joy.

Blessed Thistle seems to be aptly named. There is an old Irish saying, "*There grows no herb to heal a coward's heart.*"

Janet Guthrie