

Wheat and Tobacco

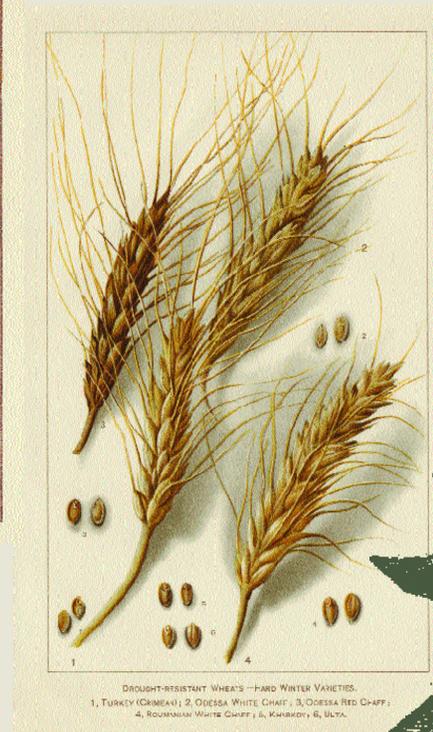
In spring and summer, wheat and tobacco grow in this garden. These two plants alone tell an important part of the history of this farm.

Tobacco was the most valuable crop in the American colonies in the 1600s and 1700s. Planters such as John Addison, an early owner of the farm, made fortunes selling tobacco to the European market. Tobacco also exhausted the soil in just a few years and demanded months of hard, painstaking labor from farm workers. To prosper as tobacco planters in Maryland, a family needed to amass large land holdings and exploit the labor of enslaved people.

In the 1800s, tobacco was on the decline in Maryland. Samuel DeButts and many other Maryland farmers had switched to mixed farming, which often included wheat. But wheat demanded less labor than tobacco, and reduced the need for slaves. Slaveholders often found that the best way to profit from their slaves was to sell them south. Some enslaved people who once tilled the soil here were likely separated from their families and sold south to pick cotton in the fields of Alabama or Mississippi.



Wheat and tobacco photographs courtesy of Visual Language Library: Antique Botanical Illustrations: 1640-1900.



DROUGHT-RESISTANT WHEATS — FINE WINTER VARIETIES.
1, TURKEY (CRIMEAN); 2, ODESSA WHITE CHAFF; 3, ODESSA RED CHAFF;
4, ROMANIAN WHITE CHAFF; 5, KHARKOV; 6, ULTA.



TOBACCO PLANT IN BLOSSOM.



Nicotiana glauca