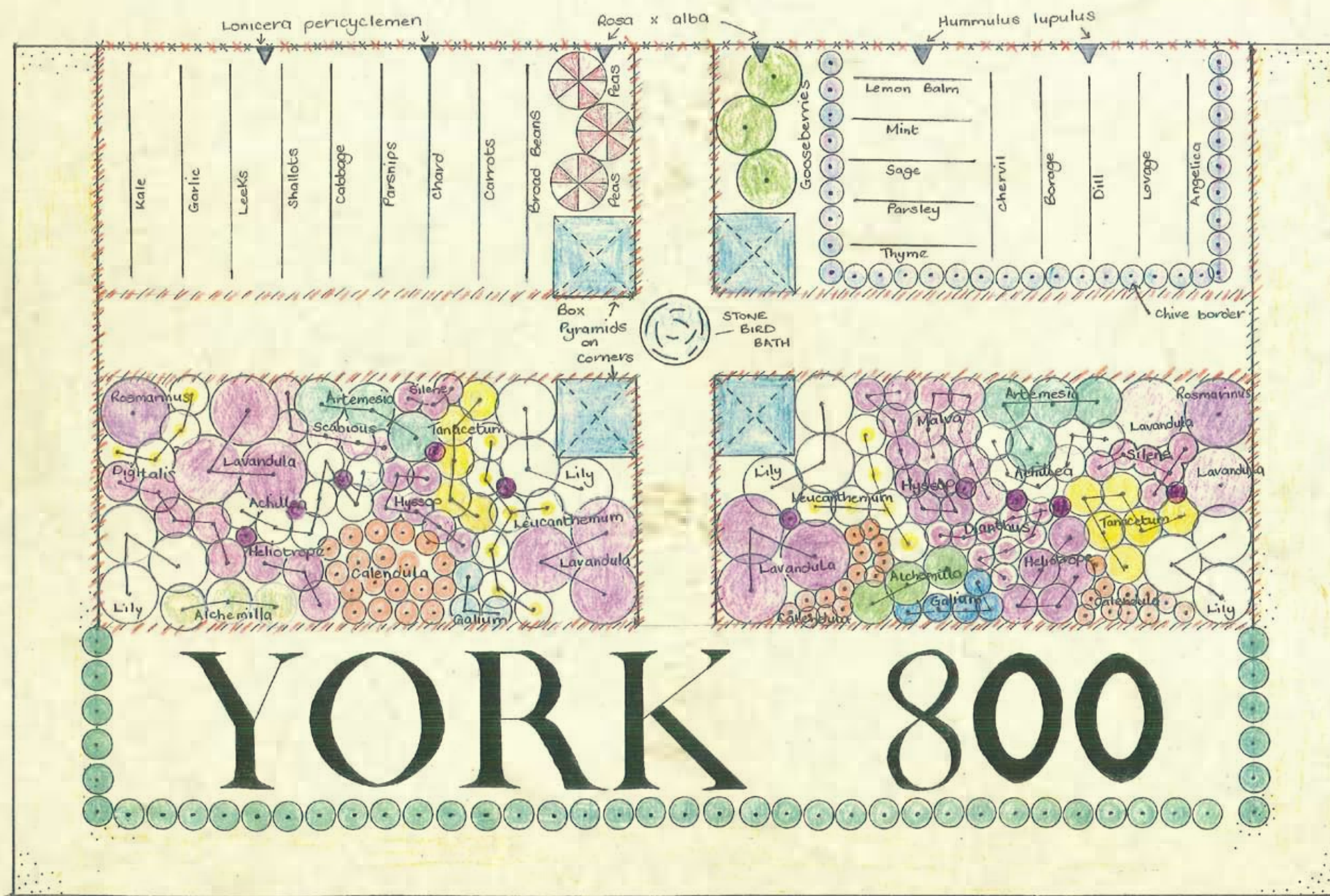


# Medieval Garden

*Come hither, we bid you!*



The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has created a medieval-style garden to commemorate York's 800th anniversary as a self-governing city.

This reproduction of a medieval monastery garden (800-1400 AD) is enclosed by a woven hazel fence, giving a sense of peace and security. A degree of formality follows naturally from the geometric patterns and symmetry.

The garden is divided into four beds with narrow paths in a cruciform shape, just wide enough for a monk to kneel. Water, the symbolic fount of life, was an essential element and always placed in the centre. The garden was a place for meditation and contemplation.

Developed for self-sufficient communities, the plants were primarily culinary or medicinal:

- Herbs were grown to make into lotions and ointments to heal the sick in the infirmary.
- Fruit and vegetables were cultivated to use in the kitchens.
- Flowers were grown for the church altar for decoration and scent.

In medieval times only a small choice of plants was available compared with the numerous varieties today. Favourites included roses, peonies, heliotrope, lilies and violets.

Flowers had symbolic meaning or religious significance. Many white-flowering plants were dedicated to the Virgin Mary. For example, the Madonna Lily (*Lilium candidum*) was the Virgin's emblem, the white petals representing her purity and the yellow anthers the glowing light of her soul.

The White Rose of Yorkshire (*Rosa x alba*) represented the Virgin Mary and in medieval times it was known as the Mystical Rose of Heaven. Later it became the emblem of the House of York, during the War of the Roses, in the reign of the Plantagenet monarchs (1154-1485).