The Victory Garden
A recreation of Emma Pecunies’ 1944 Victory garden

“War gardening will permanently establish itself because peace-time value will fully equal its war-time worth.” - War Garden Commission

During World War II, the Pecunies family planted and tended this 36’ x 42’ garden. It became one of more than 18 million Victory gardens nationwide, all providing sustenance for Americans facing food shortages, rationing and the hardships of war. New Hampshire had over 80,000 registered Victory gardens, many of which replaced lawns and vacant lots.

The Puddle Dock Neighborhood
Based on photographs, family memories and oral histories, this garden recreates the one the Pecunies family first planted in 1944. Their house stood next to this garden on the stone foundation visible to the east, where a rose arbor frames the former location of the front doorway. In addition to this garden, they also grew produce in a community garden at the nearby Franklin School – one of five community gardens in Portsmouth during the war years. Throughout the Puddle Dock neighborhood, Yankees and immigrants from many nations came together to plant a new generation of American gardens.

Can All You Can
Food shortages and rationing made it important not to waste anything. Those who grew more produce than they could eat fresh, preserved it to eat later or shared it with relatives and neighbors. Home canners ‘put up’ more than 3 billion quarts of food.

Digging In
By the 1940s, many people had left farm life behind and no longer knew how to raise their own food. Universities, the Cooperative Extension service and garden clubs, like the Portsmouth Garden Club came to the rescue. They ‘armed’ communities with training pamphlets, seeds and tools to teach Americans how to raise and preserve vegetables, herbs and fruit.

The goals of the government’s Victory garden program were to increase food production, address poor nutrition, keep wives close to home while their husbands were away, and improve home-front morale during the hard times brought on by war. Malnutrition was a major problem in America during the war. Slogans like “Grow Vitamins at Your Kitchen Door” and “You Are What You Eat” served to remind people of the nutritional benefits of fresh produce. Today, issues of nutrition, food security and supply are important again. As in the past, an organic home garden can provide healthy, inexpensive food in your own backyard.

Do you want to learn more about composting, canning, herbs, heirloom plants and family garden activities? Visit www.strawberrybanke.org