

Rocky Mount - "Where History Comes Alive"  
 By Kate O'Lenic

Rocky Mount is an amazing historic site in Piney Flats, TN. The preserved and reconstructed historic buildings and gardens covering 55+ acres truly bring life in the late 1700s alive. The site was originally owned by the William Cobb family. From 1790 to 1792, Rocky Mount became the first Capitol of the Territory of the United States West of the Allegheny Mountains and South of the River Ohio under William Blount.

Visitors can enjoy educational sessions, nature tours, museum tours, demonstrations and presentations by period-appropriate clothed interpreters, educators, and guides. There are authentic Cotswold sheep, orchards, gardens, a 1790s kitchen, blacksmith shop, and more.

Various gardens abound within and outside the fences of this historic site and are integral to illustrating life during those pioneering years. Naturally, vegetable gardening was a must back in the day and a large vegetable garden is tended by a dedicated team. Other gardens supported by the efforts of Master Gardeners include the kitchen/herb garden, the slave garden where plants were grown from seeds slaves brought with them from Africa, a dye garden, 2 butterfly gardens (one of which is comprised of all native plants), and Mrs. Cobb's cutting flower garden. One newer garden is Sonja's Memorial Garden located across the road from the main site. New gardens are being installed at the entrance gate and the flower bed around the large stone sign is undergoing a redesign.

Below is a list to give you an idea of some of the plants used that are representative of the 1700s era. Note that many plants are not native to North America. Seeds from Europe and Africa were used.

<b>Flowers for cutting</b>	<b>Herbs</b>	<b>Vegetables</b>	<b>Dye plants</b>	<b>Slave garden</b>
Roses	Sage	Kale	Common flax	Peanuts
Black-eyed susan	Oregano	Turnips	South Carolina indigo	Sorghum
Astilbe	Parsley	Spinach	Madder	Okra
Peonies	Onion chives	Lettuce	French marigold	Watermelon
Columbine	Mints	English peas	Woad	Turnips
Maiden grass	Lemon verbena	Carrots	Zinnia elegans	Black-eyed peas
Columbine	Rosemary	Beets	Benary's giant salmon rose	Collards

In addition to the non-native plants brought into the area by settlers and slaves, many native plants over hundreds of years old grow throughout the area and one is host to a rare species of dragonfly. The use of native plant is the focus of the newer gardens. Native plants in and around this historic site are one of the reasons that birdwatching is so exciting at Rocky Mount. Native

plants support the birds by providing seeds and berries as well as acting as hosts for insects necessary for feeding newborn birds.

There is a lot more to come at Rocky Mount. The need for Master Gardener involvement is expanding. Three pond areas require development and plantings – great projects for Master Gardeners who want to learn more about moisture-loving plants and pond habitats. Trails are being developed, native grasslands are being restored and more native wildflowers are being installed. Efforts are also underway to remove invasive plants to allow the native plants to thrive. In addition to the existing orchard, a tree nursery is under consideration. A nature lab and greenhouses are other potential projects for the future.

Learning about history and gardening at an amazing location like Rocky Mount just doesn't get any better! And, if you want to contribute to this TN treasure, volunteer! The personal satisfaction and rewards gained from helping are priceless.

See Rocky Mount's website for information and schedules of events:

<https://www.rockymountmuseum.com/>

Photos and details provided by Rocky Mount staff and Northeast Tennessee Master Gardener Association (NETMGA) volunteers and their websites.

NETMGA: <https://www.netmga.net/projects-and-photo-gallery/rocky-mount-living-history-museum/> .

### **How do I ask a question?**

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at [www.netmga.net](http://www.netmga.net). Click the link at the top of the page, "ASK A MASTER GARDENER" to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.

*The Master Gardener Program is offered by the University of Tennessee Extension. The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to train people as horticultural-educated volunteers. These volunteers work in partnership with the local Extension office in their counties to expand educational outreach, providing home gardeners with researched-based information.*