

A History of the Colonial Gardens at the Quogue Library

By Lovejoy Duryea FIIDA

The Origins of the Gardens

The tradition of a Colonial Herb Garden at the Quogue Library has its origins in the Bicentennial of 1976. At that time, the members of the Westhampton Garden Club wanted to honor the patriots of our area by researching and planting a garden using the plants and herbs used by our early residents. Herbs were an important part of pioneer existence here on the East End; they were used for dyes, medicines, cooking, canning and fragrance. The economic importance of herbs to early settlers cannot be underestimated.

At the time of the Revolution herbs in Quogue were planted wherever they would grow best. But in the mansions of Williamsburg and in New York City more formal and elegant arrangements were favored. It was such a formal scheme that was adopted by the creators of the gardens.

The Concept of the Gardens

The concept of the plan was to use a formal symmetrical plan around a central focal point typical of a Victorian Garden. While this rendering is not of the Quogue Gardens, it explains the concept.



A later schematic plan for replanting shows how each quadrant was devoted to a different type of herbs. Later, blueberry bushes were added to provide the tall corner component that adds a key enhancement of a Victorian Garden. Kay Allard drew the original plans.

This is the list
 (how to read) that I
 consult when searching
 for Victorian plants.
 my knee

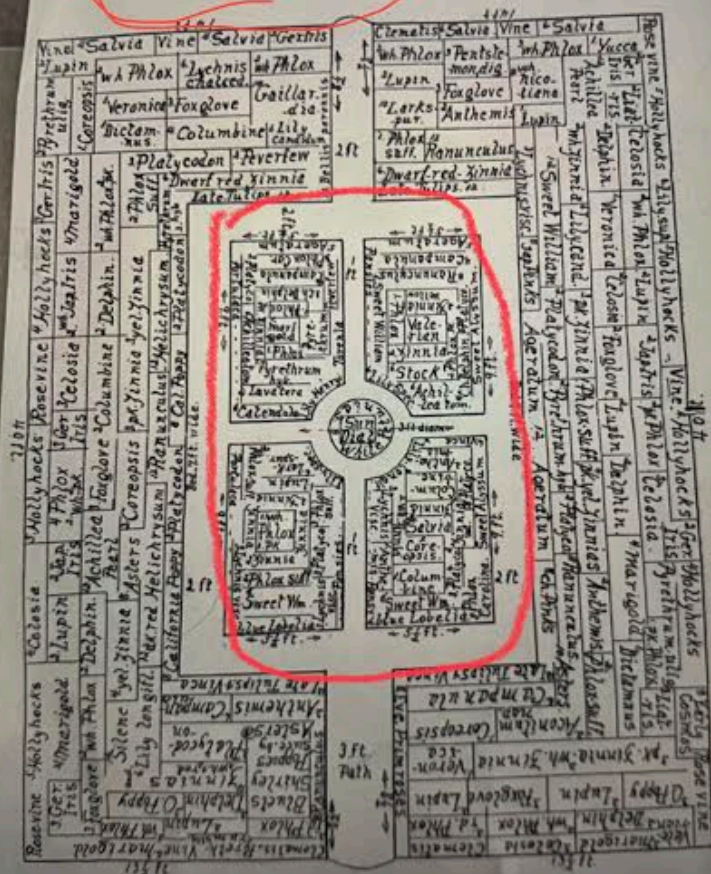
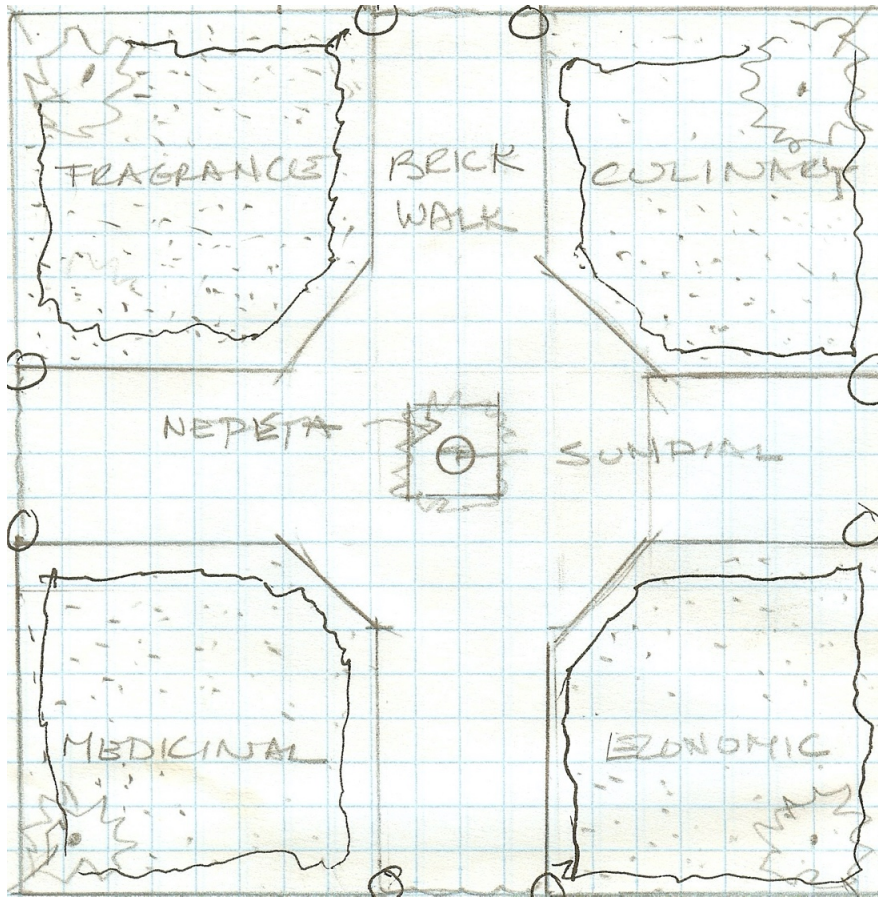


CHART OF GARDEN, 40x30 FEET, TO BLOOM FROM MAY 1895 UNTIL LATE SEPTEMBER

This plan for a garden (latitude of New York City) is an example of a complex "bedding out" scheme. It is noted that "the plants will be somewhat crowded, but will not suffer

from close planting if the soil is rich." From The Seasons in a Flower Garden by Louise Shelton. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1906.



2011 plan for gardens drawn by L. Duryea.

Mary Kane Hayes, President of the Garden Club and a marvelous gardener used this picture of a Victorian Garden in New York City as her source not just of the plan but for plants. The book, *A Flower Garden* by Louise Shelton, was published by Charles Scribner & Sons in 1906. See her note in the top left corner. The inner rectangle is the inspirational of the layout.

According to a review of *A Flower Garden* in the New York Times in 1906, the book, provided a method of researching, documenting and caring for gardens. For many years Mary Kane and her team kept meticulous records of what was planted, when, how each plant fared and provided plans and budgets for replacements as needed each year. At the time the gardens were planted the total cost was \$10,000. In today's money that would be over \$47,000.

The Original Plan and its Placement

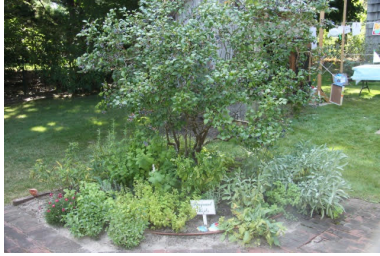
The original plan was scaled to align with the dimension of the back of the Library as shown in this photograph supplied by Joan Larson. It was square rather than the rectangle shown in the plan. Look at how small the Library is compared to the Library we know now. Also notice how the space is sunny which is essential to the success of growing herbs. At its inception, neither the size of the Library or the height of trees casts shadows on the growing area. Over the years as the library and the trees grew and the deer invaded the area, the growing conditions in the garden would change.

Here is a picture of the original foundations for the brick terrace.



The original planting July 14, 1976, shows how the small scale of the garden matches the Library while a later version of the Economic Garden shows a variety of plant sizes.





The later addition of the blueberry bushes adds another dimension.

Evolution

In addition to the original herb gardens, a Heritage Garden was planted using heirloom varieties of flowering plants typical of the era of the Old School House built in 1822. While the definition of an heirloom plant is debated, it is usually a plant type more than 100 years old that has not been changed by a modern cultivar or cross breeding. This garden was planted using colonial flowers that were typically used to adorn public buildings like a school house. In honor of Mary Kane Hayes, a president of the Garden Club for many years and her exceptional teaching of new members and her work on the gardens at the Library, the garden was named for her.

A Garden for Children

Later a Harry Potter Garden was added to provide a learning experience for children. The idea was conceived by Stephanie Delaporte whose work and donations for many years carried on the tradition of Mary Kane Hayes. It was her idea to create the Harry Potter Garden. Steffie had a Harry Lauder's *walking stick* which she wanted to move. It was the first plant in the garden. She arranged for Boy Scouts who wanted to earn a badge to plant it. Unfortunately they planted it when she was away in a shady spot and it failed to thrive. Harry Potter was the rage. The idea of a children's garden named for the best-selling children's book caught fire. The garden was moved to a sunny spot between the Old School House and the Herb Gardens.





The Harry Potter Garden was centered on the Library window and the sun dial. Its placement between the Herb Gardens and the Mary Kane Heritage Garden united the 5 gardens into a larger whole.

Initially the original garden plants were selected based on their creepy names, i.e., Spider Wort, Dragon Root, but the new garden used actual plants mentioned in the 7-volume series. This gave us a delightful opportunity to re-read all seven volumes. We created games using plant names and a party was planned to inspire young wizards to read and garden. Parents, those hapless Muggles, were allowed to come but not in costume.

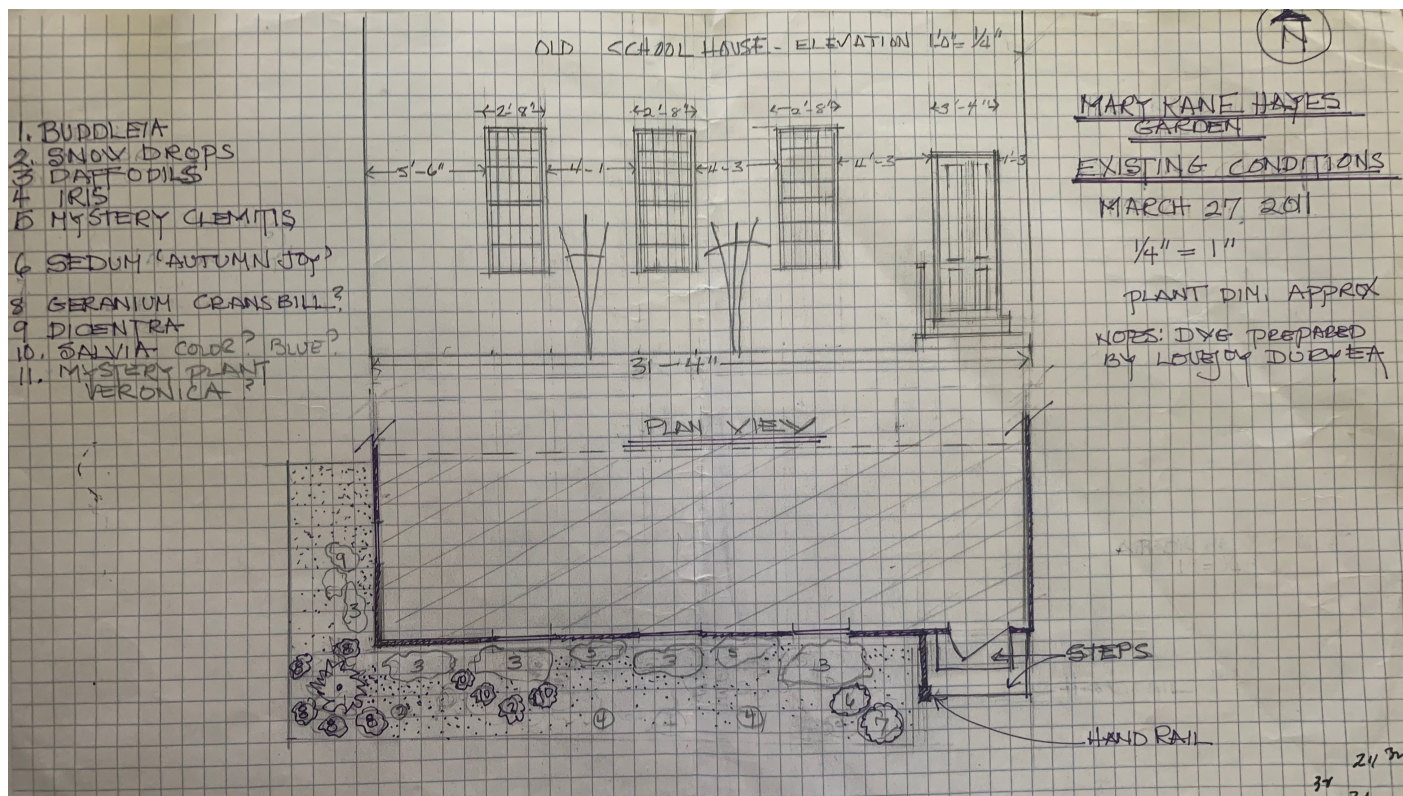
The nearest children's garden was 50 miles away. Later I found a large cauldron about 3' x3' which inspired new creativity. We selected plants to make the cauldron look like it was boiling over including dwarf Agastache berberi 'Tutti Fruitti' which looked like flames bubbling through with slithering vines overflowing the sides. Unfortunately I can't find a picture of it. Many of the garden archives have been lost in many moves.



In 2000 the gardens were renewed and later in 2011 all five of the gardens were re-designed, re-soiled, and replanted to create to be a state-of-the-art conservation garden, using modern conservation techniques and disease resistant hybrids of original heritage plants and only native and non-invasive specimens. Ginger Sander and I were co-Chairs of the Gardens. With help from my husband, Bobby and under the tutelage of Maura Bush, Chief of Horticulture at the Old Westbury Gardens, we did extensive research. The color scheme of the new gardens was lavender, pink, and white/off white. Hedges bordering the herb gardens were lavender. For ease of maintenance the gardens were 80% perennial and 20% annuals -- mostly the herbs.



Herbs are a giant category of plants. We created lists of herbs, which category of culinary, medicinal, fragrant, economic they fit into. Many herbs can be in several



categories. We then researched them based on size, color, bloom time, etc. Using this matrix, we selected plants to bloom at different times and wrote a garden bloom calendar for visitors.

While the main season for the gardens is summer, we selected plants to create interest in each of the four seasons. For the birds and butterflies we made it a fragrant garden: it met six of the seven conditions of the National Garden Club for a butterfly garden. We lacked a source of water and hoped it could be provided by a small central fountain/bird/butterfly bath at a later date.



See how much larger the Library is then when the gardens were first planted. The 2011 re-design adds lavender borders. While the selection of herbs in each quadrant is

different, the heights, colors, sizes, and shapes are in the same scale for symmetry for a harmonious whole.

The Educational Mission of the Gardens

Creating beautiful gardens where the public can see and learn about plants is an important part of the National Garden Clubs' Mission. It's a lot of work but adding professional labels, supplying lists of plants that are seen and providing a bloom calendar for visitors provides the link with our mission .

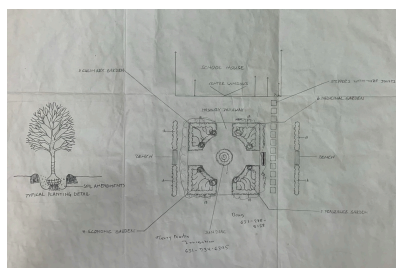


Old Westbury Gardens let us use their labeling machine to make these weather-proof signs. This was just one of the many donations which made the 2011 redesign. Other donations in no special order include Pam McCoun, Zoe de Ropp, Donna Sessa, Ginger Sander, Louis Raymond, Lovejoy and Bobby Duryea, Patti Donovan, Howdy and Mary Phipps, the Quogue Historical Society, The Peconic Herb Farm, The Quogue Library and many others.

Our New Garden

Now with the addition of our new library, the Herb Gardens have once again been re-envisioned. The Garden Chair, Jessica Beccia whose work for many years in the gardens is to be commended, has overseen the move of the gardens and the Old School House to a new location.

Dragonfly Landscaping made this drawing of the new gardens.



This time the gardens are designed and planted at the same time the library is being redesigned. They complement our beautiful new building. By reproducing the original brick and parterre formation of our original garden, the feeling of the original herb gardens has been maintained along with the herbs early East Enders used and needed to survive. But environmental cultural conditions have changed garden needs. Modern varieties of traditional plants bred to survive our modern conditions are also included. Benches create a quiet meditation area where we can enjoy the gardens, read, visit together. We hope you will enjoy not only the heritage of our early settlers of our village but the fruits of the hard work of all those who have brought us to the marvelous new library and grounds we have today.

The Westhampton Garden Club would like to thank the support of the many donors to the library, the Club, and the Quogue Historical Society that have made this worthwhile enterprise possible and to Dragonfly for their help.