



Horsemint



Butterflyweed



Monkshood

## Medicinal garden cultivates history

BY DAWN BRAZELL

Public Relations

**G**reen must run in the blood of the Porcher family.

It's only fitting that the hands of Richard Porcher, Ph.D., helped landscape the eight flowering beds of MUSC's Porcher Medicinal Garden that opened Oct. 18. Porcher realized his tie to Francis Peyre Porcher, M.D., for whom the garden is named, when he was in graduate school pursuing an interest in zoology. He took a field botany course and fell in love with the subject. He also learned about his ancestor, born in 1824, and the contributions he made, including authoring the book, "Resources of the Southern Fields and Forests."

"All of a sudden, I realized I had a botanist background," he said, adding that he has loved being involved in picking plants for the garden. Porcher, a noted field biologist himself and former professor of biology at The Citadel, is a member of the Waring Library Society's board of directors.

"I think the garden is fantastic. Finally, people will have an idea of the contributions he [Francis Porcher] has made," he said. He appreciates that the garden will be a living tribute to his ancestor and credits MUSC President Ray Greenberg, M.D., Ph.D., and Susan Hoffius, curator of the Waring Historical Library, for making it a reality.

"It's a fascinating piece of history. With the garden, it all comes full circle in seeing how those plants are being used today."

Hoffius said she likes that connection

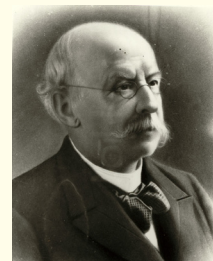
### PORCHER MEDICINAL GARDEN

**Where:** Facing the Drug Discovery Building between the Colbert Education Center & Library and the Basic Science Building

**Website:** <http://waring.library.musc.edu/exhibits/PMG/about.php>

**Artwork Exhibition:** "The Flowering of Medicine" being shown at the Drug Discovery Building, the botanical features illustrations of Thomas Hamm and Linda Ann Vinson.

**For more info:** Visit the website or contact the Office of Health Promotion, 792-1245.



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as well. "It's exciting to reintroduce someone from our past to people today. The talent he had was indisputable. He was a botanist and he came from a long line of botanists. It sort of ran in his blood. He took that interest and knowledge of local flora and made it applicable in a medical setting."

Though Porcher's book was written during Civil War time to help Southerners who were suffering from the lack of medical supplies available, Porcher had a longer view of its use

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Dr. Jeannette South-Paul, an invited guest speaker, advocates for community health centers.

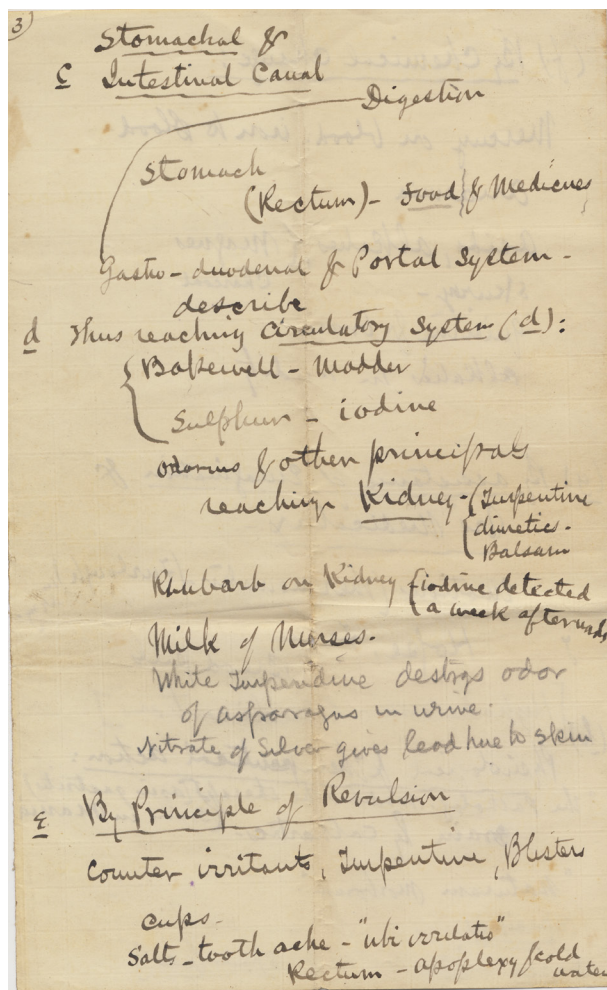
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THE CATALYST  
ONLINE

<http://www.musc.edu/catalyst>



These handwritten notes from Francis Porcher at the Waring Historical Library are part of a collection of his papers available to students and faculty for research. Contact the library at 792-2288 for more information.

“ I trust that after the war shall have ceased there will still be no diminution in the desire of every one to possess a source from whence his curiosity may be satisfied on matters pertaining to our useful plants. ”

Francis Porcher, in preface to his book “Resources of the Southern Fields and Forests”

## Dr. Francis Peyre Porcher, 1824 - 1895

### Did You Know?

❑ Francis Peyre Porcher was born at Ophir Plantation in St. John's, Berkeley County, South Carolina on Dec. 14, 1824 to Dr. William and Isabella Sarah Peyre Porcher.

❑ Through his mother's side, he was a descendant of the well-known English botanist Thomas Walter, author of *Flora Caroliniana*, the first catalog of the flowering plants of South Carolina published in 1788.

❑ Porcher graduated from the Medical College of the State of South Carolina. He was first in his class of 76, in 1847. His thesis, *A Medico-Botanical Catalogue of the Plants and Ferns of St. John's, Berkeley, South Carolina*, was published later that same year by the faculty of the Medical College.

❑ During his long affiliation with the Medical College, Porcher served as professor of clinical medicine and chair of materia medica, which he held from 1874 to 1891. With fellow Medical College alumnus Julian J. Chisolm (1830-1903), Porcher opened a hospital specifically for the care of plantation slaves.

❑ At the outbreak of the Civil War, Porcher joined the Confederate Army as a surgeon to South Carolina's Holcombe Legion and was then transferred to the Naval Hospital at Norfolk, Va. in March 1862. He finished his Confederate service in the South Carolina Hospital at Petersburg, Va.

❑ While in Virginia, Porcher was “released temporarily from service in the field and hospital” by Confederate States Surgeon General Samuel Preston Moore to write, “Resources of the Southern Fields and Forests.” The handbook identified local plants with therapeutic qualities that could be used not only by Confederate surgeons, but planters and farmers, in place of manufactured drugs made unavailable because of the Union blockade of Southern ports and the lack of southern pharmaceutical laboratories. The handbook written in 1863 was of such value that a revised edition was published in 1869.

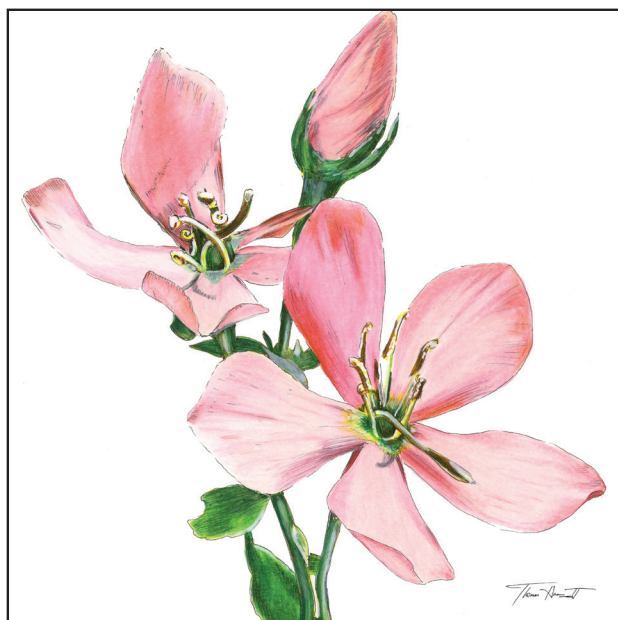
❑ Four editions of the manual were produced during the course of the war and are now available for research use at the Waring Historical Library.

❑ When the war ended, Porcher returned to Charleston and resumed his academic positions at the Medical College. As his professional career thrived and he received many honors, he remained a prolific contributor to the medical literature and wrote on a variety of topics including yellow fever, diseases of the heart, typhoid and malaria.

❑ After suffering a paralytic stroke, Porcher died at his home in Charleston, on Nov. 19, 1895.

❑ Porcher's papers are housed at the Waring Historical Library, which has digitized them for research use.





Bitterbloom



Indian Pink



Jimson weed

The botanical illustrations above by Thomas Hamm are on display with the art of Linda Ann Vinson at the Drug Discovery Building as part of a special exhibition “The Flowering of Medicine.”

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beyond the immediate needs of the Confederates. Not all the book is directed at medicinal uses either, she said. It’s like an almanac of sorts with directions for everything from making lye soap and dyes from plants to producing brandy.

The germ of the idea for the medicinal garden came from the landscape architect, Bill Eubanks (of Urban Edge Studio in Mount Pleasant), of the Drug Discovery Building who recommended it as a nice addition. Greenberg loved the idea and wanted to tie it into MUSC’s history.

“He wanted to make the connection to Dr. Porcher and looking at our future with the Drug Discovery Building and looking for new drugs and new therapies. This garden is a tribute to what we have always done, which is to innovate medicine. We were doing that in 1863 when this book came out with Dr. Porcher, and we’re still doing it today. One hundred fifty years ago we had faculty members who were making really significant contributions to pharmacology and medical therapies, and we still do. I think that’s a nice connection.”

The garden features more than 40 specimens that are shown in Porcher’s book including signage with botanical

information as well as details about what the plants were used for. There also is a companion website with more information about the plants. It will list the entry it had in his book, and for those who want to know modern-day uses, there will be a link to its entry in the Natural Medicine Compendium database, a pharmacy resource that Wayne Weart, PharmD, arranged for MUSC’s use.

There’s a leadership team that will oversee the garden composed of people from a variety of fields, including

pharmacology, history and horticulture with programming opportunities being handled by the Office of Health Promotion. There will be garden tours, lunch-and-learn events and educational sessions for students. “It will be a nicely balanced group of people looking at the garden from various perspectives, not just as a garden or a healing garden. It’s the pharmaceutical and the horticultural part, the history. It’s all of it together,” Hoffius said. Her hope is that the garden will be an inspiration.

“It’s to say, ‘look at the things around

us that are untapped as of now.’ We should not discard something out of hand just because we’re unfamiliar with them.”

She refers to a botanical illustration of horsemint that is part of “The Flowering of Medicine,” a special exhibition of illustrations by Thomas L. Hamm and Linda Ann Vinson that’s being displayed in the Drug Discovery Building in conjunction with the garden dedication.

“I went to the beach and saw a field of this horsemint. I would have thought someone needs to get out the mower, but now I see it in a different light. What I’ve learned is that all of these weeds that I’ve walked by millions of time have these properties above and beyond themselves. They’re not just weeds. They have value.”

It’s a value students and researchers can see in using the garden as an educational resource, including the historical materials in the Waring Library and the online website resources. Not everyone who comes to the garden will care about the medicinal part, though, and that’s just fine, she said.

“My favorite thing about it would be if it’s used by a variety of people for a variety of reasons, sort of like art. You can get as much as you want from it. It has a living presence and an inspirational presence, whether that inspiration is peacefulness and natural harmony or whether it’s research or healing.”



Dr. Richard Porcher helps prepare the beds in the medicinal garden.