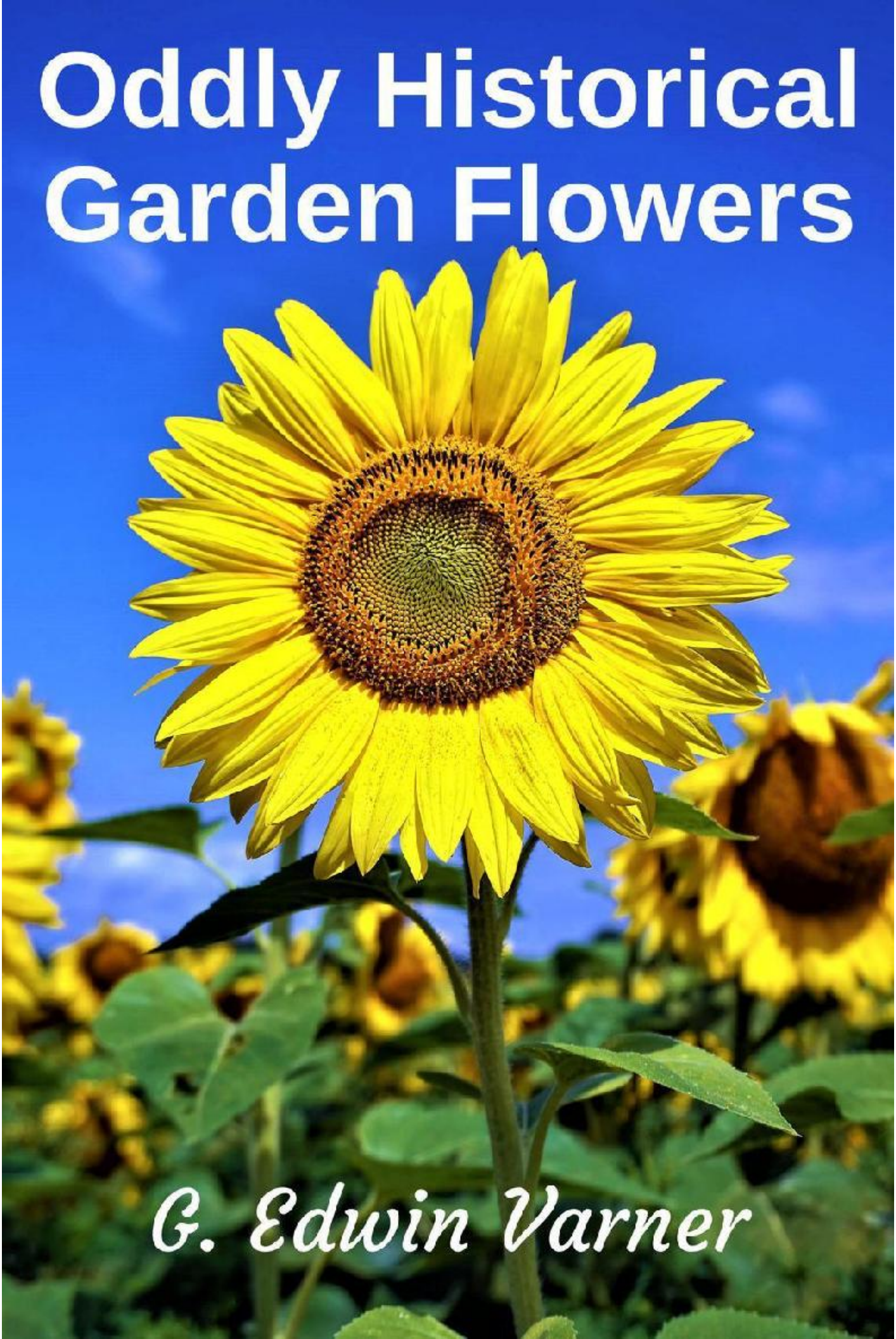
Oddly Historical Garden Flowers



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ODDLY HISTORICAL GARDEN FLOWERS

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Written by G. Edwin Varner.

Preface

This entertaining ebook concerns the strange interaction between famous events and people in history with our common everyday garden flowers. Some of those beautiful botanical wonders blooming in your garden, possibly right now, have a remarkable story to tell by helping shape the course of world history.

I am a flower gardener and only act as a historian when writing this ebook. My rendition of botanical historical accounts may prove inaccurate in some details. If so, I apologize for these unfortunate mistakes.

Portions of this publication's content are from my previous works on different floral subjects. I revised the wording and corrected some now-noticeable errors while researching the following plants.

The digital photos are of the flowers at my home, public gardens, many nurseries within my area, and Creative Commons (CC0) licensed images.

Introduction

Every person, past or present, has a history and contributes to it. You may not realize it, but flowers also have a history, but we rarely, if ever, acknowledge it. Even if we did, would we really care? Probably not, but it may surprise you that some garden flowers have played a small but strange part in historical events and people.

This ebook describes strange historical encounters with our commonly grown flower garden plants. Unlike my previous ebooks, this is not a how-to guide on growing them but on explaining why they helped influence the course of events and the people involved.

Flowers are personal objects. They have inspired artists to paint them on their canvas, representing religious themes or as botanical models inspiring outstanding beauty. Prominent writers of sonnets and poems have written about admiring flowers in expressions of love and the horrors of war. We have even used them for medicinal usage to help cure ailments of the body and mind. Some flowers helped contribute to the actions and thoughts of notable and slightly fewer famous people.

This ebook presents a short but informative and hopefully enjoyable review of those odd or rare occurrences when flowers became part of historical events. It's all about their beauty to our senses, emotions, and spiritual well-being.

Abundant beautiful flowers often grow in the field of world history.

Alcea – Hollyhock

Alcea rosea

A principal representative of the immense Mallow Family, Hollyhocks have grown in herb gardens for centuries. They are also responsible for helping knights win the Crusades — one sore horse at a time.

Native to Asia, this plant slowly spread (via explorers and traders) to the Middle East and later to Europe. Its chief importance was for the soothing salve made from the stem juice or sap. People spread applications on skin wounds and to ease sore muscles.

During those ‘holier than thou’ Crusades, knights slathered this sticky salve on their own skin and on their horses’ sore legs. One specific troublesome equine anatomical area, called the hock joint, is in both

hind legs. Each hock (equivalent to our ankles) is necessary for sudden galloping and jumping. The “hock plant” became famous, partially helping Christianity “win” the Holy Land.

Its name eventually turned into the “Holy-hock plant.” Through the corruption of the English language, the name ultimately transformed into Hollyhock. Yes, a strange but true history lesson. We will re-encounter these butt-sore crusading knights later in the Rose section.

The hollyhock flower stalks grow tall — most to over six feet — and smaller flower gardens can comfortably accommodate these enjoyable giants. They are easy to raise from seed and command attention to become “show-off plants” to your friends and neighbors. They also provided an essential necessity for outdoor beautification — especially for hiding outhouses or privy buildings. How is that for a different historical understanding of these magnificent plants?

By 1940, according to a US Census report, only half of the American households had piped-in water for bathing and indoor-installed toilets. For practically all rural areas, you excused yourself to visit the outhouse. This modest, single-roomed, wooden structure containing one or two seats (his and hers) and the extensive Sears and Roebuck catalog for reading (and a cleansing function for uninteresting pages) created some anxiety and embarrassment for more genteel homeowners, especially the ladies. The gentlemen could not care less. Homeowners planted hollyhocks (and other tall-growing flowers such as morning glories) to hide or camouflage the outhouse.

According to written accounts, refined ladies, especially those visiting, would politely ask for directions “to see the hollyhocks.” This was a code for “*Where is your privy, dear?*” The lady-of-the-house would understand and show her where they grow. For visitors too embarrassed to ask about the hollyhocks, all they had to do was look around the backyard to see them. Their general vicinity could also be located because of the smell — if you know what I mean. But the embarrassment remained, for everyone knew what someone really

wanted to do, and it wasn't to see tall-growing flowers. It was a delicate social situation back then.

There were inherent problems with planting these flowers near an outhouse. A major concern is with bees, wasps, and spiders. Bees visited the flowers while the wasps and spiders preferred the interior of the outhouse for shelter. Another problem was visiting the outhouse during the winter. Never mind the sub-zero windchill upon your exposed bottom, for you couldn't say you needed "to admire your hollyhocks" when they were all dead. I suppose people had to "hold it" until they arrived home to occupy their own icy outhouse.

You may not realize it, but we would still need permission to see the hollyhocks without modern indoor plumbing and the use of a bathroom or restroom. God bless all plumbers!

Chrysanthemum

Chrysanthemum morifolium; Dendranthema morifolium

It took a long time for chrysanthemums (aka ‘mums’) to be seen and enjoyed by European gardeners, but China cultivated them for over two millennia. According to ancient Chinese literature, they were one of four noble plants to grow. The others were plum tree blossoms, bamboo, and orchids.

Though considered having beautiful flowers, ‘mums’ were more valued for medicinal purposes, such as brewing the petals, leaves, or roots for tea to ease health issues. Experiencing sleep disorders? Drink some

mum-tea. Have recurring headaches? A hot cup of 'golden flower' tea will ease the pain.

Later, Japan and Korea had the honor of growing and enjoying the plants when Buddhist priests took home souvenir plants when visiting China. But the flowers were only for the ruling class. The rulers forbid the lower-class poor people to grow them in their gardens under the penalty of death. Selfish group of snobs, weren't they?

Today, everyone can grow and enjoy them. The public celebrates the flowers in Japan on National Chrysanthemum Day or the Festival of Happiness. We should all celebrate such a holiday!

Until the early 1800s, the first 'mum' plants arrived in England and France. Even with both countries' political and social turmoil, new plant explorations continued with interest and anticipation. Europe always sent merchants, ambassadors, and other curiosity seekers to China for goodwill relations. Some of these people were greedy plant hunter-spies who had nefarious opportunities to steal prized tea plants and other botanical "goodies" and smuggle them back home. Different species and varieties of 'mums' were part of this contraband. Botanists and growers could now breed new varieties of their own.

The wealthy high-class gentry and royal members had the time to enjoy growing and producing these plants. Some locations formed flower clubs to discuss new 'mums' and have competitions to develop the biggest and the best specimens. As for the poor folk, well, they had actual work to do and tending their vegetable gardens to supplement food. Same old story, isn't it?

Eventually, the 'mums' traveled to the rest of Europe and America a few years later. They were not always welcome to be grown in flower gardens. Ironically, Chinese and Japanese people at that time believed chrysanthemums symbolized the sun, perfection, and a long, healthy, prosperous life. Italians, though, considered chrysanthemums associated with death or with bad luck. Any fall-blooming flower was suspected of being associated with the devil. I didn't know the devil enjoyed flowers. Oh well, why not?

Since ‘mums’ are excellent cut flowers, they became popular for funeral directors to add to casket displays. Thus, in a twisted but logical question, who wants to have “dead man’s flowers” growing in a living person’s flower garden? What a significant blunder that would be! I imagine Italian garden club members would run away to find salvation in the nearest church or chapel.

Dahlia

Dahlia coccinea and hybrids

For most of history, people did not value flowers solely for planting in a garden but used the entire plant for medicinal properties or food items. Displaying beautiful flowers was a bonus to be enjoyed when feeling great and having a full stomach.

Our common dahlia plants are native to Central America and extend into the mountainous regions of Mexico. Discovered by 18th-century Spanish explorers (when they had spare time from not looking for and looting for gold and precious gems), they collected some plants to be shipped to Spain. The flowers looked pretty, but the tubers were the most interesting.

The native people, who lived where the various dahlia species grew, harvested the tubers and cooked them like potatoes. The explorers saw this, probably ate some, and then realized that the tubers could become an important food crop for Spain. Periodically, potatoes had a troublesome habit of developing fungal diseases. It would destroy entire crops before the potatoes could be dug. This repeatedly happened in France and, more famously, in Ireland.

Apparently, eating the dahlia tubers was not a pleasant epicurean experience for most of the population (they should have added some butter), but those beautiful flowers created a sensation within Europe and later America. Growers discovered dahlias had great potential to create new floral forms and colors, so everyone wanted to raise them in their gardens. That is until they later got bored with them.

Other unique and newly discovered flowers created excitement, so the once-great dahlia became a “has-been” for growing in flower gardens. Gardeners developed that “been there, done that” attitude about raising them. But, the adage of “*everything old is new again*” resurfaced, and growing dahlias again became popular. So much so that dahlia flower clubs became popular — for a while — until boredom came about again. And so, the cycle continues. Today, well... look at all the garden catalogs and websites and see all the gorgeous varieties available for you to enjoy.

Other important historical discoveries about dahlias once again center on their tubers. Recent findings suggest several essential health benefits of eating the tubers. Cooked dahlias once provided type-2 diabetic people a safe metabolic alternative to potato starch until the discovery of insulin.

The tubers “may” also provide essential minerals and vitamins, reduce cholesterol levels, reduce osteoporosis, reduce weight, control epilepsy, and help control blood pressure. These health improvement qualities are from preliminary studies, but the statistics look favorable.

Now, hold on — don’t go on a wild feeding frenzy consuming the tubers. Consult your GP doctor before having a dinner of mashed, fried, or

baked dahlia tubers. Until being a bona fide panacea for a supplier of good health, let’s enjoy those lovely flowers — until we all get bored with them.

Datura – Jimson Weed

Datura stramonium

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Practically all plants contain some form and quantity of toxic substances. This provides a plant a means of survival against all herbivores that can eat its parts. In most cases, we should learn to avoid any plant that may be poisonous.

In some rare instances, people have tried consuming plants with unknown toxicity either deliberately (for religious purposes) or by mistaken identity or purpose. The results range from wild hallucinations, uncontrollable body movements, organ failures, and ultimately, death. When a plant becomes known as harmful, it creates

stories or accounts of what happened to the unfortunate people who suffered from its ill effects. One such historical account involves the *Datura* plant, originally nicknamed *Thorny Apple of Peru*.

Datura (and the related but larger growing *Brugmansia*) contains highly toxic hallucinogenic chemicals fatal in high concentrations but are beneficial at very low levels. In medium doses, well, that's a different story.

In 1676, a company of British soldiers protected established colonists in Jamestown, Virginia, from Native-American uprisings and armed rebellion attacks by dissatisfied colonists led by Nathaniel Bacon. This rebellion eventually became known as Bacon's Rebellion.

While waiting for something exciting to happen by either terrorist group, they decided to eat the young *Datura* leaves as a boiled salad. Here, the reports "go sideways" for another account says they made soup with the flowers and leaves, while a possible eyewitness states they ground the seeds into a powder as a substitute for tea or coffee. Whichever way they consumed the plant, they all took a wild 11-day "out-of-their-freaking-minds" hallucinogenic "trip" using 1960s slang.

Some went naked and acted in simian (as in monkey) comical ways. According to an account by Robert Beverley, a Virginian who either witnessed the event or was told of it wrote this passage in his journal:

"[Their actions] was a very pleasant comedy; for they turned natural fools upon it for several days; one would blow up a feather in the air, another would dart straws at it with much fury, and another, stark naked, was sitting up in a corner, like a monkey, grinning and making mows at them; a fourth would fondly kiss, and paw his companions, and snear in their faces, with a countenance more antick, than any in a dutch droll."

For a modern translation and clarification of Bob's account, they acted like flirtatious and agitated chimpanzees worthy of a comedy sketch performed by the *Monty Python's Flying Circus* actors.

Afterward, they all returned to normal but remembered none of their wild 'spaced-out monkey' days. It must have been a rousing and

laughter-filled eleven days for those soldiers who did not eat the plants. All joking aside, they were fortunate not to die from eating this plant.

When word spread of this spectacle, the *Datura* plant began being called Jamestown Weed, James-Town Weed, or shortened and later mispronounced as Jimson Weed.

Dianthus – Pinks and Carnations

Dianthus plumarius; caryophyllus

In the 4th century BC, a Greek named Theophrastus (the ‘father of medicine’) gave this name to these beautiful, colorful flowers. ‘Dios’ means god or gods, and ‘anthos’ means flowers. Put the two together, and you get “flower of the gods” or god-flower. Hold on — it’s god-flower, not godfather! Can you imagine Don Vito Corleone growing carnations instead of tomatoes? It’s a flower you can’t refuse. Never mind; a feeble attempt at a joke.

The Normans brought Dianthus culture to England, where the population went crazy growing them. The names they gave them were ‘gillyflower’ and ‘sops-in-wine.’ This last name refers to the practice of the Tudor winemakers of dumping the flowers into barrels of wine to

help flavor it. Oh, those wild and crazy Tudors! I guess the wine produced back then was flavorless, or they drank it “before its time.”

Old-fashion Dianthus varieties are historically significant since generations of gardeners have propagated them. They are ‘living history’; what stories those petals could tell! For example, being drowned in barrels of wine.

The term “pink” refers not only to the color but to the serrated edges of the petals in many species and varieties. These jagged edges resembled those made by pinking shear scissors upon the cloth. Thus, the term ‘pinks’ became adopted. They are easy to grow, and most bloom prolifically in the late spring and early summer for about one month. Other varieties will bloom nonstop.

The largest floral varieties of Dianthus are called carnations, and they have had a few strange historical moments. One such moment involves a long-time sentimental occasion called Mother’s Day.

Celebrated in the Middle Ages and into the early 1900s, the United Kingdom practiced an annual Lent fourth Sunday holiday for parishioners to travel back to their “mother church” or the church that baptized them. This yearly pilgrimage became Mother’s Day or Mother Church Day.

Several years passed, and a new but secular Mother’s Day holiday arose — not by church officials but by a young lady named Miss Anna Jarvis from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Historians consider her the founder of Mother’s Day celebrated in the United States. Anna’s mother loved to grow white carnations, and when she died, Anna devised a plan to create a memorable holiday for people to present carnations to their mothers. In 1907, and each year after that, she gave white carnations to each church member to recognize their mothers on a specific Sunday in May. Well, word eventually spread about her special Mother’s Day carnation giving event, and, in modern social media slang, it ultimately went viral across the country.

Word eventually spread to the United Kingdom, and in 1913, Constance Penswick Smith resurrected the flagging Mother Church Sunday observation and transformed it into the Mothering Sunday Movement. To be blunt, possibly to the point of me being out-of-line, I believe it frustrated Constance into jealousy over Miss Jarvis hijacking the Mother's Day concept. Miss Smith's plan succeeded and remains today as Mothering Sunday and as a hybrid of church love and love of motherhood. Well, it's a killing two birds with one stone idea.

Anyway, back to Anna's idea of a Mother's Day celebration — it grew in scope across the United States. By 1912, several states declared it a state holiday, eventually prompting President Woodrow Wilson in 1914 to declare it a national holiday. Then things changed in how to observe this holiday, much to Anna's disappointment and increased frustration.

Several changes took place counter to what Anna had initially planned. Once proclaimed a national holiday, florists changed the original white carnations to include red or sold other flowers, especially roses, for customers to give to their mothers. Gift merchants sold many "motherly objects" such as chocolate candy, scented soap, and jewelry. Greeting card companies churned out millions of sentimental '*I Love You Mother*' inspirational cards for those on a cheap budget to spend on mom. To say Anna became emotionally devastated by what capitalism did to her ideas on what Mother's Day stood for (in her view) would be an understatement.

By 1920, she began a reverse movement to abolish a national Mother's Day and revert it back to a local church custom event day. She went on letter-writing and speaking engagement campaigns to encourage national political leaders to abandon the holiday. She even filed lawsuits against various companies that used "Mother's Day" in their advertisements to sell products. Her lawsuit cases failed in parallel with her rapidly declining lifetime savings by legal fees.

She died in 1948, almost penniless and remorseful at what she unintentionally did to dishonor her mother's memory. All that happened and still happens on the second Sunday in May (in the United

States) revolves around the idea of growing and receiving white carnations.

There is another form of love: Nationalism — the love of one's country. One particular country is Portugal, where on April 25, 1974, the citizenry and military overthrew the 40-year dictatorship government by a "nearly bloodless" revolution or coup. This revolt became known as the Red Carnation Revolution.

The history of this movement is complex — well beyond the scope of this ebook — but the basic facts are the citizens and the military overthrew the dictatorship government and established a full-fledged democracy with the help of long-stemmed red carnations. Yes, you read that correctly. A few shots were fired, which unfortunately caused four people to die. Still, unlike most military coups, the shooting suddenly stopped, and the revolting but euphoric citizens began inserting red carnations into rifle barrels and soldiers' shirt pockets. How this happened would make a good revival episode of *The Twilight Zone*.

So, how did those red carnations come to represent this new freedom? There are a couple of viewpoints on this matter. One idea is a lady holding an armload of red carnations was walking in a Lisbon Street and came upon a group of soldiers. She then gave each soldier a carnation. It would be more interesting if we knew what they talked about while she was doing this, but "who knows?".

Another variation of this story involves a restaurant worker doing the same act. It's anyone's guess why he carried such an enormous bouquet of carnations.

Regardless of the story's version, red carnations became the symbol of the newly established era of democracy. April 25 is now celebrated as Portuguese Freedom Day. That is an excellent example of what "flower power" can do to change for the better.

Dicentra – Old-Fashioned Bleeding Heart

Dicentra spectabilis or Lamprocapnos spectabilis

Once known as *Dicentra* (and still is with us diehard gardeners), botanists now classify this outstanding spring-blooming, hardy perennial as *Lamprocapnos*. I'm sorry, but this name sounds like a newly discovered dinosaur fossil or a comical beast straight out of a Dr. Seuss book. No, I will stick with the old name.

The common name of the flowers perfectly describes them. Pink, rose-red, or pure white are the colors of the heart-shaped blossoms. The pink and red ones are the most stunning, for they resemble a broken

heart with the bottom showing a large drop of white blood (think of it as blood plasma). Don't worry—some varieties display crimson red drops giving these flowers a jolt of *NCIS* realism. In some ways, it looks semi-ghastly but is a well-constructed, charming little flower!

This plant was first introduced into Europe in the 1840s by Scottish plant hunter-explorer-extraordinaire Robert Fortune. Bobby had a knack for going to out-of-the-way worldly places. One day, he came across this charming perennial growing in China, thought it looked pretty and brought it back home.

Bob had a darker side to him, and it involved being a spy—no, not your James Bond style of snooping—but of seeking and pilfering (spy-talk for stealing) tea plants out of China. The British East India Company hired him to travel to China, get friendly with the locals, admire their gardens and pretty flowers, and stuff a few Oriental botanical treasures into his pockets or bags when no one was looking. And, if, by chance, he was to visit a tea plantation—which was his actual mission—steal as many potted tea plants or cuttings as possible without the workers (and royalty) finding out. You don't steal in China under the penalty of imprisonment or, at that time, death. This plan sounds like a garden writer's script for a *Mission: Impossible* movie. Spoiler alert—he succeeded in his mission. We got pretty plants for our gardens and refreshing tea to sip while admiring them.

For a follow-up of this historical account, growers shipped *Dicentra* plants to the United States and Canada in the late 1800s. Loved by the public, florists grew them as potted gifts for Valentine's Day. Isn't that sweet? Who said history is boring? It depends on the subject and the people involved!

Helianthus – Sunflowers

Helianthus maximiliani; grosseserratus; giganteus; tuberosus and more

You are mistaken if you think sunflowers are only those common large-headed types (*Helianthus annuus*) planted in a garden. Many other native species are flourishing in North America. They all thrive in dry, open grassy areas such as meadows (prairies) and in “making the best of it” roadside abodes. These are tough plants surviving scorching sun and dry soil.

On a historical note, American Plains Indians grew these various species as a year-long food source by saving the nutritious seeds and the starchy tubers (if available). German naturalist Prince Maximilian of

Wied-Neuwied led an expedition into the American West during the 1830s and came across one or more species. One species named after him, *Helianthus maximiliani* or Maximilian's Sunflower, grows wild in many central and eastern US states.

Another important species, the Jerusalem artichoke (*Helianthus tuberosus*), also called sunchokes, is also native to central North America. It was (and still is) cultivated for its starchy tubers. These root tubers are long-lived and thrive in the dry prairie environment.

Early explorers learned of this species from the Indians and sent shipments of tubers back to Europe, hoping to become naturalized there. It would have been more popular had it not been for a more productive and easier-growing starchy vegetable called the potato.

People primarily raised sunflowers as a food resource and not strictly for ornamental value (that was a bonus). Seeds of these species also went to Europe and beyond, especially to Russia and surrounding nations, where hybridization eventually created sunflowers with seeds containing more nutritious oils used for cooking. Today, we raise them for their oil and brilliant beauty and harvest the seeds as snacks for us and the birds.

Another important historical fact concerning these plants involves "emotionally complex" artist Vincent Van Gogh, who later in his life developed a passionate interest in painting sunflowers. He was obsessed with depicting their structure, especially their bold colors of yellow and orange. His works displayed fields of them throughout France and of individual flower heads. He told his brother Theo that he had become enamored with the colors and complexities of their structure.

For proof of his admiration for this plant, art historians state he created 12 paintings of various "poses" of the flowers. No matter what people thought of him, he always credited sunflowers with giving him a welcomed but temporary "sunny disposition." Poor Vincent, he never sold a painting. Today, they are priceless.

One of the strangest but environmentally vital uses of sunflowers is for them to clean up heavy metal and radioactive contaminated soil and water. Environmental scientists discovered sunflowers growing well near the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident in the 1990s and wondered why they were not dead or "growing weird" because of the excessive radiation. What the scientists discovered was even more strange, for the plants absorbed the radioactive elements from the soil and nearby contaminated waterways. Other plants died except the common, but now wild-growing sunflowers seemed to thrive.

The scientists also experimented with growing sunflowers in contaminated ponds and lakes using specialized hydroponic methods. They inserted the seeds in floating fibrous mats or rafts, making the root system extend into the water. Surprisingly, the growing plants absorbed more radioactive elements than those growing in soil.

So, what became of all these plants? They were not allowed to bloom so as not to transfer radioactive pollen to bees and seeds to birds. Yes, they still — somehow — survive in that area but do not want the radiation to spread elsewhere. Before blooming, the technicians harvest the plants, dry them, pulverize them into a powder, and store them in containment vessels for later permanent burial out of harm's way. They only harvest the top growth while the root system remains. It is too dangerous to uproot and disturb the contaminated soil. If growing time is sufficient, they sow more seeds to allow additional plants to grow and absorb even more radioactive minerals.

Years later, sunflowers were (and still are) planted in other radioactive areas, including the 2011 Fukushima, Japan, nuclear power plant disaster.

Other scientists discovered that specific hybrid-made sunflowers absorb heavy metals (like lead) from contaminated soil. This is especially important for inner-city environments where old houses and businesses still have lead-based paint and other heavy metals contaminating the ground.

Why are sunflowers so prone to absorb such harmful substances? Environmental scientists call them “hyper-accumulators” because their large leaves and excessive thick and long main stems absorb those dangerous substances. A few other plants act the same way but do not have the size, bulk, and rapid growth that sunflowers plants can provide to absorb these harmful substances.

Using sunflowers to “accumulate” contaminated soil and water material is priceless in terms of cost-effective economic calculations. It would be very costly (over one trillion dollars annually) to dig up the soil and pump out water for decontamination. Sowing sunflower seeds and eventually harvesting and processing the plants costs a small fraction of that amount.

Since the Chernobyl disaster, Ukraine has become a nuclear-free country. The sunflower has become their national flower expressing hope for a peaceful and safe future. That is until the spring of 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine. Systematically, he has destroyed cities, towns, and villages with untold numbers of death and suffering. His military took over and occupied (absolutely crazy) the Chernobyl area, including the highly radioactive power complex.

What the future holds for the people of Ukraine is unpredictable as of the writing of this ebook. In some small but heartfelt gesture of support for them, the world sowed and grew more sunflowers. Maybe these beautiful plants can absorb toxic behavior and actions. Alas, we can only wish they could.

Iris – “Yellow Flag Iris”

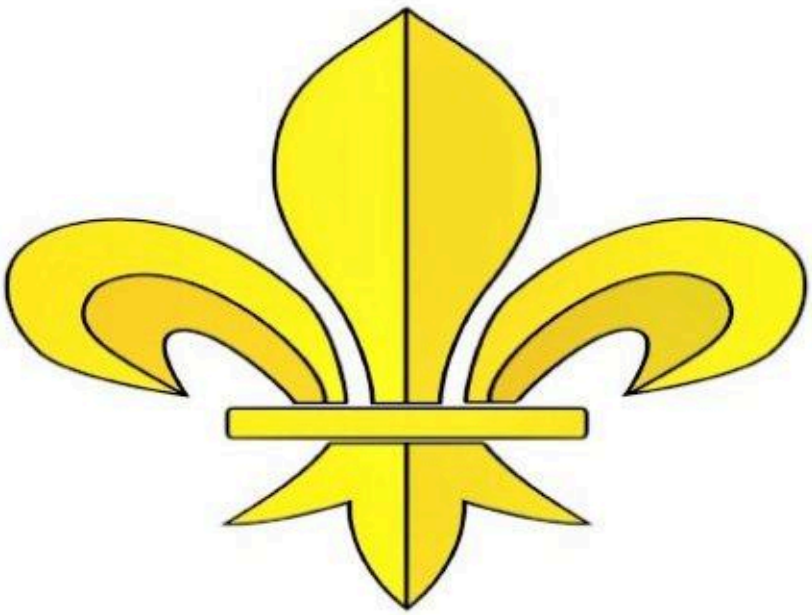
Iris pseudacorus

We are about to enter a botanical version of *The Twilight Zone*. Here, we have an unusually constructed flower, or, to be more precise, the appearance of three flowers-in-one. Their construction comprises six petals – three outer hanging ones (called “falls”) and three inner upright ones (called standards.) Along the center of each fall petal is a band of contrasting, colorful, fuzzy extensions called beards. Some species of Iris are beardless. Having or lacking these beards determine the classifications of over the 300 species of Iris grown today. Some have been hugely popular throughout the ages.

There is an underlining common historical thread about the look of an Iris flower. It is not the beard feature that makes this plant historically

unique; it is that six-piece three-dimensional design that makes all Iris plants stand out from the appearance of all other flowers.

In Greek mythology, Iris, the Goddess of Rainbows and the messenger of the gods, also had the duty of leading the souls of dead women to the Elysian Fields. Hopefully, she had time to take the kids to soccer (football) practice. Anyway, ancient Greeks would leave Iris flowers on the graves of women. It was important for the departed to confirm their reservations for the trip to Paradise. This is one physical aspect of this plant's history, but a different interpretation of how the flower looks takes on greater historical relevance. This unique look really appeals to many people in so many ways.



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This Iris became a stylized symbol known as the 'Fleur de Lis' or 'Fleur de luce,' called the "flower of the lily" in many European societies, especially in France. This motif eventually became famous as a royal

symbol of French kings, Spanish nobility, the Province of Quebec, Canada, New Orleans, the national flower of France, and the state flower of Tennessee. This beautiful flower has had an impressive history, from the Elysian Fields to many royal coats of arms, flags, crowns, and flashy clothing designs. There are plenty more accolades available somewhere.

It is debatable which species of Iris spurred this interest in depicting it as a design. One favorable theory is the **Yellow Flag Iris** (*Iris pseudacorus*), which grew in abundance in France and Germany. It is the one that captivated the early French Monarchy and succeeding kings.

Some kings changed the yellow color to royal purple. Other nobles in other countries may have thought, "*If those other kings think it is a great logo, then I will also have my version.*" It is not a far-fetched idea, for displays of an Iris retro-design are everywhere in European history. For example, Ms. Joan of Arc, to support Charles VII (The Dauphin) to be king of France, successfully led her French troops to victory over the English, holding a white banner emblazoned with this symbol.

Other military units in other countries, including the United States Army, have, at some time, used the Fleur-de-lis as a symbol of power and fortitude. One other major user of this symbol is the Roman Catholic Church. The iris represents the Holy Trinity and is a unique icon representing the Virgin Mary.

Here lies a problem — not for Mary — for I am not sure when an Iris was officially called an Iris, but long ago, some botanically misinformed people called it a Lily. I will not venture into this symbolic quicksand involving Mary, Jesus, and Easter until the next section on the historical adventures of the Easter Lily. For now, treat this as a warning of several confusing ideas ahead.

Lathyrus – King Tut Pea

Lathyrus azureus

As our common fragrant Sweet Pea varieties gain all the accolades of prestige and honor to grace our gardens, another humble little pea has made a significant name for itself. This plant has a few other names, such as Blue Grass Pea and Indian Pea, but it's best known as the legendary **King Tut Pea** (*Lathyrus azureus*).

Gather around everyone, for you are about to learn about this mysterious plant. As the legend begins, the famed English archaeologist and Egyptologist Howard Carter discovered Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamun's tomb, nicknamed "King Tut," on November 4, 1922. He and his assistants found seeds of this plant while rummaging around Master Tut's personal burial belongings (poor kid). The ancient

Egyptians supplied their deceased rulers with parting gifts on their journey to the afterlife. They had left food items, like these peas, as a quick, high-energy snack for this teenage pharaoh.

Carter spirited the seeds and valuable ‘golden goodies’ back home to England at the country estate of Lord Carnarvon, who financed Howard’s excavations.

The seeds germinated, grew, and bloomed when inserted into the estate garden soil. It amazed people that these seeds could germinate and thrive after 5000 years. On learning of this discovery, gardeners wanted seeds from these unique royal plants. They became known as the King Tut Pea to distinguish them from all other species or varieties.

Historians and botanists doubt if this pea-story is true. One reason is that 5000-year-old seeds would not survive so long in a tomb. A more plausible story is that Lathyrus sativus grows wild in that area and throughout the Middle East, Northern and Eastern Africa, and Asia. Someone sent Lord Carnarvon fresh seeds (or collected himself) and grew some in his extensive estate gardens. Here, he “germinated” an intriguing story about these Mummy peas.

You can believe this story or not, but what is true is this pea has gorgeous sky-blue to purple blossoms. A few stripes of pink (like marbling) create a greater eye appeal. Unlike the climbing and fragrant nature of the Sweet Pea, this unscented species forms a few climbing tendrils but prefers to sprawl on the ground.

Growing this pea in your garden is worth the wild story and all those gorgeous blue blossoms.

Leucanthemum – Oxeye Daisy

Leucanthemum vulgare; Leucanthemum x superbum

The Oxeye Daisy is not the most beloved plant in many parts of the world, especially here in North America, by being considered a roadside and farm field weed.

Native to Europe, this tenacious plant can colonize most soils and easily out-compete native plants. Reports show it growing in North America in the 1800s. It came here as a stowaway in imported crop seed. When the plants bloomed, they caught the attention of gardeners and became a must-grow plant for their gardens.

Later, farmers and ranchers found the plants spread crop diseases and grew uncontrollably in meadows. Cattle and horses dislike eating these plants, so the land becomes unusable.

Today, botanists list the plant as one of the most invasive plants found in the United States and Southern Canada. It is against the law to sell or grow them in gardens in many areas. (I am not sure, but are there garden-police officers on duty?)

If prime growing real estate is unavailable, these daisies are blooming-their-heads-off near roadsides and nutrient-exhausted fields. A field or long stretches of highway lined with these daisies in the late spring is breathtaking! They are eye-candy but lack important qualities — except for providing nectar and pollen for pollinator insects.

Couldn't someone do something so we could grow them (lawfully and safely) in our gardens? Two people eventually did, but it took several years to do so.

One person, American horticulturist and plant breeder extraordinaire Luther Burbank (1849 to 1926) had a brilliant idea. He wished to breed a new daisy that behaved itself, was hardy, floriferous, and grew best in a garden instead of in the wild. After years of exhaustive breeding work involving the Ox-Eye daisy and other hardy daisy species, he created the world-famous Shasta Daisy (*Leucanthemum x superbum* or *Chrysanthemum maximum*), named for the Mount Shasta peak viewed from his home in California.

That is one account of Burbank's work, but he was terrible at recording his cross-breeding experiments on this daisy and other plants. He may not have been so meticulous in his breeding and selection process but relied on luck to discover a better-growing plant. Today, few of his treasured plants remain but are surpassed by even-better varieties.

One other man helped transform the Shasta Daisy into better acceptance into gardens and did it by luck and observation. All he had to do was pull a train's emergency stop cord.

English nurseryman Horace Read traveled by train one day in the 1920s, looking out the window when he suddenly spotted a semi-double petaled Oxeye Daisy growing near the tracks. Either he possessed outstanding vision, or the train was traveling at a snail's pace for him to see it. Giddy with excitement, he memorized the approximate location of the plant in relation to a nearby landmark.

As the train neared the remembered landmark on his return trip, Horace pulled the emergency cord, quickly stopping the train. Once entirely stopped, he jumped out, hunted for the plant, and found it. He then dug it out and safely secured it for the trip home. There is no mention of what verbal assaults he must have faced from the angry engineer, conductor, and fellow travelers. You can imagine their response when hearing his possible reason for pulling the cord. "*I saw the most splendid specimen of Leucanthemum, and I had to have it!*" Yeah, that was a good excuse. He probably arrived home with a black eye and, for good measure, a bloody nose.

To Horace's credit, he would add "new blood" to a lackluster daisy. He would breed several new varieties using his cherished plant, some with fully doubled petals, better hardiness, and smaller size.

Today, the long-blooming daisies sold in garden centers and growing in our gardens are variations of this stunning plant. It is not weedy, for it cannot grow well outside a garden. Best of all, the garden police will not arrest you for raising them—if they were to raid your garden. As for your marijuana and opium poppy plants, well, that's a different matter.

From a newer historical perspective, these daisies and children go hand to hand — or, more specifically, finger to finger. I do not know if children continue the practice of fortune-telling "petal-ectomies"—the practice of plucking off daisy petals to determine if a love interest is sincere. As a young girl plucks each petal, she would say, "he loves me, he loves me not." The last plucked petal determines her happiness or despair. Mother Nature can mess with your emotions.

Lilium – Lily

Lilium candidum; longiflorum

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Let's consider the lilies of the field — and of our gardens. Absolutely no fragrance garden is complete without the dependable lily. They have had a close relationship with us since 1600 B.C., based upon artwork from ancient cultures. The Greeks and Romans valued them as fertility symbols. It seems they were always obsessed with fertility and sexual ideas from flowers.

On the opposing viewpoint, early Christians wrote about lilies symbolizing purity, chastity, and honor in the Bible. Is there any question why a pure white lily symbolizes the resurrection of Christ?

The question of which lily species is Christianity's Easter lily is constantly questioned and debated. One major contender is Lilium candidum "**The Madonna Lily**." This is not a lily associated with the music star 'I am a Material Girl' Madonna but of the Virgin Mary's religious fame. Historians believe this species is one of the oldest cultivated ornamental plants, with historical and artistic references going back 3,000 years. And no wonder, for it is so darn pretty!

According to legend, Mary began weeping over the violent death of her boy. Her tears dropped to the ground and later "germinated" into white lilies. Many Medieval and Renaissance paintings depict Mary with these white flowers. The pure white sepals, golden anthers, and sweet perfume symbolize her pureness of body, heart, and soul.

The Madonna Lily has different growing requirements and habits than other lilies.

It blooms in the spring before the others, with several pure white trumpets and sweet perfume. Then it goes dormant during the summer but forms a rosette of foliage on the ground late in the fall and winter. All other lilies (and most other flowering plants) grow in the opposite sequence.

It was once popular in cottage gardens but is now rare and forgotten by gardeners and nurseries — possibly because of its unique growth process.

Now, hold on — there is another contender for the honor of being the real Easter lily fame. Many people consider *Lilium longiflorum* 'The Easter lily' for growers can artificially induce it to bloom whenever Easter occurs. Otherwise, this species naturally blooms in the summer. Christian churches have always associated this lily with Jesus's resurrection.

The principal problem is that *Lilium longiflorum* is native to Taiwan and other Japanese islands. Unless there is a long-lost text of the New Testament stating so, I believe Jesus never took a vacation to those areas and brought home a few bulbs as souvenirs. The Madonna Lily,

though, is native to the Middle East. Now, let's add two plus two, which should add up to four.

Like the loud television infomercial salespeople say when selling some "miracle" gadget, "*But wait, THERE'S MORE*," another plant claims to be the real Easter lily even though it is not a true lily.

Native to southern parts of Africa, *Zantedeschia aethiopica*, called the **Calla Lily**, has its followers accepting it as the original lily associated with Jesus's Crucifixion and Resurrection. Like the other lilies previously mentioned, white calla lilies also symbolize the tears of Mary. Some Renaissance artists have painted Mary holding bouquets of this flower instead of the white, trumpet-shaped lilies.

To complicate all this Easter lily wannabe confusion, the highly fragrant perennial **Lily-of-the-Valley** (*Convallaria majalis*) also threw its small, bell-shaped, white flowers into the Virgin Mary's teardrop symbolism competition.

If you haven't deduced it yet, any white-flowering plant having the add-on "Lily" part of the name adds credence to being the "true-lily" of the resurrection experience. If people "back then" could not identify or come up with a unique common name for a white flower, they gave it the "lily" moniker. So much confusion for an outstandingly beautiful group of plants!

Monarda – Bergamot, Bee Balm; Oswego Tea

Monarda didyma; fistulosa

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Sometimes you have to wonder why people make certain decisions. Some actions can significantly alter the course of history. The common denominator to any such action is based on ideas or even a single item. For our purpose here, the item is as simple as tea.

On December 16, 1773, a ragtag group of "fake Mohawk Indians" ransacked a ship in Boston Harbor and threw overboard several chests and crates filled with compressed bars of tea leaves. The nerve of doing such a dastardly thing! Those fake Indians were actually costume-

dressed colonists protesting the actions and policies of the English government. One act, in particular, was the Tea Act, which heavily taxed and placed tariffs on tea and other commodities and items in the colonies. This wild nautical event was later called the Boston Tea Party and was one spark to help ignite the American Revolutionary War in 1775.

After the tea party festivities ended, the colonists probably rejoined at a local tavern for a kegger party by hoisting several mugs of Samuel Adams's best beer and praising themselves on a well-executed action plan. The fun ended later on when Bostonians were running out of tea. "*Where is the tea? We got to have our tea!*" they probably cried. Here is an excellent example of wondering what the colonists thought when destroying a shipload of tea. Didn't they realize they would run out of it later on? Why not loot the ship, take home all the tea, secretly store it, or sell it on the black market? There was plenty for everyone.

They didn't have to destroy the tea just to protest the tax on it. Just don't pay the tax — period. If they had to buy the tea from nearby areas, the price was probably higher than the tax levied on it by the British. Someone must have thought or been brave enough to say, "*I think we made a horrible mistake.*"

The same silly decision-making can also be blamed on King George's and Parament's idea of issuing a tax on the tea. Most colonists were of English descent and certified tea-guzzling junkies. Tea was a necessity, just like breaking air and laying a tax or tariff on it was not wise. No wonder tensions increased. If Parliament did not tax the tea, it might not have created such an uproar to the point of rebellion. I know that is a simplistic opinion, but Great Britain helped bring on this revolution with poor advice and terrible actions within the Monarchy.

Boycotts of many products from England were common throughout the thirteen colonies. Inspired, to a point, by the Bostonians' weird Tea Party shenanigans, women from Edenton, North Carolina, formed a club to protest against the tea tax. Organized by Penelope Barker, the ladies

drafted a declaration letter stating their threat to boycott all products (including tea) from Great Britain in response to the tea tax.

This is a significant protest by women who had no voice or physical actions in male-dominated politics. Penny and her activists thought the Bostonians' activities were childish and counterproductive. Smart women.

To fight the Crown and lawmakers from England, Penny and the ladies drafted a formal statement expressing their displeasure with taxation and without colonists' representation. They threatened boycotts if King George No. 3 did not adequately address their demands. They signed their full names to the document, but this was a treasonous action punishable by imprisonment or death. Gender doesn't matter in treasonous matters.

Ms. Barker had remarked: "Maybe it has only been men who have protested the king up to now. That only means we women have taken too long to let our voices be heard. We are signing our names to a document, not hiding ourselves behind costumes like the men in Boston did at their tea party. The British will know who we are."

Spoken like a true, brave patriot. Good for you, Penelope!

She sent the document to King George with copies to Parliament and the British press. Unfortunately, the Edenton ladies' demands were rejected, thinking the document was a goofy joke. The British press was merciless in ridiculing the ladies in their editorials. Deemed "*The Edenton Tea Party*," their letter became published throughout Great Britain, Europe, and the thirteen colonies. Depending on where you lived, these ladies became celebrities, either as ridiculed comedians or seriously minded patriots. For the women in the thirteen colonies, they became a beacon of strength, courage, and fortitude in a growing time of uncertainty and fear. The time had come to prepare for war but first was the need to locate some tea.

After this protracted (but mostly ignored by many people) history lesson, our attention finally arrives on how the *Monarda* plant plays a

part in this series of events. Tea became a treasured item since the boycott. Industrious people needed to find some type of substitution. People had to make do with something — anything — for a hot cup of tea. They had coffee, but it was not as popular or a readily available drink.

Somehow, out of tea-junkie desperation, someone discovered the wild-growing and future garden plant *Monarda* could make a half-decent orange-flavored (oil of bergamot) Earl Grey tea. They understood if you can't have the name-brand product, go with a generic one. The indigenous Native American tribes living on the region's outskirts discovered that particular herbal tea. They used all parts of the plant for nutritional and medicinal purposes.

These are bold-looking perennial plants related to mint with large and colorful flowers. The plant is native to the eastern half of North America and grows in moist woods and along stream banks. Maybe it was not the real thing, but as an herbal tea, it was worth brewing. With diminishing availability, they served proper tea only on special occasions.

Colonists with a solid British heritage (and support) preferred the garden variety *Monarda didyma*, having an orangey Earl Grey flavor. Actual independent colonists wanted complete separation from "anything British." They chose — or grew to like it — the wild-growing and Oswego Indian preferred brand, *Monarda fistulosa*, which tastes of oregano. Oh well, to each their own taste.

Nelumbo – Sacred Lotus

Nelumbo nucifera

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Earlier, we reviewed the religious significance of the Lily — with considerable confusion in Christian ideology on the species and the actual “Lily” plant. Thankfully, we will now learn about a bonafide plant that is central to the teachings of both Hinduism and Buddhism.

We often think of Lotus and waterlilies as being similar plants. They both look alike in flower shape and size, plus having oval floating leaves. But those similarities are deceptive, for they are not related to each other. They share a common ancestor eons ago but separately evolved similar appearances and functions in growing in similar aquatic

environments. The following section will learn more about the waterlilies (Nymphaea).

Although I include them here in the ebook on garden flower histories, they are technically water plants that need to grow in standing water, such as in a garden pool or large tub.

The aquatic Lotus plant is a living fossil, like the Ginkgo tree. Mother Nature decided not to tinker with the evolution of these plants; why mess with perfection? Fossils of clearly identifiable Lotus plants date back to the Cretaceous Period when dinosaurs ruled the earth. Then, like now, this plant grew in mud-covered tropical flood plains. They submerged their tubers in thick, silty mud.

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When covered by floodwater, a perfectly formed, immaculate flower bud emerged to the surface. It opens into a pristine white to rose-pink

flower highlighted with yellow anthers and a conical seed capsule. It amazed ancient people how such beauty could develop from such a smelly mass of muddy earth. Such amazement eventually led to the development of religious movements.

There are only two species of Lotus in existence. *Nelumbo nucifera* lives in semi-tropical to fully tropical locations from India to the Middle East and vast regions of Indo-China, China, and Japan and extends into the eastern Malay Archipelago. The other species, *Nelumbo lutea*, the **Yellow or American Lotus**, is native to the southern areas of North America. From a religious-historical perspective, most worshiping action dwells on the Sacred Lotus, *Nelumbo nucifera*.

The Sacred Lotus developed as a cult symbol following over seven thousand years ago based on its life-giving properties. It was a vital food resource for generations of people, providing many nutritious seeds and tubers and creating a magnificent renewable agricultural resource. From an aesthetic perspective, those attractive flowers perfectly depict transforming one's soul from dwelling in a filthy earthly existence to a heavenly, clean and unsullied realm.

One person, Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, devised the beginnings of a religious following based upon the spiritual blending of the beauty of this Lotus with everyday life. Through his writings and teachings, he declared, "*As a lotus flower is born in water, grows in water and rises out of water to stand above it unsoiled, so I, born in the world, raised in the world having overcome the world, live unsoiled by the world.*"

Buddhism acknowledges that life oozes considerable suffering. Still, the soul will ultimately achieve Nirvana or true Enlightenment through devoted meditation, honest hard work, and a peaceful state of mind and body. Later, Hinduism and similar "ism" religious faiths would parallel this belief and symbolism of the Lotus. Its doctrine includes that our earthy existence (the tubers) is in darkness while our spiritual goal (the leaves) is to seek life-giving substance (the sun) and the intent (the fresh flower) to find beauty, fertility, and regeneration.

Okay. I hope that I have stated the basic principles of these two regions “almost accurately” in association with this Lotus plant. Since I am not an expert on religious doctrines and practices, I will not venture further. Things become more complicated when stories and mythology intertwine and overlap with a heavy layer of political dogma. To summarize all the previous paragraphs into a shortened version, the Sacred Lotus symbolizes the way to achieve a better life and soul. Not bad for a flower being a living map to navigate to the state of Enlightenment!

Nymphaea – Water Lily

Nymphaea caerulea

People clumped the **Sacred Lotus** (described above) for a long time with water lilies. Hey, they all look alike, don't they? Well, yes and no. As stated in the Lotus section, they apparently are unrelated via DNA analysis. Maybe they had a common ancestor eons ago but now mirror each other based on similar growing conditions. The flowers almost look identical but differ in coloration and the appearance of the stamens and seed capsule.

Old habits die hard, so you will not warrant a visitation by the police if you classify every large floating leafy aquatic plant as a water lily — or as a Lotus, according to some historical accounts. *Nymphaea caerulea*, commonly called the **Egyptian Blue Lotus**, is a case in point.

The ancient Egyptians revered this beautiful blue water lily. Their lives and culture centered on the Nile River, specifically on its yearly flooding cycle vital for the fertility of their agricultural land. Each year, these flowers rose from the thick mud near the shoreline of the Nile. The Egyptians not only harvested the plentiful seeds and tubers but also worshiped them for displaying this cyclical regeneration. It is almost a parallel belief and symbolism of the Sacred Lotus in the other civilizations.

Let's not rehash what I wrote about earlier, but the cycle of birth, death, and resurrection is a recurring concept with these plants. But there is another down-to-earth attraction for water lilies (and Lotus) plants — enjoying their beautiful flowers.

"*I'm good for nothing except painting and gardening,*" French painter Claude Monet once said. Although he was an artist, he took immense pride and pleasure in creating beautiful flower gardens and painting them. Did you know his massive work called "*Water Lilies*" is not just one painting but over 250? Critics and the public scorned most of his work. Oh, what do they know? There is always a critic lurking about to trash a creative person.

Monet planted several water lilies in his garden and each year painted them in various "poses" (for a better word). A friend reported he would stare at his water garden for hours, determining which daylight intensity was perfect for painting. Art historians believe he was not focusing his attention solely on the water lily flowers but on their colorful reflections in the water.

His immediate attention (or attraction) was what the water surface looked like. The reflections in the water were an ideal representation of the impression of something out-of-focus, colorful, and distorted. He once wrote, "These landscapes of water and reflection have become an obsession. This is beyond the strength of an old man, and yet I want to express what I feel. I have destroyed some of the canvases. I begin once again. ... I hope something will come of all this effort."

His statement reflects what ancient civilizations once valued the Lotus and water lily — a unique representation of the constant fluidity of life, death, renewal, and resurrection into something new and beautiful. He couldn't have picked a better subject to paint.

Papaver – Opium, Field, and Shirley Poppy

Papaver somniferum; Papaver rhoeas

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In the history of garden poppies, I suppose we need to address the colorful elephant residing not in the room but in our gardens. That botanical elephant will be the **Opium Poppy** (*Papaver somniferum*).

The Latin species name means 'to bring on sleep,' since we derive the drug morphine from the plant, but the fantastic colors of their flowers will keep you wide-eyed awake. That fact alone can be ideal for growing this plant in your garden. Still, it also has the dark side of becoming

(through unlawful human activity) horrible mind-altering drugs called opium and heroin.

Relating the history of poppies, especially the Opium Poppy, would take a considerable amount of writing and downloading capacity for an ebook. Sorry, that is a polite excuse for me to prevent saying I can't undertake such a chore. For simplicity's sake, we should know that people did not grow most poppies only for their colorful flowers. Most recorded history emphasizes the need to harvest the alkaloid latex or sap released from the deliberately injured seedpods. They can convert this latex into compounds that represent both good (pain relief) and bad (as in horrible mind-altering addictions).

Wars and laws became enacted for generations to control poppy growth in many societies and countries. No other flowering plant has experienced such a tumultuous history of commerce, greed, control, and usage as the opium poppy. All eradication efforts to eliminate the unlawful growing, selling and use have been futile, including strange United States federal actions that affected our backyard gardens and nursery businesses.

Since 1995, the federal Drug Enforcement Administration has asked florists, plant nurseries, and mail-order seed companies to stop selling opium poppy seeds or plants. This was not a firm mandate but an "it would be appreciated if you did" attitude. At first, the DEA acted in an Orwellian "Big Brother" manner by threatening nursery and seed businesses to get rid of the seeds or plants or face criminal prosecution.

One famous example was the 1991 incident at Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home. The tourist shop sold many seeds and plants of flowers, herbs, and vegetables that Tom grew in his gardens. One such flowering plant Tom enjoyed seeing was the opium poppy. No, he was not a Founding Father drug kingpin; he just enjoyed the beauty of the flower. The DEA cracked down on the workers at the Monticello gardens, seed shop employees, and directors of the estate for selling and nationally distributing a known unlawful narcotic plant. The entire

staff at the estate was stunned by the DEA's stringent demands to stop selling the seeds and destroy every opium poppy plant in the area.

One other legal worry concerned the purchasers of those seeds and plants. When learning of what happened at Monticello, gardeners became concerned that the "Feds" would break down their doors and arrest them for drug trafficking via poppy growing. Guess what? The Feds did — but not about the Monticello case — for neighbors would report (aka rat) that their nearby neighbors were growing several opium poppies in their flower beds or the local nursery was selling several packets of poppy seeds. Local police were notified, and investigations proceeded. I am unaware of any significant arrests, but plenty of "official warnings" and orders to destroy the plants were issued.

At some point, possibly noticed by lawyers, the Controlled Substances Act of 1970 (where all this poppy miss-mash began) stated that growing and owning opium poppy plants were contraband substances, but selling seeds was fine and dandy. What? Yes, that law states the seeds were acceptable to sell. This may have been a loophole for bakers to sell poppy seed ingredient cakes, bagels, muffins, and other goodies. Seed companies could also sell limited amounts of seed. The cringe-worthy wording of the law also states that whoever plants the seeds has perpetrated an unlawful act. Gardeners beware!

These actions created a political uproar over the innocent and straightforward act of raising colorful poppies. The Fed's actions were eventually tamed-down, but the request for seed stores and nurseries to stop the sale of the opium poppy remains — but is rarely, if ever, iron-fisted enforced today. Too many other problems need immediate law enforcement action instead of hunting down rebel gardeners.

One saving grace for gardeners is the vast number of people who can't identify an opium poppy from a Shirley poppy or any other flower. Let's face facts — most people are ignorant about identifying garden flowers. I don't know if that is sad or a blessing.

You may think you are about to embark on a clandestine operation as an opium gardener, but fear not; most opium poppy varieties offered in seed catalogs produce insignificant amounts of sap or latex to form copious amounts of opium. Still, you and I are breaking the law. We gardeners can be “bad-to-the-bone” when push comes to shove.

Worried the “garden police” will ransack and uproot your prized perennials and petunias, thinking they are opium poppies? Then your best recourse is to grow lawful poppies instead, including the ever-popular **Field or Corn Poppy** (*Papaver rhoeas*) and a variant strain of vibrant Shirley Poppies.

Nothing can compare to these eye-catching historical plants growing near roads and in old meadows. As annuals, their tiny seeds can live for years, waiting for the soil to become disturbed. When so, the seeds germinate by a plow or battlefield grave digging, then quickly grow and bloom into vibrant red flowers.

Once considered a nuisance agricultural weed, it is no longer thought so because of better crop farming practices (such as better purification of crop seeds and herbicides). Today, these poppies spread via escaped seeds from garden plantings or intentionally sowed for roadside plantings for beautification.

The bright red flowers bloom from spring to late summer, depending on your location and climate. Native to southern Europe, especially around the Mediterranean, the plants would thrive in newly plowed fields from long-dormant seeds. When the cereal crops — corn, wheat, or oat — became ripe, so were these poppies. At the time of harvesting, all these seeds became mixed. Later, the following spring, some poppy seeds sprouted along with a new cereal crop, and the cycle began again.

Historically, the red petals became a memorable symbol of the tragedies of war. British Lt. Colonel John McCrae composed a famous poem in 1915 describing the horrific results of a World War I battle in which his close friend, a Canadian medic with Canada's First Brigade Artillery, died. Called "*In Flanders Fields*," he traumatically told of rows of soldiers' graves surrounded by a sea of grass highlighted with these red poppies.

"In Flanders fields the poppies blow; Between the crosses, row on row,...."

Like most poetry, his poem would have been forgotten if not by Moina Michael, an American lady who was inspired by the poem. Moina helped nurse wounded soldiers during and after the war. When she read McCrae's war poem, it overwhelmed her with a sense to compose her own poem, "*We Shall Keep the Faith*," for people to remember "the war to end all wars." She is the first person to wear and distribute red poppies in support of all military veterans from that war. Her actions became popular and soon spread across the US, Canada, and England.

A botanical problem occurs, though, for the Corn Poppy will quickly wilt when cut. One way to overcome this was to wear artificial poppies made from bright red cloth cut and sewn to look like the poppy. Volunteers sold these cloth poppies (via donations) to raise funds for

the war veterans and their families and help finance hospitals. The tradition continues today.

As for Lt. Colonel John McCrae, he did not live to see his poignant poem "come to life." In 1918, he died in France from complications of pneumonia.

Today, people wear artificial red poppies in observance of Remembrance Day in Canada, Memorial Day (Decorations Day), and Veterans Day in America. If you need to sow and grow a beautiful "weed" in your flower gardens, let it be this and the next memorable and glorious flowers.

These Field Poppies are not always bright red. In 1880, the Reverend William Wilks of Shirley, England (a suburb of London) discovered one or more of his red poppies had different shades of color. Being an excellent gardener, Vicar Wilks saved seeds of his unusual variations over the years and planted them. He built up a line of different colors, and they became known as the **Shirley Poppy**. These plants now have vivid yellow, pink, orange, and even white variations, with most having a white "blotch" or base of the petals. New variations are still being bred, including semi and fully-double types, some having lovely bicolors and even gray.

These poppies may not have the criminal undercurrent of the opium poppy, but they are the most grown and most loved poppies planted in most gardens worldwide. That is a most reassuring fact.

Pelargonium – Geraniums

Pelargonium hybrida

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Our popular garden variety Pelargonium — called geraniums — have either solid green leaves or variegated, centralized, contrasting bronze bands called zonal leaves. They are bushy and have semi-succulent stems topped with pink, violet, white, salmon-orange, and the traditional favorite of red or scarlet flowers.

Starting in the late 1700s, with the increased production of glass windows inserted into wooden framework structures (early greenhouses), vast numbers of tender flowering plants, including cuttings of new and rare geraniums, grew during the winter months.

Wood and coal-fueled furnaces provided the heat to keep them alive until being allowed for planting outdoors in late spring.

So, what makes them such a historical subject? Instead of famous people growing them, these plants eventually became popular among the general public. The poor who lived in cities had no land for planting flowers and could enjoy at least one potted plant near a door or windowsill. A potted blooming geranium provided color to a dirty gray city environment and elevated the mood of depressed housewives.

This plant may represent the first-time people began “cherishing” having a potted plant to help ease tension and depression. These “pet geraniums” made people (lonely women especially) feel needed and act like companions. That makes better sense than having “pet rocks,” a popular trend beginning in 1975.

Geraniums are prime potted plant subjects since they can tolerate dry and low-fertility soil and have their roots confined within a clay flowerpot. These soil conditions mimic those found in their native southern African regions. Friends would give other friends and family members rooted or un-rooted stem cuttings or side-growing shoots.

Artists often painted potted red geraniums against the backdrop of the dismal homes of common laborers — along with the obligatory sleepy house cat near the pot. Authors such as Jane Austen would include a depressed character shyly retreating from society to enjoy the company of a potted red geranium. Charles Dickens firmly believed in growing them to give the poor and oppressed a reason to smile.

Not all of society loved these plants. At first, the wealthy gentry enjoyed growing them for their estate beds and borders. As the plants became popular and excessively planted, their opinions changed. They then considered the plants vulgarly common because of being too commercialized. If the poor people grew them, that was a significant reason for not having them. Pompous author and playwright Oscar Wilde comically worried that he would become reincarnated as a red geranium instead of a precious orchid after his death. I wonder how he fared?

Today, geraniums of all colors (yes, especially red) display themselves in beds, borders, pots, grave sites, and window boxes. Most are seed-raised varieties, and gardeners now treat them as annuals, for they all die by the early onset of winter. What was once a cherished plant is now considered a disposable item. That is a rather sad treatment of a once dependable and obedient botanical pet.

Polianthes – Tuberosa

Polianthes tuberosa

This delightfully fragrant plant from old Mexico comes from a bulb or thickened tuber. From midsummer until a frost, a spike of medium-sized, single to double, waxy, rosebud-like flowers open in the warm evening air. They release into the air one of nature's most potent syrupy-sweet perfumes—like that of gardenia, hyacinth, lily, and jasmine combined.

A long time ago, Tuberose was heavily used for funeral arrangements. The reason was to help mask the smell of... well... you know... the dear departed. Sorry, but I had to mention that fact. Well, it eventually lost its popularity. After all, you don't want someone saying that your garden smells like a funeral home. Seriously! Ultimately (and with better

techniques (like refrigeration) to preserve a dead body), Tuberose became a popular garden plant again.

One other little-known fact is King Louis XIV of France (the Sun King) had thousands planted in the Grand Trianon's flower beds at the Palace of Versailles. He loved them — maybe a little too much. Each summer evening and through the night, their combined fragrance was so overpowering it made people nauseous. Many learned to flee the area before sunset or risk up-chucking their dinner. In a letter by Madame de Maintenon on August 8, 1689, she states, in part: "*We have to leave the Trianon each evening on account of the tuberoses; men and women alike find themselves overwhelmed by the power of their aromas.*"

Well, if you want to "get even" with your horrible neighbor, here is one unique way of doing so!

Pueraria – Kudzu Vine

Pueraria montana

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After the American Civil War, the defeated Confederacy once boldly declared, "*the South shall rise again.*" Well, the rest of the country is still waiting, but if you have the **Kudzu Vine** (*Pueraria montana*) creeping up and around you, that prediction has come true.

At the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1876, this vine made its debut in the United States from Japan and China and later to the Southern states at the New Orleans Exposition in 1883. At both venues, the government heralded it as a unique new vine. By the 1930s, agricultural workers planted thousands of vines to help decrease the

threat of Dust Bowl soil erosion. By 1974, the Department of Agriculture officially classified Kudzu as an invasive, noxious weed and earned the infamous nickname "*The vine that ate the South.*"

At the Expositions, growers advertised it as a great, fragrant vine to grow on porch trellises to help shade houses from the hot southern sun. It worked... boy, did it work! I'm not kidding! Homeowners realized something was horribly wrong when the vines covered their entire home.

Kudzu belongs to the pea-bean family. A significant reason for its rampant growth is that it is a legume – its roots can obtain nitrogen from soil bacteria. It processes its own fertilizer, even in poor nutrient soils, and forms large storage roots that provide energy for the plant during the winter even if freezing temperatures kill the top growth.

Within time, Kudzu smothers all plants, human structures, and even tall trees. So why does it spread so fast? The primary culprit for its dispersal is by seed. Birds and commercial seed companies helped spread the seeds to new areas—including a few places in Europe. Selling seeds continued for many years, even after realizing it was an invasive vine. It took until 2009 to ban internet sales in the USA.

Today, the news rarely, if ever, mentions Kudzu, but it continues a northward and westward progression in the United States. It may (actually, will) increase its travels because of global warming. Even severe cold areas do not limit its ongoing spread. There are reports of it growing in southern Canada (populations reported increasing along the north shore of Lake Erie) and even into Europe, where Switzerland, Italy, and a slew of other locations report it is growing.

Will it continue its quest for world domination, or will we control it? Sadly, all bets are on the domination prognostication. Like the Dandelion, how can we stop its prolific growth and spread?

Reseda — Mignonette

Reseda odorata

Sometimes, the tiny insignificant flowers can create some well-needed pleasure, especially in turbulent times. The exceptional quality of this annual flower is not about having beautiful flowers (which it sorely lacks) but its pervasive and unforgettable sweet violet and raspberry-blended fragrance.

Reseda is native to northern Africa and accepted in high regard by the ancient Egyptians. They scattered bouquets within the tombs of pharaohs, so the dear-departed kings had a pleasant air about them to enter the afterlife. How thoughtful of them! Many centuries later, specifically by the mid-1700s, when this plant reached the gardens of

Europe, the flowers helped to lessen the stench of garbage and sewage-strewn streets of London and Paris.

The name 'Mignonette' is French for 'little darling,' and 'reseda' means to calm down or have a calming influence. While conquering various countries, Napoleon Bonaparte came across this plant growing wild in Egypt. He eventually sent packages of seeds of it and others (by an earlier type of *FedEx*, no doubt) to his beloved Josephine. Long before text messaging and email, he may have sent an archaic form of a message called "a letter" to her. It may have read (in French, of course):

"My dearest Jo,

Marched across Northern Africa. OMG, what an exhausting trip! I found this wonderful perfumed flower. I thought of you. Enclosed are some seeds. Love from your little darling, Nappy. XXX :>)"

Well, he may have sent a note like that. Probably not, but... anyway, Empress Josie loved the perfume so much she called the flowers "mignonettes." That may not be that accurate because Napoleon's soldiers also loved this flower and called them the same nickname. That doesn't sound true either. Oh well, whoever called those blossoms that name, it stuck and hasn't changed.

Eventually, Reseda crossed over the Atlantic and found its way into Thomas Jefferson's hands. One thing about Tommy was that he was an avid gardener and was delighted to sow and grow any new flowering plant he encountered. To the delight of historians, he would write about his thoughts on his vegetable and flowering plants, including this plant.

And so, this little, weed-like plant still grows in gardens worldwide. It is, surprisingly, unnoticed by newer gardeners. Perhaps this is because of having so many other flowers available for growing and enjoying in a garden. It is out-competed by many other colorful flowers and is classified as "out of sight — out of mind." Once smelled of its unique perfume, it will never leave your mind.

Rosa – Heirloom Roses

Rosa species and varieties

We're now getting into a very thorny situation concerning history's most bellowed flower — the rose. This section will be the longest, for there is a lot of history concerning these plants. I concentrated on the more unusual stories attributed to them, so find a comfortable chair, have a rose at hand (be careful of the thorns) and settle in for a long read. If you lack sleep, this may be an induced solution to that problem. Oh well, here we go...

The first cultivated roses appeared in Asian gardens over 5,000 years ago. Confucius wrote about them, and the Greeks introduced the joy of rose growing to the Romans. The Romans went way too far in loving roses, for they threw rose petals everywhere—especially at lavish sex

parties. Yes, this is true! I know you will want to know more about that, but... well... this ebook is not about sex orgies. Use your imagination, but include plenty of rose petals for the ambiance.

Anyway, this rosy love-fest ended after the empire's fall, for the early Christians viewed roses as vile plants and a symbol of absolute debauchery. Enjoying beautiful flowers was not a top priority back then. Earning a living and staying alive were the primary concerns. Homes and monasteries were places where herbs were to be grown for health benefits. It took several years for roses to be enjoyed again for their beauty.

One rose, considered a necessity back then if you could afford it or obtain it, was *Rosa gallica officinalis*, commonly known as the **Apothecary's Rose** (shown above). It is the most celebrated rose in history. Why such an honor? Well, it depends on the various reasons for using the rose.

It all began with the Crusades when gallant knights came riding (not marching) back home again (Hurrah! Hurrah!). Some knights returned with hollyhock salve (see the Alcea section above), and these rose bushes. How odd. Well, yes, and no — for people considered this rose as a cure for many health disorders. What is more valuable—gold, jewels, or your health?

Monks in monasteries became the first gardeners to grow and distribute this rose far and wide, believing it had super-duper medicinal properties. The highly scented petals could help cure or ease anything from headaches, heartaches, stomachaches, toothaches, and whatever aches the body and mind can offer. People carried around the dried petals in bags or small boxes. This rose was the aspirin of their day. "*Take two petals and call me in the morning*" was what may have been a prescription back then. It was a significant healing 'drug' of a Middle Ages doctor. Thus, it became known as the Apothecary's Rose.

Rumor has it (according to TMZ of that era) that on her way to Paris to marry the future king of France, Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette was very nervous and sleepless. When her entourage came to Provins, France, a

town whose primary industry was growing roses and other fragrant flowers for perfume. Her physician prescribed having her stop and sleep on a bed stuffed with dried petals of this rose. You guessed it—she fell asleep. Oh, the wonders of late 18th-century medical science!

The dried petals may not have been an actual cure for any ailment, but they gave any person a reason to smile in such sad times. The popularity of this and other roses is because of their stunning fragrance. One group called **Damask Roses** may have originated from Damascus, Syria, by the crusader knights coming home from their wild adventures in the Middle East. Other accounts suggest the Romans brought them into England. No matter; many people loved this rose and gave it to others.

The rose petals contained fragrance oils, later extracted and eventually transformed into a liquid or concentrated into a high-quality waxy paste called Attar-of-Roses. This oily substance is costly, and we still use these "high octane" roses today to scent teas, skin lotions, perfumes, and expensive cosmetics.

Eventually, roses re-established themselves as beautiful botanical subjects, especially in wealthy people's gardens. We common folk still worked our butts off to live and tended vegetable and herb gardens instead of raising worthless flowers. The rich dudes and dudesses enjoyed growing, admiring, and showing off their prized roses. Royalty has its advantages in having plenty of time to enjoy such pleasures.

Over time, new varieties of stunningly beautiful and fragrant roses became available — especially for the enjoyment of rich and famous people. One renowned account involves Napoleon Bonaparte, his wife, Josephine, and his mistress, later to become his second wife, Marie Louise. The story goes that Napoleon dearly loved Josephine and built the vast Chateau de Malmaison complex for them to live in. They converted the grounds into massive flower gardens and even a zoo for exotic animals. While on his military campaigns, Napoleon would send numerous seeds and plants, including several roses he encountered, back to Josephine for planting in the gardens.

Empress Josephine grew several hundred varieties and species of roses at the Chateau de Malmaison. She took the time to look throughout France to find new roses. She also had help from Napoleon, even during his extended battle campaigns, to discover new roses and flowers for her to grow. He did so out of devotion and love for her, but he also loved the peaceful Chateau gardens when he was home.

Because of her intense interest in roses, Josephine encouraged her gardeners to experiment with growing new varieties. This policy may be the first historical record of making rose breeding (and other flowers) a serious activity. Over a few years, her rose gardens became the most beautiful in France, if not all of Europe.

All was well until Napoleon requested (well, ordered — as generals usually do) a divorce. Although they loved each other, Napoleon desperately wanted a son, a male heir, from Josephine. She could not have a child with him, so Napoleon divorced her and married a younger woman named Marie Louise of Austria. There was a political reason for this: he did not love Marie all that much (just her body). Well, it happens!

Anyway, there was a slight catch to having a divorce; Josephine wanted to stay at her beloved Chateau de Malmaison residence. Being an avid gardener who loved many flowers (especially her rose collection) and exotic animals, she wanted to remain there indefinitely. She told Napoleon he could have the divorce if he agreed to allow her to stay there and have a generous yearly income. Napoleon probably said, "*Honey, you got yourself a deal!*" Not bad, considering no divorce lawyers were involved.

It was customary for new royalty to have roses named after them. Napoleon, busy with day-to-day national affairs and that pesky dispute with England, asked Josephine to have her gardeners create a new rose for his new wife, the now Empress Marie. Josephine (possibly out of spite) had the gardeners change the name of an ordinary, run-of-the-mill Damask rose (perhaps one she did not care for) and rename it "Marie Louise." Josephine must have thought, "*Why bother to go to all*

that trouble to create a new rose for that little hussy?" Many rosarians feel Empress Marie received a good rose from Josephine. Maybe so, but it's the thought that counts.

Well, the plan worked. Everyone was happy. Napoleon eventually got a son. Empress Marie gained fame and fortune (including a rose named after her—which she probably cared less about since she was not interested in growing flowers). Josephine lived happily for her few remaining years of life at Chateau de Malmaison. She was one remarkable lady, well ahead of her time.

I may have colorfully embellished this true story, but that is how one rose came to be. Another flower story involving Napoleon and Josephine, this time concerning violets, will be told later.

Since roses and other gorgeous flowers are ephemeral, how can you enjoy their memory when they are not blooming? The best method back then was to hire an artist to paint them, which brings us to the next phase of rose history.

The **Centifolia Roses** took petal production to the extreme. Centifolia means “a hundred petals.” A common name is the Cabbage Rose, for the shape of the flowers, in full bloom, appear as heads of cabbages. Even with all those petals, they are not compact but are loose and open. Someone counted them one summer day, and the total came to 200 petals. I guess he had nothing better to do.

These roses were an artist’s favorite from the 15th to the 18th centuries. They commonly renamed it The Rose of Painters, for they exhibit “pretty as a picture” beauty. All these petals caught the loving attention of painters in the mid to late 17th century, and they became one of their favorite floral models. Roses (along with tulips and poppies) appear in many Dutch masterpieces.

It was an admired flower for Flemish painters such as Jan van Huysum and Gerard van Spaendonck. Look at many masterpieces of this time,

and you will see these roses and the obligatory semi-nude women. I'm sure you will only look at the roses. Yeah, right.

These artists probably wished they could have added the rose fragrance to make the paintings come to life. Who knows, they could have begun the first "Scratch 'n' Sniff" project if they had added the perfume oil with their paint. "Scratch the canvas here and smell the roses." Whoa! I may be on to something here with new painters. Remember, you read it here first.

Since we are dealing with unusual historical references to roses, wars would be one surprising area of interest. One such conflict is The Wars of the Roses, 1455 to 1487 royal family feud-type "Hatfield's and McCoy's" dispute. These conflicts were excessively bloody and did not involve fingertip pricks with rose thorns. Don't worry; I'm not inclined to go on and on about the cast of characters and never-ending battles.

The only reason roses are involved is that several years after the wars, a legend developed (possibly rumored by William Shakespeare) using roses to tell members of the Houses of Lancaster and York families apart. Each House had a red or white rose as a form of "floral mascot" or a symbolic badge of allegiance. Other symbols were involved, but rose coloration was one small identification idea. Hey, who doesn't love a pretty rose? Represented by a red rose was The House of Lancaster, while a white one identified the York House. Pardon my modern-day comparison; it's like identifying players on opposing sports teams by their uniform colors or team logo. Only these royal teams competed to win the title of ruling England.

Who won the war? Edward IV — for he became England's first York family king. Eventually, both family clan members intermarried (usually by arranged loveless politically based marriages) to develop a new hybrid family called the Tudors. The creation of a new family dynasty began along with future bloody warring troubles. Their rose has an inner white center with an outer ring of red petals. Too bad it wasn't a simple hybrid pink rose.

Other historical rose stories need to be told. Here are a few others passed down through the generations.

Different interpretations exist on how the American westward expansion was successful. New land for making a new life (at the expense of Native American lives) is probably the biggest reason. How did the **Harison's Yellow Rose** (*Rosa foetida x Rosa pimpinellifolia or Rosa harisonii*) fit into this "hitch-up your wagon and go West" travel plan?

It began life in a small New York City garden in 1824. This garden belonged to an attorney and amateur rose breeder named George Harison. One day, George saw a new rose bloom for the first time. It was his creation, and boy was he proud of it. He should be, for it turned out to be a rare hybrid.

The petals were semi-double bright yellow with a surprisingly fruity fragrance. It was also very prickly, but, hey, so are a lot of other roses.

Later, wanting to show off his new rose, he contacted a nurseryman named Thomas Hogg. Mr. Hogg loved George's rose and took cuttings to propagate it. He later sold small bushes to the public as 'Hogg's Yellow American Rose.'

People loved it, but Mr. Hogg could not supply the demand. It caught the eye and nose (plus, most likely, the pricked fingertips) of another nurseryman named William Prince. Mr. Prince contacted George and asked if he could propagate his rose and rename it "Harison's Yellow." The answer was an effervescent "YES!" So, Mr. Prince sold them, and, to make a long story short, it was a "blooming" success.

Everyone wanted to grow this must-have-it-now rose. Yes, everyone! It was easy to propagate, either by cuttings but also by suckering. Many old roses (especially the species) can spread outward by fresh shoots arising from the roots. And so, from one plant, many younger plants can grow and be gifted to friends and family.

It eventually went with the westward-bound pioneers, tucked into barrels and wrapped in wet burlap. As it traveled across the continent, its name changed. In many locations, someone called it "The Pioneer Rose" or the "Oregon Trail Rose." In Oregon, the lumberjacks renamed it "The Logtown Rose." Like you, I cannot wrap my mind around visualizing he-man lumberjacks planting, nurturing, and picking bouquets of roses. Well, working all the time with towering trees can get monotonous.

Other areas throughout the newly opened western regions grew this rose. Some places misspelled the original name with an added "r," which became "Harrison's Yellow." It's still misnamed today by some nurseries. Oh well, mistakes happen.

The name game took a significant detour in what eventually became the state of Texas. It became adopted as a native rose and affectionately called "**The Yellow Rose of Texas**." Someone later composed a boisterous song (of the same name), but it is debatable whether it is about this rose or a famous lady (possibly a popular prostitute) who helped establish Texas's independence from Mexico. Texans were not

keen on this yellow rose being a Yankee Rose. New York City? Oh, lordy no!

So, this is “How the West Was Won,” at least for this city rose, one plant and one mile at a time. Even after homesteads across the country became abandoned, extensive thickets of it survived and still do in out-of-the-way places. It tolerates many soil conditions but grows well in drier, poor soil and thrives with little care—which explains why it was popular. It was your basic “plant and forget about it” rose.

Excuse my play on words, but another rose that rose to fame was an ordinary wild plant living in Ireland. *Rosa hibernica* or *Rosa canna ‘Hibernica’* became immensely popular because of a chance encounter with a vacationing couple.

According to legend, Irish-American Chauncey Olcott and his wife took a holiday trip to Ireland in 1898. While there, a young Irish boy gave his wife a pretty rose. Isn’t that sweet? She asked him its name, and he

replied it was from a wild rosebush. The boy could have named it 'O'Shaughnessy,' but he was honest. She kept it dry-pressed in an album as a touching souvenir.

Chauncey later composed a melody of an Irish song but needed simple rhyming lyrics and a memorable name. He racked his brain for ideas, but nothing clicked. Tired of his persistent whining of failure, his wife opened her vacation album and may have told him, "*For heaven's sake, Chauncey, here is the inspiration for your new song.*" Thank goodness for wise wives. Not every day do you come across a rose with its own song entitled "*My Wild Irish Rose*."

Gardeners have enjoyed this rose for generations, discovered sometime around 1800 (give or take a day) in or around Belfast, Ireland. Although it has a slight fragrance, the simplicity of the single to semi-double petaled pink flowers is inspirational. Ah, the luck of the Irish!

Now, you'll have to endure one more famous rose from yesteryear called **The Sweet Briar Rose** (*Rosa eglanteria*,) also known as Eglantine, and is native to England. It is a favorite of Chaucer, the author of "*Canterbury Tales*," which you may have read — especially the naughty stories — and William Shakespeare, whose works you should have read (yes, with some difficulty) in high school. Bill wrote about this rose several times in his plays and sonnets beginning in the late 1500s. A good example is from his "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*," where the character of Oberon describes Titania's bower:

"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."

Yeah, so what? Well, prepare yourself for a shock if you have never encountered this enjoyable rose. Its love is not for the lightly fragrant, single-petaled, pink blossoms but for the dark green leaves. The leaves? Yes, isn't that weird? It is part of a group called **Incense Roses**, where the leaves release a sweet apple-scented aroma into the air when wet by rain and dew.

If you have never smelled the leaves after a summer shower, you miss an enjoyable gardening experience. Try to place it where you can enjoy the fragrance after a summer shower.

A history tour involving roses would not be complete without clumping them together and other flowers to create a visual, and I suspect, an olfactory extravaganza. I am referring to having a spectacular parade to celebrate a major holiday.

On New Year's Day, since 1890, the City of Pasadena, California, has had a great big flower show. Unlike the usual flower shows, this one has colorful flower-covered floats, marching bands, and thousands of spectators. Then, afterward, have a big American football game. What a way to celebrate the New Year! However, it was not planned like this.

The concept began as a local hunting club that desired to invite tourists from the cold Midwest and Eastern states to Pasadena. One way to

bring people there was to advertise all the beautiful flowers growing in the winter warmth of the area. So, they formed a winter carnival similar to one in Nice, France, highlighting roses and other flowers. Horse-drawn carriages and the invention of automobiles became decorated with colorful roses. They all trotted and "chitty-chitty-bang-banged" down Main Street on New Year's Day. This floral festivity's official name became "The Tournament of Roses Parade."

The 'tournament' name is because immediately after the parade, there was a jousting tournament in an athletic stadium named... yes, you guessed it — the Rose Bowl. In some years, there were "Ben Hur style" chariot races. How thrilling is that? However, the more exciting entertainment (like jousting and chariots were not) was having a big football game. I guess it depends on how rough they played the game. Maybe the players wore no pads or helmets. It eventually became the official game of the Tournament of Roses. You can't help but wonder what it would be like to see those jousting and chariot races. We shall never know.

The Tournament of Roses parade grew larger and increased in popularity because of wanting to increase needed tourism in the heart of winter. It was indeed a brilliant idea and a major success!

Silphium – Compass Plant or Rosinweed

Silphium laciniatum

This impressive perennial is native to the vast prairie land of North America. The coarse-textured, six to nine-foot-tall stems and bright yellow, daisy-like flowers resemble sunflowers but are not directly related to them.

The common name refers to how they orient their lowermost leaves. They position themselves vertically to a north-south axis alignment. By seeing their arrangement, the pioneers could get their approximate navigational bearings. Imagine your two or three ox-power Conestoga station wagon rolling across the prairie and realizing you're lost. Having the children constantly question, "*Are we there yet?*" does not help the situation. What can an enterprising pioneer do? Find a patch of

this plant, look at the leaves, and proudly proclaim, "*That thar way is west, so we be alright, Ma. Tell those darn youngins to simmer down!*" This plant probably helped several pioneers navigate across that expansive sea of grass. It could have been worse if the children were singing a mind-numbing repetitive countdown song called "*99 Bottles of Beer*" along their excessively long journey.

Why on earth does this plant move its leaves? Botanists theorize that it orients the leaves to avoid constant exposure to the harsh prairie sunlight during the afternoon. Aligning to a north-south position prevents excessive water loss by showing less leaf surface area to direct sunlight.

The other common name of rosinweed refers to the Plains Indians splitting the stalks and extracting its sticky sap (resin). When the resin partially dried, they would start chewing it like bubblegum.

On a sad note, this plant once grew in abundance with the tall prairie grasses before the plow appeared. Today, conservationists try desperately to protect some wild prairie areas. The great American conservationist, environmentalist, and author Aldo Leopold wrote about the loss of the prairie fauna and flora in his book, *A Sand County Almanac*. One passage describes him finding a solitary Compass Plant growing in an old, tall grass-covered cemetery. It was ironic for him that one of the last few remaining wild-stock plants grew in such small protected areas, even in a neglected cemetery. He wrote, in part:

> *"What a thousand acres of Silphiums looked like when they tickled the bellies of the buffalo is a question never again to be answered, and perhaps not even asked."*

You will not find this plant offered for sale in any garden center. You may discover plants in wildflower nurseries or in wildflower seed catalogs. Let's cross our fingers that we can find and grow this fantastic plant in our flower gardens.

Tagetes – Marigold

Tagetes erecta

Native to Mexico, these floriferous garden flowers were essential to the Aztecs for their beauty and as a medical resource and religious item. The flowers are primarily bright yellow and orange, with the leaves having a robust herbal odor that many people find offensive. For the Aztecs, these colors honored the sun, and the smell was a beneficial attribute for helping cure illness and respecting the dead.

These large flowers are called Flor de Muertos, or “Flower of the Dead.” Marigolds, chrysanthemums, and dahlias are decorations for *Día de Muertos* (Day of the Dead) holiday celebrations each November 2 and are prevalent in decorating the home and gravesites. For non-Spanish-speaking people, this day would resemble a macabre Halloween horror

movie but is like Memorial Day to honor dead relations in non-fearful but happy “welcome back home” festivities. This holiday also adds a touch of Thanksgiving to the celebrations when deciduous food is prepared and served. What a great way to celebrate the dear departed with ways to say, “thanks for the memories” or “thank you for being part of our lives.”

Anyway, the Aztecs incorporated these wildflowers into their celebrations which, strangely, became of interest to the Spanish conquistadors. Being devote Christians, you would think it would horrify them over such goings-on but eventually incorporate the flower-filled festivities into a Christian-themed holiday.

The Spanish became enthralled by these flowers and called them “Aztec carnations.” Later, they gave these plants a proper name in honor of the Virgin Mary called Mary’s Gold, and later still a shortened version of “Marigold.” Along with looting as much gold and precious gems from the Aztec people, the Spaniards also shipped plenty of native fruit, spices, and various marigold seeds back home, especially the taller growing and larger flowered types.

The sailing trip home did not have a direct connection but had a few layovers in India and Africa to take on more supplies. While at each location, the marigold seeds exchanged hands and found new admirers. New crops of seeds eventually developed there and spread to new areas throughout the Middle East and Europe. Although originally native to Mexico, the marigolds took on new names. *Tagetes erecta* became **African Marigolds**, while the smaller growing plants with petite flowers became **French Marigolds**.

Not much happened later with these plants after spreading to most parts of the world. People grew them and enjoyed the flower colors but hated their odor. Flower gardening soon became immensely popular in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Seed businesses sold many varieties of marigolds — usually based on flower size and stem height — but the flower colors remained the same basic yellow and orange, with some reddish coloration occurring in the French types. Yes, rather

dull, but what can you do? It is the nature of this floral beast, and breeders had (and still have) trouble adding new, exciting shades.

Along came David Burpee, son of W. Atlee Burpee, who created the world-famous *W. Atlee Burpee & Company*. David developed a passion for marigolds (along with a few other flowers) and bred new types through the years. But there was a problem — how to create a pure white marigold. As a gardener, you probably think, "*Hey, what's the problem? Most other garden flowers have white varieties.*" You are correct, but Mother Nature seems to have forgotten about adding white (along with other colors) to marigold pigment.

David desperately wanted to develop a white type to help boost seed sales. Unfortunately, breeding one would cost an astronomical price. Well, that is a conundrum, but that did not deter David and his flower breeding team. Someone (maybe David) came up with a brilliant idea of using Burpee customers to help develop a white-flowered variety.

Launched in 1954, Burpee created a breeding contest for customers to grow and select their palest light yellow to "almost white" flowered selections. The grand prize for the gardener submitting the best "near-white" marigold seed was $10,000. Burpee occasionally awarded $100 to people who submitted half-decent seeds as "*almost good but keep trying*" gestures throughout those years. These money gifts were either actual merit awards or public relations prompts to keep gardeners' continued interest in developing white marigolds. It was like dangling a carrot in front of a horse to keep him moving toward a goal. This idea worked, for gardeners continued growing and later submitting seeds of their possibly white-flowered marigolds, and the people at Burpee Seeds were happy with the results.

The contest continued for 20 years until Burpee breeders decided they finally had a genuine winner. Mrs. Alice Vonk, the widow of a farmer from Sully, Iowa, was declared the winner in 1975 with her seed entry. She kept selecting and pollinating her palest flowers each summer for twenty years. Each generation supplied her with even more pale yellowish-white flowers. She may have or may not have realized she

was using a simple process of natural selection (via Darwin's evolutionary theory) and Gregor Mendel's genetic selection process. No matter — she succeeded. She credited her success to God's guidance and watering her plants only with rainwater collected into a plastic barrel from gutters. Unknown to her, she was part of over 80,000 participants developing a non-hybrid "whitish" marigold.

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Burpee breeders eventually crossed her seeds with a few selections of their own to form their best (at the time) almost pure white African marigold named "Snowbird." David Burpee believed the entire experience was a blooming success for making a white variety and getting gardeners interested in growing lots of marigolds in their gardens. Their contest, advertising, hundred-dollar gift awards, and further breeding work cost the company nearly $250,000, which was a

“drop-in-the-bucket” amount compared to the astronomical cost of developing a white marigold on their own.

Still, Snowbird was the most expensive garden flower bred for public use then.

Over the years, other almost-white African marigolds became available, including a current popular variety called “**Snowball**” — also created by Burpee. These marigolds still have a yellowish cast, especially in the center area of each flower head. Mother Nature still calls the shots in flower coloration. To date, there are a few almost-red French marigolds but no white ones, while there are no ‘almost-red’ African varieties. Hey, it’s time for more breeding contests. Let’s make the prize a cool one million dollars or more!

David Burpee and company tirelessly campaigned for the marigold to become the official national flower of the United States. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed legislation in an extraordinary ceremony in the White House Rose Garden to make — drum roll please — the rose the official floral emblem of the United States. Gee, how fitting and how dull.

Roses always take center stage in all matters, including being named after famous people. The problem with marigolds is their intense herbal odor; there are no people-named varieties. Also, people objected to calling it a national flower since it originated in Mexico. Roses smell divine, but no one complained about the stems having vicious thorns. Smelling a beautiful fragrance and enduring bloody fingertips overruled those marigold defenders, including David Burpee.

India has also had an endearing history with these larger-flowered marigolds. People display them during public and personal celebrations such as weddings, funerals, holidays, and religious occasions. You would think everyone loves these flowers, but that would not be the case.

Indira Gandhi, India’s third Prime Minister, was a famous example who hated them for they caused her to experience a severe allergic reaction.

Although she forbade any to be near her, she did accept marigold bouquets from her endearing fans during public appearances. Her assistants and helpers would then quickly grab them from her hands and dispose of them.

She never showed her displeasure to the public over their floral gifts but released hell-on-earth anger if her assistants did not get those damn flowers away from her pronto. The public was later ordered not to offer the flowers to her. Well, duh... it was life-threatening. Just ask anyone having an anaphylactic attack from being near peanuts.

The most tragic story about her and these flowers occurred after her assassination in New Delhi on October 31, 1984. According to reports, during the funeral, her displayed body became covered with hundreds of yellow and orange marigolds offered to her by mourners. I am having trouble describing my thoughts on this action. It’s touching, thoughtful, and loving but overshadowed with tragic irony.

Tanacetum – Costmary or Bible Leaf

Tanacetum balsamita or Chrysanthemum balsamita

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Easily overlooked, this is a rather dull plant with large leaves, rarely flowers, and creeps along the ground. It has bright green and is intensely spearmint scented when handled or disturbed.

This plant's claim to fame goes way back throughout history. Known to the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and barbarians, it became of more important status throughout the Middle Ages. At this time, they called it **Costmary**. This name refers to two fundamental reasons — "costus," meaning herbal or medicinal, and "mary," meaning the Virgin Mary. The

combined meaning implies the plant can help heal or relieve the pain during and after childbirth. I do not know if it works, but it must have helped ease the pain — somewhat.

Years later, people have accidentally come across this plant — albeit dry — when pursuing antique books, especially those of old family Bibles. It then creates a mystery in their minds why someone would place a large leaf inside such a book. One explanation is the Puritans, in the 1600s, referred to it as the Bible Leaf. Used by parishioners as a bookmarker, they would use the large leaves to mark a page in the Bible and use a leaf as a stimulant to wake themselves up during rather dull and endless sermons. For a Puritan, the old barbaric idea of easing childbirth associated with Mary would have been heretical. Begone Satan!

Over the years, other Christian congregations have applied this leaf bookmark idea to other... ahh... boring books. (Clergy people will chastise me on that statement.)

Another reason for having a leaf inserted between pages was to discourage insect damage such as woodlice and silverfish from consuming the Old and New Testaments. Can I get a hallelujah? Amen.

Taraxacum – Dandelion

Taraxacum officinale

Yes, I must include this plant, for chances are it was, is, or will be growing in your lawn and garden. Most gardeners, even those living near Mount Denali in Alaska, can't escape it. Most botanists theorize these plants originated in Europe but are not sure of their exact location before humans began spreading them willy-nilly, here and there. No matter where it considers its "homeland," Dandelions may be the most successful plant in colonizing almost the entire planet. It now occupies all continents except Antarctica — give a few more years of climate change, and we'll see those yellow heads popping up in newly exposed patches of soil. That's a lame joke, but who knows?

These worldwide travelers have tiny flowers collected together into a composite flower head. This is no surprise since they are part of the extensive ensemble of plants in the Daisy Family. An elegant, silky white material called pappus attaches to each seed. Released from the globular seed-head by the wind or a big puff of air expelled by a child's (or us child-like adults) lungs, the seeds can travel a few yards away or to a yard in another city. They look and act like a parachute.

Wherever the seeds land, they remain viable for a long time in the soil. A new plant develops once the ground becomes disturbed and exposed to light. This process is how these plants are dispersed to all corners of the earth. Even if chopped or partially pulled from the ground, its thick root will regrow another top batch of leaves and flower heads. Without using the "nuclear option of herbicides," a plant can live for several years. That's frightening, in an unsettling way!

Although not proven, there is a theory that some seeds (or potted plants) arrived in North America with the Mayflower colonists, Vikings, European explorers, and settlers at some point in time. Everybody brought the plants with them either intentionally or as seed stowaways within the homeland soil. Other weed seeds also arrived this way since customs agents were not around then.

We must acknowledge an essential consideration that this plant played a vital role in being grown as a nutritious food item and medicinal resource throughout most of human history. The leaves made vitamin-rich salads, the yellow flower-heads transformed into deserts and wine, while the roasted roots became a coffee bean substitute.

The Ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese, Japanese, and Europeans all valued this plant for some form of cure it supposedly offered. You name the medical problem, and the dandelion will immediately heal you. Sometimes, the treatment may be a little strong and develop additional problems. For example, an old English folk name referred to the dandelion as "piss-a-bed" (I kid you not), for the roots produce a strong diuretic effect on the body.

Who could find fault with this remarkable plant? Modern homeowners who own extensive green lawns, that's who. From a historical perspective, people did not consider dandelions as weeds until they grew on a thick, grassy lawn. I am not sure if this is a similar worldwide complaint, but Americans react with disdain seeing many yellow flowers popping up all over their large green lawns and flower beds in the spring.

No matter how many broadleaf herbicide applications or how short the lawnmower blades slice through the grass, this plant, and its abundant progeny, keep reappearing. Over the years of mowing my lawn, I (and others) have noticed "possible" localized dandelion natural selection evolution occurring. The flower stalks (inflorescences) once grew tall, especially when they transformed into their fluffy seeds. They were easy to mow down then. Today, the flowers bloom below the lawnmower blade level, and even the seed heads extend shorter than usual. Mother Nature is determined to make her favorite flowering plant the ultimate survivor no matter what hazards it may encounter. Time to wave the white flag and create a salad accompanied by a glass (or two) of dandelion wine. Remember not to consume before bedtime or discover a new complaint against these plants by morning.

Tulipa – Tulip

Tulipa turkestanica and other species

Forget about gold, silver, stocks, bonds, and lottery tickets. To "get rich quick," you need to invest in weird-looking tulips — especially the virus-infected bulbs.

I should be more specific about timing. Don't do this investing now, but if you could travel back in time with *Mr. Peabody's Wayback Machine* (or the TARDIS in *Doctor Who* if you want a dangerous adventure) to Holland and surrounding areas from 1634 to 1637, you could make a tidy sum of cash.

Tulips originated in the Middle East and became a must-have item. Poets and artists praised their beauty. QVC or HGTV would hawk them

to their viewers if television were around. The most valuable tulips were ones that had streaks or spots of a different color than the base color. Buyers and sellers referred to them as “broken tulips.” No one knew about viruses or plant diseases — only their beauty and if they could make you a quick profit by selling them.

In western Europe, especially in the Netherlands, this fascination with weird tulips became a status symbol of addiction. It was so severe that tulip bulbs became “living currency.” Wealthy people purchased off-color tulips to impress their friends. Those friends had to impress their friends and so on. Eventually, this craze hit its peak in a period known as Tulipmania or Tulipomania, depending on which historical source spelling.

This obsession with what would be otherwise a beautiful garden flower became something like the California Gold Rush, but people got tulip fever instead of gold fever. Wealthy people wanted to grow, invest, sell, buy, cheat, and steal rare tulip bulbs. One weird variety, **Semper Augustus**, was the most sought-after since it was spectacularly beautiful and extremely rare. One bulb was worth more than its weight in gold. Some people sold their houses to afford one or two of its bulbs!

Then the market collapsed. Fortunes were eventually lost when level-headed people asked, “*ARE WE CRAZY? Wake up, people*!” Some economists believe the collapse in tulip trading occurred when too many people joined the buy-sell frenzy and did not know what they were getting into. There were not enough “broken bulbs” to invest in, and the market quickly collapsed.

Other economists disagree and feel this tulipomania was an overblown myth, not an economic catastrophe for Holland society. Some people did “lose their shirts,” but most (the smart ones) did not venture into the chaos. To each his own, but all economists agree this tulip-time was pretty crazy. Other financial “commodity bubbles” and collapses have occurred since this period. Still, this mania is a lesson in careful investing in a new commodity.

The lesson here with tulips is buying some bulbs, planting them in the fall, and enjoying their beauty in the spring. You'll be richer in enjoyment instead of your bank account.

Tulipmania had ended, and they downgraded tulips to just being pretty spring-blooming flowers. Some enterprising people in Holland knew they were still a good thing and continued to grow and sell them — even to this day. Thank goodness we don't have to mortgage the house to buy them.

Today, selling tulips and other spring-blooming bulbs (as Fall purchased bulbs and florist bouquets) is a multi-billion-dollar industry. Who knew such a beautiful flower could cause such excitement?

Viola – Violets

Viola odorata

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The European native *Viola odorata* varieties have an overwhelmingly sweet perfume. Originally called Florist Violets, they have escaped into the wild and our gardens and lawns. Years ago, when I operated my fragrant flower nursery, I sold blue and rosy-pink varieties. I rescued the unwanted plants from the fate of a compost bin to spend their years in the flower garden. They self-seeded with gusto, spreading all over the place, including the lawn. They bloom only in the spring, self-seed, and then slowly settle into semi-dormancy during the summer. Each spring, more plants bloomed, spreading a delicious perfume into the air.

The Greeks cultivated violas for herbal medications. Several hundred years later inspired William Shakespeare to write of love and romance (thus the old viola name of “heartsease.”)

Pansies and violas are from the same family as the spring-blooming violets. Violas are referred to as small-flowered pansies, but it is now believed that the common pansy originated from selected forms of Violas with larger flowers. Violas may not have the broad range of flower colors as pansies, but they bloom longer and more prolifically over the growing season. There are many nicknames for this plant, including “love-in-idleness,” “godfathers and godmothers,” and “jack-jump-up-and-kiss-me.” Smaller viola varieties are often commonly referred to as “Johnny-jump-ups.” Obviously, people love to use hyphenations when naming these flowers!

Now that we understand the attraction to these plants, there is at least one significant historical reference. It involves our old friends and flower lovers Napoleon and Josephine Bonaparte. You may (or should) have read about them earlier with the *Reseda* and rose sections. This couple positively loved the excessively fragrant Italian **Parma Violets**. These plants grew wild and plentiful in Corsica, where Napoleon was born. His mother loved them, and he grew to enjoy them as well. Josephine wore them at their wedding, and Napoleon gave her bouquets each anniversary. He was a true romantic. Josie also had them planted all over their grand estate of Malmaison.

Anyway, in 1814, Napoleon was exiled to Elba. Before his departure, he gave a rather strange statement to his political supporters (the Bonapartists.) In part, he said he would return (to Paris) with violets. That was one hell of a weird — if memorable — bravado bon voyage goodbye. He could have said he would return with souvenirs, but with violets? To the Bonapartists, it was code for “*see you again in the spring, my friends!*”

And they did see him by the following March when the violets bloomed. It was time for another attempt to restore France (and himself) to greatness. He was long known affectionately by the nickname “The

Little Corporal" by his troops and supporters. With his return to power, he became known as "Corporal Violet."

A few months after being imprisoned at Elba, authorities informed him of Josephine's death. Heartbroken to near-suicidal, he gained strength and spent his time planning his escape. When he did so, he secretly traveled to Josephine's tomb and afterward to her Malmaison estate for physical and spiritual (more so of Josephine's spirit) rejuvenation. Here, the fragrant blooming violets covered the ground.

On his travels to Paris and arrival there, crowds of supporters always greeted him, including women clutching bouquets of violets.

Eventually, his reign as emperor ended with his military loss at Waterloo and his exile to St. Helena, where he later died in the spring of 1821. Supposedly buried with him was a locket containing dried violet flowers — ones he picked at Malmaison.

Conclusion

Let's call this an ebook primer on garden flower history. It details a few selected garden plants that "made a difference" in world history.

Our garden flowers were once wildflowers growing in their native regions until, deliberately or accidentally, human activity distributed them to other areas of the world. Some became more well-known because of their association with medicinal and religious purposes, while others for their outstanding beauty. No matter why they grow, the most important lesson to learn is how they have associated with our past endeavors, present lifestyles, and future hopes and fears.

Flower gardening came much later in our history when people eventually had the time and money to enjoy some leisure. What a joy to realize that flowers could give us so much pleasure, especially when times are terrible.

Today, nothing has changed — from ongoing wars, economic troubles, and health problems abound everywhere — flower and vegetable gardening is still the most popular type of leisure. The future will still be the same.

Former First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson once said:

"Ugliness is so grim. A little beauty, something that is lovely, I think, can help create harmony, which will lessen tensions. ... Where flowers bloom, so does hope."

Thank you for reading this ebook

I hope you have enjoyed this ebook on unusual historical occurrences associated with a few representative garden flowers. Everything you plant has a history, but the ones listed above have special significance, however minor those reasons may be.

The flowers you grow in a garden or container today may play an incredible role in some present or future event or highly influence a person or people. What remarkable stories those colorful petals could tell us.

Please visit my author website of https://gedwinvarner.com concerning my other gardening ebooks and contact information.

About the Author

G. Edwin Varner grew up on a farm helping his father in the crop fields and assisting his mother in the flower and vegetable gardens. This early experience and learning led him to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with a minor in Botany.

For twenty years he successfully owned and operated a fragrant flower mail-order nursery. Unlike most mail-order nurseries publishing colorful but expensive pictorial catalogs, his frugal catalog extensively described the flowers he grew. He once said, “I write a thousand words worth a picture in my catalogs.” Today, he has the same style of writing (thankfully with fewer words) through a variety of enjoyable and informative ebooks. This time, the ebooks include color photos of each flower.

He encourages you to cultivate something unique and beautiful in your gardens. His motto is “read about it, see it, grow it, and enjoy it!”

G. Edwin Varner lives in a rural area of northeastern Ohio, USA.