

## HISTORIC FARMING AND GARDENING

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## Historic Farming and Gardening



Above: Master Gardener Eve Otmar at work in the Historic Garden.

Below: Yorktown onion flower.

**Expanding Colonial Williamsburg's** farming and gardening trades — and adding a milling trade — broadens our knowledge of practices that have sustained human life for hundreds of generations and played a very large role in 18th-century Williamsburg.

Through a fusion of Indigenous, African and European techniques, and the boom of an agricultural revolution, Virginia became one of the wealthiest and most prosperous of the American colonies. The Foundation seeks to better understand and share the stories of enslaved and free planters, gardeners and millers and the ways in which these historic trades built and sustained our nation.

In 18th-century Virginia, farming was how approximately 90% of colonists made a living, including James Madison, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Tobacco was the king cash crop and corn meant sustenance was always available. While also the Age of Enlightenment, the 18th century saw an agricultural revolution, thanks to advances in technology such as the plough.

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For decades, Colonial Williamsburg has kept these historic practices alive through its Historic Trades program. Comprised of two dozen trades, this initiative sets the Foundation apart from many other living history museums across the globe and remains immensely popular among guests.

To broaden our knowledge and understanding of these important and connected trades, the Foundation is moving their sites to new locations on Francis Street near the intersection of Botetourt Street. With the addition of Robertson's Windmill at the site, a new milling trade will also be added to demonstrate the art of grinding grains and explain the importance of flours and cornmeal in society.

Moving the Historic Garden to a larger space allows the Foundation to grow past a gentleman's garden and explore and interpret the gardening practices of African Virginians and American Indians, both of which were very influential among Europeans.

Expanding these trades also benefits others, including Historic Foodways. Larger growing space allows for more bounty, which in turn gives foodways staff more crops to use in historic recipes and guests greater access to hands-on experiences. Colonial Williamsburg's restaurants can also utilize the yield in developing modern dishes, creating a true farm-to-table experience.

