

MARY GARDENS

BY

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MARY GARDENS

By DANIEL J. FOLEY

MORE than a quarter of a century ago when I first began to explore the plant realm, I remember a visit I made one warm afternoon in June. It was to an old Salem garden where sweet William and fox-gloves, delphiniums and Canterbury bells, ferns and sweet rocket and a host of other plants flourished in a series of meandering borders. The flower beds were edged with violets which were kept trim and formal by reason of the "bobbing" or shearing their owner gave them on several occasions through the summer months. I recall an espaliered peach tree which covered one side of the old tool shed, but most of all I remember a figure of Our Lady enshrined in a shady corner of the garden. My inquisitiveness got the better of me and I asked about the shrine. The dear old lady who tended the garden told me that she had dedicated her garden to Mary and, somehow, the thought lingered with me. At that time I knew nothing of the tradition of the Mary Gardens of the Middle Ages, but a few years later, while doing some research in college, I discovered a host of ancient plant traditions associated with the life of Our Lady. When my old friend dedicated her garden to Mary, I am sure that she was not aware of the fact that she was reviving a Medieval tradition.

During the past twenty years, in fact since the founding of the Herb Society of America, there has been kindled in the hearts of gardeners a new enthusiasm for the symbolism of plants. And not the least of these is the urge to know more of gardens and gardening in the "age of faith." Perhaps the most intrepid example of the present fervor and devotion is a garden established in Philadelphia in 1951 by John S. Stokes, Jr., and Edward A. McTague (two young businessmen) called Mary's Gardens. They distribute seeds of the more familiar flowers associated with Our Lady and carry on their labor of love as a non-profit enterprise in a most extraordinarily spiritual fashion. It is truly refreshing to read their letters and to

sense some of the spiritual fire that kindles their hearts in this confused atomic age filled with wars and rumors of war.

Another significant signpost that warms this writer's heart is the recent publication of a monumental work entitled *Plants of the Bible*, Waltham, Mass.; Chronica Botanica, \$7.50, by Harold N. Moldenke and Alma L. Moldenke. The authors devoted more than 12 years of research to their task, with the result that we now have a carefully documented and most readable book to serve as inspiration for all who would plant a Mary Garden.

If we are to conjure up in our minds any concrete notions of the Mary Gardens of Medieval times we must turn to the wood cuts and illuminated manuscripts of the period. The contemporary writings of the Venerable Bede and St. Augustine contain some casual comments and the early herbals make reference to numerous plants carrying Our Lady's name; but for specific notions of these ancient gardens we must interpret the illustrations, many of which were idealized and glorified by the artists who painted and drew them. It is only natural that they should have been embellished greatly because these illustrations were expressions of devotion.

The beauty of holiness symbolized by flowers was a living part of the expression of the period. Ecclesiastics like Bede referred to the lily as the emblem of the Virgin with the petals symbolic of bodily purity and the anthers typifying the beauty of her soul. Augustine delighted in championing the daisy (probably *Bellis perennis*), whose yellow center was the sun and whose ray petals reflected purity and goodness. The illustration and the notes that accompany it may well serve to convey something of the spirit of the deep-rooted symbolism which was an integral part of Medieval life.

Curiously enough many of the plants which came to be associated with Our Lady during the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance had been known since before the dawn of Christianity and their attributes were associated with pagan deities. Thus plants formerly associated with and considered sacred to Juno, Venus and Diana of Greek mythology, Bertha and Freya of Scandinavian tradition, were bestowed upon the Madonna. If we ponder the studies of the great

humanist scholars and accept the belief that the coming of Christ brought a new sense of values into the world, then it is easy to understand how Christianity flung its shadow over the entire vegetable kingdom. In their ardor to stamp out every vestige of heathen influence and thought, the early fathers soon interpreted the folklore and the apparent associations of heathen nature worship with the Christian tradition. In every corner of the Old World, the life and sufferings of Christ and the everyday happenings of Mary and Joseph and the saints dominated the thoughts and the beliefs of peasant and nobleman alike. The age of faith had made a deep imprint.

The English writer Hepworth Dixon has caught the spirit of that simple faith in these lines: "Hearing that the best years of her youth and womanhood were spent, before she yet knew grief, on this sunny hill and side slope, her feet being for ever among the daisies, poppies and anemones, which grow everywhere about, we have made her the patroness of all our flowers. The Virgin is our rose of Sharon, our lily of the valley. The poetry no less than the piety of Europe has ascribed to her the whole bloom and coloring of the fields and hedges."

However, after the turmoil and upheaval caused by the Reformation, many of the folk names of plants previously associated with the Holy Family were divested of their divine associations. The dawn of secularism, in a large measure, cast a heavy shadow on that feeling of devotion which had previously characterized the Christian world. Nonetheless, in many a village and hamlet in Europe today the folk names associated with plants dedicated to Our Lady are still in use.

In making a Mary Garden today it would perhaps not be practical to grow all the plants associated with the Madonna. Some are denizens of partial shade, others are weedy by nature and still others are plants for special uses such as ground covers. Soil requirements and hardiness are also factors to be considered. If the garden maker wishes a traditional Medieval garden, a simple knot pattern or a series of rectangular or square beds designed to fit the area chosen would be most suitable. Old grapevine trimmings might be used to make a wattle with which to surround the garden. A suitable figure

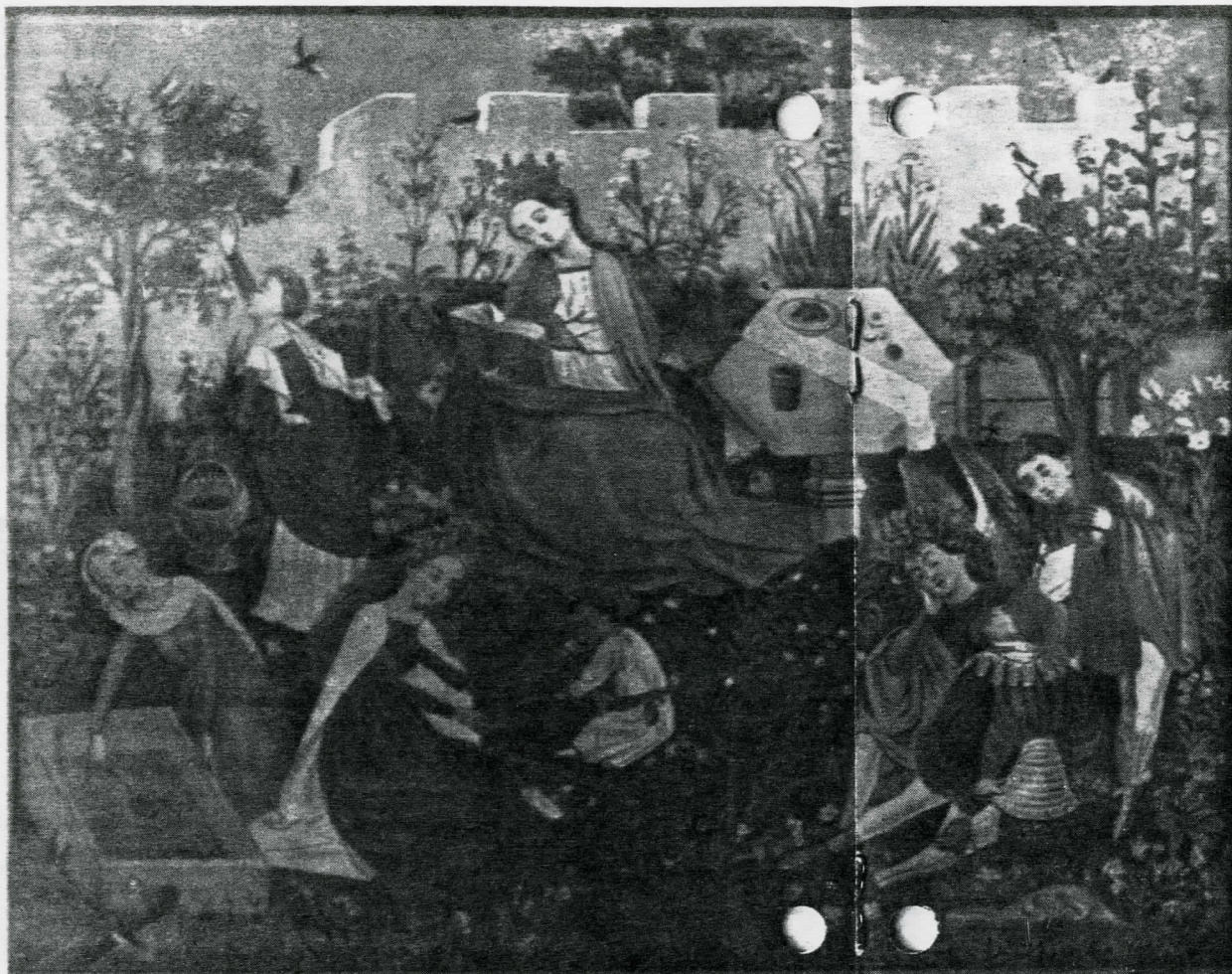


Illustration by an unknown artist of the 15th century. Art Gallery, Frankfort.

One of the early references to Mary Gardens is to be found in *An Introduction to the Obedientry and Manor Rolls of Norwich Cathedral Priory*, by H. W. Saunders. From this record we learn that the Sacristan had "S. Mary's garden" and the "green garden" and the cellarer rented the "little garden" or "garden within the gates."

Mary is seated in an enclosed garden surrounded by a castellated wall. Her crown is of leafy sprigs. Nearby the child, Jesus, is being taught to play a musical instrument. At the right St. Michael and St. George, in armor, and, conversing beneath the vine-stock, a tiny ape-like devil is barely discernible. Behind Our Lady, irises, hollyhocks, marigolds and other flowers are growing in a raised bed. Iris is the symbol of royal birth, referring to Christ—descended from the house of David. In the foreground are daisies, lilies-of-the-valley, violets, cowslips and strawberries. A rose tree, cherries and apples are also featured. Several birds are easily recognized. The atmosphere is a pleasant one and the composition as a whole has an easy kind of lifelike quality not always found in Medieval illustration.

*Illustration by Courtesy of the
Massachusetts Horticultural Society*

cast in metal or carved in stone or wood might well be used as a focal point. Many of the sweet-smelling herbs of Medieval days could be mingled with the plants associated with Mary. A well-designed pool or a bird bath might be incorporated if it could be adapted to the area for such a garden. The list of plants which follows is by no means complete. Nor can it be said that all of those included are justifiably classified as being associated with the Madonna. Some scholars have seriously questioned a few of the plants and the legends attached to them. However, the writer looks upon these casual notes merely as a preliminary paper on a subject that well merits more serious study, checking manuscripts that are not easily available without considerable travel. At any rate, gentle reader, take these rambling comments for whatever they may be worth in the way of information and pleasure.

* * * * *

The following list of plants, associated with the Madonna in tradition and legend, is by no means complete, but it may serve as a basis for those who wish to make a Mary Garden. Botanical classification has been used, since common names are numerous and variable.

Adiantum capillus-veneris was known as "Freyia's Hair" in the Scandinavian sagas. Our Lady's hair, Maria's fern and maidenhair fern are most recent in their origin.

Alchemilla pratensis and *A. vulgaris*, Our Lady's mantle.

Anastatica hierochuntica has been called Rosa Maria, Mary's rose or flower and St. Mary's rose.

Anthyllis vulneraria, Our Lady's fingers.

Aquilegia vulgaris (the common columbine), Our Lady's shoes.

Armeria maritima and *A. vulgaris* (the delightful tufted thrift used as a ground cover in sandy areas), Our Lady's cushion.

Artemisia pontica (a fragrant herb), her needle with which to sew, probably because of the thin but sturdy stems.

Athyrium filix-femina, Lady fern.

Briza media, another plant symbolic of her hair.

Calendula officinalis (the colorful pot marigold), "Her dresses were adorned with Marygold." The blooms were used at her shrine for the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25) or Ladytide.

Campanula medium (the Canterbury bell), one of the flowers called her nightcap; see also *Convolvulus*.

Campanula rotundifolia, her thimble.

Capsella bursa-pastoris, her purse, also called shepherd's purse.

Cardamine pratensis, referred to as her smock. It flowers in Europe at Ladytide and is known as Our Lady's flower. It is the cuckoo-flower and the milkmaid in Devonshire lore.

Centaurea nigra, another plant referred to as her cushion.

Chrysanthemum balsamita (costmary of herb gardens), Our Lady's balsam, or "Frauen balsam," to dress her wounds.

Clematis vitalba, named virgin's bower by Gerarde in the 17th century and probably not associated with the Virgin Mary.

Convallaria majalis (lily-of-the-valley), used to decorate the Lady Chapels of the Middle Ages and often spoken of as her tears.

Convolvulus sepium, her nightcap to keep her hair in place.

Cyclamen europaeum, the bleeding nun. This plant was used as a charm against bad weather and was dedicated to Mary.

Cypripedium sp., Our Lady's slipper.

Daphne mezereum, the laurel of Greek mythology came to be known as her laurel.

Digitalis purpurea (our familiar foxglove) was referred to as her thimble, her fingers and her gloves.

Dipsacus fullonum (teasel of herb gardens) has leaves that grow around the stem which, when united at the base, form a basin for dew or rain. First it was Venus' basin and later Our Lady's.

Filipendula ulmaria, her belt.

Fissipes acaulis, another plant called her slipper.

Fragaria vesca (the wild strawberry) was considered sacred to Mary, who accompanied children on St. John's Day to pick strawberries.

Fuchsia sp., her eardrops.

Galanthus nivalis, our common snowdrop, which often blooms in Europe at Candlemas (February 2), the Feast of the Purification,

was consecrated to Mary as the emblem of purity and chastity. It is also called Fair Maid of February.

Galium verum, her bedstraw. N. Poussin painted a "Nativity" in which this herb appears.

Impatiens balsamina and *I. capensis*, Our Lady's slipper in some countries; her eardrops in others.

Lathyrus pratensis, her fingers.

Leontopodium alpinum (edelweiss) is made into wreaths and hung over doors and windows in Switzerland on the Feast of the Ascension as the emblem of immortality.

Lilium candidum, the madonna lily, is usually depicted with three blossoms symbolizing innocence, purity and virginity. Because of its blooming period, it is associated with the Feast of the Visitation, July 2.

Lotus corniculatus, another plant called her slipper or her shoes and stockings.

Matricaria inodora (common Mayweed) was sacred to Athene in the age of Pericles. Later it was called St. Mary's herb, probably with reference to Mary Magdalene.

Mentha spicata (our pungent spearmint) is known in France as "Menthe de Notre Dame" and in Italy as St. Mary's herb.

Orchids—north European species because of their hand-shaped underparts were referred to as Mary's or Our Lady's hand.

Oxalis acetosella, her clover.

Phalaris arundinacea picta, her garters.

Polypodium vulgare (rock polypody) was called "Marie bregne" because it was said to have sprung from drops of her milk which fell on the ground when she fed the infant Saviour.

Primula elatior and *P. veris*, her keys.

Prunus, cherries are often seen in paintings of the Madonna because of the prevalence of a charming legend concerning her and Joseph.

Pulmonaria saccharata, Bethlehem sage or Our Lady's milkwort. In Cheshire it was called "Lady's milk sile," the name sile meaning to soil or stain.

Rosa sp. Both the red and the white rose were associated with Mary and her rosary at an early date. Scholars differ on the origin of the rosary, but tradition has credited St. Dominic with the devotion whereby prayers were said on beads made of rose leaves which had been pressed into round molds. In season, rose blooms were strung together to make a devotional chain. In its early use, the word rosary referred to a rose garden and later was used to mean a garland, a wreath or a bouquet of roses. In Italy roses bloom in May and naturally the queen of flowers was dedicated to Mary, as with the month of May. In pre-Christian times, the rose was dedicated to Flora.

Rosmarinus officinalis, our beloved rosemary of herb gardens, produces pale blue flowers in early spring. It is told that the flowers, which were once white, became blue in color because Our Lady spread her cloak on a rosemary bush to dry.

Saxifraga hypnoides, another plant called her cushion.

Scandix pecten-veneris, a plant whose slender, tapering seedpod resembles the teeth of a comb—hence Our Lady's comb.

Silybum marianum, Our Lady's thistle or Holy Thistle or Lady's Milk because of the white spotted leaves.

Smilacina racemosa we know as Solomon's seal. A curious seal-like mark which is revealed on the rhizome, when the stem is shed, caused it to be known as the seal of the Blessed Virgin, or Our Lady's signet.

Specularis speculum-veneris, her looking glass.

Spiranthes sp., Our Lady's tresses.

Tamus communis, sometimes called black bryony, bears fruits resembling seals. It has long been associated as the emblem of the Madonna, commemorating the Feast of her Nativity, a festival dating back to 695 A.D.

Thuja occidentalis, the common arborvitae, is dedicated to her in conjunction with the Feast of the Conception, December 8.

Vinca minor, virgin flower.

Viola tricolor, Our Lady's delight.

Xanthoxalis corniculata, her sorrel.

The Herb Society of America
1962 Annual Meeting, May 13 - 16
Marriott Key Bridge Motor Hotel
Washington, D. C.

MARY GARDEN EXHIBIT

Friends:

This exhibit is a miniature copy of my Mary Garden at Hagerman, Idaho. Most of the plants were dug in Hagerman in early April and were shipped to Philadelphia where they were potted and cared for by Mrs. Edmund G. Thomas of the Philadelphia Unit of the Herb Society of America. The exhibit was brought to Washington by station wagon on Saturday.

To those who are not familiar with this phase of gardening - a few words of explanation. A Mary Garden, or St. Mary's Garden, is a collection of plants which in medieval times were given religious names and symbolism referring them to the life of Christ and his Virgin Mother. In monasteries such gardens and the work of caring for them were dedicated to the Virgin. The famous Mary Garden at Melrose Abbey, Scotland, is the subject of the first chapter of Rosetta Clarkson's book, "Green Enchantment". An article on Mary Gardens appeared in the 1953 edition of the Herb Society publication, "The Herbarist".

Mary Gardens were often planted around a figure of the Madonna and Child as focal point. The figure in this garden is the Virgin in Majesty, adapted from medieval figures by liturgical artist, Ade Bethune of Newport, Rhode Island.

In all, over 400 herbs, flowers, shrubs and trees have been found so far which at one time had a total of over 1,000 names, symbolisms, legends or uses associated with the Virgin. As an herb gardener I have planted my Mary Garden mostly with herbs. A list of Mary Garden herbs, many of which are to be found in this exhibit, is given on the reverse side of this sheet.

Mary Gardens are of special interest to students both of medieval horticulture and of religion. About half the plants known to have been grown or collected in medieval times were associated with the Virgin in one place or another. Authorities, such as the Oxford Dictionary, which lists some 50 such associations, are in agreement that the words "Lady" or "Mary" in the old names of plants are almost always a foreshortening of "Our Lady's" or "Virgin Mary's". The diverse symbolism of such plants reflects with remarkable comprehensiveness the lives of Jesus and Mary as found in the Scriptures and the teaching of the Church. For those who are especially interested I can provide sources for documented lists of over 350 Mary Garden plants which are horticulturally available, and also several studies which have been made of their symbolism.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Ernest Roberson

Mrs. Ernest Roberson
Hagerman, Idaho

MARY GARDEN HERBS

This list of Mary Garden herbs is comprised of culinary, sweet smelling and medicinal herbs of medieval use, and also a few of more recent introduction into herb gardens.

<u>Botanical Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Religious Name</u>
Aconitum napellus	Monkshood	Mary's Slippers
Anthriscus cerefolium	Chervil	Lady's Needlework
Aquilegia vulgaris	Columbine	Mary's Shoes
Artemisia absinthum	Wormwood	Mary's Tree
Asperula odorata	Sweet Woodruff	Our Lady's Bedstraw
Calendula officinalis	Scottish Marigold	Mary's Gold
Cheiranthus cheiri	Gillyflower	Mary's Flower
Chrysanthemum balsamita	Costmary	Lady's Balsam
Convallaria majalis	Lily-of-the-Valley	Mary's Tears
Iris germanica	German Iris	Mary's Sword (of sorrow)
Lavendula spica	Lavender	Legend: Mary's Washing Plant
Levisticum officinale	Lovage	Our Lady's Cloth
Lilium candidum	Madonna Lily	Mary Lily
Marrubium vulgare	Horehound	Mary's Nettle
Melissa officinalis	Lemon Balm	Sweet Mary
Matricaria Chamomilla	Matricary	Lady's Flower
Mentha spicata	Spearmint	Our Lady's Mint
Monarda didyma	Bergamot; Bee Balm	Sweet Mary
Nepeta cataria	Catnip	Mary's Nettle
Oreganum vulgare	Marjoram	Lady's Bedstraw
Paeonia officinalis	Peony	Mary's Rose
Petroselinum crispum	Parsley	Our Lady's Little Vine
Primula veris	Cowslip	Lady's Keys
Primula vulgaris	Primrose	Lady's Frills
Rosa alba rubic	Maiden's Blush	Incarnation Rose
Rosmarinus officinalis	Rosemary	Mary's Bouquet
Ruta graveolens	Rue	Herb of Grace
Salvia officinalis	Sage	Legend: Mary's Plant
Stachys officinalis	Woundwort	Lady's Finger
Tanacetum vulgare	Tansy	Jesus-Wort
Thymus serpyllum	Thyme	Mary's Bed
Viola odorata	Sweet Violet	Lady's Modesty

The National Herb Garden

at the U.S. National Arboretum



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Program
Aid
Number 1261

Prepared by
Science and
Education
Administration

The Specialty Gardens

The third garden actually consists of 10 Specialty Gardens, arranged along the perimeter of a grassy oval about 150 feet (46 meters) long. Inside the oval are small trees of herbal interest. Each specialty garden is separated by boxwood hedges, and each is large enough to contain a collection of special plants for teaching and studying purposes.

1. Dioscorides' Garden includes a representative herb selection from plants listed about 60 A.D. by a Greek physician, Dioscorides. The modern science of pharmacology started with his efforts to list systematically the plants that were used for medicine. His list, *De Materia Medica*, was used as a basis for the early herbals, still referred to in the 20th century.

Planted here are marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*), anise (*Pimpinella anisum*), coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*), garlic (*Allium sativum*), oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), and chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*).

2. The Dye Garden includes plants used for dyes in both the past and the present.

Planted here are agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), calendula (*Calendula officinalis*), indigo (*Indigofera tinctoria*), madder (*Rubia tinctorum*), and henna (*Lawsonia inermis*).

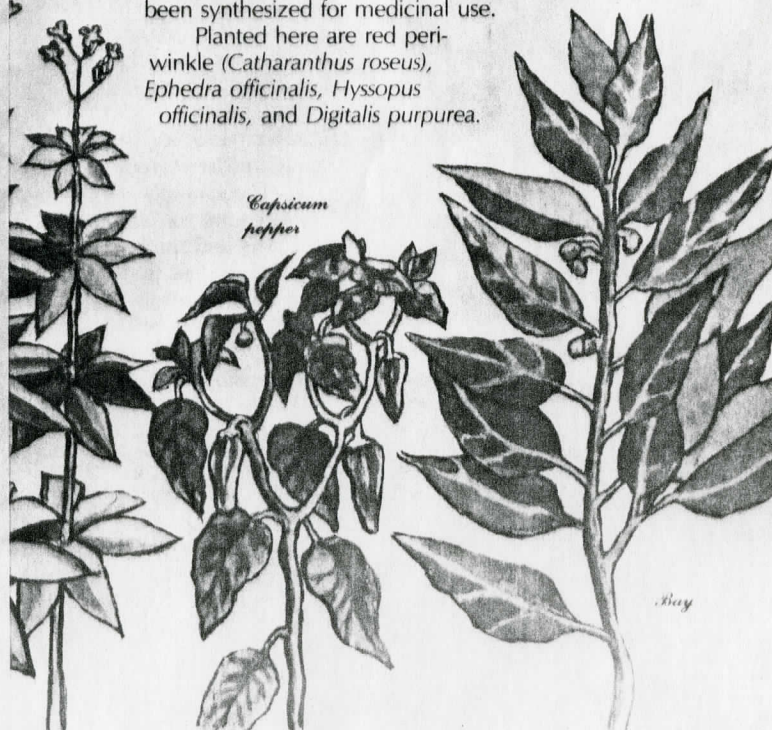
3. The Early American Garden contains plants brought from the Old World by colonists, as well as native plants that were used in colonial times.

Planted here are pepper (*Capsicum annuum*), chicory (*Cichorium intybus*), mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), and canaigre (*Rumex hymenosepalus*).

4. Herbs Around the World plantings will be changed from time to time to show herbs from different parts of the globe.

5. Plants in Medicine include herbs used in modern medicine or plants from which alkaloids have been synthesized for medicinal use.

Planted here are red periwinkle (*Catharanthus roseus*), Ephedra officinalis, Hyssopus officinalis, and Digitalis purpurea.



6. The Culinary Garden is a collection of herbs used for flavoring and seasoning food.

Planted here are basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*), chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*), dill (*Anethum graveolens*), mints (*Mentha* spp.), and summer savory (*Satureia hortensis*).

7. The Industrial Garden includes plants that are sources of fuel, oil, pesticides, fibers, and other essential products for modern industry.

Planted here are angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), perilla (*Perilla frutescens*), licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), saffron (*Crocus sativus*), and sesame (*Sesamum indicum*).

8. The Fragrance Garden is a collection of plants that have historically been grown for their sweet scents and the pleasure they give.

Planted here are rose geranium (*Pelargonium graveolens*), English lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*), lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*), carnation (*Dianthus caryophyllus*), and clary (*Salvia sclarea*).

9. The Oriental Garden is a selection of herbs used in China and Japan.

Planted here are oriental onion (*Allium chinensis*), lemon (*Citrus limon*), common ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), perilla (*Perilla frutescens*), chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum indicum*), and *Zanthoxylum piperitum*.

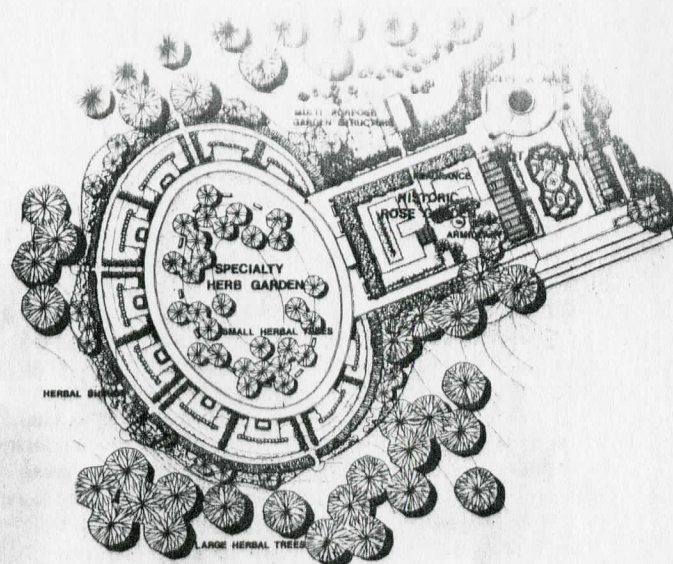
10. The Beverage Garden contains plants used for teas or for flavoring liqueurs and other beverages.

Planted here are mountain balm (*Calamintha officinalis*), mints (*Mentha* spp.), coffee (*Coffea arabica*), cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*), and tea (*Camellia sinensis*).

The specialty gardens are surrounded by trees and shrubs of herbal interest. Both native and foreign species, they have been most frequently used for medicines or dyes.

Related Gardens and Facilities

Other facilities associated with the National Herb Garden include a trial and propagation garden, which is a secluded area holding coldframes and compost bins. Here, new plants may be tried out and



special propagation done. The Herb Garden Curator's Building houses an office for records and an area for potting and propagating. Also available is space for teaching those skills.

Along the walk in front of the trial and propagation area, a bed of *Capsicum* (hot peppers) displays the range of colorful variation in this historic culinary plant.

Origins of the Herb Garden

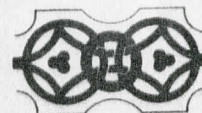
The National Herb Garden at the National Arboretum has been a joint project of the Herb Society of America and the Arboretum since 1965. In 1976, the Herb Society presented \$17,760 to the Department of Agriculture as a Bicentennial gift to begin the garden. The Herb Society then raised the majority of the contributed funds, and Congress appropriated matching funds for the garden. Other donors include garden clubs, companies, and interested individuals. Construction began in 1979 and planting in 1980.

The Herb Society

The Herb Society of America, founded in 1933, is concerned with the cultivation of herbs and with the study of their history and uses: with their roles, both past and present, as flavoring agents; as medicinal, fragrant, and dye plants; as ornamentals in garden design; as household aids; and as economic plants supplying sources of fuel, oil, rubber, and other essential products for modern society. The Herb Society of America is not medically oriented.

The U.S. National Arboretum

The U.S. National Arboretum is concerned primarily with educating the public and conducting research on trees, shrubs, and plants of ornamental or useful interest. It is part of the Science and Education Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Issued June 1980



Salad burnet

From Shakespeare—

"mickle is the powerful grace that lies in herbs"

To Simon and Garfunkel—

"parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme" we have prized, written, and sung about the marvelous qualities of herbs.

In ancient times, rue was believed to cure bald headedness and inebriation. Rosemary was used to ward off the evil of witches. And nearly every herb imaginable was tried at some time or other to heal or cure or to concoct a love potion.

Migrating people, across time, have carefully carried along their herbal plants and seeds, which they valued for medicinal, savory, aromatic, or economic qualities.

And we still value them today for these qualities: We may take horehound drops to soothe our coughs, polish our furniture with marjoram and lavender oils, sip mint juleps or rosehip tea, and season the simplest or most elegant dishes with basil or tarragon.

Thousands of herbs could be planted in the National Herb Garden. Those you see here have been selected to demonstrate the significance of plants in human life.

Knowledge of herb uses is constantly increasing, and the plantings will be changed to reflect these uses. Gardens also change as plants flourish or perish, so the Herb Garden can never be static. But it should give you new ideas with each visit.

The Herb Garden covers about 2 acres (0.8 hectare) in a meadow opposite the National Arboretum's Administration Building. The design concept is of three separate but closely related sections—the Knot Garden, the Historic Rose Garden, and the Specialty Garden.

Plant material masses, changes in elevation, and trellises are used to separate and, at the same time, integrate the gardens. Inside the gardens, plants are organized in strong patterns, with plantings along the edges loosely arranged to provide a transition from the gardens to the surrounding meadow. All gardens are accessible by wheelchair.

You will enter at the reception area, which is a brick-paved terrace, about 50 feet (15 meters) in diameter, with a central pool. The terrace is surrounded by

osmanthus hedges with collections of thymes in semicircular beds. The view from the terrace is over the knot garden to the meadow beyond.

The Knot Garden

The classic elements of the knot garden design, which was fashionable during the 16th century in England, are carried out here. However, because of the large size of this garden, dwarf evergreens, rather than traditional small herbs, are used to create the intricate patterns of the knot.

The knot itself is about 25 by 50 feet (8 by 15 meters) in a larger 60- by 80-foot (18- by 24-meter) sunken space beyond the reception area. The formal knot expresses the traditional elegance of garden design that originated in Europe.

Three types of dwarf evergreens—cultivars of arborvitae, cypress, and holly—are planted here: *Thuja occidentalis* 'Rheindiana Globosa,' *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Squarrosa Pygmaea,' and *Ilex crenata* 'Helleri.' Their resins, barks, and needles have been used for medicinal or industrial purposes.

The Historic Rose Garden

Next, you will come to the Historic Rose Garden. It is about 50 by 80 feet (15 by 24 meters) and bounded by *Taxus* hedges on two sides, by an open grouping of airy trees of herbal value on the meadow side, and, on the fourth side, by a trellis-covered sitting area. These roses were chosen as representatives of roses long used for medicine, perfume, food, and pleasure.

Most of the roses in the collection bloom only in June or early in July.

Roses of historic interest and fragrant plants also surround a modern version of an ancient astronomical instrument—an armillary sphere. This decorative sphere can be used to tell "sun time."

The collection includes varieties of French roses (*Rosa gallica*), Damask roses (*R. damascena*), Alba roses (*R. alba*), cabbage roses (*R. centifolia*), China roses (*R. chinensis*), and rugosa roses (*R. rugosa*).

Red
bergamot



Woodruff



19. **Our Lady's Tears**, *Convallaria majalis*. The valley-of-the-valley, which is sometimes found wild in woods in England.

20. **Our Lady's Seal**, *Polygonatum multiflorum*. Otherwise known as Solomon's Seal, it is occasionally found wild in England, especially on chalky soils.

21. **The Milk Thistle**, *Silybum marianum*. It is called this because the white veins on the leaves were supposed to have been caused by the spilling of Our Lady's milk.

22. **Costmary**, *Chrysanthemum balsamita*. Known in German as Frauenmünze, it is a sweet-smelling herb used mainly for flavouring drinks, and is sometimes called the Herb of the Madonna.

23. **Sainfoin**, *Onobrychis sativa*. 'Saint Foin', the Holy Hay, is said to have been used in the stable at Bethlehem. It is sometimes grown as a pulse crop on farms but is also found wild on chalky soils, mainly in the south east.

24. **The Christmas Rose**, *Helleborus niger*. This was said to have flowered on Christmas Day to honour the birth of Our Lord.

25. **The Star of Bethlehem**, *Ornithogalum umbellatum*. This is included for obvious reasons. It is also probably the 'Doves' dung' referred to in 2 Kings VI, v. 25, so called because of the whiteness of its flowers. The text describes a famine, and when food was short the bulbs may have been eaten instead of onions, to which this plant is a near relation.

26. **Candlemas Bells or Our Lady's Bells**, *Galanthus nivalis*. These are snowdrops, which flower at the time of the feast of Candlemas (or Purification of Our Lady) which falls on February 2nd.

27. **Mary and Joseph**, *Pulmonaria officinalis*. Lungwort has blue flowers (for Mary) and often red buds and sometimes flowers (for Joseph).

28. **The Marigold or Mary's Gold**. Probably the common calendula is indicated, which grows wild in Mediterranean countries. It represents the golden rays of glory that are often shown round the Blessed Virgin's Head and is, broadly speaking, in flower at all the chief festivals of Our Lady.

29. **The Juniper** is said to have offered shade and to have hidden the Holy Family during the Flight into Egypt.

30. **Our Lady's Pincushion**, *Armeria maritima*. This is the sea-pink or thrift, which is common in sea-side places throughout the British Isles.

31. **The Maiden Pink**, *Dianthus deltoides*. This may have been so called because in some mediaeval legends the 'gilly-flower' or pink was considered a symbol of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is a scarce British native and likes limestone escarpments.

32. **Our Lady's Eyes**, *Myosotis*. The forget-me-not of which there are several wild sorts, some beautiful and some insignificant.

33. **Our Lady's Needlework**, *Saxafraga umbrosa*. London Pride is very well known in gardens and is sometimes found wild in damp shady places.

34. **Our Lady's Modesty**. This is the violet, which is well known as an emblem of both modesty and humility. St. Bernard described Our Lady as 'the Violet of Humility'.

35. **The Virgin's Flower**, *Vinca minor*. The periwinkle, was sometimes known by this name—perhaps because of its blue star-like flowers which may have a connection with Stella Maris as a name for the Blessed Virgin.

36. **The Herb of the Madonna**, *Cymbalaria muralis*. This ivy leaved toadflax was sometimes given this name together with Costmary (No. 22). In Italy it is the 'Erba della Madonna'. It is probably not a native of England but must have been introduced a very long time ago and is now common on old walls and ruins.

Just as Lincoln Cathedral preserves some of the finest flowering of Gothic architecture in England, and its choir and organists continue the equally important heritage of English church music; so it is also preserving from oblivion some of these ancient legends about the plants that are associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary.

John Codrington.

The Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary Lincoln



The Plants of the Cloister Gardens

THE CLOISTER GARDEN OF LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

The beds in the cloister are filled partly with sweet-smelling plants which give pleasure to the blind, and partly with plants associated by tradition and legend with the Blessed Virgin Mary, in whose name the Cathedral is dedicated.

Many of these traditional associations are centuries old and are found not only in England but throughout Christendom. Some more recent introductions were probably by the Spaniards after their colonisation of Central and South America.

After the Reformation, the expression 'Our Lady' was frowned on in England, as were too frequent references and allusions to the Blessed Virgin Mary. So some of these plants became simply Lady's Smock, Lady's Mantle, Maiden Pink and so on; some even reverted to the pagan goddess Venus, as in Venus's Comb (a little cornfield weed akin to cow-parsley), or Venus's Looking-glass (an annual related to campanula).

Of the many plants associated with Our Lady, only a few have been selected to plant here. Lack of space, inappropriate growing conditions, or rarity made others unsuitable. For instance Our Lady's Slipper, *Cypripedium calceolus*, is the rarest and most beautiful of our native orchids, but is difficult to cultivate; Our Lady's Tresses is another rare native orchid; while Our Lady's Smock (Cuckoo Flower, *Cardamine pratensis*), would need far damper conditions than can be provided here.

In planning this cloister garden, plants have sometimes been substituted for the original because they are more amenable; in these cases a species or variety has been selected which is as near as possible to the original.

1. **Our Lady's Ribbons**, *Phalaris arundinacea-picta*. This is the ribbon grass, more commonly known as Gardeners' Garters. It was one of the earliest of the ornamental grasses to be cultivated in gardens, and is the variegated form of the wild plant.

2. **Our Lady's Thimble**, *Campanula rotundifolia*. This is the Harebell. It is a widely distributed wild flower, usually in short grass on poor soils.

3. **Our Lady's Bedstraw**, *Galium verum*. This was said to have been the bedding chosen by Our Lady to line the manger at Bethlehem. It is a common hedgerow plant, especially on light soils. It smells of new-mown hay.

4. **Our Lady's Lace**, *Asperula odorata*. Another name for Woodruff. It is fairly common in woodland places in England. It has lots of tiny delicate white flowers and also smells of new-mown hay.

5. **Our Lady's Keys**, *Primula veris*. These are Cowslips, which used to be very common in England especially on poor, lime-stone soils. Now they are getting much rarer, so please do not dig up any you may find!

6. **Our Lady's Gloves**, *Digitalis*. The Foxglove, which has both poisonous and medicinal properties. The purple kind, a biennial, is a fairly common woodland plant, especially in the West of England and Scotland and Wales. There are also handsome perennial kinds, but not wild.

7. **Our Lady's Fingers**, *Anthyllis vulneraria*. The other name is the kidney vetch. It is evenly distributed on chalk and limestone in most parts of England. Though the colour is generally pale yellow, it sometimes appears with an orange tinge. Also known as Woundwort for its healing properties.

8. **Our Lady's Thumbs**. This should be the wild *Polygonum persicaria*, but as this is annual and loves to grow in wet places another polygonum (*P. affine*) has been planted instead.

9. **Our Lady's Mantle**, *Alchemilla vulgaris*. This is generally found in rather shady places in England. The leaves are clothed with very fine silky hairs on which raindrops can settle without wetting the leaf. Possibly because of this it was likened to a good waterproof for the Blessed Virgin.

10. **Our Lady's Shoes and Stockings**, *Lotus corniculatus*. This is an old name for Bird's Foot Trefoil, a common wild plant on poor soil.

11. **Our Lady's Bower**. Traveller's Joy, the wild *Clematis vitalba*, would be far too rampant here, so *Clematis recta* whose flowers are very like it has been substituted. The wild Traveller's Joy is very common on chalky soils, and is beautiful both in flower and (as Old Man's Beard) in the seed which lasts throughout the winter.

12. **Our Lady's Taper or Candle**. This is the mullein, one of the wild biennial verbascums. *V. Chaixii* which is normally a perennial has been included as well.

13. **Our Lady's Earrings**. This must be a more recent appellation for the fuchsia is a native of the New World.

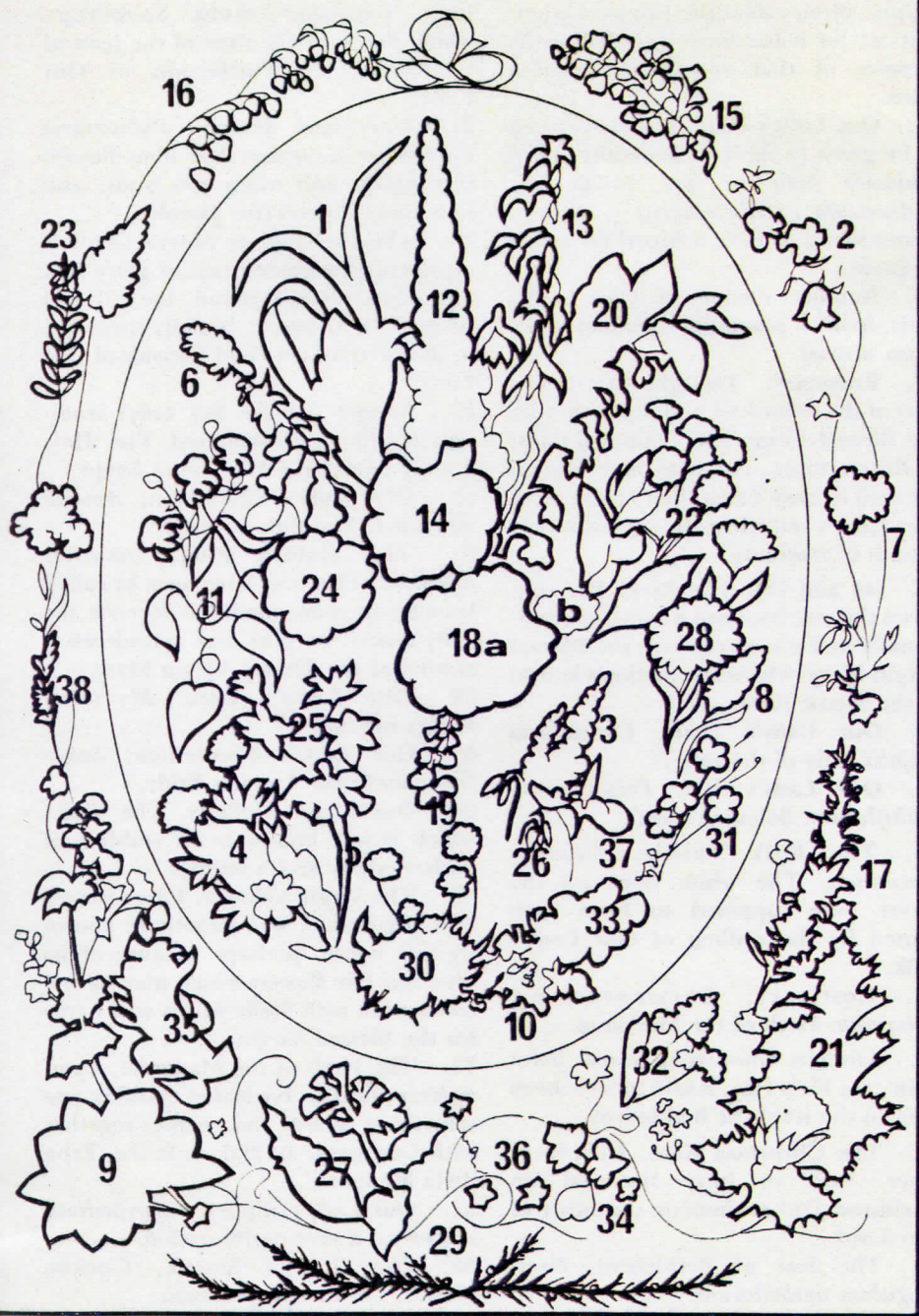
14. **The Madonna Lily**, *Lilium candidum*. It is often called the Lily of Annunciation, for it has been included in the pictures of that event from earliest times and throughout Christendom. It was possibly introduced by the Crusaders.

15. **Our Lady's Hair**. This name used to be given to the fern generally called Maiden's Hair or just Maidenhair (*Adiantum capilla-veneris*)—though Venus seems to have usurped the name in Latin. The true maidenhair is not hardy, except in mild climates like Ireland, so a hardy substitute (*A. venustum*) is used here.

16. Another version of **Our Lady's Hair** is this perennial quaking grass (*Briza media*) which is common in England on chalk downs and limestone pastures.

17. **Rosemary**. Though the 'mary' part of the name had nothing to do with the Blessed Virgin (the botanical name is *Rosmarinus*), the pale blue flowers are said to have taken their colour from Our Lady's veil when she spread it over a bush of rosemary.

18. (a) and (b). **The Rose**. For centuries the rose has been associated traditionally and pictorially with the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was sometimes known as the Mystic Rose. There are, of course, countless very ancient roses, both wild and cultivated. Here, 18 (a) the Old Blush China, or Monthly Rose, has been chosen because of its very long flowering season; while 18 (b) is the native sweet-briar, (*Rosa rubiginosa*) and is here for the sake of blind visitors. 'The Wide Expanding Rose of Divine Charity' is mentioned in the Sarum Primer.



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Plants of the Virgin Mary

PAINTED BY DIANA AITCHISON
 Photographer D. Rendell

Plants of The Virgin Mary

Over the centuries, and throughout Christendom, certain plants have been associated with The Virgin Mary. Some traditions have a very long history, whilst others — such as those emanating from the New World — are of comparatively recent origin.

After the Reformation in England, references to The Blessed Virgin and Our Lady were sternly discouraged, so Mary's plants were given less provocative names and became Lady's Smock, Lady's Mantle, Maiden Pink and so on.

To make sure that the legends linking the Mother of Christ with growing things are not forgotten and lost to posterity, part of the Cloister Garden of Lincoln's Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary has been set aside for her plants. For reasons of space, rarity, or adverse conditions, it is not feasible to cultivate them all, and in some cases the original plant is represented by one as nearly related as possible.

The Cloister Garden at Lincoln was the inspiration for this leaflet. By very kind permission of The Dean and Chapter, it contains much of the information available in rather more detail at the Cathedral.

The back cover key to the painting is numbered as follows:

1. Our Lady's Ribbons, *Phalaris arundinacea-picta*. Ribbon grass or Gardeners' Garters.
2. Our Lady's Thimble, *Campanula rotundifolia*. Harebell.
3. Our Lady's Bedstraw, *Galium verum*, said to have been the bedding chosen by Our Lady to line the manger at Bethlehem.
4. Our Lady's Lace, *Asperula odorata*. Woodruff.
5. Our Lady's Keys, *Primula veris*. Cowslips.
6. Our Lady's Gloves, *Digitalis*. Fox-glove.
7. Our Lady's Fingers, *Anthyllis vulneraria*. Kidney vetch.
8. Our Lady's Thumbs, *Polygonum persicaria*.
9. Our Lady's Mantle, *Alchemilla vulgaris*.
10. Our Lady's Shoes and Stockings, *Lotus corniculatus*. Bird's Foot Trefoil.
11. Our Lady's Bower. Traveller's Joy, the wild *Clematis vitalba*.
12. Our Lady's Taper or Candle. Mullein.
13. Our Lady's Earrings. A recent appellation, for the fuchsia is a native of the New World.

14. The Madonna Lily, *Lilium candidum*, often called the Lily of Annunciation, for it has been included in the pictures of that event from earliest times.

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18. (a) and (b). The Rose. For centuries the rose has been associated traditionally and pictorially with the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was sometimes known as the Mystic Rose.

19. Our Lady's Tears, *Convallaria majalis*. Lily-of-the-valley.

20. Our Lady's Seal, *Polygonatum multiflorum*. Solomon's Seal.

21. The Milk Thistle, *Silybum marianum*. The white veins on the leaves were supposed to have been caused by the spilling of Our Lady's milk.

22. Costmary, *Chrysanthemum balsamita*. Herb of the Madonna.

23. Sainfoin, *Onobrychis sativa*. 'Saint Foin', the Holy Hay, is said to have been used in the stable at Bethlehem.

24. The Christmas Rose, *Helleborus niger*, said to have flowered on Christmas Day to honour the birth of Our Lord.

25. The Star of Bethlehem, *Ornithogalum umbellatum*.

26. Candlemas Bells or our Lady's Bells, *Galanthus nivalis*. Snowdrops, which flower at the time of the feast of Candlemas (or Purification of Our Lady).

27. Mary and Joseph, *Pulmonaria officinalis*. Lungwort has blue flowers (for Mary) and often red buds, and sometimes flowers (for Joseph).

28. The Marigold or Mary's Gold. It represents the golden rays of glory that are often shown round the Blessed Virgin's Head and is, broadly speaking, in flower at all the chief festivals of Our Lady.

29. Juniper (in the key only) traditionally hid and sheltered The Holy Family during the Flight into Egypt.

30. Our Lady's Pincushion, *Ameria maritima*. Sea-pink or thrift.

31. The Maiden Pink, *Dianthus deltoides*. This may have been so called because in some medieval legends the 'gilly-flower' or pink was considered a symbol of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

32. Our Lady's Eyes, *Myosotis*. Forget-me-not.

33. Our Lady's Needlework, *Saxifraga umbrosa*. London Pride.

34. Our Lady's Modesty. The Violet which is well known as an emblem of both modesty and humility.

35. The Virgin's Flower, *Vinca minor*. The periwinkle, was sometimes known by this name, perhaps because of its blue star-like flowers which may have a connection with Stella Maris as a name for the Blessed Virgin.

36. The Herb of the Madonna, *Cymbalaria muralis*. Ivy leaved toadflax was sometimes given this name together with Costmary. In Italy it is the 'Erba della Madonna'.

37. Our Lady's Slipper. *Cypripedium calceolus*, a rare native orchid.

38. Our Lady's Smock, Cuckoo Flower. *Cardamine pratensis*.