



Divine Horticulture

A survey of the windows of
Tabernacle Methodist Church,
Binghamton, NY

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The Tabernacle Methodist Church was completed 1884. There are large windows depicting Jesus, Ruth, and a scene depicting an angel visiting shepherds after Christ's birth (a Tiffany window). The window of Jesus has the following dedication: Reverend Solon Stocking, July 16, 1793-Oct 8, 1867, and wife Methetabel June 29, 1800- Feb 24, 1883. The window depicting Ruth is dedicated to Ruth Ingalls Nov 5, 1808- Sept 7, 1879.

The remaining windows are smaller with the floral motif. It appears that they have been hand-painted, but the glass was not fired following painting as the larger windows were. It is possible that these windows were installed as plain colored-glass that was later painted with botanical scenes. We don't know who the artists were, but there appear to be several painting styles. Several panels seem to depict seasons. These floral windows could be the artists' way of converting the sanctuary into a symbolic Garden of Eden or Paradise. The Binghamton city historian has a file on the church in the main branch of the public library that may have additional information.

Suggested next steps:

- Determine the history of the painted windows,
- date of painting,
- whether the windows were painted before or after installation,
- who painted them,
- why there are different styles of painting,
- and why the floral motif was chosen.

One resource may be the Binghamton city historian's files on the church. The Corning Museum of Glass may have information on stained-glass window makers of that era.

Other possibilities:

Add information about the windows to the church's web site to raise awareness and find possible funding for restoration.



Easter Lily

Lilium longiflorum

Family: Liliaceae

Common name: Easter lily

Symbolic of resurrection, the Easter lily we know today originated in Japan where it grows on humus-rich coral cliffs. In North America, especially in the Northeast, lily bulbs of this cultivar are not winter hardy and are best grown in greenhouses. Flowers are pure white and 4-7" long. Plants grow from 1 to 3 feet tall.

The Easter lily is also symbolic of purity, innocence, and majesty. A description from ancient Hebrew texts describes it as follows: "A white flower of sweet but narcotic perfume. It has six petals and six stamens, and one pistil, representing the 13 attributes of God. The heart of the blossom is always turned upward, and it is often found growing among thorns, symbolizing the trust in Jehovah which His children should feel

even amid afflictions" (Beals, 1973). While the lily is often associated with Matthew 6:28 "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin," most authorities believe that this verse refers to the windflower, a wild anemone flower of the Holy Land. At the time Jesus delivered his Sermon on the Mount, these flowers would have been the brightest red/orange flowers in bloom.

The "Madonna" lily was selected by the church as the flower representing the Virgin Mary because unlike most other flowers, its scent cannot be extracted as essential oil and because the lily represents the "worth" of Mary, "being white without and gold within." Our Easter lilies of today are not Madonna lilies, but a white oriental lily cultivar.





Passionflower

Passiflora

Family: Passifloraceae

Common name: Passionflower

There are between 400 and 500 species of these climbing, predominantly woody plants. Native to Southeastern North America, Passionflower is found from Virginia and Kentucky to Florida and Texas. It also can be found in South America, Asia, and one is native to Madagascar. Leaves have large three-lobed, serrated leaves. Flowers are large and fragrant, approximately 2-3 inches across, and often are purple and white. They have five sepals and five petals that range from white to red and are joined at the base of the flower to form what is called a corona. There usually is a fringed structure within the corona, 5-10 pollen-bearing stamens (the male part of the flower), and three large stigma lobes that connect to the flower ovaries. Flowers bloom from June to

August. Passion fruit when ripe is a berry about the size of an egg and has sweet, yellow, edible pulp. Fruit and flowers can be eaten raw or made into jams and jellies. High in niacin, young leaves can be used in salads or cooked as a vegetable dish. Flowers, leaves and stems are used by herbalists to relieve anxiety, insomnia and other nervous disorders. Three species are somewhat winter hardy: *P. caerulea* (to zone 7), *P. incarnata* (to zone 6), and *P. lutea* (to zone 5).

In the language of flowers, the Passionflower stands for faith. After the Spanish invaded South America, missionaries used the Passionflower to teach the natives of Christianity. Since then, it has been a widely used symbol of Christianity. The name Passionflower refers to the passion of Christ: The fringed structure within the corona resembles the crown of thorns that Jesus wore during the crucifixion; the stigma lobes represent his wounds. It can also be said that the vine requires support, like the Christian needs Divine assistance and that the plant readily grows back if it is cut down, like those who have God's love in their hearts overcome the evil of this world. The ironwork choir screens of the Lichfield and Hereford Cathedrals in England prominently display the passionflower.

Calla lily

Zantedeschia aethiopica

Family: Araceae

Common name: White calla lily, arum lily

Native to South Africa, the calla lily is a tender perennial rhizome that blooms in summer to a height of 24-30 inches and 24 inches wide. It can grow year-round in landscapes and in bogs in the warmer climates (zones 8-10) where temperatures do not fall below 20F. In the North, rhizomes must be dug and stored through the winter. The flower has a large white spathe with a trumpet-shaped flare. The yellow spadix within the spathe is fragrant and only about a third the length of the spathe. Broad, arrow-shaped leaves as well as the flowers grow out of rhizomes at the base of the plant; there are no so-called stems. Many people will recognize the calla lily because it often has been used as a cut flower in wedding and funeral arrangements.

The genus name honors Italian botanist and physician Giovanni Zantedeschi.





Cattail

Typha latifolia

Family: Typhaceae

Common name: Cattail

Cattails are winter-hardy herbaceous rhizomatous plants that live in wetlands and aquatic habitats such as marshes. There are about 15 species found nearly all around the world, including in temperate and tropical regions. In the Northern Hemisphere, they sometimes are used as ornamental plants.

Leaves, which grow erect, linear and flat with parallel veins, are sheathed at the base and have been used as weaving material. The starch-rich rhizomes can be roasted or boiled. Native Americans used the juice from the roots. Young male flowers (located on the stalk above the female flowers) and pollen are edible. Fruits are small nutlets and can be found within thick, soft brown spikes. As a

folk remedy, parts of *Typha* plants have been used as diuretics, tonics, anticoagulants, astringents and sedatives. The artist used some artistic license when painting the leaves of this plant; *Typha* leaves always grow from the rhizome up.

Typha domingensis and *T. latifolium* are both found in the Near East and in the saline swamps of the Red Sea. It was among these reeds that the basket with baby Moses was found by Pharaoh's daughter in Exodus Chapter 2. For this reason it is a symbol of salvation. It is also thought to be the reed given to Christ at the Crucifixion.



Hellebore

Helleborus orientalis, *H. niger*

Family: Ranunculaceae

Common name: Lenten rose, Christmas rose

Native to Europe, both species bloom in late winter/early spring, and have evergreen, leathery leaves. Plants grow 15 to 18 inches tall and 15 inches wide. Blossom colors range from white to plum. The Christmas rose (*H. niger*) blooms in the snow at Christmastime and after. Its common name comes from the legend that a little girl, finding she had no gift for the Christ child, shed tears in the snow near the stable in Bethlehem. An angel came down and showed the girl flowers blooming where her tears had fallen, so she picked them and gave them to the baby Jesus. (Historians have shown that the plant is not native to the Holy Land, however.)



The Lenten rose (*H. orientalis*) peeks up from the snow as one of the earliest blooming flowers of spring. Both species prefer partial to full shade and rich, well-drained soil.

The word *Helleborus* comes from the Greek words *helein* (to injure), and *bora* (food), referring to the bitter taste of the roots and leaves, which are poisonous when consumed. The plant was used in ancient times as a medicine and most often was used to cure worms in children.

Orange

Citrus sinensis

Family: Rutaceae

Common name:

Orange



The word orange is derived from the Latin *aurangia* meaning “golden apple.” It is thought to have been one of the trees in Paradise. While it may have been grown in Egypt and Cyprus in ancient times, it was likely not introduced to the Middle East until the classical times. Orange blossoms are traditionally used as a wedding flower in England because of its symbolism of purity, fruitfulness and chastity. Orange also associated with the Virgin Mary. In the Middle Ages it was used to counter poisons and treat nausea in pregnant women.





Grapes

Vitis

Family: Vitaceae

Common name: Grapes

The grape is a common and widely cultivated plant in the Holy Land. The vines were grown on fig trees for support, and the two often are mentioned together in scripture. There are many metaphors and symbols associated with the grape. Examples include: The vine, as it grew on the branches of the fig tree provided a pleasant place to sit and was a symbol of peace and prosperity (see Zechariah 3:10 and 8:12); then in Psalms 80:8, Isaiah 5:1-7 and Ezekiel 19:10-14 it symbolizes Israel's fruitfulness in doing God's work on earth; Christ uses this plant to illustrate his relationship with God in John 15:1 -- "I am the true vine, and my father is the vine dresser."

Water lily

Nymphaea odorata

Family: Nymphaeaceae

Common name: White water lily

A symbol of eloquence and purity of heart, the water lily is often referred to as the lotus and holds a prominent place in many religions. The Hindus, for example, and the peoples of ancient Tibet and Nepal believed that the Buddha was born in the heart of a water lily flower. Water lilies were abundant in the Nile and it became a symbol of Upper Egypt. The root was used as food and the seeds were used for flour. To propagate the plant the seeds were put in a ball of clay and cast into the water. Because of this, it is thought that Solomon might be referring to the water lily in Ecclesiastes 11:1: “Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.”

Ancient Greeks believed water lilies had antiaphrodisiac properties, and nuns and monks in the Middle Ages reportedly made pastes of ground water lilies and honey to preserve chastity. The Chinese associated the water lily/lotus with female beauty. The Japanese saw it as a symbol of purity because its flowers grew pure and white from the muddy waters.



Pomegranate

Punica granatum

Family: Lythraceae

Common name: Pomegranate

The pomegranate means “apple with grains” and originated on the southern side of the Caspian Sea; today it grows wild in the Near East as a large shrub. It is valued for its juice and ornamental qualities from Egypt to the Holy Land. Spies brought pomegranates, figs, and grapes from the Promised Land in Numbers 13:23; 1 Kings 7:20 describes having the fruits carved on pillars of Solomon’s temple. It has come to symbolize fertility, hope, the unity of faith, the concord of peace, and the blood of Christ. It had medicinal value for several ailments including heart tremor, infertility, eye, and stomach problems.



Cattleya orchid

Cattleya sp.

Family: Orchidaceae

Common name: corsage orchid

Orchids comprise the largest family in the plant kingdom – Orchidaceae. The most popular of cultivated orchids and the orchid represented in the church window painting, the Cattleya orchid is a tropical flower native to South and Central America. With an asymmetrical form, large outward-spreading sepals and petals, and a cuplike column has a lip that often grows in a contrasting color, Cattleyas (there are more than 60 species) are typical of orchids in that they are epiphytes – they grow on other plants, fences, or on rock faces. In flower lore, orchid symbolizes “beautiful lady,” “luxury,” “I shall make your life a sweet one.”

Some species of orchid have dark purple spots on the leaves and are associated with the blood of the Savior from the garden of Gethsemane and Calvary. In the Middle Ages the wild orchid’s roots, distilled or sodden in goat’s milk or wine, were said to be an aphrodisiac, as was the vanilla bean – also the product of an orchid species.





Forget-Me-Not

Anchusa azurea

Family: Boraginaceae

Common name: Italian Alkanet, Italian Bugloss, Forget-Me-Not

Native to the Mediterranean, but now a naturalized perennial in North America, *Anchusa azurea* is closely related to what we commonly call the biennial Forget-Me-Not (*Anchusa capensis*). One cultivar, 'Loddon Royalist,' grows to three feet tall and has purple-blue flowers. *A. azurea* blooms in late spring and midsummer and is hardy in Zones 3 through 8. It prefers full sun but will tolerate partial shade. Five-petal flowers 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch across bloom on loose racemes and last for approximately four weeks. Leaves tend to be oblong, alternate, sessile and pubescent (hairy). There are approximately 40 species of *Anchusa*. The name is derived from the Greek, and refers to a pigment made from the fleshy, tuberous roots of the plant that were used as a cosmetic to stain the skin. In the language of flowers, Forget-Me-Not signifies true love and remembrance.

Two plants that may be represented in the window paintings, but which we could not positively identify:

Lily of the Valley

Convallaria majalis

Family: Liliaceae

Common name: Lily-of-the-Valley

Often used as a ground cover in shady, moist areas, Lily-of-the-Valley is known as an aggressive plant and should be planted by itself. Individual flowers are bell-shaped, white, and hang from a delicate raceme that sprouts from two to three 4- to 5-inch-long elliptical leaves. It is very fragrant and a favorite spring flower for weddings.

In the language of flowers, Lily-of-the-Valley represents the return to happiness, likely because it is an early to mid-spring bloomer. In Europe it is commonly known as the mayflower or maylily. It has been a symbol of the Virgin, depicted amid thorns, so is often called Our Lady's tears. It is thought to have medicinal value for treating nervous disorders, gout, and freckles, and was valued so highly in ancient times that the liquid was stored in bottles of gold or silver. Native to the Northern Hemisphere, it is not known to have grown in the Holy Land.

Convallaria comes from the Latin *Lilium convallium*, meaning lily-of-the-valley.

Olive

Olea europaea

Family: Oleaceae

Common name: olive

The olive is native to the land surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. It was one of the most important trees of biblical times. The wood was used for sculpture (1 Kings 6:23), the oil for anointing (Judges 9:8-15); and the oil in fruit for food. The olive is symbolic of rebirth because it will grow back from the stump after being cut down. It also is a symbol of peace. The Mount Olives also called Olivet is an important place in Jerusalem. Jesus frequently went there (Luke 21:37, 22:39; Zechariah 14:3&4), and the place called Gethsemane, which means "oil press." There is a wild olive, *Olea europaea* var. 'Sylvestris,' which is mentioned by Paul in Romans 11:17-24 when he speaks of the Gentile being a wild olive branch being grafted into the cultivated olive tree, which is Israel.



Oak

Quercus

Family: Fagaceae

Common name: Oak

The common or pedunculate oak is *Quercus robur*. Several species of Oak are common in the land of Palestine. these include *Q. callipronos*, *Q. coccifera*, *Q. ithaburensis*, *Q. cerris*, and *Q. aegilops*. The oak symbolizes holiness, strength, and righteousness. It is also associated with the Virgin Mary and salvation. In the Middle Ages it was used as an antidote for poisons and to heal wounds. Several references to the oak are found in the Bible. From Isaiah 61:3: "They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor."



Wheat or oats

Triticum aestivum, Avena sativa

Family: Poaceae

Common name: Wheat, oats

“Wheat is still the staff of life, much as it was for people in biblical times. Tulips, hyacinths, narcissi, geraniums, poppies, and morning glories still sprout from the hillsides and valleys. The fruits of the Promised Land — apricots and almonds, figs and olives, pomegranates and grapes — still grow in abundance (McNaught, 1967). Oats came into cultivation after wheat and often was considered a weed in the wheat fields. The wheat seed is symbolic of the self-sacrifice of Jesus in John 12:24 : “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Wheat, the chaff and the harvesting process are used symbolically throughout the bible (Matthew 3:11-12, Psalms 1:4, Amos 9:9, and Luke 22:31-34). Cereal grains also were important for making offerings and bread, which relates to God’s presence (Exodus 25:30), the bread of Passover (John 6:35; Matthew 26:26), and the Bread of Life.



Quince

Chaenomeles

Family: Rosaceae

Common name: Flowering quince

A close relative of the pear, quince blooms early in spring and its fruits are used for preserves. Historians have suggested that quince could be the forbidden fruit of Eden. The Greeks and Romans dedicated quince to Venus or Aphrodite as a symbol of love, happiness and fertility. Doctors in medieval times prescribed quince to help women conceive strong and able sons. In some ancient legends, it was believed to ward off “the evil eye.”



Marsh marigold

Caltha palustris

Family: Ranunculaceae

Common name: Marsh marigold, Kingcup

A native of Europe and North America and hardy in Zones 4-9, marsh marigold is a spring-blooming member of the buttercup family. It will grow in sun or partial shade and moist soil, but does best in wet soil. Two-inch yellow flowers are borne on hollow stems with dark green leaves that are nearly round.

Caltha is the old Latin word for marigold. The word marigold comes from “Mary’s Gold.” The Crusaders found the plant in the Holy Land and named it for the Virgin Mary. Marigolds also frequently were used to decorate church altars. In Ireland, the flowers were used to decorate cow sheds in Ireland to protect livestock from the evil influence of witches.

Daisy

Leucanthemum sp., *Chrysanthemum sp.*, *Bellis perennis*

Family: Asteraceae

Common name: Oxeye daisy, Shasta daisy, English daisy

Associated with simplicity, innocence, and modesty, daisy may derive its name from the Celtic story of Ossian, where it is called day's-eye because the flower opened in the morning. St. Augustine said the yellow center symbolized how the "Sun of Righteousness" desires to be the center of our hearts. The white rays are like the purity we reflect to the world from the light of heaven that is in us. Daisies were used to treat wounds and sore eyes. Shasta daisies, however, are known to kill other flowers if kept together in the same vase. *Bellis* is from the Latin word *Bellus*, which means pretty. In Victorian times, Daisy was a popular name for girls.

In Christianity, the anchor symbolizes hope.



Sunflower

Helianthus annuus

Family: Asteraceae

Common name: Common sunflower

Grown for its oil and for its edible seed, the annual sunflower is also a popular symbol for summer and fall. The name *Helianthus* comes from *helios* (the sun), and *anthos* (flower), and the flower also follows the sun throughout the day. It is used to symbolize how Christians are to follow the Light, the Son of God. It is associated with consistency, adoration, and devotion and has been dedicated to St. John the Evangelist. A window at the Church of Remi at Rheims depicts St. John and Mary at the foot of the cross with aureoles of sunflowers around their heads.





Fig

Ficus sp.

Family: Moraceae

Common name: Fig

The fig was a very important plant in the areas around Palestine and Egypt. It was an abundant source of food that could be dried and stored. The large, tough leaves were used for baskets and dishes. Figs first were mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 3:7) where Adam and Eve used the leaves for clothing. The tree cultivated for fruit (*Ficus carica*) grows less than 25 feet with spreading branches that provide large areas of shade. The fig is used metaphorically throughout the Bible: Jeremiah 24:1-10; Amos 8:1; and Joel 1:6&7.

Palm Sunday used to be called Fig Sunday to commemorate the time when Jesus destroyed the barren fig tree as he entered Jerusalem. The Sycamore fig (*Ficus sycomorus*), which was used for its wood, is mentioned several times in the Bible: Luke 19:4; Isaiah 9:10; First Kings 10:27; and Second Chronicles 1:15.



Rose

Rosa sp.

Family: Rosaceae

Common name: Rose

Symbolic of joy, beauty, love, and silence, the rose is most often dedicated to the Virgin Mary. On the fourth Sunday of Lent, the Pope blesses a Golden Rose, symbolic of Christ's beauty and majesty.

Thistle

Silybum marianum

Family: Asteraceae

Common name: Milk thistle, Mary's thistle, Our Lady's thistle

The thistle is symbolic of austerity, independence, and retaliation. This variety, called Our Lady's thistle, is said to have received its white-veined leaves when the Virgin's milk spilled as she was nursing the Christ Child. There are several references to thorns and thistles in the Bible and there are many types of thorny plants and thistles that grow in the Holy Land. The thistle is a highly regarded symbol and the oldest recorded national flower of Scotland because it helped the Scots win the war against the Danes in 1263: A Dane warrior made the mistake of stepping on a thistle, cried out, and gave away his army's position.





Blackberry

Rubus allegainensis, Rubus fruticosus

Family: Rosaceae

Common name: Blackberry, bramble

Several rubus species are common to Palestine, and are thought to have been the burning bush that Moses saw on Mt. Sinai. Thorns and brambles often are associated with uselessness or a curse and are contrasted with pleasant plants (see 2 Samuel 23:6, 7; Isaiah 7:23-25; Luke 6:43, 44). This may have been the plant that was used for Christ's crown of thorns; however, several thorny plants were common in that area (*Sarcopoterium spinosum*, the spiny burnet; *Ziziphus spina-christi*, the Syrian Christ thorn).

During the Middle Ages, blackberries were used to make black hair dye and to treat kidney stones, ulcers, and venomous bites.



About circular symbols

“The spiral was found on many Dolmans and gravesites. Its true meaning is not known for sure, but many of these symbols were found as far as Ireland and France. It is believed to represent the travel from the inner life to the outer soul or higher spirit forms; the concept of growth, expansion, and cosmic energy, depending on the culture in which it is used.”

Source: (<http://www.celtic-art.net/Symbols/Page42.htm>)

Other identified plants with unclear religious connotations:

Dicentra (bleeding heart)

Bamboo

Ranunculus

Purple flowering raspberry

Elderberry

Lichen

Spanish moss

Evergreens in winter window scene (not identifiable)

Rudbeckia hirta

Water hemlock

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