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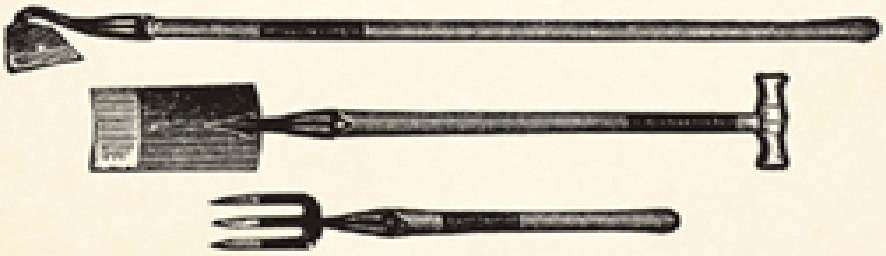
FOXFIRE

Planting by the Signs



Edited by

FOXFIRE STUDENTS

Planting by the Signs: Gardening

The Foxfire Americana Library
Edited by Foxfire Students

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Table of Contents

A NOTE ABOUT THE FOXFIRE AMERICANA LIBRARY SERIES

For almost half a century, high school students in the Foxfire program in Rabun County, Georgia, have collected oral histories of their elders from the southern Appalachian region in an attempt to preserve a part of the rapidly vanishing heritage and dialect. The Foxfire Fund, Inc., has brought that philosophy of simple living to millions of readers, starting with the bestselling success of *The Foxfire Book* in the early 1970s. Their series of fifteen books and counting has taught creative self-sufficiency and has preserved the stories, crafts, and customs of the unique Appalachian culture for future generations.

Traditionally, books in the Foxfire series have included a little something for everyone in each and every volume. For the first time ever, through the creation of The Foxfire Americana Library, this forty-five-year collection of knowledge has been organized by subject. Whether down-home recipes or simple tips for both your household and garden, each book holds a wealth of tried-and-true information, all passed down by unforgettable people with unforgettable voices.

GARDENING

All my life I had heard talk of, and even watched my family make, a garden. But because I was younger and the grocery store was just down the road, I never felt that I should go out in the hot sun and hoe the garden. Suddenly last year the fact that I was going to have to plant a garden dawned on me. The first thing that came to my mind was, “I don’t know anything about a garden.” That’s when I started working on this article.

My first question was why did they plant a garden? Esco Pitts, one of our contacts, said, “Then you couldn’t just go to the store and buy much stuff, ’cause they wasn’t much stuff to buy. And the people just made their living, just got the practice of making their living at home.”

And that’s just what they did. The women would take care of the vegetable garden. Mr. Pitts recalled, “My mother would always put one row of flowers in the middle of the garden. She took care of them just like she did the vegetables.”

What did the men do? They took care of the field crops—things like two acres of corn or wheat. The corn was saved to take to the mill for their cornmeal and the wheat was made into flour. Sometimes they grew cane for cane syrup, which could be used in the place of sugar.

Yes! People really did get out and work in the field. And if you got sick and couldn’t work, you didn’t worry about it much because some of the folks that lived near would come over and help. Aunt Arie said, “People wasn’t a’scared of each other, like they are now.” All the people far and near would gather at one house. They would have a barnraisin’ or bean-stringin’ or cornshuckin’. The families would all bring food and after the work was done, all would eat and talk. Lawton Brooks said, “We had a many a cornshuckin’ way back yonder, but no more.”

After getting the land ready and planting the seeds came watching it grow and keeping the animals out and the bugs off. Finally came the harvest. That was the time when everybody worked. They worked not only to gather it, but to store it for use during the winter. The mother would can the vegetables and dry the fruit. The father had to bury the things like potatoes and cabbage. He buried them to keep them from freezing. Florence Brooks said, “You could go back in the dead of the winter and dig out a cabbage and it would be just as good as the day you cut it.”

ILLUSTRATION 1 Ednie Buchanan’s vegetable garden.

The people raised their pork and beef, so they didn’t have to buy much. They only bought what they couldn’t grow, going to market about twice a year. A family would raise enough vegetables to have some left to sell after putting up what they needed for the family. Kenny Runion remembered, “We loaded up the wagon and it was so far [to market] that we would have to camp on the way there or back.”

When they sold the vegetables, they would buy their supplies consisting of pepper, salt, some seeds, and coffee beans. Mr. Pitts

commented, “I’ve woke up many a’morning to the smell of coffee beans roasting on the fireplace.”

After about ten or fifteen interviews I found that I had not only learned how to plant a garden, but I had gained a small amount of understanding of what life was like thirty or forty years ago.

MARY THOMAS

Interviews and transcriptions by Bit Carver, Mary Chastain, Vicki Chastain, Susie Nichols, Cheryl Stocky, Mary Thomas, and Terese Turpin.

Organization and editing by Mary Thomas and Lynnette Williams. Photography by Brenda Carpenter, Myra Queen, Annette Reems, Barbara Taylor, Mary Thomas, and Lynnette Williams.

CLEARING THE LAND

Families in the mountains generally settled on land that had not been previously homesteaded. They, therefore, had to build their homes and clear their land for farming using only simple tools, manpower, and ox-power. To cut the trees, many of them two and three feet in diameter, they had only large two-man crosscut saws and axes. They chose the levelest, richest-looking land, and cleared that for their crops. This was very important, because those mountaineers were not gardening casually; they were, of necessity, farming for their survival.

R. M. DICKERSON: All this country, this bottom land here where we see it now, in my father’s and mother’s day and my grandfather’s day, was in a swamp. It was growed up in woods. And the first settlers here settled around the foot of the hills above the swamp. The swamp was full of water and you couldn’t do any good down there until it was drained out, so they first settled around the edge of the mountains and up on the mountains. They cleared the land there and got the logs and built log houses; that’s the kind of house I was raised in—a log cabin. They built those log cabins out of logs that they took off the land they was going to cultivate. They took

those logs and used this kind of tractor [a horse and sled] and skidded them up to where they was going to build a house.

They [sawed] the trees down on th'place and cut'em up. The ones that they was going to use, they rolled them over to the side. But they rolled the old rough logs and the stuff that was too big for a house log, they rolled that up and built'em a fire and burned'em all up in the brush. Sometimes it would take two or three days to burn all the logs. They'd just keep rollin' the logs together till they got'em burnt up.

Never thought anything about getting them stumps out. You'd just plow around the stump. In the middle there might be some little stumps or rocks in the way. Come time to take a big stump, they might lay some loose rocks up on it to get them out of the way of the plow or the hoes or maybe a stump that wasn't burnt up quite in the pile they would lay it up on the stump and let it rot.

MARY CARPENTER: You've seen them big bottoms in the valley. That was all in timber once, and that was all cut down. [In order to clear the land], they'd go out with their crosscut saw and an axe, and they'd chop down the trees and they'd work them into logs if they wanted to build a house. If not, they worked them into firewood; saw it and bust it up. Then they take the mattock and the shovel and dig the stumps up. It took a long time to dig a stump up, but that's [what they had to do]. Sometimes they dig down to a tap root. That was a root that went straight down, [the others spread out] and sometimes they'd be so big that they couldn't hardly roll the stump out of the hole. So they'd hitch a mule to it with a chain and pull the stump out. Then they'd fill the hole back up.

ILLUSTRATION 2 It took a tremendous amount of work years ago to completely clear this fertile bottomland.

People would sled rocks off a field. Why, we used to have an old mare and we made a sled, and put rocks on it. We'd load that old sled with rocks—every one we could put on it, and Oshie Holt would drive the old mare. She was a big and mean horse, too, if she wanted to be. And we'd take them down in between Grandpa's place and Bleckley's and add them to one side of the rock fence. Mr. Bleckley would haul and pack the *other* side of the rock fence. It was down in the valley, just old loose rock out of the field: we'd just take a sled load, place them in there, and keep filling the wall up. We didn't need any wooden fence; see, there wasn't no cattle grazin' in there then, but it was a line marker between their place and Grandpa's.

PREPARING THE SOIL

A man couldn't walk into the general store and buy his fertilizer and lime—no such things existed. The people had to provide for the enrichment of the soil from what was available on their farms. Every

scrap of chicken and animal manure that could be collected was put back in the soil. Some folks made compost piles, and many spread ashes on the ground to sweeten and enrich it. They were true organic farmers.

ANNA HOWARD: We'd terrace if we had a really steep place. Sometimes you'd have t'do that. You know, the way they'd do that [was to] make a ridge right through here, an' they'd put some sage'r'somethin' through there, and it'd stay there all th'time, an' th'sage'd hold the edge of the ridge.

LON DOVER: Now that new ground with natural soil that's not been disturbed maybe for a hundred years or longer, see it's got everything in there it needs. Until you tended it an' got nutrients out of the soil, why we didn't have nothin't'do but plant it. When we'd grow stuff till the ground wouldn't make any more, we'd sow grass for th'horses on those bald places.

ILLUSTRATION 3 Belle Dryman's father built this pen for composting organic matter, and Belle still uses it.

HARRY BROWN: We took the manure out of the barn and put it in a pen as big as this room. We'd clean out the stalls of the mules, cows, hogs, and chickens in the early part of the fall. And then we'd go to the woods and get a load of leaves to throw in there. From time to time during the winter, we'd mix it up and keep addin' to it till it was time to use it. We had big sacks we made into big aprons, and we'd go to th'pile and somebody would fill up our apron and we'd go scatter it around the gardens.

I was raised at Scaley, back in th'mountains, and you'll find that nearly ever'body has a different way of farmin'. Our garden, we kep' it special. We'd clear it in the spring of th'year, cleared off every little briar, an' took a rake an' raked it; then broadcast it with stable manure—tried t'broadcast it ever'year. Now farmin' is different—like a broomsage field, we'd burn that off, where if we'd had somethin' t'turn it under, see, that'd be just like good fertilizer. We didn't know that back then. Land was cheap back then and people cleared up new ground nearly ever'year or we'd just leave. 'Course, that'uz hard—plowin' with those stumps all around. An' we'd tend that every year till it got where it wouldn't make nothin' and then we let it grow up. That's th'reason s'much of this mountain land washed away.

We'd try t'plow it th'first year—we'd just go along an' it'd hang up, an' we'd take it out and go again an' hang it [the plow] up again—it'uz kinda aggravatin'. Some folks just dug holes and planted in the hills th'first year. Y'know those sprouts an' briars in that rich dirt'd grow some times six inches in one night. You could buy two, three acres of land back then cheaper than you could buy a two-hundred-pound sack of fertilizer. My daddy bought three hundred acres for less than a dollar an acre!

MARY CARPENTER: We'd cut those weeds and things all down, then we'd rake them to the middle of the garden. Just put them all into rows; one at one end, and one at the other end, and one in the middle, then light a fire to them. We'd light a cornstalk and keep stickin' it along—it don't make a big fire. Just let it burn a little at a time. You know, if it had been burning from one end to another it

would have made a fairly big fire. It'll just burn up so high and go out—just stir around with a fork and make certain it's all out. Then we went to plowing with a horse or a mule.

LAWTON BROOKS: They'd let the old cornstalks and vines and ever'thing rot on the ground, and that fall, they'd plow'em under. They usually plowed in th'fall or through th'winter, because the freezin'an'-thawin' would break up that dirt an'make it s'fine. Made your ground better. It don't have clods'r'nothin' in it. You plow it in th'spring of th'year an' it happens t'be a little bit damp, you'll have clods in there all year you couldn't bust with a durn hoe. I've hoed old cloddy ground when you couldn't do nothin', only roll the clods. I despise that—just like gettin' in a rock pile. [They used ashes for fertilizer.] I've hauled many a'wheelbarrow load of them. They used'em kinda like they use lime to sweeten th'soil. An' that's where they get their potash. They put that mainly in their vegetable garden, not in th'cornfields. Put'em down through th'winter. Every time y'clean out th'fireplace, get your ashes and fill up your wheelbarrow and go spread it on th'garden.

WILLIE UNDERWOOD: Before we planted, we'd have to plow it; back then we'd have to plow it with a mule, 'cause we didn't have any heavy equipment—like big harrows and things like that. We used a low gopher plow and what we call a single-foot mule and plowed through those things. We didn't tear it up too much the first year after it was cleared. We worked it then through the summer, and the next year it would be a lot easier, and we could do a lot better job plowing because we could break those roots up; they died out and started to rot out. And that helps your soil, too. When I was growin' up it didn't take too many years for the soil to stop producing a good crop; we'd let it grow up in stubble one year and the next year we'd plant it in rye and the next year we'd plant it in corn. We rotated then. Now a lot of times, we run year after year with the same thing. We put a lot more stuff back into the soil than we used to. You grow a lot more in soil if you put back in it. Soil builders, you know. They rot in there and make better soil.

ILLUSTRATION 4 Gay McClain uses an old push plow to lay off his rows for planting.

TOOLS

The tools available for farming in this area fifty to one hundred years ago were relatively simple and non-mechanized, except for the wood-burning, steam powered grain thresher which people hired out on a shares basis to thresh their rye, wheat, and oats. It seems almost every family had a plow, shovels, hoes, spades, rakes, and mattocks; but some families had several kinds of plows, harrows, a corn planter, and a grain cradle. And then some people just made do with what was on hand—Florence Brooks told us that since her father didn't have a harrow, he took a big old pile of brush and hitched it to the mule and dragged it over the field until it was smooth.

R. M. DICKERSON: Well, people used about the same tools—hoes, rakes, mattocks, and a plow—that's about it.

My grandfather used to have a braid hoe. When they come out here to a pretty good-sized sprout or grub that they wanted to dig up, they'd use this hoe as a mattock and dig it up. And as th'sprouts come out on a stump, they could take this old braid hoe and go around th'stump and knock'em off. But these ol' light hoes we got now, you'd break the handles out of them. This one had a good, big, strong handle in it and it was what people called a grubbin' hoe. I don't know how come them to be called "braid" unless [someone named] Braid invented them.

ILLUSTRATION 5 Kenny Runion has used this hoe for over sixty years.

Now you've seen these single-foot plow stocks that people would lay off a row at a time with just one mule to it. Now that was the only kind of a plow they had to get the land prepared. After they got the land prepared and the rows laid off, they'd have what they called a double-foot that would have two feet on it—one plow in front of the other. The front plow would be next to the row and a little ahead and this one would come along and go along like that

and get some of the dirt to the row sort of, and then they'd turn around and come back down that row and throw the dirt to the other row. Now that'uz what they called a double-foot plow. And that'uz the only kind of a plow that they had to cultivate corn with. They had this single-foot plow that they plowed up the land with and laid off the furrows, and then they used this double-foot to cultivate the corn with and to plow up the weeds. Then along behind that the children would hoe. Lots of times one of those harrows would belong to three or four families. Every family didn't have one—couldn't afford it. So they'd work together and when they got the land ready, they'd go somewhere to a good neighbor's over there and they'd get his harrow maybe and they'd go in together and all [work together].

ILLUSTRATION 6 A homemade drag harrow with wooden teeth. Drawn behind a horse, this harrow would break up clumps of earth in a garden before planting.

HARRY BROWN: We didn't have nothin' but a little bull-tongue or single-foot plow t'plow it with—didn't have tenners back then. They call'em single-foots now, but back sixty years ago they called'em a bull-tongue, because most everybody plowed with a steer. I can remember seein' one fellow plowin' with a plow he made out of a locust tree—just a stick hangin' down t'dig up th'ground.

For a long time, hand wooden plows were all we had. Then people began t'learn how t'work with iron; they made the plow-shoe out of that. Later they had turnin' plows, an' shover or [a] lay-off plow for layin' off rows, an' twister plows for hilling your dirt.

MARY CARPENTER: They had a drag harrow that was a big old iron thing with bars across it and sharp teeth. They'd put a big rock on there and a log and sometimes they'd stand on it, when they'd get in a place that was pretty clotty, you know. That'd help to mash it down. And you could harrow it when the ground was damp. Why, it'd be as smooth as a lettuce bed.

ILLUSTRATION 7 Robbie Letson holds another homemade drag harrow, this one with metal spikes for teeth.

FAYE LONG: Well, they used a horse in those days. We didn't have a tractor and we hoed the corn. We planted big fields of corn, and we plowed the corn about three or four times. Every time we plowed, we had to hoe it, but now we just spray the corn instead of having to hoe it. That was a lot of work, having to hoe the corn every time it was plowed. But you had to keep the weeds down. We used a single-foot to lay off with, and a cultivator to plow with. We used one horse, and hooked it to the cultivator. That turned the soil real good and if you could plow it, if your corn was big enough, you plowed close to it, throw the fresh dirt from the far side of the row

over to the next. That would cover up a lot of the little weeds that were coming, but you still had to cut the big weeds that were in there, and if it was a dry season that would kill'em. But if it was rainy, they'd grow right back.

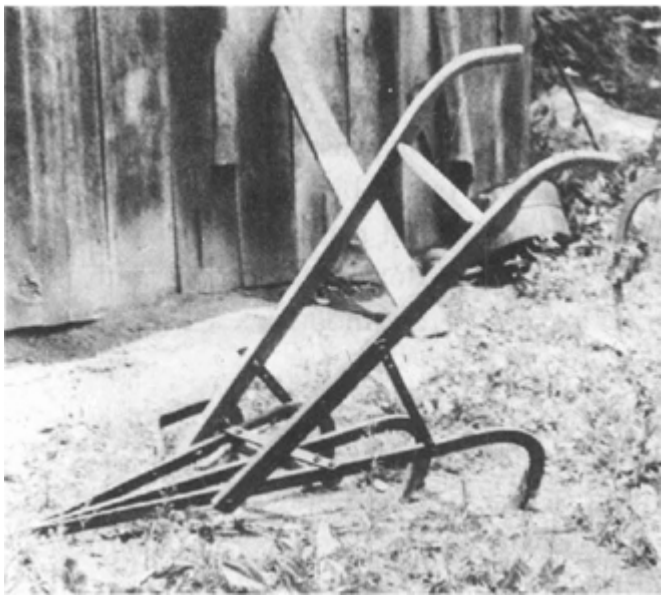

ILLUSTRATION 8 Horse- (or mule-) drawn cultivators such as this one are still in use.

SEEDS

Everyone saved almost all of their seed, but many people did buy some; lettuce and cabbage seed, for example. Gathering and storing seed for next year's crops was serious business. A supply of healthy seed assured a family that, barring great misfortune, they would be able to make it through the next year as they had made it through the last. Precautions were taken to insure that the seed would remain safe and dry, as next year's food supply depended on that.

ESCO PITTS: I don't reckon there's not much of anything a fellow can plant but what he can save th'seed off of. Let'em get ripe on th'stalk or vine, get'em up, shell'em out, dry'em, save'em in little pokes or jars. Pepper seed, tomato seed, cucumber seed, all kind of bean seeds, all kinds of seeds. People used t'never buy seeds. An' people used t'save their onion seeds, too. Had th'multiplyin' onions —red button onions—that'd run up an' make their buttons on th'stalk. Save th'buttons. We never did save no cabbage seed, but

you could save your cabbage through the winter, and then set'em out in th'spring of th'year. And they'll make you cabbage seed. Beets, the same way—save them through the winter, put them out in a row in th'spring of th'year, and they'll run up an' make seed. If you leave'em in th'ground, they'll make seed th'next spring. [My daddy] picked him out some purty potatoes, and he'd take some hay or somethin', maybe leaves, put that in a hole in the ground and put his potatoes on that and put hay over them. And rake dirt over it and put a piece of tin over that to keep the water out. That was the seed. Now sweet potatoes he couldn't save. He just had to buy them.

LON DOVER: You get your seeds from pretty ripe vegetables, put them on something and let them dry. Then you take them up and put'em in jars. They have to be dried, or you can't keep them through the winter. We'd put th'seeds in a jar or a tin can back then. When th'bugs got t'gettin' in, people would store their bean seed in a snuff can an' kept enough snuff in there t'cover'em up. For tomato seeds, you'd just squeeze the seeds out on a cloth, then lay them down somewhere to dry. Then put the cloth up somewhere to save for the next year. The seeds stuck to the cloth. You do the same thing for cucumbers, squash, and pumpkin, but you had to let the seeds dry before you packed them away. People were more anxious in savin' seeds then than we are now, freezing things. That was a big thing.

MARY CARPENTER: There was nowhere to buy seeds, so we saved them. Once we got'em, we kept'em. We'd leave a row of beans in the garden to seed for next year, then we'd shell them out when they dried up, and put them in a can and put a spoonful of soda in'em and shake it real good. And that's your seed for next year. It's the same way with peas.

For corn, when we were shucking it out after it was dried on the ear, whenever we found a big pretty ear, we'd throw it in a separate pile to save for seed. Even mustard—we'd let one or two grow up and make seed, and they'd leave one cabbage stalk to grow up and make seeds. Same way with spinach. The pea and bean seeds are the

only ones I put soda in—the rest I'd just put them up in a cloth bag in a dry place and hang it on a nail somewhere.

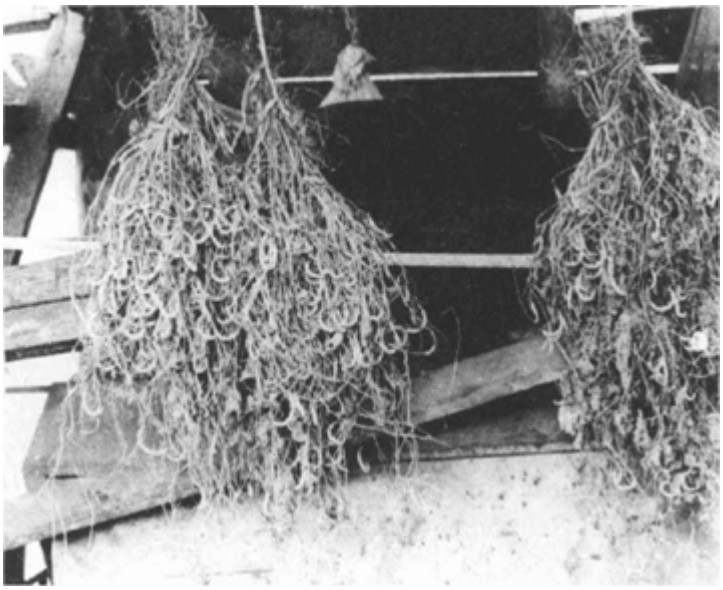

ILLUSTRATION 9 Belle Dryman hung these bean plants in her barn to dry in the fall, and will use the seed next spring.

BELLE DRYMAN: We growed our own seed. For sweet potatoes, we'd save some from the last year and, in the spring, bed them down. Fix up a seed bed, ever how big y'want, and put manure in it. Cover that with dirt—don't mix it in, then put your potatoes pretty close together on top of that, and cover'em up with some more dirt. When they start t'sprout, watch'em and let those slips get six, eight inches tall, and pull'em off and plant'em where y'want your sweet'taters.

SIGNS

It appears that many more people used to plant by the signs of the moon than do now. Some may call this practice silly or superstitious, but many swear by it. They would no more plant corn under the wrong sign than farmers now would plan to cut hay during a rainy spell. We don't know if any carefully controlled scientific experiments have been done on planting by the signs, but several people have told us that they have conducted their own simple experiments and found that the seed planted

under the proper sign did much, much better than the same kind of seed planted under the wrong sign.

LON DOVER: I wouldn't plant nothin' only by th'signs. Now they's lots of people that don't believe in that, but I do. I'uz raised that way, and I go by it yet. Don't you plant anything till th'moon gets full. Don't plant nothin' on th'new moon for it'll grow up high and it won't make nearly as much t'eat. Now roastin' ears planted on th'new moon grow small ears right up at th'top of th'stalk. An' planted on th'old moon, it makes a bigger ear an' kinda falls over. I plant by th'signs or I won't plant at all. Irish potatoes, plant them on th'new moon and they'll grow that [three feet] high and they won't make a total failure, but they won't make half as many. The old moon [is] any time from the time the moon fulls till it gets its smallest. You can plant all the way to the new moon. Plant everything on th'old moon. Now mustard or greens, if you plant on the new moon, they'll run way up an' won't have much leaves on'em an' they'll go to seed.

I don't know what causes the signs to do what they do. I just plant mine like I told you, and I don't know much about how it works. I plant by th'signs an' gather when it gets ripe. I learned it from the old folks. If you want to make a good yield, you better go by th'signs, I'll tell you that now.

The dark nights is when th'moon is going down, last quarter before it news, there's three dark nights before the new moon. My daddy [planted by the moon]. I don't know what the signs were, but it was th'moon, a certain time he planted his corn, a certain time he planted his watermelon patch. Whenever th'signs are in th'arms is the best time t'plant your beans. An' you shouldn't plant corn when th'signs is in the heart—y'get black spots in your grain. There's certain times as th'moon goes down that I won't plant. Sometimes as they go down, they'll be maybe in th'bowels an' get in th'legs an' feet is a real good time to plant. An old friend of mine—the best potato raiser I ever saw—said t'plant your taters when th'signs is in the feet even if it's on the new moon. The best time in the world t'make Irish potatoes is when th'signs are in the feet. The signs are

good from the head down to th'heart, then from just below th'bowels on down to th'feet. The signs get t'every part of th'body ever'month. They go from the feet back to th'head all over again.

HARRIET ECHOLS: [There are certain signs to plant under], and that is on the new of the moon when you have dark nights. When you plant your cabbage, plant when the signs are in the head. Now the dark nights is for onions and potatoes. The new moon, I believe, is for corn where it won't grow so tall—if it's planted on a full moon, see, it grows straight up. You sow your plants at different signs, and when you plant your beans the best time is to plant'em in the arms. When you set out plants, start with the signs in the thighs and you'll have good luck. That's the old-time rule, now, and we still go by it. 'Course, I'm old timey myself, you know. My parents went by this and I found [usually] the old timer's go by the zodiac signs. When the sign is in the bowels, you don't plant because your seed rots.

ETHEL CORN: An' if you plant beans on th'new of the moon, if y'ever like t'raise any, they'll rot an' speck. They'll make good vines, but they'll rot and speck. I didn't b'lieve that at one time—then I tried it once.

PAULINE HENSON: If you want a lot of cucumbers, plant [the seeds] when the signs are in the twins.

R. M. DICKERSON: Well, some people'd plant by the signs, 'specially beans, but we never did take much stock in plantin' by the signs. A lot of people believed in'em and sometimes it worked out and it'd look like they's right; then again maybe it won't. But what most ever'body had to do back then when they got their land ready and the time come, they'd plant signs or no signs. It's kinda' like Uncle Bob, that lived in this two-story house over here. Somebody was asking him one day about plantin' by the moon. He said he always planted his down here 'cause it was so far to go to the moon to work it that he'd never get it worked.

LIZZIE LOVIN: Mamma planted beans when the signs was in the arms. They'd never plant corn when the signs was on the new of the

moon; it would grow so high you couldn't reach the ears. They planted corn on the full moon, and it'd grow short and the ears would be full. And potatoes the same way—if you plant them on the new of the moon, they'd make all vines and no potatoes. So we'd plant potatoes on dark nights in March or April. My mamma used to say the moon was just like a man. It changes every eight days. She'd plant things that grow leafy on the new of the moon.

ESCO PITTS: You want'a put onions out in March. You can put them out earlier, but they do better to put them out on a dark moon, for they make under the ground.

COMMON VEGETABLES

The different kinds of vegetables grown here years ago are still prevalent today, with some variations in particular varieties. The Jerusalem artichoke, which many people used to cultivate, appears to be the main exception, as it isn't grown very widely here now.

Corn was one of the most important crops—it was a staple for both people and all their animals. They ate it fresh on or off the cob; in fresh corn cornbread; used it dried to make cornmeal, popcorn, parched corn, grits, and hominy; and sprouted it to make moonshine. The fodder (leaves) was used dried to feed the animals, and the shucks were made into mats, scrub brushes, hats, and various other things.

The vegetables are listed in the general order in which people said they planted them, starting with the cool-weather ones in the early spring, and going to the warm-weather ones in late spring and through the summer.

Potatoes

R. M. DICKERSON: Usually the first thing they would plant was Irish potatoes 'cause they'd stand the cold. We used to plant'em back in February. 'Course they never came up maybe until sometime in March. Then you'd have some to eat because more'n'likely you'd eaten up all your potatoes that you'd made last fall by that time.

EDNIE BUCHANAN: We always planted potatoes on a dark moon in April, but some folk'd plant'em in March or even February. We'd cut the potatoes from last year that we saved for seed into a couple

pieces each. Had to be sure there was two good eyes in each piece. Well, we'd already have our rows ready and fertilized with manure, and just plant those pieces.

LON DOVER: You can plant potatoes real deep. We used to always take th'turnin'plow an' lay off for our potatoes an' then cover'em with a tennin'plow, an' that'd ridge'em up.

ADA KELLY: After we planted the potatoes, we'd work'em and ridge the soil up some as the vines grew. We found that if we made a small ridge, we'd get big potatoes. We always put ashes on our potatoes, and it made them grow really well. We'd dig new potatoes around the time the vines were blooming, but wouldn't dig the whole patch until all the vines had died down. We'd plow them out —that plow'd run along under the potatoes and run'em out on top of the ground. But I guess some people would dig them out.

LAWTON BROOKS: [To store] potatoes, we'd dig out a round hole, not too far. Then we'd take us a big sack of leaves, put right in th'bottom of that hole, pile th'potatoes up. You can pile them up over the level of th'ground, then you put some leaves over th'top of them, or straw, an' cover that with dirt. You end up with a sort of mound, then when you want some potatoes, scratch you out a little hole right down at th'bottom an' them potatoes keep a'walkin' right to you. You can do apples th'same way.

Onions

AUNT ARIE CARPENTER: [The onions were] planted early. We put them out in March if it got dry enough. The earlier you get them out, the better they do. We always bought onion buttons, and Mommy had some of those multiplying onions. A big onion made little onions and a little onion made a big one. And we had these little white shallots, as they call'em. Set out one and they'd just make a whole big bunch.

ILLUSTRATION 10 Aunt Arie Carpenter getting some help digging her potatoes from *Foxfire* students.

LON DOVER: If I don't get onions out in March, I might just as well not plant. Seems like they never would do no good [if they were put out any later]. They do best in a pretty loose, rich dirt, and they need lots of sunshine. Sometime along in August when the tops dies down, we'll pick'em and spread'em out till th'dirt gets dried off, and they get cured good. You can't store them till they've dried and cured. Then we'd put'em in a box'r'somethin' and not let'em freeze. Lots of people'ud tie'em in bunches an' hang'em up in a dry, cool place.

BELLE DRYMAN: We always raised our own onions. We had what they called th'multiplyin' onion back then. [They were biennial because] the first year, a little onion would grow into a big onion. Save that big onion till next spring, plant it, an' it'd grow into a whole bunch of little onions [each of which, when planted next year, would grow into another big onion, and so on]. An' we had some that made what we called buttons on the top o'th'stalk, where

them blooms grow. You save those buttons till next spring and pull'em apart and plant'em. Now if you planted the buttons or the little multiplyin' onions in the late summer, they wouldn't make too big of onions, just green onions.

ILLUSTRATION 11 Onions and lettuce may be planted in February or March.

Lettuce

FLORENCE BROOKS: They did have leaf lettuce; you didn't never see a head lettuce. We planted it early, and when it give up, we planted it late. It needs cooler weather—we didn't try t'grow it in th'middle of th'summer. Plant it around March if the ground's dry enough. Our seeds—we bought'em in th'store.

ESCO PITTS: My mother grew it every year. She had two kinds—leaf lettuce and some that made heads. She planted it very early in the spring, even before th'frost quit, because lettuce is a hardy plant. She had a corner of th'garden where it seemed t'grow better than any other place. Then she had lettuce along in her onion rows.

EDNIE BUCHANAN: I just sow my lettuce in sort of a bed. It loves cool weather, and once it gets up some, even a freeze don't kill it. It

does real good where the ground is rich, but now it's something you have to use when it's ready, or it will ruin.

Peas

R. M. DICKERSON: [Plant] five or six rows of garden peas. You know nothing but a hard freeze'll hurt garden peas. The frost don't bother them, and then in May we'll be gettin' peas from th'garden.

LON DOVER: You plant a row of peas on th'new moon, an' cover'em up good with dirt, they'll just crawl right on top of that dirt. I go by th'calendar; you can see what phase th'moon is in, and where th'signs are. I go by th'moon and th'signs.

We had what we call English peas—that's all they called'em back then. We'd let th'peas dry an' save'em for seed from year to year.

HARRIET ECHOLS: We'd plant garden peas, also called them English peas. You have to plant them early, February or March, because they like cool weather. They don't need a real rich soil like, say, corn does, but a pretty good soil. They do best if you can stake them up, but you don't have to. They're harder to pick if you don't, though.

We also planted crowder peas and black-eyed peas, which are really more like a bean in the way they grow. Now they like the warmer weather, and you can plant'em in your corn, and they'll climb the corn and you pick'em after they're mature and all dry.

Turnips

FLORENCE BROOKS: We raised great big turnips—people don't raise turnips like they did then. Old people had great large turnips back then, and they had'em all the winter. Lot of times they'd have t'plow those old turnips up and push them aside to plant again in the spring. And my father went to th'field with a big basket [to gather the cast-aside turnips], and we'd put on pots of'em t'cook for the hogs. We used the same turnips for greens that we used for the turnips themselves.

HARRIET ECHOLS: The turnips, you saw them early in the spring, 'bout like peas or lettuce. We usually sowed them in late summer, too, to have the greens through the fall and winter. Turnips'll grow in a fair soil—now if you want the turnips instead of the greens, you have to thin'em out some so they'll have room to grow. People used to bury turnips to keep over the winter just like they buried potatoes.

ESCO PITTS: The turnips [we grew] was the purple-topped gold. And I've seen them get as big as six inches through.

Carrots

EDNIE BUCHANAN: I plant carrots just about the same time I do beets, early spring. I dig a little ridge, then sow the seed along in that ridge. They do the best in a loose kind of dirt, but it doesn't have to be too rich.

HARRIET ECHOLS: Carrots like the cool weather—you can plant'em in early spring and you can plant'em again in the summer for fall carrots. Now y'can't plant'em too deep, because they'll not come up too well, and you have t'cover [the seeds] with fine dirt. You have to thin'em good and keep'em weeded, too, in order to get big carrots.

Beets

AUNT ARIE: Now I'll tell you when to plant beets … the twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, and twenty-eighth of March. If you plant beets on them three days, you'll sure have beets. But you have to keep right after them. If you let the weeds get a little bit ahead of you, they're hard to raise.

HARRIET ECHOLS: Beets should be planted in February—if they're planted later and along comes a dry spell in late spring, they may die if they're still real small. They like th'cool weather, and want a fairly rich dirt, but nothin' like corn. Sometimes they're bad to not germinate, so it's good to sow'em pretty thick. You have to thin them out if they're real thick though, or they won't make much

beet. You can store'em, but they taste the sweetest right out of th'garden.

Mustard

FLORENCE BROOKS: We planted mustard [in March] about the same time as turnip greens. We mixed th'seed together most of th'time. Then we'd plant'em both again along in August an' have late greens.

ESCO PITTS: You plant your mustard early in th'spring—it can stand frost an' it's th'first greens that come in th'spring.

MARINDA BROWN: My mother used to sow mustard from early spring, all through the summer. It likes cool weather, but it did all right through the summer. We'd eat it into the late fall. It likes a good rich garden soil.

Cabbage

LIZZIE LOVIN: My mother always planted her cabbage seeds in between the onions, in certain intervals—she didn't put'em thick, but she put'em where there'd be skips in the onions or where she'd pulled out the onions to eat. Then she'd have a row of cabbage where the onions was. [Onions, having a strong smell, can help in repelling the cabbage moth, which lays eggs on the leaves, which turn into cabbage worms which eat the leaves—Ed.]

ESCO PITTS: Seems to me we grew a Flat Dutch [cabbage] back then. The head would get as big as a half a bushel. Cabbage likes a pretty rich dirt to grow in, and they need cool weather t'do their best growing—the best times are spring and fall, but here in some of these mountains we can grow them all summer long. We'd usually plant'em in March. Some folks'd plant seeds right in the rows, and some would start'em in a small seed bed and then transplant'em into th'rows when they got up about four to six inches. Now the early cabbage we'd eat or make into kraut, but the late cabbage, we'd dig down a ditch, pull the [mature] cabbage up by the roots, and bury them [head down] in the ditch—instead of putting them

straight up and down, they was slanted up at an angle. We'd cover the heads, and leave the roots sticking out. That was the best cabbage you ever eat. Any time of the winter you could go out and dig some out.

LON DOVER: At that time we grew what we called late Flat Dutch [cabbage]. I don't believe I've seen any of that lately; it had a big old head. And another smaller-headed one called Copenhagen Market. We had t'buy our cabbage seed. But if y'take a cabbage that's been buried all winter, and set it out again in the spring, it'll put up a stalk and make seed. You've got t'go th'second year t'get cabbage seed.

ILLUSTRATION 12 Cabbage just beginning to head.

Corn

LIZZIE LOVIN: Back several years ago, people grew yellow prolific and white prolific and Indian corn. The Indian corn, sometimes Dad would take it down yonder to the mill [and have it ground] and us kids wouldn't eat it because it was too red. We didn't have any sweet corn back then, though.

Corn likes a really rich soil, and most of the time, people would put it on the newly cleared ground, and plant it there for a couple of years until it didn't make good corn anymore.

To harvest the corn we just hitched the mules to the sled and went through there and pulled the ears off and leave the stalk standing.

But then they'd usually fall over before Dad plowed and he'd plow them under. Then we'd take the corn and put it in the crib.

R. M. DICKERSON: Our old rule for planting corn back then was the last week in April and the first week in May. That was when the ground began to get warm enough for the corn to come up. That was as late as you could plant that old field corn and it mature in the fall.

ILLUSTRATION 13 Margaret and Richard Norton planting corn.

LON DOVER: Up in June, we'd plant a patch of corn, and it'd be in good roastin' ears till frost. We'd cut th'stalks off before th'first frost, stick'em down in th'ground and shock it. Th'frost wouldn't hurt it and you could pull roastin' ears a good while after th'frost. Stick th'stalks down in th'ground, y'know, and just shock it up. Make a big year of corn—y'get it in roastin' ears what y'want now, but what you don't use for feed or for bread, you wait till after it comes two'r'three good frosts in th'fall of th'year and then y'gather your corn and put it up. They say [the frost] helps t'dry th'sap out of th'shuck. I plant corn in March and harvest in fall.

In plantin' corn, you want to cover it, early corn, about that [two inches] deep. But now if th'ground's gettin' warm, it's gettin' late,

you don’t cover it deeper than three-quarters inch an’ it’ll come up quicker. But if you plant it too deep, it won’t come up.

KENNY RUNION: They’ve changed from th’old way, and th’best corn I ever raised was when I planted it in March and it’d get up an’ get frostbit, and then it’d come back out. Of course, if it’s barely picked up out of th’ground, if it bites it down into th’bud, why it won’t come out. As long as it don’t bite it plumb down t’th’ground into that bud, your corn’ll come out. It’ll come out and make th’heavy corn earlier.

ILLUSTRATION 14 This corn has matured and dried and is ready to bring in and store for the winter.

HARRY BROWN: To harvest the corn we were going to keep over the winter, we waited way late, till after several frosts. That’s so the corn would get good and dry. If it didn’t, when you gathered it, it would rot. We’d go in an’ pick the corn and heap it up, and then

somebody would come through with a wagon, loading up and carrying it to the barn. Sometimes we'd pile it out in the yard, and have a corn-shuckin' with twenty-five to thirty men and have a great big dinner.

Sweet potatoes

LAWTON BROOKS: You take y'potatoes for seed, an' you got to fix you a good bed, an' keep it where it won't rain in it—keep it covered—and use good, rich soil. Plant your seed potatoes, lay'em in there whole, bury em side by side till you get your bed full. When they come up, you just slip one [sprout] off, an' another'll just come on. Tater'll just be covered up with slips. Y'start your bed in th'spring, an' you have t'keep it warm. You plant your slips along in June. We always just grew them in a corner of th'corn patch close to th'house. You want clay land, not rich soil. Them roots have to have hard soil t'push to or they won't make. They'll get real long an' not be any bigger than my thumb. You harvest them long about frost. Sometimes a frost'll hit'em, an' you cut your vines off. If it rains on'em after a frost, they claim th'frost goes in'em, an' causes th'taters t'rot. We plowed'em up—they're hard t'dig up without you cuttin' a lot of'em diggin'em.

ESCO PITTS: My father always, when he dug his sweet potatoes, let 'em dry in th'sunshine. Then he'd bring'em in th'kitchen an' put'em back of th'stove. He'd sort out all th'small, long, stringy potatoes that weren't big enough to try t'eat, [and he'd save them for seed]. He stored th'sweet potatoes over the winter in the smokehouse. Early in the spring of th'year, he'd take those little ones and make him a cold frame with a cover to start his plants.

Tomatoes

HARRY BROWN: To make seed beds for our tomatoes, we'd burn [organic] trash in a pile. Then just took a shovel and hoe, and just turned it all up, and mixed it all in the ground. Then we'd sow the seeds, and when they got up several inches, we'd set'em out in rows.

EDNIE BUCHANAN: I sow the seeds in April and sometimes I sow them the first of March, but you can't set them out without keeping them covered until the middle of May.

LAWTON BROOKS: People didn't always stake up their t'maters, but they do just so much better than when they just crawl over th'ground. Now, t'maters is a thing that does best in the new ground—even if you put lots of manure or fertilize to [the old] ground, there's still somethin' about th'new ground—they do best in it. The dirt needn't be too rich, but it can't be poor neither. And, sun—t'maters need sun or they'll grow taller and taller lookin' for light, and not make many t'maters.

ESCO PITTS: I never saw a tomato till I was ten or twelve years old. My daddy wouldn't hardly go to the table if there was a tomato on there. He said they wasn't a hog would eat'em and he wasn't going to eat'em. Tomato was something we never saw in our young days.

Peppers

ESCO PITTS: Mother used to grow a lot of hot pepper—we didn't have any bell pepper in those days—none of these big sweet peppers. She sowed th'seeds right in th'garden usually, but sometimes she'd plant'em in a box an' set'em in th'kitchen, an' they'd get up an' then she'd transplant'em. Y'got t'wait till frost is over t'plant or set'em out—latter part of April. It takes quite a while. They don't start making peppers till July or August. She used pepper in her sausage; rubbed pepper on th'cured meat t'keep th'flies away. She used it in her relishes, too.

FLORENCE BROOKS: [The peppers were] just like they have now—all but th'banana pepper. We had bell pepper and hot pepper. We planted them early, about April, I guess. Planted th'seeds right in th'row—didn't ever thin'em out because pepper'll make pretty thick.

Okra

ESCO PITTS: We planted okra just as quick as warm weather gets here after th'last frost. It can't stand cold weather. Mother sowed'em

in th'row; then thinned them if they was too thick. She had th'green kind of okra.

FLORENCE BROOKS: You don't put any in till after frost—I guess May. We always put th'seeds in a cup of warm water one night, let'em sprout, an' take'em out an' plant'em th'next day. We always made sure we put chicken manure around—chicken manure will really make okra. Th'okra was just like th'one we have now, an' we used t'have a white okra—it's just so pretty and smooth, an' it was good too. Okra takes a while before it starts bearin', but once it *starts* bearin', it just keeps growin' taller, and *keeps* bearin' till frost. It's best t'pick it ever'day, when th'pods are around four inches long. It gets tougher the longer it grows.

Squash

ESCO PITTS: I don't remember seeing these yellow crookneck squash when I was a boy. [My mother] planted hubbard and butternut squash, [the kind that can be stored over the winter]. My daddy had a smokehouse where he put his meat, and that's where he stored the squash. He'd pile them in there and cover them with shucks or sacks to keep them from freezing. Squash likes any good garden soil and pretty much sun. It's not a hard thing to grow. We'd just plant them in hills, several feet apart, and give them room to crawl.

HARRY BROWN: Old people always—any vine, th'tenth day of May they called Vine Day—that's when they always planted them—squash, Kershaws, and hubbard. Kershaws are pulp-filled an' grow great long, an' they're white, have a neck to'em kind of like crookneck squash, only great big. They were really good t'fry like sweet potatoes, or slice up an' put butter an' sugar on'em, an' put'em in th'stove an' bake'em.

Cucumbers

ETHEL CORN: You put cucumbers out just as quick as th'danger of frost gets over—frost kills'em—along in May, unless you just put out

a few that you can cover from the frost. Plant'em in hills an' give'em plenty of room to crawl.

EDNIE BUCHANAN: We usually plant cucumbers around the tenth of May, Vine Day. I just plant them in hills, several seeds to a hill, and they just run out on a vine on the ground, and the cucumbers come on the vine. Like most everything else, they like a good soil.

Melons

LON DOVER: We'd plant watermelon an' mushmelon—y'always planted them th'tenth day of May—Vine Day. I've known that as far back as I can remember. Poppy always'd step off about a half a acre that we'd put in watermelons.

EDNIE BUCHANAN: We used to grow whole patches of melons, but we didn't have a certain time to plant them, just early enough in the late spring or early summer so they'd have enough time to grow. We'd have watermelon and cantalopes, and the whole family would come over to eat watermelons. We never did sell them, but I think we sold a few cantalopes. My husband just loved to raise'em, I don't know why.

MARINDA BROWN: We grew watermelon and mushmelon, which they call cantalope, now. We grew them in the field, in good bottom land, because they like a more sandy soil, not in the garden. We'd plant them in hills, and work'em until [the vines] started to run out, then we couldn't weed'em any more.

Pumpkins

ESCO PITTS: We had pumpkins all in th'cornfield. We'd plant it by hand, and plant a pumpkin hill here, another one there, another one yonder.

FLORENCE BROOKS: We'd put'em in th'corn planter an' plant it with th'corn. An' just let them drop out whenever they wanted to. An' boy, did we have pumpkins! Never did plant'em till 'bout th'time blackberries go t'bloomin'—that's th'best time. We had a old mule that got scared of a pumpkin vine one time, an' tore down

’bout half a field of corn! We raised some great big’uns, an’ we ate’em in pies, and cooked and fried in grease.

MARINDA BROWN: Pumpkins like a good rich soil, and they seem to grow best in cornfields, possibly because of the shade the corn gives them. I’ve planted them just out by themselves, and they don’t seem to do as well. My parents used to grow the big field pumpkins —we’d store them in the shuck pen, buried under the shucks to keep them from freezing. We’d also peel, slice, and dry some of them. Those we didn’t eat, we’d feed to the cattle and hogs.

Beans

FAYE LONG: We like to plant our first beans on Good Friday, which is just before Easter. Some of the time they’ll get frostbit, and part of the time not. I can keep going with fresh beans all summer, as long as I keep planting them two weeks apart, until I don’t think there’ll be enough time for them to mature by the first frost in the fall.

FLORENCE BROOKS: There’s altogether a difference—people ain’t got none of th’old-fashioned bean seed they used t’have. The beans ain’t near as good as they used t’be. We had what we called greasy-black beans—I’ve not seen any of’em in years—little white beans in a white pole bean. Th’greasy-black bean, you can either eat the green bean or a dried bean. For a dried bean, after they get dry on th’vine, y’pick’em an’ put’em in a sack an’ beat’em out with a stick. The beans fall out of th’pod.

We planted green beans and cornfield beans. We always planted th’cornfield full of them, so we’d have beans that’d dry up an’ we’d have our own soup beans. When they got dried up, we picked’em an’ shelled’em out. They’re th’same as green beans, only we let’em dry.

HARRY BROWN: We didn’t have any half-runners back in those days; we had cornfield beans. We’d pick’em after they got large enough. We’d take’em and break’em like we were going to cook them, and set down with a big needle and string’em on a thread—[called them] leather britches. People didn’t can so much like they do now.

ILLUSTRATION 15 Everyone helps when beans come in.

ESCO PITTS: When I was a boy we didn't have bunch beans—they's all cornfield beans or running beans. Around the edge of the garden my mother planted her butterbeans and what we called October beans, those big old red striped beans. And they'd run up those garden palings, and they'd be nothin' to bother'em and they'd make all kinds of beans. And out in the cornfield we'd plant field beans and they'd run up on the corn and they'd just be bushels and bushels of beans out there. We ate [the cornfield beans] green as long as the season was open, and what we didn't pick before the frost, we let dry on the vine.

Fall garden

It was a common practice to take advantage of the cooler weather in late summer and fall to grow more cool-weather vegetables. People planted the same kinds of things they planted in the early spring, but not as big a variety. Collards are included only in this section because they really don't taste good until they've been hit by frost, but everything else mentioned here was also grown in the spring.

ESCO PITTS: For a fall crop, we planted turnips in September and cabbage. Sometimes we'd put out late-multiplying onions in the fall

[around September] and have onions all winter. We buried th'turnips along with th'cabbage t'keep'em through th'winter. Usually, my mother planted [collards] in th'fall of th'year. Latter part of July, first of August, she'd sow a collard bed an' when they come up good size t'transplant, she'd have a row in th'garden. Collards are not much good till th'frost bites'em—makes'em better t'eat.

FLORENCE BROOKS: They planted mustard an' turnip greens; that's about all except for late cabbage which they planted before August. They'd dig a hole an' store those cabbage. Didn't plant late potatoes —they wouldn't make.

Collards you grow like y'grow late cabbage. They taste th'best if it frosts on'em before you pick'em—they just have a sweeter taste that way. If you grow'em like early cabbage, they don't taste right. You can sow your seeds [in July] in your rows, or in a bed an' then transplant'em into rows. Come the first frosts in October, you can start pickin' the leaves and cookin' 'em. Y'don't pull the whole plant up at one time, just keep pickin' the leaves, and they like cooler weather, so for a time they'll just keep growin' more leaves.

HARRY BROWN: My father would take the collards after they got so high, and push them over, and put a piece of pine bark and then dirt over them. That'd protect the collards and keep them through the winter.

Other farm crops

In addition to the garden vegetables mentioned, people grew other things, either for themselves, or for their livestock. These crops occupy a separate section because they are not garden vegetables per se, but were very important to the overall functioning of the farm as a nearly self-contained unit.

Perennials, herbs, and spices

It was common for a corner or edge of the vegetable garden to be set aside for perennials. The herbs and spices (many of which are perennials) were often dug from fallow or wooded areas and

transplanted into the garden so they'd be close at hand. Plants such as Jerusalem artichokes and rhubarb were commonly grown (as vegetables) with the herbs and spices. The Jerusalem artichokes form edible tubers under the ground, and if a few are left each year, they will sprout and grow up again in the spring. Rhubarb grows back each year from the same stock. (We have not included another well-known perennial, asparagus, here, because no one we spoke to used to grow it.)

MARINDA BROWN: My mother had her herbs and spices set aside on one edge of the garden. She grew horseradish for putting in pickles, sage for seasoning sausage, garlic for flavoring different things, dill for dill pickles, and peppermint for flavoring tea. None of these things took much pampering—all but the dill would come back from the same roots, and that would self-sow, and they didn't take a really rich soil. Of course, you had to weed them and keep them from spreading too far, especially the garlic.

She also grew rhubarb and Jerusalem artichokes along the edge of the garden. The rhubarb she got when a neighbor divided hers. They like a rich, well-drained soil, and [the roots] need to be divided every couple of years. The Jerusalem artichokes grew in rich soil, too. We liked to eat them raw.

FLORENCE BROOKS: Oh, we had [Jerusalem] artichokes. I don't know when they planted'em; they was just there when I was. They kept coming back, an' we'd just dig'em an' *eat*, Lord mercy! They were planted outside of th'fence—it was good rich soil right below th'garden.

Ever'body had rhubarb. We always set it out by th'garden fence an' let it go. Didn't dig it up, just let it grow, year after year. It gets in big bunches. Set'em inside th'garden.

ESCO PITTS: My mother had all kinds of [herbs]—rhubarb, rue, comfrey, Jerusalem oak, mallards, sage, parsley, and catnip. She had in one corner of her garden all her medicinal plants, and that corner never was plowed up—she was very careful of that. They'd just come up ever'spring. The rue she made tea of, and I ain't seen a stock of rue in many a day. She used Jerusalem oak to make candy out of for worm medicine. And th'mallard leaf was to put on a burn

—wilt it in front of th'fire an' slap it on a burn an' it would draw th'fire out. The comfrey she used for poultices for sores.

ADA KELLY: My mother [had a corner of the garden] where she grew dill and sage, catnip, ground ivy—the babies had to have that for tea. And she grew tansy and peppermint. Most of them came back year after year, but a few, like dill, she had to plant from seed.

Fruit

Many people cultivated fruit in the mountains years ago, with apples, peaches, and grapes being the most common. But it appears to us that people relied very heavily on the wild fruit which grew in abundance. Some examples are blackberries, strawberries, huckleberries, persimmons, cherries, mulberries, mayapples, and elderberries.

KENNY RUNION: People grew apples, peaches, grapes, plums, and pears. And they were delicious. At that time there was no such thing as sprayin'. The people in my young life pruned their trees and grape vines in February, and that was all that was done. And it was delicious fruit. You don't get fruit now'days that tastes like that fruit. Now some people had a cellar t'put stuff in, but most people just dug holes in th'ground.

MARINDA BROWN: While I was growing up on Middle Creek, my father had all kinds of fruit, and there was no problem with bugs. There were several apple trees all around the house and barnyard. He always fertilized them with stable manure every year. The kinds I can remember that he grew were Shockley, Ben Davis, and Limbertwig. I guess he pruned them, but I really can't remember.

He also set out some cherry trees around, but as far as I can recall he never pampered them. They just bore every year. There were also some currant and some gooseberry bushes that were on the place when Dad bought it. He never did anything with them, either. They just bore fruit.

There was a man who used some of our land to start seedlings [to sell] on—all kinds of fruit trees. Many of those seeds were carried around by the birds, I guess, and we also had self-sowed plum and

peach trees all around from that. And no one ever took care of them—all we did was pick the fruit.

ADA KELLY: We had a nice apple orchard and a peach orchard. We called'em Indian peaches, and they were small and about as red as a pickled beet. And then we had a small peach we called an openstone, because the peach didn't cling to the seed. We had to take care of the orchard—mainly, we pruned and fertilized them during the cold months. We'd store the apples in a hole dug in the ground. First, we'd put in some hay or straw or dry leaves, and pour the apples in. Then, we covered it over with more hay or leaves, then heavy soil. They kept all winter.

LON DOVER: We grew grapes and had wild grapes, too. Grapes don't take a whole lot of work, and they'll grow in a lot o'different places. We always gave them a trellis t'grow on, and we'd prune them and put stable manure on them every fall or winter. Nothin' much used to bother'em, but the Japanese beetles [we have now] are bad to eat the leaves. I've heard old folks say about pruning, that if you saw an apple tree limb off on the new moon it's guaranteed t'heal—just grows over like skin grows back. If y'saw a limb off on th'old moon, th'wood'll generally rot. So, if I have *any* prunin' to do, I'll do it on th'new moon if I can.

Cane

LON DOVER: Many people grew cane. Y'sow your cane and when it grows up, it's like corn. When th'seed turns brown, it's ripe. Some people cut their cane green an' make syrup from green cane. If it's not good an' sweet, it'll have a kind of bitter whang. But you let the seeds get good an' ripe on your cane, cut it down, strip th'fodder off it and bring it to a cane mill t'make syrup. That's what old people baked their sweet bread out of. Th'people who grew it sold it t'people who didn't have it. They wasn't too many people had mills. They'd take it t'other people's mills an' make it. Sorghum makes an awful black syrup. We thought it was good then. Black soil like we had won't make clear syrup—you have t'have a red clay t'make clear syrup.

BURNETT BROOKS: There's not a whole lot to growing cane. The work starts when it ripens. You just plant it and forget about it for sixty to sixty-five days. You don't even put much fertilizer on it. It's really an easy crop grown. You can plow and hoe it about twice. You don't have to spray it [for bugs]. Then you take it up about this time of year [the middle of October]. This [year's crop] wasn't planted until July fourth because of the weather, but usually we try to get it in around the beginning of June.

LAWTON BROOKS: Cane is something that takes a soil that's not too rich—a good clay soil's the best. Sow it in rows so it can be worked a time or two during the summer—it's best to sow it in early June. It won't take too much wet weather, 'cause it's bad to blow over during bad weather, and that ruins it.

You've got t'try t'get it stripped, cut down, and made into syrup when it's ripe; if y'wait too long it could come a frost on it in the field and that ruins the taste of the syrup. If y'think it's gonna soon come a frost, and it's still in the field, y'can strip it, cut it down, and stack and cover it for a few days, and the frost won't hurt it that way, but y'can't leave it stacked too long because it won't make as good syrup.

ILLUSTRATION 16 The cane tops Myrtle McMahon is holding are fully ripe.

HARRIET ECHOLS: My father grew cane. All those mountain folk made their own syrup. You plant it in the spring. Syrup was cheap

and it was hard work. We couldn't sell it. I used to sell it for twenty-five cents a gallon. My father just made hundreds and hundreds of gallons. He cooked syrup for all the neighbors. He had his own equipment, his own furnace and cooking vat and everything. Everybody couldn't own a vat to cook syrup 'cause it was too expensive. One person in the neighborhood like would start the operation. They paid'em so much, I don't remember the prices now, but we always had a big cane patch. I had to hoe it, and that was a job. Plum up until after I married, we had cane.

Tobacco

HARRIET ECHOLS: You get the seed and prepare your bed. First you put your fertilize or barnyard litter in it. Frame it in with planks and put a screen over it. Dig the dirt up and make it soft. Then, in the early spring, sow the seed, just pat them in. They are little seeds and you don't want them very deep. When they come up then you put a screen over them; or wire; then a plastic cover. You plant them on the east side so the morning sun will hit them. You let your plants get up six to eight inches high, at least six. Maybe eight. The bigger the better.

Then you set them out in your tobacco patch. You have to work the soil carefully to keep the weeds down. Plow it, but you can't plow close to the plants; you have to go around and be careful not to bruise them. When it starts to ripen, it goes to seed; it has a bloom and a seed on top. Then you top it. They have little suckers on them, little plants that come out on the stalk at the leaves. You have to pinch those little suckers off to make good tobacco, and all that strength goes to the leaves. Then when it ripens enough all the leaves go together.

They cured the tobacco back then. They didn't have curing houses just for a small farm. They would just hang it in the barn.

ESCO PITTS: My grandfather grew tobacco for his own use, a patch about as big as this room [12' × 14']. When those leaves began to turn—now that was his job, we couldn't do that—he'd go through the field when those bottom leaves began to turn and very carefully

pick one off at a time and put them in a basket. He'd go over his little patch two to three times a week. He'd take those big tobacco leaves, tie a bunch together, take'em and hang'em up in the barn till they got good and dry. He'd put'em where we couldn't get to it. It was hard to grow; seems like every three to four days checking those leaves, looking for worms. I always wanted to work with him in his tobacco, but no, that was apart.

When he got ready to twist his tobacco, he would make a sweetened water with homemade syrup and he'd put a big wagon sheet down, put his nice leaves down on that sheet, and take that sweetened water and sprinkle it on the tobacco. When it got pretty damp, why, he'd twist it. He'd keep on until he got it done. Some parts he'd have for chewin', and some for smokin'. I'm pretty sure he saved his seed. Some people had big old tobacco patches. They didn't sell it. They made their tobacco and they divided it with people who didn't have any.

ILLUSTRATION 17 When the tobacco is cut, the curing process is begun by tying it in bundles and hanging it in the field.

ILLUSTRATION 18 Tobacco curing in the sun on Conway and Park Hughes's farm.

Hay

LAWTON BROOKS: Lots of people grew hay. They could sow it along in August in their corn. After I laid by my corn, I'd go in th'corn an' sow it. Then when y'gather your corn, you go back in there, cut th'stalks, rake them off, an' you'll have you a clear meadow. An' then when your hay gets up big enough t'cut, you cut it sometime in th'spring. They'd get an old mule mowing machine [pulled with mules or horses]. Then they had an old rake driven with horses, an' it'd rake up an' when it got full, you'd trip it an' it'd dump th'hay. Then after it cured, y'had t'stack it. Didn't have no balers then.

You could get three cuttings out of a meadow. You won't get too much th'third time. It keeps comin' up by itself each time. Then you could plow it under and put it in something else, like corn.

ILLUSTRATION 19 Belle Dryman and her son Foy put up these haystacks. Her cows have nibbled away some of the hay from the bottom portions.

HARRIET ECHOLS: Hay is a crop raised in most every area now. All the work is done with tractors and big machinery today, but used to be, it was all done by hand. Lot of times people would plant grass on worn out cornfields, where the land wasn't good enough to grow other crops anymore.

When the hay got up tall enough and there was a good stretch of dry weather, people'd go out with their scythe and cut it. Now some folks had horse-drawn moving machines, but we didn't. How long it takes to cure depends on the temperature, how long the sun is out, and the humidity. They'd turn it a time or two with rakes while it was curing, till it was ready. Then they'd rake it up and haul it in the wagon where they were going to put their stacks. We didn't know what a *bale* of hay was. I didn't see one until I was full grown, 'cause they didn't have the machinery to work with like they do now.

BELLE DRYMAN: We stack our hay yet. [My son] Foy bales some, but we don't have enough cover for it all. We put up a tall pole t'stack the hay around it, then lay some brush on the ground [around the pole] so it doesn't set on th'ground. Then we just go to stackin' it around the pole. Y'have t'try t'make the top of the stack

bigger than th'bottom, and you have t'lay th'hay on the top so the water'll run off. It'll keep right on—just a little on the outside'll get moldy.

Rye, wheat, and oats

ESCO PITTS: You can plant wheat in December, and harvest it late next spring. Back then people had t'harvest it with a cradle, an' th'same thing with rye and oats. I've followed my father many a time and banded it, picked it up and tied it in bundles, an' put eight bundles to th'shock. Let that cure, an' th'thrashing machine'd come around after a while an' thrash it. You grow all three 'bout th'same way, except y'sow your rye when you lay by your corn in June. We never grew many oats, but I think we sowed them in th'spring. They'd just cut th'oats in th'green stage, and feed it whole to th'animals—grain and hay and all.

LAWTON BROOKS: You can sow rye in August in your corn—it likes cooler weather. I'uz always proud t'see th'old thrasher come in there—pulled by oxen—after we cut it with a old-time cradle. M'daddy'd cradle it an' me an' m'brother'd tie it in pretty good-sized bundles. Then we'd go back an' shock it—several bundles in a shock an' two bundles spread out on th'top for a kind of roof. Stayed dry till we got ready t'stack it in th'field. We'd stack it when th'old iron thrasher could be brought in by th'oxen. When they got done thrashin' at my house, he'd go to yours. We had to haul wood for the thrasher—it had a old steam boiler. We'd stack the straw t'use for bed ticks. Ever'year we got new straw for our bed ticks.

We grew our wheat and oats. At harvest time, you cut your wheat and had a thrasher thrash that wheat out, sack it up, take it to the mill and get your flour. The oats was for the animals.

HARRY BROWN: Well, th'way we thrashed th'rye, we laid a bunch of poles over a hole in th'ground, and laid a wagon sheet in th'hole. We laid th'rye on top of th'poles [over the hole] an' beat it with a pole. You get as much as you would out of a thrashing machine, just took longer. Th'rye falls down into th'wagon sheet—then you take that wagon sheet out, and put it in sacks. Then y'had a lot of chaff

in it. Well, on a windy day, you get out and pick up a handful of rye an' pour it over into another sack, and th'wind blows th'chaff out of it.

ILLUSTRATION 20 Louin Cabe shows us how a grain cradle is used.

HARRIET ECHOLS: Rye, wheat, and oats, it's all planted the same way. Except rye, they'd plant it earlier in August or September. The rye will make without being plowed. Wheat and oats, they had to prepare the ground. It's the same way they did hay. They didn't have to sow the ground as thick as they did hay, because it spreads as it comes up. They planted wheat and oats about the same time. If they had winter oats, they'd plant them in the fall, the spring oats in February or March. The winter oats will stand the hard freezes, but the spring oats they had to put in when the hard freezes were over.

They had to prepare the ground the same way, put in the fertilizer or the barnyard litter, whatever they had. Broadcast it over the land,

then plowed it under, then sowed their grain. A lot of people used to sow it in rows. They had this machinery to sow it. One little grain will come up and make dozens of stalks. Then they had to harvest it. They'd cut it with grain cradles, and put it in bundles and shock it. It was hard labor all together. They called it cradling the grain. The grain cradle was as sharp as a razor blade—it had to be to cut the grain. When the shock cured, they'd haul it to the barn where the thrasher could go, and thrash it out. It took four or five to operate the thrasher.

Pests

Interestingly enough, all the people we talked to said the insect problem used to be very small. Some felt it had to do with the fact that people often burned off their gardens and fields before planting, and that the mountains were burned over every year. We were assured that there would have been little need for chemical insecticides even if they had already been developed. It must have been quite a blow to people who had for years grown healthy, relatively bug-free vegetables and crops, to witness the ever-growing insect population and watch them lower their gardens' productivity.

Animals, however, both wild and domestic, presented a greater problem to people's gardens years ago. For this reason almost everyone fenced their vegetable gardens, and while cattle, etc., were still on open range, most people fenced their fields. Following we present a general quote from Anna Howard about pests; after that we'll give suggestions on dealing with individual pests, and finally, we'll present a small piece on fencing.

ANNA HOWARD: [There are so many insects now] 'cause they ain't no cattle nor hogs nor nothin' in th'woods is my idea. An' people don't burn like they used to—burn off fields and big brush piles, kill all them insects.

I remember we had rats. They'd get in th'garden once in a while and eat a little in the garden. We didn't do anything about them. Now crows would eat up your corn crop if you didn't keep them scared out. We'd make scarecrows and put around the edge of

th'field—that'd scare'em out. Sometimes they would get so bad, people would get out in th'edge of th'woods and shoot at'em.

Now we had rabbits. They was worse than anything else. We kids would have a couple of rabbit boxes set out in the edge of th'field, and every morning or two, we'd bring in a couple a'rabbits and Mama'd cook'em. Th'rabbits could get through a fence like that, but they had s'much stuff t'eat back then, they didn't bother gardens like they do now. We had moles, an' used to, one of us'd sit around through th'day with a hoe t'kill it, but then we got a mole trap. Th'ground squirrels got in a lot and we'd shoot [them] an' eat'em. See, we kept dogs, and that was our pastime.

Well, now, 'coons, they'd eat corn in th'field after it got hard an' dried up. But th'rabbits, they'd eat stuff some, but you could put up scare-boogers an' keep'em out, an' nearly everybody kept dogs to keep'em run out of their garden. People'ud make scare-boogers t'look like a man an' put a hat an' clothes on'em.

Ants:

- plow the garden up good
- sprinkle fireplace ashes, soot, or snuff over the anthills
- pour hot water over the anthills
- pour gasoline over them and light it
- place cucumber peelings in the garden; the ants will avoid them

Bean Beetles:

- plant marigolds in the beans
- pick them off and put them in kerosene oil

Cabbage Worms:

- pour warm water that's had a red pepper soaked in it over the cabbage
- dust with soot or ashes from the fireplace
- sprinkle dry dirt on the cabbage
- pinch off a leaf from the bottom of the plant, lay it on top of the
- cabbage—in the morning it will be covered with worms

Cut Worms:

- dig down to them and kill them

Flea Beetles:

- dust them with soot or ashes from the fireplace

Potato Bugs:

- sprinkle plants with sulfur or ashes
- boil tobacco stems in water and sprinkle over the bugs
- plant petunias in the patch

Tobacco Worms:

- dust with ashes or soot
- pick them off and kill them

Blackbirds:

- shoot them
- use a scarecrow
- keep a cat in the garden
- run out to the garden and make a lot of noise

Crows:

- put up a scarecrow
- shoot them
- hang tin foil or aluminum pie pans in nearby trees and on the plants; they'll rattle in the wind and reflect the sun intermittently and scare them off
- shoot one crow and hang it up in the garden—it will keep others away
- put an old hat high on a pole
- hang a white sheet up in the garden—it will flap in the wind and scare them

Deer:

- watch for them to enter the field or garden and shoot them
- put up a *tall* fence around the garden

Groundhogs:

- keep a good groundhog dog
- stick a sock soaked in gasoline in his hole
- fill his hole with tin cans
- set a trap in front of his hole
- sit around the garden in a concealed spot and shoot him

ILLUSTRATION 21 Jake Waldroop demonstrates one way of keeping pesky animals out of his garden.

Moles:

- watch for them from 10:00 A.M. to 11:00 A.M., and dig them out and kill them
- put kitchen matches in the mole run—they will eat the heads and the sulfur will poison them
- set a mole trap in the run
- put mothballs in the run
- stick rose stems in the sides of the runs—they'll scratch themselves on the thorns and bleed to death
- teach your dogs and cats to kill them
- soak corn in lye or arsenic and put some in the run, and poison them

- put very salty cornmeal dough or biscuit dough in the run—if they eat it, it'll kill them
- plant mole plants (also called castor beans) around your garden
- put small windmills in the garden—the vibrations will drive the moles off
- whenever you kill a mole, put him in another mole run and his body will scare off other moles
- get a long metal pipe, fill one end with strong tobacco, light it, and force the smoke into the run by blowing on the other end of the pipe
- sprinkle salt in the runs

ILLUSTRATION 22 Esco Pitts has used this mole trap for years and years. He told us it has killed numerous moles.

Owls:

- set a steel trap baited with a piece of chicken on top of a pole

Rabbits:

- get a good rabbit dog
- sit around out of sight and shoot one when you see it and then make rabbit stew
- set up stakes around the garden and run a string about six inches off the ground around the garden—they won't cross the string
- set out rabbit boxes (traps)
- sow lettuce in your squash—it'll put the rabbits to sleep
- put up a fence
- plant marigolds in your beans, or petunias in your potatoes—the smell will keep them away
- set an old shoe out in the row
- feed them all they can eat, and they won't eat up your garden
- set glass jars around in your garden roughly twenty feet apart. The sound of the wind blowing over their tops will scare them away.
- fill a gallon jug with water, add one tablespoon of kerosene, and sprinkle it on and around the plants the rabbits will eat; the smell will keep them away for several days
- take a piece of paper like the Atlanta *Constitution*, two or three folds of it (it has to be this big because it won't rattle if you don't) and fold the paper down over the stake at the top. Tie a string big enough to fit around the stake so the paper won't blow off. It looks just like somebody's head and arms flapping. When the wind blows, the paper rattles and flaps and scares them something awful.
- string some aluminum pans on wire. Be sure you string them over whatever the animal is eating. You can tie the wire to two stakes, trees, or anything that's near around. Don't put on too many—just enough so when the wind blows, they'll rattle. And they shine in the dark, so that helps.

Raccoons:

- keep a good 'coon dog and hunt raccoons regular during gardening season

- set a trap for them

Rats:

- set mothballs around where you last saw them
- set a rat trap in a mole run, as rats often use mole runs
- teach your cats to hunt and kill them

Squirrels:

- get a squirrel dog
- shoot and eat them
- poison corn with lye or arsenic

The following people contributed information on how to deal with garden pests:
Joe Arrowood, Ednie Buchanan, Mrs. Cecil Cannon, Carl Carpenter, Leana T. Carver, Doc Chastain, Mrs. Norman Coleman, Imogene Dailey, Fred Darnell, Mimmie Dickerson, Barnard Dillard, Bobbie Dills, Harriet Echols, Tom Grist, Lonnie Harkins, Mrs. Earl Holt, Mrs. L. D. Hopper, Mrs. Ray Kelly, Ted Lanich, Aunt Faye Long, Pearl Martin, Jim McCoy, Ulysses McCoy, Belzora Moore, Mrs. George Nix, Mrs. J. D. Quinn, Kenny Runion, Will Seagle, Vina Speed, B. J. Stiles, Lake Stiles, Mrs. Oren Swanson, Gladys Swanson, Gladys Teague, Cal Thomas, Nell Thomas, Mrs. Birdie Mae Vinson, Ralph Vinson, T. F. Vinson. Pearl Watts, Grover Webb, Naomi Whitmire, Mrs. Ben Williams, Mrs. Grace Williams, Lee Williams, Will Zoellner.

Fences

Most people put up a paling fence around their vegetable gardens. A paling fence is sort of a rough picket fence made of hand-split boards, pointed on top so the chickens wouldn't fly up on it and then into the garden. Many people fenced in their farm crops, too, but there they used split rails put together in a zigzag pattern for that. These fences kept out larger domestic and wild animals which would eat the vegetables and/or farm crops.

ESCO PITTS: You had to enclose your garden so my daddy split chestnut palings in those days. Chestnut trees was mostly what he built his house out of. Chestnut trees would be sixty feet to the first limb and long straight trees. And they would split awful easy and he would just split palings about six to eight feet long. They're thin slats about three quarters of an inch thick, about four to six inches wide, and as long as you want to make them. Then he put his locust posts in every eight feet and made his railings one at the bottom and one at the top to nail his palings to. The palings went up and down; they were sharp on the ends.

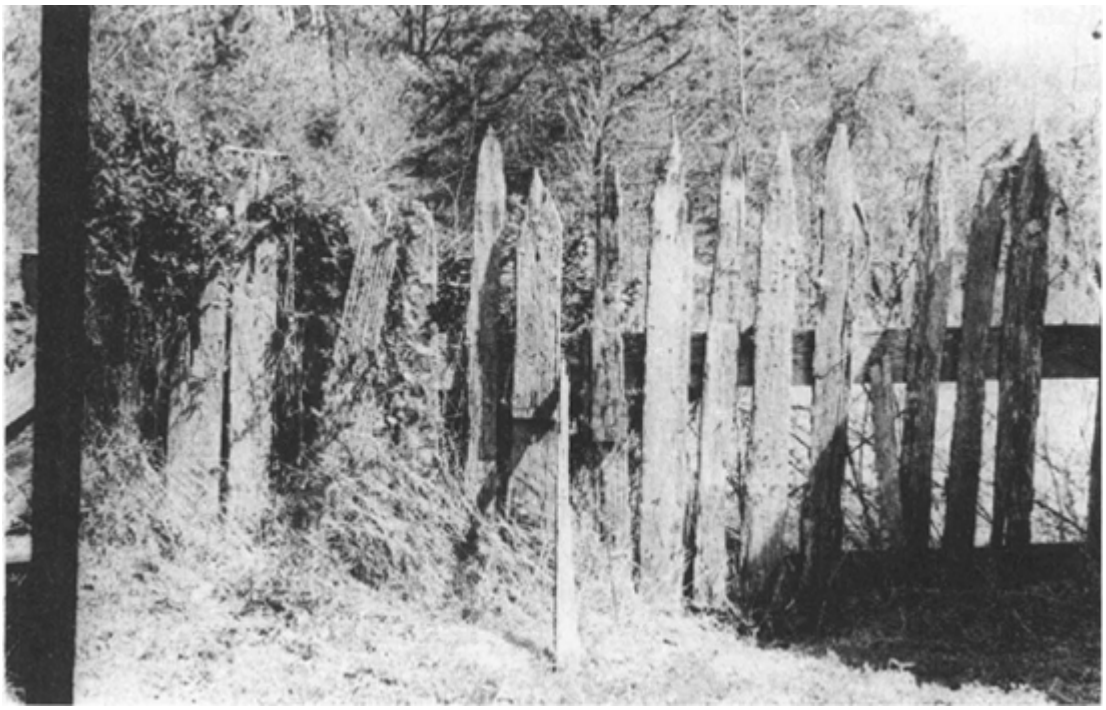

ILLUSTRATION 23 This old paling fence surrounds Aunt Arie Carpenter's vegetable garden.

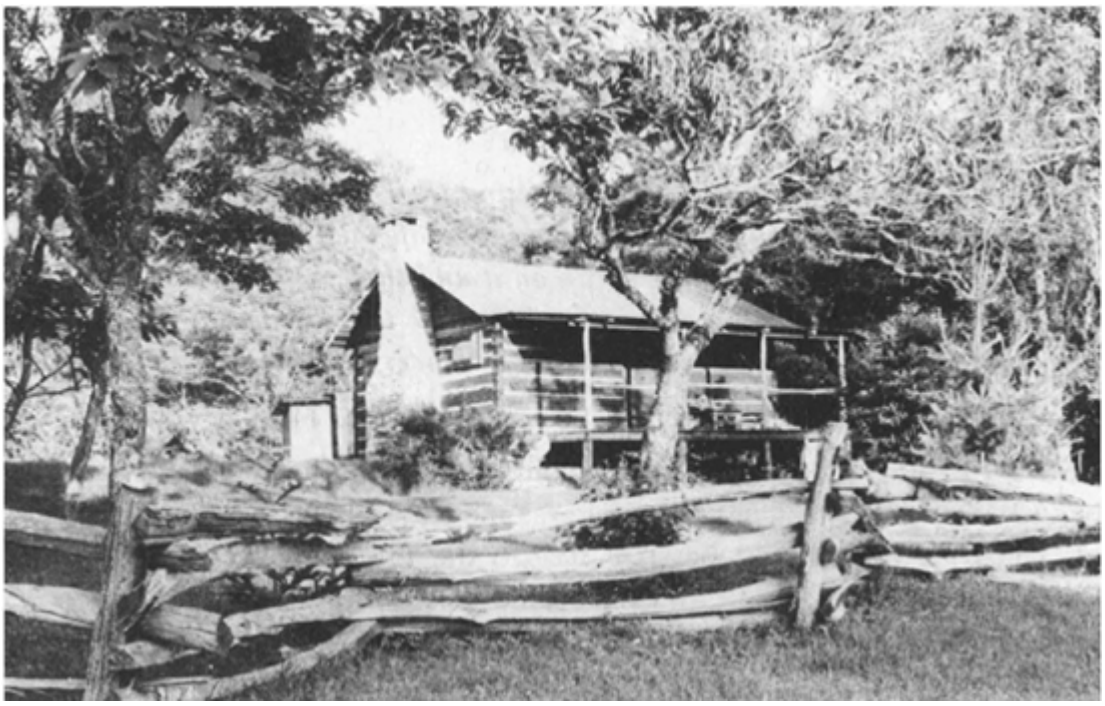

ILLUSTRATION 24 The rail fence in front of Thomas Stubbs's cabin is very much like the ones people used to put up around their fields.

R. M. DICKERSON: Ever'body had to fence their own fields. You had fence logs and you were supposed to take care of your own cow yourself. But back when I was out here, they had what y'called an open range and anybody could turn their cattle out, and if you had a cornfield; you had to keep it fenced up to keep the cattle out. But after we voted out the free range and voted in the fencin', ever'body that had cattle had to put them up and keep'em in their own pasture. After that we didn't have to fence our cornfields so much.

DIFFERENCES IN THE OLD AND NEW

Many people we spoke to felt that the vegetables they used to grow tasted better than those they grow today. The differences were attributed to the facts that they used to grow non-hybrids, whereas today most seeds are hybrids; that they used to grow vegetables totally organically, but don't now; and that age may have hindered their sense of taste.

ANNA HOWARD: I think the fertilizers make a difference. I think that makes th'difference in the taste of the plants we eat. You take people that use stable manure for their garden; I think that makes a

difference in the flavor of the food—it grows off better. Now I garden with store-bought fertilizer, and I don't like it either. I can't get a good pretty garden like I want to. I think about back when I was a kid and my father used t'have those pretty gardens. And now I can't get one like that, and I'm sure it's that stable manure. It's really good for a garden.

ADA KELLY: I really believe that some of them had a richer flavor. They were grown just from the soil with no additions at all, and it just seems that they had a better flavor.

LAWTON BROOKS: They have a lot of difference—in th'beans an' in th'tomatoes and things like that. Th'beans taste altogether different from th'kind they used to grow then.

HARRIET ECHOLS: There is a difference in the taste of vegetables now and then. I don't know whether it's that we people have grown older and our taste buds arc getting away from us, dimming, like our eyes, but it doesn't seem like the vegetables here taste as good now as they used to. You know, I used to love fruits and I ate them all the time. I still do, but I have to force myself. I don't care for them like I used to, I don't know why.

FORECASTING WINTER BY ANIMALS

It will be a bad winter if:

squirrels begin gathering nuts early (middle or late September).
muskrat houses are built big.
beaver lodges have more logs.
the north side of a beaver dam is more covered with sticks than the south.
squirrels' tails grow bushier.
fur or hair on animals such as horses, sheep, mules, cows, and dogs is thicker than usual.
the fur on the bottom of rabbit's foot is thicker.
cows' hooves break off earlier.
squirrels build nests low in trees.
wild hogs gather sticks, straw, and shucks to make a bed.
animals grow a short fuzzy coat under their regular one.
crows gather together.
hoot owls call late in the fall.
screech owls sound like women crying.
juncos arc feeding in the trees.
birds huddle on the ground.
you hear an "old hoot owl on the mountain, winter's comin' soon —better put on your boots"—Kenny Runion.
birds eat up all the berries early.

FORECASTING WINTER BY INSECTS

It will be a bad winter if:

hornets and yellow jackets build their nests heavier and closer to the ground than usual.
worms are bending up and going into peoples' houses and abandoned buildings in October.

there are a lot of spiders, frost worms, and black bugs about in the fall.
miller moths hit the screen trying to get in.
crickets are in the chimney.
an ant builds its hill high.

The woolly worm tells of a bad winter if:
there are a lot of them crawling about.
he has a heavy coat.
the black band on his back is wide. (The more black than brown he is, and/or the wider the black stripe, the worse the winter.) if he's black in front, the bad weather is to come; and if he's black behind, the worst weather is past.
if he's brown at both ends and orange in the middle, the winter will be mild.
you see him crawling before the first frost.

Three months after the first katydid begins "hollerin'," the first killing frost will come.

When butterflies:
migrate early, winter will be early.
gather in bunches in the air, winter is coming soon.

FORECASTING WINTER BY PLANTS

It will be a bad winter if:
blackberry blooms are especially heavy.
carrots grow deeper.
grapes, cockleburrs, and apples mature early.
sweet potatoes have a tougher skin.
onions grow more layers.
trees are laden with green leaves late in the fall.
the crop of holly and dogwood berries is heavy.
hickory nuts have a heavy shell.
there's a heavy crop of berries, acorns, and pinecones.
bark on trees is thicker.
tree bark is heaviest on the north side.

corn shucks and silk grown thicker, and the shucks grow tighter around, and further over the ends of the ears.
leaves shed before they turn.
moss grows heavy on the trees.
the old-time corn ear (shank) hangs downward.
laurel leaves roll up.
pine cones open early.

The darker green the grass is during the summer, the harder the winter.

FORECASTING WINTER BY WEATHER

Two frosts and lots of rain mean cold weather is near.

A late frost means a bad winter.

For every frost or fog in August, there will be a snowy day in winter.

At least three severe fogs in June or July mean early snow.

If it snows crosslegged, it will be a deep one.

If the first snow stays on the ground for three days, another snow will come to top it.

If it frosts before November 23, it will be a bad winter.

Lots of low rolling thunder in the late fall means a bad winter.

A long hot summer means a long cold winter—the hotter the summer, the colder the winter.

FORECASTING WINTER BY FIRE

When you build a fire outside and it pops, it will snow in three days.

If a fire "tramps" snow coming down the chimney (in other words, if noises are coming from the chimney that sound like boots swishing through deep, dry snow), it will be a deep snow.

It will be a hard winter if smoke from the chimney flows toward or settles on the ground. It will snow within twenty-six days.

If it's cloudy and smoke rises, there's a chance of snow.

FORECASTING WINTER BY THE MOON

The number of days old the moon is at the first snow tells how many snows there will be that winter.

FORECASTING WEATHER

It will rain:

within three days if the horns of the moon point down.

if leaves show their backs.

if cows are lying down in the pasture.

if there is a ring around the moon. Count the stars in the ring and it will rain within that many days.

if the sun sets with clouds.

within three days, if you see a black snake in a tree.

if an ant covers the hole to his ant hill.

if smoke goes to the ground.

the same time the next day, if the sun shines while it rains.

if earthworms come to the surface of the ground.

if birds fly low.

If it hasn't rained in a long time, and it starts before 7 A.M., it'll quit before 11 A.M.

If it rains on "Blasting Days" (the three longest days of the year), there won't be any "mast" (acorns, chestnuts, etc.) for animals like hogs to feed on.

If it rains on Easter Sunday, it will rain every Sunday for seven weeks.

If it begins raining on the day the moon becomes full, it will continue raining until the moon quarters.

The first twelve days after Christmas indicate what each month in the next year will be like.

The weather will be fair if:

you hear a screech owl.

smoke rises.

crickets holler. The temperature will rise.

PLANTING BY THE SIGNS

Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.

Genesis 1:14

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.

Ecclesiastes 3:1–2

At the time when many of the crops planted in the spring were gathered in and preserved for the winter to come, our attention was turned to a phenomenon that had fascinated us for some time—that of planting, harvesting, and conducting a number of other activities by the moon and the signs of the zodiac. Its rules have been passed down so carefully from year to year that its practice bridges the gaps between the generations more successfully and more completely than most.

Over thirty separate interviews were conducted for this chapter, some with people who follow the signs religiously, and some with those who scoff at the idea. Many of the interviews were taped, making it possible for us to set down information just as it was given us—word for word.

THE ZODIAC

Ancient astronomers discovered that a number of the bright constellations of stars that they had studied and named were evenly spaced along the yearly path of the sun in a belt about eighteen degrees wide. This belt also included the paths of the planets and the monthly path of the moon.

T. E. BLACK'S LIFETIME PLANTING, BUSINESS AND FISHING GUIDE

INFORMATION IN REGARDS TO EVERYDAY AFFAIRS COMPILED FROM 13 YEARS EXPERIENCE

INFORMATION

Check your Calendar or Almanac for the dates of he month they appear each one of the 12 Signs comes around every 28 days each one remains 2 or 3 days. You will find most every month a little different in the dates. Notice when I say Root Crops I mean every thing that bears in the ground when I say above the ground I mean every thing that bears above the ground. Get my new book "God's Way" Price $1.00.

5th Sign Leo In The Heart

This is a Fire Sign. Barren Sign favors no planting nor transplanting. Good for destroying bushes and weeds and deading trees. It favors sports, pleasure, love and romance Ask for jobs. Good for hunting. Get hair waved, baking cakes, etc.

7th Sign Libra In The Kidneys

An Air Sign very good for crops that bear above he ground. Favors friendship and business.

9th Sign Sagittarius In The Thighs

This is a Fire Sign. Fairly good for planting onions and cucumbers. Favors all business affairs. Ask for jobs, deal with lawyers, judges and bankers, work on future plans. Good for hunting, Get hair waved, bake cakes, make candy, preserves, jelly and pickles. Dont transplant anything.

For Laying Hens

For laying hens and brood sows 3 good signs in every month but for the best hatched off or born between February 18th and March 20th or between June 21st or July 23rd or between October 23rd and November 22nd in the sign Pisces or Cancer or Scorpio which sign appears in every month on different dates. Signs the same in every state.-

3rd Sign Gemini In The Arms

This is an Air Sign. I find it one of the second best signs for planting and transplanting All Crops, root crops and crops that bear above the ground. Favors talking things over with people. Also favors making jelly, preserves and pickles.

1st Sign Aries In The Head

Known as a fiery Sign. Hot, dry and barren. Very good for planting beets, onions and tobacco. Not good for planting and transplanting other crops. Favors welding, getting hair waved, all cooking, making preserves, pickles and jelly. Also destroying weeds and bushes. Good for hunting, fair for fishing.

2nd Sign Taurus In The Neck

An Earth Sign. No. 1 for all root crops. Peanuts, potatoes, and etc. Transplanting all plants, second best for all crops bearing above the ground and all flowers. Favors buying, attend sales, deal with creditors. Very good for fishing, making pickles & canning.

4th Sign Cancer in the Breast

A Water Sign. No. 1 top sign for all flowers, planting and transplanting all crops that bear above the ground. When I say bear above the ground I mean cotton, corn, cane, tobacco, peas, beans, pepper, watermellons, squash, cucumbers, okra, wheat, rye, oats and etc., all cover crops, all grasses, all leaf crops. This sign also No. 1 for all root crops. Biddies hatched in this sign for laying hens pigs born for males & brood sows. Good for all cooking, changing jobs, moving, cut hair to stimulate growth. Good for fishing, making potato beds and seed beds.

EACH SIGN APPEARS 2 OR 3 DAYS EACH MONTH

8th Sign Virgo In The Bowels

An Earth sign Doesn't favor planting nor transplanting no crops. Barren sign very good for bus.

8th Sign Scorpio In The Loins

This is known as a Water Sign. No. 1 for all crops that bear above the ground. Also for flowers. Second best for all root crops. When I say root crops, I mean all potatoes, peanuts, chuffas, onions, beets, carrots, turnips, rutabagas, etc. Setting out plants, biddies for laying hens, pigs for males and brood sows. Set out fruit trees. Flower bushes and vines. Good for fishing and hunting.

INFORMATION: I made a 13 year test for the right signs for planting all crops, business and fishing and other things and for the correct dates I found the Ladies Birthday Almanac and others that correspond with it are most correct.

10th Sign Capricornus In The Knees

Known as an Earth Sign. No. 1 for all root crops Potatoes, peanuts, onions, beets etc. Second best for all flowers. All crops that bear above the ground. all transplanting. Pull teeth, mark hogs, prune trees and vines. Good for business. Fair for fishing. Canning.

12th Sign Pisces In The Feet

Known as a Water sign No. 1 for planting and transplanting all crops that bear above the ground. And all flowers. Second best sign for all root crops. Biddies hatched for laying hens, pigs for brood sows. Best for pulling teeth, marking hogs, prune and set out trees, bushes and vines. Good for fishing. Wean babies and animals.

11th Sign Aquarius In The Legs

Known as an Air Sign. Very good for planting crops that produce above the ground. Except seeds are apt to rot. This is a friendly sign. Exchange ideas, seek help from friends, favors dealing with all types of people in all types of business. Favors sports and pleasure.

ILLUSTRATION 25

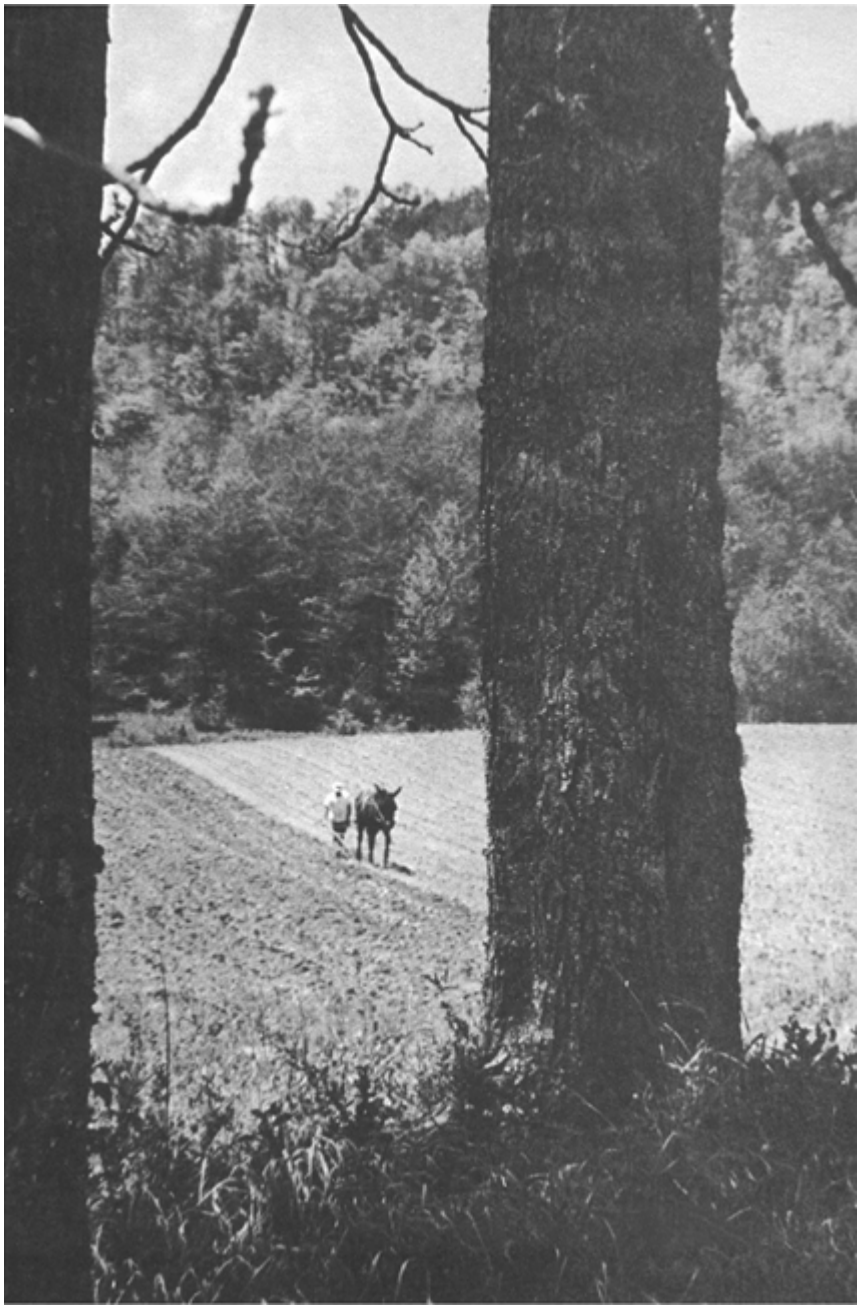

ILLUSTRATION 26

This belt was subsequently divided into twelve parts each of thirty degrees in length called “signs.” Each of these signs contained a constellation of stars, and each sign thus received its name from the name of the constellation it contained. Since all the signs except Libra were named after living things, the belt was named the zodiac, or “zone of animals.”

As the early wise men believed that there was an intimate relationship between the celestial bodies and mankind, the twelve signs soon became identified with various parts of the human body. Charts which illustrate this relationship have been noted as far back in history as 1300 B.C. according to the 1967 edition of *Grier's Almanac*.

Astrologers all over the world lost no time in seizing the zodiac as a guide for their predictions. With its use, they and their followers constructed everything from horoscopes to guides for good fishing days. One of their constructions which received serious and devoted attention from thousands of families was a set of rules for planting. Although the practice seems to be declining in popularity now, there are still many accurate sources of information to be found. Grier's annual almanac, "first published in 1807 and every year since," is mailed out of Atlanta and contains one of the most complete astrological calendars available. A wall calendar equally full of information of this sort is published by the Francis and Lusky Company of Nashville, Tennessee. But perhaps the most specific information comes from T. E. Black. He publishes a guide, numerous fishing and planting charts, and he even personally answers many of the letters he receives from his followers. The chart which precedes this article is from his booklet, *God's Way*, which gives complete directions for planting by the signs as tested through years of research. It is available from Mr. C. J. Black, P. O. Box 785, Andalusia, Alabama, and is reprinted here with his permission.

HOW IT WORKS

Every day of the month is dominated by one of the twelve signs of the zodiac. Each of the twelve appears at least once a month, and then for a period of either two or three days. All good planting calendars label each day with the sign that rules over it (depending on which constellation is foremost in the sky at the time), the part of the body and the planet associated with the sign, and the element it is most closely akin to. The following chart summarizes this information.

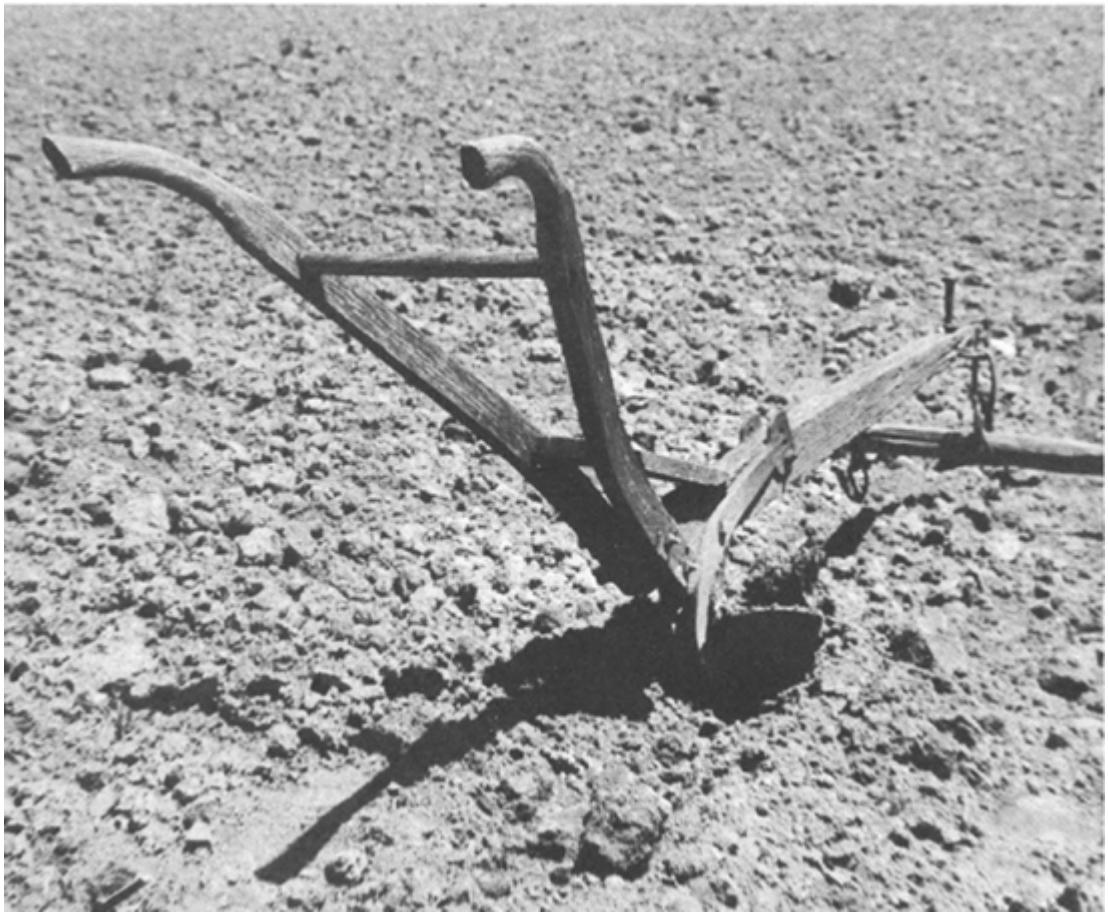

ILLUSTRATION 27

SIGN	SYMBOL	BODY PART	PLANET	ELEMENT
1. Aries	Ram	Head	Mars	Fire
2. Taurus	Bull	Neck, throat	Venus	Earth
3. Gemini	Twins	Arms, chest	Mercury	Air
4. Cancer	Crab	Breast, stomach	Moon	Water
5. Leo	Lion	Heart, back	Sun	Fire
6. Virgo	Virgin	Bowels	Mercury	Earth
7. Libra	Balance	Kidneys	Venus	Air
8. Scorpio	Scorpion	Loins	Mars	Water
9. Sagittarius	Archer	Thighs	Jupiter	Fire
10. Capricornus	Goat	Knees	Saturn	Earth
11. Aquarius	Waterman	Legs, ankles	Uranus	Air
12. Pisces	Fish	Feet	Neptune	Water

The signs always appear in sequence, beginning with the Ram or Head and working their way down to Pisces, the Fish or Feet. Following Pisces, the Ram appears again beginning a new sequence.

Each of the signs is known as being cither masculine, feminine, airy, dry, barren, fiery, earthy, moist, watery, fruitful, or very fruitful. In general, any activity that requires a dry atmosphere, such as painting, should be done in one of the dry signs; and an activity requiring moisture, such as some planting, should be done on one of the moist or fruitful signs.

The best time of all, of course, to conduct any activity is when a day falls on both an ideal sign *and* a good phase of the moon.

Over the years, a more specific set of rules has grown up around the zodiac which governs such activities as planting and harvesting. These rules take into account both the sign governing the day and the phase of the moon on that particular day. At the beginning of the planting season, for example, the farmer consults his calendar, picks out one of the fourteen favorable days that occur every month, and plants only on one of these fourteen "fruitful" days. Should he miss and plant his crops on one of the unfruitful days, his crops will not produce at half their ability, say the believers. T. E. Black even goes so far as to say that a few hours can make the difference between success and failure, and many of his followers agree.

THE RULES

The following rules were gathered both from interviews and wide reading. They do not represent a complete set, but they should serve to give the reader a good idea as to the nature of this system. We also included rules for butchering, cutting hair, killing weeds, pulling teeth, and others to give some grasp of the scope of the subject.

PLANTING—Planting is best done in the fruitful signs of Scorpio, Pisces, Taurus, or Cancer (when the signs are in the loins, feet, neck, or breast).

Plow, till, and cultivate in Aries.

Never plant anything in one of the barren signs. They are good only for trimming, deadening, and destroying.

Always set plants out in a water or earth sign.

Graft just before the sap starts to flow, while the moon is in its first or second quarter, and while it is passing through a fruitful watery sign, or Capricorn. Never graft or plant on Sunday as this is a barren, hot day (the sun's day).

Plant flowers in Libra which is an airy sign that also represents beauty. Plant them while the moon is in the first quarter unless you need the seeds, in which case use the period between the moon's second quarter and full.

ILLUSTRATION 28

Corn planted in Leo will have a hard, round stalk and small cars.

Crops planted in Taurus and Cancer will stand drought.

Plant beans when the signs are in the arms.

Root flower cuttings, limbs, vines, and set out flower bushes and trees in December and January when the signs arc in the knees and feet.

Never transplant in the heart or head as both these signs are "Death Signs."

If you want a large vine and stalk with little fruit, plant in Virgo —"bloom days."

Don't plant potatoes in the feet. If you do, they will develop little nubs like toes all over the main potato. The best time is a dark night in March.

Plant all things which yield above the ground during the increase or growing of the moon, and all things which yield below the ground (root crops) when the moon is decreasing or darkening.

Never plant on the first day of the new moon, or on a day when the moon changes quarters.

In the fourth quarter turn sod, pull weeds, and destroy.

REAPING AND HARVESTING—Pick fruit like apples and pears in the old of the moon (while it is decreasing or shrinking). This will cause the bruised spots and blemishes to dry up rather than rot. They will rot if the fruit is picked on the increase or rising of the moon, or on the new moon.

Harvest most crops when the moon is growing old. This will cause them to keep better and longer.

Dig root crops for seed in the third quarter of the moon. They will keep longer and are usually drier and better.

Gather root crops in the last quarter of the moon when the signs are in the knees or feet.

Can vegetables, cook preserves and jelly, and make pickles in the right sign during the last quarter of the moon.

MISCELLANY—Cut timber in the old of the moon. It will dry better and not become worm-eaten.

Set fence posts in the old of the moon to prevent loosening.

The part of your body governed by a particular sign is more sensitive when the moon is in that sign. People with heart trouble, for example, will have more trouble in Leo's sign, and lovers are more successful at this time. In Taurus (throat) an operation on this part of the body will be unsuccessful. Conversely, if tonsils are removed and teeth are pulled when the signs are in the knees or

feet, there is less soreness, loss of blood, and danger of infection. You can easily figure others out for yourself.

Paint houses or cars in a dry sign like Leo or Aries.

Wean a child or animal when the moon is in a sign that does not rule the vital parts of the body (Capricorn, Pisces, Sagittarius).

Set eggs to hatch in a fruitful sign like Cancer. The chicks will mature faster and be better layers.

Quit habits on the second day that the moon is in Sagittarius, or on the new moon, or in Pisces.

If you cut your hair in Libra, Sagittarius, Aquarius, or Pisces, it will grow stronger, thicker, and more beautiful.

Purge with pills in Pisces and with liquids in Sagittarius.

Bake and cook in Aries.

Hunt in Taurus.

Lay foundations in Capricorn.

Don't nail shingles or boards on the growing side of the moon, or the ends will draw up and curl and go crooked.

Destroy weeds, kill trees, turn sod in the barren signs Gemini, Leo, or Virgo (especially if the moon is in the last quarter).

Slaughter while the signs are in the knees or feet, and in the last quarter of the moon.

THOSE WHO BELIEVE

The first information we gathered for this article was through interviews with those people that we knew in advance followed the signs. We knew nothing of this phenomenon before we started out.

ILLUSTRATION 29

Here, then, is the beginning of our search:

Mary Cabe, or “Granny” Cabe as she is affectionately known by her family and close friends, lives on Mulberry Road just across the North Carolina line. A tall, thin, stately, elderly woman with flashing, friendly eyes, she was the first person we questioned. Like many young people in this area, we knew nothing about the zodiac

when we met her—not even what questions to ask except, “What is it?”

Patiently, with the use of several calendars, she explained its basic principles to us and gave us several of the rules. Her family had used the signs for as long as she could remember, and she spoke quietly and with complete conviction, laughing kindly at our amazement. “Take taters. On th’ dark of th’ moon or th’ old of th’ moon—that’s th’ last quarter,” she explained, “they make less vine; and on th’ light of th’ moon they makes more vine and less tater.… Don’t plant in th’ flowers. A plant blooms itself to death and th’ blooms falls off, and don’t make cucumbers, tomatoes, squash, or stuff like that.…And if you kill a hog on th’ growin’ of th’ moon, th’ meat’s all puffy and there just ain’t no grease a’tall. I don’t know why it is, but it’s sure thataway for we’ve tried it.”

Her son, Elvin Cabe, agreed, telling us the story of a man he knew who, before cutting his hay, told those helping him that they could walk right behind him and stack it as he went if they wanted to. It would never mold, but would cure perfectly because he was cutting it on just the right time of the moon.

“And you know, that stuff never molded a bit in th’ world. Cut hay on th’ old of th’ moon,” he continued, “and it’ll dry a third quicker than it will on th’ new. On th’ new of th’ moon, th’ sap is still in it. It’ll dry, but it’ll take a lot longer. It’s th’ same with wood. Cut it on th’ new, and when you put it in th’ fire it’ll spew water out both ends all th’ time. It’ll rot out before it’ll dry. And take sand in a river. I’ve noticed this out fishing. On th’ new of th’ moon, th’ water’s full of sand as it can be, and if you’re standing on th’ edge barefooted, th’ water will pull th’ sand right out from you and sink you down. But on th’ old, th’ water’s clear. It never carries sand.

“Another thing. Dig a hole on th’ new of th’ moon and you will have dirt to throw away, but if you dig it on th’ old of th’ moon, you’ll not have enough to fill it back again. Look, if you don’t believe me, try this, and if it doesn’t work, I’ll give you a hundred dollar bill. Dig a post hole on th’ growin’ of th’ moon. Dig it ever how deep and how big around you want, and put th’ post in it. It’ll be loose all th’ time and never settle. Dig th’ same kind of hole on

th' old of th' moon, just th' same size, and sink your post. It'll settle as tight as you could want—like it's took roots and growed there."

By this time, we were fascinated. Anxious to help out, Elvin took us farther up Mulberry Road and introduced us to Mr. Harley Carpenter. Speaking slowly, quietly, chuckling often, he talked about the signs and about the people who refused to believe in them.

"They're as wild as a rabbit sittin' up there in the broom sage," he laughed softly. "Get too close to 'em and they're gone. Seein', in a sense, is a great believin'. You can hear things, but if you've seen it, you've got more sense out of it. If it hadn't'a been true, it wouldn'a been handed down through the years. In other words, it speaks the signs in th' Bible, you know.

"I heared a fella' talkin' about plantin' corn. He said t'other one, he said, 'I plant mine when th' signs is in th' arms and it won't grow high, and th' ear'll come out and shank and hang down.' And th' other'n says, 'Aw, I don't plant by th' signs and by th' moon. I plant in th' ground when I get ready.' He just ain't got th' self-experience, you see. Now all these things, you'd have to go through a process of tryin' and seein'. Then you'd be a permanent believer.

"And th' same way by beans. Now you might talk to a woman about plantin' beans, and they'd just hoot at'ya and say, 'I plant in th' ground,' like I said. But there's a certain time them signs is when if you plant'm, they'll speck and rot, and it's in th' bowels. Now there's a mystery there for me and you to study about that. Why does it happen? And here's what I figure out about it—just thinkin' about my food. It goes in here pleasant and good in th' mouth, and when it comes out, its manufactured and went through a process in th' bowels. In other words, it's rotted, see? Went on out.

"And th' same way by corn now. In my comin' up, my daddy always tried to plant his corn when th' signs was in th' arms; and beans and pumpkins and so on th' same way. Well, now I've growed up and we don't have much corn in th' mountain country, you know. It's about to quit. But people back then always tried to grow enough corn to do 'em, see? Well, they'd have corn shuckin's—go in and help one another. You can't get a crowd together now unless it's

for music or somethin' they're goin'ta give away. But in my bein' at corn shuckins' and shuckin' my own corn, you'd find cars once in a while that if they was planted in th' bowels, they'd be grown and matured green—solid dry rot. And th' old people claimed that that was th' signs.

"You take pigs, now—castratin' pigs. If you want a pig to do well, let th' signs be in th' feet. Gone on out, you see; gone on down past th' arms and legs and out, through th' feet."

We asked him about cutting wood. "Cuttin' wood? Oh, shucks yeah. Lots'a people just hoot at'ya talkin' about cuttin' firewood to burn good, but there's a certain time of th' moon when you cut it and it won't do nothin' but fry and hiss about and have to get red hot and maybe burn enough kindlin' to make another fire. There's a certain time in that now about deadenin'. I did know, but I wouldn't say for sure. I think it's th' dark nights in May when th' signs are in th' heart. You stick an axe in a tree, and when you cut it, it'll die."

Twenty miles away, we visited another woman known throughout this area. Mrs. E. N. Nicholson, frail but energetic and bright, is the oldest woman in the county, having watched over a hundred years go past. Did she believe in the signs? "I was brought up in that day, and I can't help from believin' in it. When I plant my garden, I wanta' plant it on the right time of the moon. But most of that's forgotten now."

When asked if she thought it ought to be preserved, she answered, "I can't help but think that it ought. There arc too many things to think about today. A good home and plenty of land should make anyone perfectly happy. Too many things now that call for money. We had a good time when I was growin' up, and we got along as well as you all now."

On the way back home, we stopped in to visit Mr. Carnes whose relish, preserve, and jelly stand outside Clayton is a favorite stop for tourists and local people alike. He does not follow the signs himself as he does not plant, but his whole family did. He was able to tell us the following story, and theory.

"Some time ago, a man was castrating two hogs. He finished one, and just as he got to the second, the moon changed, and the second

hog bled to death."

He also advanced the theory that you needed to plant your corn so that it would lower on the bright nights of the moon. That way, the insects could see better and pollinate the flowers more completely. This, obviously, would result in a better crop of corn.

The whole thing, being strange to us, still sounded crazy. The next day we had a new angle. If this whole thing *did* work, then there had to be a logical explanation. Margaret Norton would know, if anyone would. She was our next target.

Margaret, author of our recipe column in our magazine, is widely known and respected as one of the most successful gardeners in these parts. Because of this, and because she has been planting strictly by the signs for over ten years, she has become the authority in Betty's Creek valley on the signs and how they work. Knowing Margaret and her husband Richard better than most of the people we had interviewed, we felt free to ask her more probing questions. Besides, we knew a little more about the signs by the time we got to her—more, at least, than we had known when we talked to Mrs. Cabe—and so we felt more confident.

She and her husband Richard both talked to us freely. Margaret explained, "It's all true, and just a few hours can make a difference. It sure works for me. And th' ones that don't [plant by the signs]—if they once was to get started at it, they wouldn't change for nothin'. But they have just growed up thataway and, you know, it's hard to change when you've done a certain thing all your life. But I don't know why they won't try it. If they just was to fail with something several times, they perhaps would try then, because that's th' thing made me start tryin'. My cucumbers failed. I planted them, and they just bloomed and bloomed and bloomed and never did any good. I just planted 'em in an unfruitful sign."

Richard continued. "We plant Irish potatoes by th' signs, too. They's a certain sign you can plant Irish potatoes in and they'll do as good again; I know that. They's lots of people who hit it once in a while anyhow though." And Margaret added, "Naturally once in a while you'd hit it, because there's fourteen good plantin' days in every month, see?"

Soon we were on the subject of the younger generation and whether they were following the signs or not. Margaret commented, “Young people aren’t followin’ it. They don’t even know th’ signs. They perhaps just go on about somethin’ else and never help their parents in th’ field; and maybe their parents don’t say anything to them, and don’t say, ’Now this is th’ right day to plant. Let’s go and plant.’ You know, th’ young generation don’t work like we had to work when we was growin’ up.”

What would happen with the young people not following the lessons of their ancestors? “They’ll just run into trouble. Th’ farmin’ and stuff’ll just be goin’ out more and more every year.”

Richard changed the subject. “Another thing. Now you take like killin’ hogs. There’s a certain time to kill hogs too. You kill a hog on th’ new of th’ moon and take a slice of it and put it in a pan, and it’ll just bow up. You don’t want’a never kill it on th’ new of th’ moon.”

Just before we left, we finally got to the question that had been bothering us for days. If it was true that it *did* work, then *why?* Why did it work? Margaret supplied an answer—“Well, it must have been in th’ plan when th’ world was made. Because you know in Ecclesiastes it says, ’There’s a time for everything. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest.’ That’s God’s book, you know, so that’s the reason.”

THOSE WHO DOUBT

It was not long before we came across first one, then another and another who refused to believe in the signs. Seeking some semblance of balance after so many days of living with the zodiac, we were glad to find them and talk with them.

Most of those we talked to were educated people. Most had college degrees, and held positions of great respect in the community.

Dr. Harry Brown of Mountain City, for example, was County Agent fifty years ago. Later he was Farm Bureau president, and then Under Secretary of Agriculture in the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. He stated, “My yield’s as high or higher than anyone in

the county, and I've never used the signs. I don't even know how they work. There's no scientific evidence for it at all."

Pope Bass, overseer of the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School's dairy, has been farming for forty years without using the signs. He said that he had never been able to see any difference between his crops and the crops of those who used the signs.

James T. Burden, Professor of Agriculture at the Rabun Gap school, said essentially the same thing. "There's no scientific proof at all. Look. If someone's going to be careful enough to plant by the signs and watch and harvest the crop that carefully, then the chances are he *will* have a good crop, regardless." He plants by the weather and the season. When the soil is warm enough, and the danger of frost is gone, it's time to plant, signs or not.

Mr. Burden realizes the importance of the signs to many of his students' families, however, and he is very careful not to turn them against their parents' beliefs. He tells the students that they are perfectly free to use the system if they wish, cautioning them only with the statement that there is no scientific proof for it as yet.

Barnard Dillard, owner of the local drugstore, added another dimension to the subject with a story he remembered about a family who played a trick on one of their elderly relatives who could no longer see well enough to read the planting calendar. Knowing beforehand what he considered to be the right time to plant corn, the boys in the family asked his advice, but planted on a day whose signs were exactly opposite of what he recommended. "They had a fine crop, too," he recalls.

SO?

Two points of view. We are in no position to judge which is correct. But we can't resist a parting shot.

The times are turning against the practice of planting by the signs. Younger people, now exposed to a different type of education, are turning to new ways of doing things and often discarding the old in the process. Sometimes this is good. But with planting by the signs, there remains a lingering mystery that refuses to be silenced.

It would be nice to be able to dismiss the whole thing with a wave of the hand as “fogeyism,” but it’s hard to dismiss like that the unshakable beliefs of generations of people older and presumably wiser than we will be for some time.

Besides, there are two stories we haven’t told you yet—those told by Wilbur Maney, County Agent, and R. L. Edwards, owner of Edwards Photographic Studios in Clayton. Knowing these men and their reputations, we have every reason to believe the truth of these stories.

While cutting a field of waist-high, bothersome brush one day several years ago, Mr. Edwards noticed an older man watching him at work. He stopped his tractor and went over to say hello, at the same time complaining good-naturedly about the job that still lay ahead. “Well, after this you won’t have to worry about it any more,” said the older man.

“Why, sure I will,” answered Mr. Edwards. “Next year I’ll just have to cut it all over again.”

“Nope. After this it won’t ever come back,” the other stated. “Know why? Because you picked exactly th’ right day to cut that brush. Th’ moon and th’ signs are just right. You’re killing it, every bit. Go ahead and finish th’ job today and you’ll never have to worry about it again.”

“You know,” said Mr. Edwards, “that old man was right. I cut that brush several years ago and it hasn’t come back up *yet.* My only trouble now is that for the life of me, I can’t remember which day I cut it on.”

Mr. Wilbur Maney had a similar experience while attending a funeral in Hiawassee in August 1967. The corpse of the large man to be buried was enclosed in a huge, steel, waterproof vault. As is normal at funerals a dump truck was standing by to carry away the excess earth after the services. Usually one full load would do the job.

During the service, an elderly gentleman standing nearby spoke to Mr. Maney. “See that dirt?” he asked. “You watch when they get done. Because of the day they dug that hole on, they’ll hardly have a wheelbarrow load left to cart away.”

The vault was lowered into the ground, the dirt replaced, and all the remainder carried away in one wheelbarrow.

Mr. Maney still does not plant by the signs, and still does not really believe in it—and yet…

One of these days we intend to dig those two post holes Elvin Cabe told us to dig. We'll keep you informed.

RAISING NATIVE AZALEAS FROM SEED

~Coyl Justice~

“About publishin’ [my] secret, I don’t mind because at eighty-four, it don’t make a lot of difference. None of my family is gonna do it anyway.”

In their nursery tucked into a hillside of the Betty’s Creek community in Dillard, Georgia, Coyl Justice and his wife, Mildred, demonstrated for me the steps of gathering and then planting the seeds of the native azalea bushes that provide beautiful color in the mountains each spring. As he described to me each step of the process of growing these azaleas from seed, Mr. Justice told me not only what he does in his nursery but also how a layperson could copy what he does, using materials frequently found in the average home. As we walked their property, I witnessed the thrift and ingenuity that have undoubtedly been contributing factors in the success of their nursery. No container seemed to be wasted; even old medicine bottles were recycled and put to good use. Long before “green” was anything other than a color, Mr. and Mrs. Justice, and so many other people of the southern Appalachian Mountains like them, were making do with what they had, saving anything that could be reused, and wasting little, simply because doing so just made good sense.

During my time with them, I found Mr. and Mrs. Justice to be patient with the many questions of a novice gardener and generous with their hard-earned knowledge. Their passion for their work was clear as they enthusiastically showed me all their many plants and gave advice for some of my own gardening dilemmas.

The Justices maintain several greenhouses in which they grow various types of plants that they will later sell in their nursery. Through hard work, study, patience, and determination, they have created a business that they enjoy. The fruits of their labors have beautified homes in the surrounding area for many years, ensuring that long after they’ve retired, their legacy will continue.

GATHERING AND STORING

ILLUSTRATION 30 Coyl Justice holding an immature seedpod with evidence of bug infestation

After the native azaleas have bloomed out in late spring, a seedpod will form where the blossoms were. Allow the pod to remain on the plant until it begins to brown, usually in late September. Mr. Justice explained to us that if the pod remained on the plant for too long, it would burst when picked, spilling the seeds onto the ground.

Place the seedpods in a container—the Justices use an open cup for this step—sprinkle with insecticide, and then place the cup in a sunny windowsill, where the seedpods will dry for approximately two months. Mr. Justice describes his initial experiences with trying to sprout azalea seeds before he added the use of an insecticide to this step: “They wouldn’t [sprout] because if you don’t put some sort of insecticide on the seedpod, the weevils gets in it, and by the time you get ’em hulled out, they done got it eat up. They don’t look like it ’cause you can’t see where the weevils has eat ’em, but if you put Sevin on ’em—I use Sevin dust and just shake it up, you know, and let ’em dry. Then hull ’em out, and then they’ll come out [germinate].”

In November, hull the seedpods by pinching the brown pod with a pair of pliers, then rolling the pod between your fingers over a container such as a plate or pie pan until the seeds fall out.

ILLUSTRATION 31 Mr. Justice holding azalea seeds and chaff

After shelling the seeds, rub them over a fine screen to separate the seeds from the chaff. The seeds will fall through the screen while the chaff remains on top. Then place the seeds in a container and store them in the freezer until you are ready to plant. “I gather the seed and freeze it. I have planted [them after I] had them five years in the freezer, and they still come up. If you gather the seed like this year, they’ll come up this year, but one year is all they’ll [usually] come up.” Mr. Justice told us that he always plants during the December after he’s gathered the seeds, though he believes that the seeds will germinate in the correct conditions up to a year later when stored in the freezer.

GERMINATION

During the month of December, prepare the seed trays for planting. Mr. Justice told us that while he uses nursery seed boxes for his planting today, in the past, with great success, he has used plastic shoe boxes into which he had drilled drainage holes. To prepare for planting the seeds, screen peat through a wire screen. Place the peat remaining on top of the screen into the planting box first. Then mix part of the screened peat with warm water until it is wet. Squeeze the wet peat almost dry and place a 1- or 2-inch layer on top of the material already in the seed box. Then sprinkle the seeds on top. Finally, sprinkle a very small amount of the dry, screened peat—Mr. Justice said, "Pour barely enough to cover the seed; maybe not even one-sixteenth of an inch on top of the seeds and pat down gently." Mist the planted seeds with warm water—preferably the same warm water used to moisten the peat—and cover with plastic sheeting to keep the seedbed from drying out. Mr. Justice places his seedbed on a heating cable that maintains a temperature of approximately seventy degrees Fahrenheit at this point in the process to keep the azalea seeds warm enough to germinate. However, he said that before he had a heating cable, he would place the seedbed in a sunny windowsill in his home. Keep the seedbed slightly moist with occasional mistings but not overly damp—allowing the environment to be too damp will be counterproductive—as Mr. Justice says, "Too much dampness will kill them. Some of 'em will sprout a little bit later, but most of them will sprout in about four weeks."

After the seeds have sprouted, place them under a grow light or in a location that is warm and sunny. A window with eastern or western exposure should provide good light, though Mr. Justice says that one with eastern exposure is ideal. When the seedlings have sprouted, continue to maintain a slightly damp but not overly wet environment. When the seedlings have a pair of leaves, Mr. Justice makes a very weak solution of fertilizer with which he mists the seedlings approximately once per week. He says, "Keep the cover on

’em and mist about one time per week with a very weak solution. I only put about one-fourth teaspoon of Miracle-Gro per spray bottle.”

POTTING

When the seedlings are approximately 1½ to 2 inches tall, place into individual 2-inch seed cups. Patience is key, as Mr. Justice warned us that it takes a while for the seedlings to grow to this point. Mr. Justice uses 2-inch breakaway plastic seed cups, though he says that any cup that holds approximately the same amount of soil mixture and has drainage holes will do. A container that is too small will allow the soil to dry too quickly, jeopardizing the health of the plant. In years gone by, Mrs. Justice and three other ladies would perform the task of moving the seedlings from seed tray to cups by using a toothpick to lift the seedlings from the seed trays without harming their roots. The seed cups should be filled with a mixture of perlite and peat that has been soaked in warm water and then wrung almost dry. Once the seedlings are in the cups, keep them inside in a sunny windowsill or protected outside in a cold frame or a greenhouse. Mr. Justice told us that he had grown “hundreds of ’em in a windowsill” until he obtained a cold frame. Keep the soil “moist but not too wet.”

ILLUSTRATION 32 Seedlings in seed cups

ILLUSTRATION 33 “I been takin’ [azalea seedlings] out as they grow and puttin’ them in individual cups. I leave them over winter, and then next year, I put ’em in gallons [to sell]. At three years, they’ll bloom for seeds.” At three years old, Coyl’s plants are typically knee-high.

MATURATION

Allow the seedlings to grow in the seed cups through the rest of the year until early the next spring, almost a year in total, at which point they will be large enough to move to gallon pots. When Mr. Justice transplants his azalea seedlings to gallon pots, he plants them in “pure pine bark” that he mixes with slow-release fertilizer. If not using slow-release fertilizer, he recommends watering with Miracle-Gro regularly.

After moving the azaleas into the gallon pots in early spring, clip them back to encourage branching out; otherwise, they will grow straight up. Move the plants outside, but keep them protected. Mr. Justice told us that if they are planted outside while still too young,

“the rabbits and deer will eat them.” The plants will be ready to transplant into the ground when they are approximately 12 inches tall.