

*the Garden of*  
ST MARY & ST CHAD



MARIGOLD (*Calendula officinalis*)



LICHFIELD  
CATHEDRAL

The garden consists of the three flower beds which border the grass in front of the Cathedral and the plants are named so that you can recognise them.

## **JOINT PATRONAGE**

Lichfield Cathedral is under the patronage of both St Mary, the Mother of Jesus and St Chad, first Bishop of Lichfield. By establishing a garden in their honour, we can learn more about their stories and also remember the generations of pilgrims who have visited this site over the last 1300 years.

## **A SPIRITUAL GARDEN**

In Mediaeval times, a garden could have a symbolic and spiritual dimension. The 'hortus conclusus' or 'enclosed garden' was a sacred area which might represent the Christian soul, enclosed in the body, or the Church, formed of the body of faithful people.

It was also, in the late Middle Ages, an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, and depictions of the Virgin in a Paradise Garden were frequent, in particular in Flemish and German painting. In these pictures, and in the decorated pages of illuminated manuscripts, the flowers all have a symbolic meaning and we have chosen a selection of them to grow in our garden here in Lichfield.

## **HEALING PLANTS**

Other plants to be found in the two flowerbeds are traditional healing herbs which bring to mind the many pilgrims who flocked to Lichfield after the death of St Chad in 672. They came seeking healing of both mind and body and walked many miles in the belief that their ailments might be cured and that their spiritual life, both on earth and after death, would be greatly blessed by such a journey.

## **ON HOLY GROUND**

By growing these flowers on holy ground outside our Cathedral, we have created an area of colour and interest and also linked ourselves with the mediaeval inhabitants of Lichfield, who would have understood very well both the religious and medicinal significance of these ancient plants.

The garden is not complete yet but these are some of the plants in the two flower beds (north and south) which you may find:

### **ANGELICA** (*Angelica archangelica*)

In medieval times, angelica was named the 'angelic herb' as it was believed to protect against evil and cure all ills.

### **BETONY** (*Stachys officinalis*)

Considered a most valuable and powerful healing herb, it was used for more purposes than any other medieval plant.

### **BORAGE** (*Borago officinalis*)

Credited with lightening the heart as well as the taste buds, it is still used in drinks today.

### **CAMPANULA** (*Campanula persicifolia*)

Also known as Bell Flower. Pilgrims carried bells as they travelled along narrow country roads and bought badges, sometimes in the form of a pilgrim handbell, when they finally arrived.

### **CHAMOMILE** (*Chamaemelum nobile*)

One of the Anglo-Saxon sacred herbs, it has been valued ever since for calming and healing both mind and body.

### **CHRISTMAS ROSE** (*Helleborus niger*)

This is said to have bloomed on Christmas Day to honour the birth of Jesus, son of Mary.

### **COLUMBINE** (*Aquilegia vulgaris*)

In Christian art, the sorrows of Mary were reflected in purple flowers, especially Columbines.

### **DAISY** (*Bellis perennis*)

Symbolic of purity and simplicity, it is widely portrayed in the 'flowery mead' or meadow in medieval paintings.

## **ELECAMPANE** (*Inula helenium*)

It has been valued as a medicine since the time of Hippocrates and is still to be found on old monastic sites. In the Middle Ages, the candied root was sold to alleviate coughs and chest ailments.

## **FENNEL** (*Foeniculum vulgare*)

The twelfth-century abbess Hildegard von Bingen described fennel as 'beneficial for anybody, whether healthy or ill...it makes a person happy and makes his digestion good.'

## **GOLDENROD** (*Solidago virgaurea*)

*Solidago* is derived from the Latin word 'solido', to join or make whole, a reference to the many healing properties of the plant.

## **HEARTSEASE** (*Viola tricolor*)

Known as Herb Trinity because of its white, yellow and purple colouring and frequently found in medieval paintings of Mary.

## **HYSSOP** (*Hyssopus officinalis*)

In the Old Testament, it is a symbol of purity and forgiveness: 'Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean'. In the Middle Ages, it was a valuable strewing herb and was used to cleanse the houses of sick people.

## **IRIS** (*Iris versicolor*)

The blade-shaped foliage denotes the sorrows of Mary which 'pierced her heart' in accordance with Simeon's prophecy at the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

## **LADY'S MANTLE** (*Alchemilla mollis*)

'Our Lady's Mantle'. The leaves are covered with fine silky hairs on which raindrops can settle without wetting the leaf. Possibly because of this it was likened to a cloak for the Blessed Virgin.

## **LAVENDER** (*Lavandula angustifolia*)

It was the Romans who first introduced this plant to Britain and from then on monks cultivated it in their monastic gardens to heal burns and strings and aid relaxation with its fragrance.

## **LEMON BALM** (*Melissa officinalis*)

It has been praised by herbal writers for centuries as a tonic for melancholy and stress and is also much loved by bees. The leaves also contain balsamic oils which make excellent antiseptic dressings.

## **LUNGWORT** (*Pulmonaria officinalis*)

According to the medieval 'doctrine of signatures', the spotted leaves were thought to represent diseased lungs and were used to heal chest complaints. They were also called 'Mary's tears'.

## **MALLOW** (*Malva sylvestris*)

Grown for its softening and healing properties, a poultice could be made from the leaves for bruises and bites.

## **MARIGOLD** (*Calendula officinalis*)

Known as Mary's Gold or Mary Buds, these cheerful flowers were assigned to the Virgin Mary but the plant has always been an important healing herb too and is used to this day to cleanse and soothe skin problems.

## **MARJORAM/OREGANO** (*Origanum vulgare*)

As a medicinal herb, it was a remedy for a host of problems and is one of the best antiseptics owing to its high thymol content. Valued in cooking for flavour and digestion.

## **MEADOWSWEET** (*Filipendula ulmaria*)

An ancient herb of the Druids and well-known remedy for arthritis and rheumatism because it is a valuable source of the substance we now use in aspirin.

## **MILK THISTLE** (*Silybum marianum*)

The name marianum refers to a legend that the white markings on the leaves of this thistle came from the milk of the Virgin Mary nursing her child whilst fleeing to Egypt. It is a very old medicinal plant recommended to this day for liver complaints.

## **PEONY** (*Paeonia officinalis*)

In paintings of the Mary, a peony expressed the concept of 'a rose without a thorn'. They were grown in physic gardens to fight against infection.

## **PERIWINKLE** (*Vinca minor*)

The Virgin's Flower, probably because of its blue, star-like flowers. Mary was often referred to as Stella Maris, 'Star of the Sea'.

## **PINKS** (*Dianthus species*)

Also known as the Gilly Flower, they were considered a symbol of the Virgin Mary. They became one of the main flowers adorning the borders of medieval manuscripts.

## **ROSE** (*Rosa Lichfield Angel*)

Roses were widely grown in medieval times for medicinal purposes. It was also an important emblem of the Virgin Mary and rosary beads were made of compressed rose petals.

## **ROSEMARY** (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

The pale blue flowers are said to have taken their colour from Mary's veil when she spread it over a rosemary bush. As a herb, it is both cleansing and stimulating and was used at times of plague.

## **SAGE** (*Salvia officinalis*)

As well as a tasty addition to food, sage cleanses and clears infections. 'Why die with sage in the garden' was a saying known all across medieval Europe.

## **ST JOHN'S WORT** (*Hypericum perforatum*)

The Crusaders took St John's Wort into battle with them to staunch bleeding and heal wounds and burns.

## **SNOWDROP** (*Galanthus nivalis*)

The white of the snowdrop symbolizes innocence and purity and because they are the first flowers to bloom at beginning of spring, they also bring hope. Also known as Candlemas Bells, they usually appear for the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple on February 2nd.

## **THRIFT** (*Almeria maritima*)

The mounds of soft green leaves on this plant led to it being called 'Our Lady's cushion' in medieval times. In Welsh, it is called clustog fair, Mary's pillow.

## **THYME** (*Thymus vulgaris*)

Taken as a pungent and warming remedy to aid chills and respiratory infections and as an antiseptic mouthwash and gargle.

## **VALERIAN** (*Valeriana officinalis*)

In the Middle Ages it was given as a treatment for epilepsy and most problems affecting the nerves. It is still widely used for anxiety and poor sleep today.

## **WILD STRAWBERRY** (*Fragaria vesca*)

The strawberry was called 'Fruitful Virgin' because it has both flowers (white) and fruit on the plant at the same time, representing the twin attributes of purity and fruitfulness.

## **WORMWOOD** (*Artemisia absinthium*)

A bitter herb, used to expel worms, and as a strewing herb to repel moths and other harmful insects around the house.

## **YARROW** (*Achillea millefolium*)

A very ancient herb, used both for reducing fevers and healing wounds, especially on the battle field. The plant was still used as a dressing in the First World War.

## WHO WAS ST CHAD?

Chad is the saint and bishop to whom Lichfield Cathedral is dedicated. Born to a noble family around 634, he was sent as a boy to Lindisfarne in the care of St Aiden's monastery there. Years later he spent time as Bishop of York and Abbot of Lastingham. When he was appointed Bishop of Mercia, one of the most powerful Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, Chad chose to centre his administration in Lichfield. He founded a church and a community here in 669 which became the religious heart of the kingdom.

Chad died in 672, much loved and revered for his holiness, missionary zeal and simplicity of life. Bishop Hedda, his successor, consecrated the first cathedral in Lichfield on his burial site on Christmas Day 700. The shrine of St Chad grew quickly in importance and was among the most visited centres of medieval pilgrimage in the country.

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at Lichfield Cathedral.

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