

Maisie Landis knows and grows herbs

By SUSAN KAUFFMAN
Feature Writer

In recent years the ecology thrust in our country has sent all types of people with varying degrees of experience, or inexperience as the case may be into their backyards to grow a garden full of fresh vegetables or flowers.

For those back-to-nature enthusiasts who are confined to an apartment without a plot of ground, or those who cannot get through a winter without some greenery around them, the latest fad is to start an herb garden made up of several small pots of fragrant growth on a window sill. Added to the charm of this miniature window garden's aroma is the usefulness of the plants' leaves for flavoring food dishes.

One person who has succumbed to the wiles of herb gardening is Mrs. Maisie Landis, a petite and agile lady well past retirement age. Her age would be hard to guess because of her youthful physical activity. She says about life in general and herb gardening in particular that every day she finds so much to learn. The more she learns, the more she wants to learn. Her curious spirit and physical stamina permit her to continue searching out information and people and to travel all over the United States, often alone. She remarks that one can meet people easier when traveling alone because fellow travelers will go out of their way to speak to a loner when they might not start up a conversation with a couple.

A member of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society since 1944, she has increased her knowledge of plants through much reading in texts and magazines and through attending many tours conducted by the society. Besides these ventures she admits she often packs her bags and "hops on a plane, a train, or a bus — anything that moves" and takes off for almost any place. She and a friend went to California one year not long ago pulling a travel trailer. She admits that "although neither of us could back up the trailer we made it clear across the continent!"

Every year Maisie Landis winters on the West Coast of Florida. But when spring comes to Pennsylvania, "the most beautiful state in this country," according to this traveler who should know, she returns home to her apartment at 27 West State St., Quarryville. As soon as the weather is cooperative, she and six of the 32 members of the Drumore Flower Club find time each week to work in the herb garden which the club provides at the Robert Fulton Birthplace or Fulton House, six miles south of Quarryville on Rt. 222.

Since 1971 the Drumore Flower Club has maintained two 15 x 15 ft. plots of herbs inside a picket fence at the back door of this beautiful stone historical building.

After communicating with the state for permission, she and Mrs. Landis, Grace Smith, Doris Hough, Esther Graybeal, Mildred Holzauer, and Mary Haller cultivated an herb garden display for the enjoyment of tourists and many children who come to Fulton House on field trips from school.

"Each year we try to have something new — some new plant — because the children remember them, and those who are interested in herbs want to see more types," says Mrs. Landis.

This year one plot is designed in a Bicentennial theme. Around the outer four sides are planted 50 silver lace artemisia often commonly called dusty miller. These plants, of course, represent the present 50 states.

Forming a circle inside the artemisia are 13 dark purple basil plants symbolizing the 13 original colonies.

Inside the basil-formed circle is a large star-shaped carpet of creeping thyme. At the center of the star stands the two-foot-high delicate foliage of lavender. The contrast of colors of silver-gray and dark purple to green and



Homestead Notes

Mrs. Stanley Grill, chairlady of the herb garden committee, stands raking to keep the garden in shape.

lavender accents the various textures and heights of plant growth. And, of course, as with all herbs, the visual beauty of the plants is greatly enhanced by their fragrances.

The second plot serves as a display of various specimens of herbs. Several scented-leaf geraniums, peppermint, lemon, and fingerbowl geraniums are now on display here.

In the second corner stands a collection of thyme plants. The third corner contains sage assortments including a colorful variegated plant. The fourth corner of the specimen plot exudes the fragrance of mint. The apple, curly peppermint, spearmint, and horehound mints thrive in this area.

Planted in spots throughout the rest of the plot are chives; shallots; mustard; marigolds, which are borderline herb and flower; borage, a beautiful two-foot-high plant with small blue flowers which make attractive, edible garnishes on sandwiches; fennel; dill and lamb's ears, a tall plant three feet in height with silvery grey woolly leaves and bright magenta colored single-petaled flowers. A circle, five feet in diameter, serves as a focal point in the center of the specimen plot. On the rim of the circle are the low-growing, bright green, star-shaped leaves of sweet woodruff, which is speckled with little white star-shaped flowers in early summer.

Maisie Landis suggests that if she had a garden of her own she would try the herbs she is fond of using in cooking, then experiment later with other more exotic types. Chives are the easiest to grow. Dill is not too difficult to master, and mint can go wild if it is not kept under control. This herb enthusiast explains that mint can be planted in a large bucket then set down into the garden soil to help retain the root and stem growth within boundaries. After

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Mrs. George Hough, a committee member of the Drumore Flower Club, works in a Bicentennial garden which contains various specimens of herbs.



Dave Grill spreads cocoa shell mulch, a necessity to keep weeds down in the herb gardens.

My Thoughts and Welcome to Them

(With apologies to James Thurber)

By JOANNE SPAHR

When the Bicentennial Wagon Train entered Lancaster County over the Susquehanna River at Columbia, I felt excitement welling up inside me.

It had actually happened. There had really been wagon trains in the early days, and now people had really resigned from their jobs to take part in the nation's birthday.

As they passed, and I ran beside the train, seeking interesting photos and trying to gather information for LANCASTER FARMING, I saw a marvelous thing happening — riders and passers-by were talking to each other, smiling, and sharing a "once in a lifetime moment," as Dieter Krieg puts it, with one another.

I heard one wagon master yell, after spying a Columbia woman with a miniature American flag in her hand, "Hey, Lady, would you let me carry that to Valley Forge with me?"

Instead of the usual and expected response of either giving him a strange look, or ignoring him

completely, she eagerly ran out into the street and willingly handed it to him, saying, "Wave it for me when you get there, okay?"

How often does that, or will that, happen? I won't attempt to answer my own question, but it is a rarity.

In this age of commercialism, the Bicentennial has been utilized to its fullest for capitalistic gain. There are Bicentennial keychains and Bicentennial Cadillacs. And, I hear, implement dealers have gotten into the act with Bicentennial tractors. Sometimes this show of commercialism in the Bicentennial is enough to downhearten and disillusion.

However, the Bicentennial wagon trains, which symbolize the nation's past — its agricultural past — is one of the truly awe-inspiring and binding elements I've seen in this, our 200th year.

One wagon master said to me, "It's a shame we can't do this more often."

It is. But, thank goodness it happened once. Have a pleasant and safe 4th of July.