



# Putting Down Roots: Gardening Insights from Wisconsin's Early Settlers

*Marcia C. Carmichael*

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Culture and history can be passed from one generation to the next through the food we eat, the vegetables and fruits we plant and harvest, and the fragrant flowers and herbs that enliven our gardens. The plants our ancestors grew tell stories about their way of life.

Wisconsin's nineteenth-century settlers arrived in the New World in search of new opportunities and the chance to create a new life. These European immigrants and Yankee settlers brought their traditional foodways with them—their family recipes and the seeds, roots, and slips of cherished plants—to serve as comfort food, in the truest sense.

This part of our collective history comes alive at Old World Wisconsin's re-created nineteenth-century heirloom gardens. In *Putting Down Roots*, historical gardener Marcia C. Carmichael guides us through these gardens, sharing insights on why the owners of the original houses—be they Yankee settlers, German, Norwegian, Irish, Danish, Polish, or Finnish immigrants—planted and harvested what they did. She shares timeless lessons with today's gardeners and cooks about planting trends and practices, garden tools used by early settlers, popular plant varieties, and favorite flavors of Wisconsin's early settlers, including recipes for such classics as Irish soda bread, pierogi, and Norwegian rhubarb custard.

*Putting Down Roots* celebrates the diversity and rich ethnic settlement of Wisconsin. It's also a story of holding fast to one's traditions and adapting to new ways that nourished one's family so they could flourish in their new surroundings.

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