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Integration of Native American Medicinal Plants into the Heber W. Youngken Jr. Garden

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INTRODUCTION

- Healthcare among Native American tribes focused on all aspects of a patient's life, including physical, spiritual, and environmental elements.
- Native American tribes used a holistic treatment approach with a combination of herbs, therapies, ceremonies, and prayers to prevent or treat a range of both acute and chronic illnesses.
- Medicinal plants served an integral role in direct physical healing and were incorporated as an important element for the execution of traditional ceremonies.

OBJECTIVE

- Identify and incorporate medicinal plants used by local Native American tribes into the Heber W. Youngken Jr. Garden.
- Increase awareness of traditional and natural practices that can continue to be incorporated into current healthcare initiatives.

MATERIALS and METHODS

- Initiated a comprehensive review of Native American tribes in the northeast region to identify plants used in medicinal healing practices and ceremonies.
- Surveyed the Heber W. Youngken Jr. Medicinal garden to see which plants were already available at the site.
- Native plants to this region used by Native American tribes were added to the current collection. Local native plants species were defined as those species believed to have been present in Rhode Island prior to the European settlement beginning in the 15th century.
- Seeds were planted in the greenhouse and a plot of land was identified for the layout of this collection.
- Signage was modified by the addition of a unique symbol to identify those plants used for Native American medicine.

RESULTS

Tobacco (*Lobelia inflata*)



Sweetgrass (*Anthoxanthum nitens*)



White Sage (*Salvia apiana*)



Blue Vervain (*Verbena hastata*)



White Snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*)



Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*)



Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)



Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*)



CONCLUSIONS

- There are a significant amount of local medicinal plants available today in nature that can be used by the general public.
- The use of these plants in the Native American tradition may provide beneficial healthcare outcomes for some individuals.

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