The “Butterfly Garden,” so-called because of its butterfly shape, was an important part of early settlers’ lives, helping to feed an entire community. Here they farmed produce in the growing months which would have also been dried and preserved to provide for the cold winter months.

Today’s garden contains herbs, vegetables, and fruits that would be grown in colonial times, as well as newer plants the community would not have discovered, but would have likely embraced.

Between 1748 and 1758, this garden was dug close to the house, arranged in three terraces, each of which had a specific function. The garden’s outer boundaries included heirloom roses, white grape vines, and flowers native to the colonial period. Grass-covered walking paths led to various sections for tending and harvesting; we use the same arrangement today. The original garden also had a small, one-story log structure to store garden tools, which we have reproduced on the exact site of the original stone foundation. The entire garden was surrounded by a plank fence to protect it from animals.

Women tended the garden, while men focused on field crops: wheat, oats, corn, and flax.

The first terrace nearest to the house is the kitchen or parlor garden, devoted to flowering plants and herbs. The plants not only attracted insects to pollinate the crops, but were cut to beautify the house and dried into potpourri. Whether picked fresh or dried for later use, many of the herbs added spice to the menu, helped preserve other foods, and were used medicinally. Today, lovage, thyme, lamb’s ear, bee balm, tansy, chives, and yarrow from the colonial period grow at the top of the garden. Along the slope between the parlor garden and the next terrace are gooseberries, currants, and strawberries.

The second terrace was the spring or root garden, and probably included beets, carrots, garlic, leeks, onions, turnips, horseradish, parsnips, and potatoes. Raspberries, blackberries, and blueberries, grown in open fields and woods, would have separated the second and third terraces.

The lower, or third, terrace area was the bean garden, home to asparagus, celery, rhubarb, cabbage, cauliflower, lettuce, spinach, kale, and kohlrabi. The colonials also planted pole beans and bush beans, and we have added other vine crops like squash, pumpkins, peas, tomatoes, corn, cucumbers, and peppers.

We’ve planted heirloom seeds and plants, saved and handed down through generations of families. Thus, they are old-time varieties, open-pollinated instead of hybrid, and will produce the same characteristics of the parent plant.

Finally, everything is grown organically, as the settlers would have done. The only fertilizer we use is organic mulch to break up the hard clay soil. We continue the colonials’ practice of crop rotation to benefit the health of the soil.