

LEARN FROM HOME



Early Settler Gardens

Parents: Please use the following information to help your child(ren) complete the worksheet.

i This week, let's look into the theme of **gardening**! This time of year is perfect for starting a garden. Gardening today is something fun, and a hobby for many people. For our early settlers, gardens were more than a hobby – they were necessary for survival. Their gardens helped feed their families, provided goods in which to barter with their neighbors, or as a little extra income if they could sell what they had too much of. It was a family affair, and everyone had an important job. For example, the mom of the family may have planted the seeds, but you would help pluck weeds, and the whole family would help pick fresh vegetables when they were ready to harvest!



To start off, let's talk about early settlers. Who were they?

You may know the **early settlers** as pioneers! They are “people who leave their own country or the place where they were living, and go and live in a place that has not been lived in before.”¹ They began to come to Upper Canada as early as the year 1760!² It is important to note that **Canada's Indigenous Peoples** inhabited Canada prior to the early settlers arrival.

? Early settlers chose to come to Canada for many of the same reasons that people come to Canada today. They wanted a better life, they wanted religious freedom and some were escaping war. Do you know why your family came to Canada?

When early settlers to Canada settled their lands, they were given seeds by the Government of Upper Canada to help get them started (**Upper Canada** is what Ontario was called before 1841). Before they planted the seeds they needed to cut trees, till the soil, find the best spot (often facing the south) so that their gardens would flourish. The gardens were as large as they needed to feed their families. Most gardens would have had the same common vegetables, called staples. These vegetables were easy to grow, could grow in Canada, and were considered *hardy* (less sensitive to changes in temperature and sunlight). These vegetables included potatoes, corn, pumpkins, squash, beans, peas, cabbage and turnips.



Rose Hip, courtesy of Encyclopedia Britannica

Gardens also contained herbs that could be used for **medicines**! In the times of early settlers, doctors were not the trained professionals that we have today. There were no hospitals to visit if you got sick. Your family would have tried to use poultices, salves, and ointments to cure whatever was bothering you before calling a doctor in for a house visit. Various plants were tested & tried over time to see what they could be used for. Garlic, for example, was mixed with honey and was used for coughs & colds. Rose Hip was brewed in teas for restoring vigor, or energy. Rose hip is very high in Vitamin C, which helps in

¹ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/pioneer>

² <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/pioneer-life>

boosting energy levels! An early settler could even make a band-aid by smearing some honey over a wound, and sticking a leaf off a lambs-ear plant overtop.



Lily-of-the-valley, courtesy of Encyclopedia Britannica

There were also plants that were used exclusively for dyeing textiles. **Textiles** are fabrics that would have been used for clothes, wash cloths, tea towels, and many other important fabric items that would be used in the daily life of an early settler. Like medicines, various plants were tested for what colours they could produce! Some examples of plants and their colours are **Lily-of-the-valley** which created a green-gold colour, **Balm Blossoms** which created a soft pink, and **Hollyhocks** created a yellow-orange. They even used the skin of an onion to dye their clothing. Early settlers thought about fashion and their looks just like we do!

The list of uses for plants doesn't stop there! Did you know that there are also **cosmetic** uses? For example, a chamomile rinse used like shampoo was recommend for people with blonde and red hair, as it was thought to enhance their hair colour. A blend of rosemary and maiden hair fern was used as a hair wash, and hazel bark was used for calming the skin!

An early settler's garden contained much more than just food to eat – it provided medicine, dyes and cosmetics. They were an essential part of early settler life, because they needed to live off of the land! There were no grocery stores for to shop, which means they had to grow enough in the summer to last them through the cold, long winter as well. Families would preserve food by pickling, drying or smoking it.

Key Words: Here is a list of all the **highlighted** words in the lesson. If you are interested in learning more this is a great place to start!

1. Gardening
2. Early Settlers
3. Canada's Indigenous Peoples
4. Upper Canada
5. Medicine
6. Textiles
7. Cosmetic



LET'S GET BUSY

Are you ready to make your own early settler garden?

1. Build your own early settler garden using the space provided below! Be sure to include at least one plant that you can eat, one that will give you some sort of medicine, and one that you could use to dye your clothes!

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin blue border, intended for drawing a garden plan.

2. Why did you choose the plants that you did? How many people do you think you could feed with a garden of your size? Would this feed your family today?

3. Now that you've created an early settler garden, draw the garden that you have at home today! If you don't have a garden at home, what do you think your garden would look like?



4. Look at your two gardens. What is the same? What is different? Why do you think your two gardens have these similarities and differences?
5. Do you think you would enjoy being an early settler in Upper Canada, knowing how much work it was to maintain your garden?