

A selection of inside stories about how you

MAKE YOUR GARDENS GROW



Perry Smith made this garden memorial. See page 21.

Thanks to everyone who sent us your gardening secrets. The rest of us surely can learn from these.

Next month we'll publish your stories about "The Camping Trip I Will Never Forget." (Deadline was Feb. 15.) The deadline is March 15 for your stories on "What We Did When the Power Went Out." See other themes on page 20.

LISTEN TO GRANNY

Growing up with grandparents who lived on a farm gave me a pretty good education on planting a garden. I admit that I didn't pay much attention to the cotton and soybeans, but seeing that I really liked vegetables and flowers, I listened to Granny. She believed in planting by the moon. She told me to put a rusty nail in the hole when transplanting tomatoes. She put ashes from the woodfire around roses and dahlias, and she always used newspapers for weed control. I use her methods and have a very pretty garden.

*Olivia Jernigan
Goldsboro
Tri-County EMC*

JUG PLANTS IN A SMALL YARD

I lived in a house with a small fenced-in front yard. Money was tight, and I had no plow. I got to thinking how in the world would I plant tomatoes, green beans and cucumbers and still share the yard with three dogs.

So I took eight, 20-gallon plastic jugs, cut the top out, cut a whole in the bottom about the size of a half dollar, and then filled with potting soil. In six buckets I put one tomato plant and a 5-foot stick. I placed them in two rows, three feet apart.

In the seventh bucket, I put in three string bean plants and placed it against the fence.

In the eighth bucket, I put in two cucumber plants and placed it against the fence three feet away.

Every Monday I would take a gallon jug, put in one tablespoon of Miracle Gro and fill with water. Each plant got one gallon. On Friday, each plant got two gallons of plain water only.

My tomato plants grew taller than me (5 feet, 6 inches) and really put out the tomatoes!

I put some on the porch to ripen. Some went bad so I just pushed them off to the ground. One day I looked beside the porch, and lo and behold there was a plant growing. I put blocks around it and started doing the same with it. It grew as tall as the porch!!

My string beans ran up and around the fence, as did my cucumbers.

I was blessed with so much, I was giving tomatoes, string beans and cucumbers out to friends, neighbors, family and strangers that would stop and admire the plants.

There was no weeding and the dogs had plenty of room to run.

We had plenty to eat until things got better. We were able to share and make some new friends.

*Carol Killough
Indian Trail
Union Power Cooperative*

HORSE MANURE AND BLACK PLASTIC

Trying to have a garden can be a difficult job with a lot of hard work. I suppose having a garden tractor or a tiller could make the job a lot easier. I do not have either. But the love of fresh tomatoes and garden vegetables always makes me want to grow my own. I love going to the garden for fresh produce, but do not like the hard work that goes with it. Trying to work smarter and not harder, I came up with a plan about how to grow vegetables the easy way.

My brother who lives across the road from me, Joe, has a friend who needed a place to dispose of his shavings from his horse barn. He just scrapped all the horse manure out back of his barn to be moved someday. Joe has a small dump truck, so he brought 20 some loads of this rich soil to my garden. What was I to do with the mounds of rich dirt?

I took heavy black plastic and threw it on each pile. Not wanting to have the walkways filled with grass, I put down old car carpet with plastic backing on it. This has lasted for many years.

I used scissors to cut slits in the black plastic, then I put the plants in. The plastic keeps the soil warm, and makes the plants grow. You do not have to water the plants. The plastic keeps the soil moist enough for plants to grow. Using the rotted horse manure, I had no need for chemical fertilizer, making this an organic garden.

Instead of pulling weeds and hoeing the garden, I can walk out in the morning with a cup of coffee and watch the plants

grow. They were beautiful tomatoes and the sweetest cantaloupes you have ever eaten.

*Marie Kidd
Seagrove
Randolph EMC*

CITRUS FRUIT FERTILIZER

I have been a gardener and landscaper for 30 of my 48 years on earth. In past years I have learned many gardening secrets. Perfection comes from patient practice.

The secret I share with all readers is this: In planting many vegetables, shrubs and perennial flowers, while preparing the soil I quarter or section a citrus fruit to use as an alkaline acid fertilizer, which is totally biodegradable. Therefore, when decomposure begins, my pH balance is at a normal ratio slowly feeding what I have planted. The neatest thing is I work less, letting this natural technique do a lot of the work for me. I spend a lot more time instead just enjoying the beauty of plant life.

*Phillip R. Henson
Cashiers
Haywood EMC*

ADD A LOT OF LOVE

The love of seeing things grow is a great secret within itself. If you don't love it you won't take care of it. Pet it, pamper it, water it, feed it and by all means, keep all the outlaws (weeds) away from the prize. The weather and location of the plant goes a long way for success.

I planted a watermelon seed that was about ½ inch long. It produced two melons, one weighing in at 222 pounds and one at 200 pounds. From a half-inch beginning to a finished fruit of 79½ inches end to end, 21 inches wide and 53 inches around the width. For Wilkes County and the foothills, this one was pretty nice.

Try this recipe for watermelons: Bushels of love, one good seed, eight ounces balanced fertilizer, eight ounces cotton seed meal, plenty of sun and heat, God's help. Water only when heat and rain permit. Good luck to all.

*Nancy Stanley
Roaring River
Surry-Yadkin EMC*



MAKE IT A FAMILY AFFAIR

This is my daughter, my son and my dad planting the garden one year (above).

Moma and Poppa married and built a house here in 1949. Poppa had a large garden every year and my brothers and I helped. We enjoyed the fruits of our labor, especially the watermelons and strawberries.

When I married we built a house in the woods behind Moma and Poppa. The garden is between the two houses. Our children loved to help in the garden by the time they were 2½ years old. As they grew, my sons especially enjoyed driving the tractor. We enjoyed fresh food from the garden and always shared with friends and relatives.

We have many happy memories of times in the garden. One day last year Moma, who is 72, was exhausted from spreading seeds and laid down in the bed of Poppa's pick-up truck with her head on a bag of fertilizer. One of our dogs hopped up there, laid his head on her tummy and rested with her. Moma got tickled at him and we all laughed at how funny Moma looked.

I treasure these pictures of my children helping Poppa in the garden. They've grown up and moved to homes of their own now, but still stop by and help in the garden occasionally.

*Jan S. Clark
Indian Trail
Union Power Cooperative*

MINERAL OIL

To prevent corn earworms, I squirt a few drops of mineral oil (from regular oilcan) in the silk of each ear when the silk first appears.

*Ralph Clayton
Balsam Grove
Haywood EMC*

PLANT NEXT TO THE CHICKEN COOP

One of the things I love about rural life is having a small garden. But every year, I have less and less time to hoe, weed and tend it. In 2002, I decided to be practical and not plant a garden at all. Practical or not, I really missed having something to harvest in the fall. So I thought about it a while and came up with an idea for the perfect garden.

Last spring, I planted six watermelon plants and three tomato plants in the thick grass beside my chicken coop. All summer, I let the plants grow untended. The natural chicken guano fertilized them as it washed downstream when it rained. The grass grew tall and kept them moist and weed-free. When insects appeared, I turned a rooster loose for a couple of weeks to take care of them.

Benevolently neglecting my tiny garden worked even

better than I expected. I reaped a bountiful harvest, including one watermelon that weighed in at 65 pounds.

Needless to say, I'll be using the same method this year.

*Sharon Hartung
Currie
Four County EMC*



continued on p. 20

HOW TO GROW BULBS

When I moved from New Mexico to North Carolina in 2000, I was enthralled with the glory of spring bulbs. Much to my dismay, my new neighbors said the voles and squirrels would eat most if not all of my bulbs.

Determined to grow tulips and more, I set out to research a method to successfully grow bulbs. I read an article that said those little destructive bulb robbers did not like the grit of sand. In the late fall, I dug 10-inch deep bulb trenches layering each with one inch of sand, two inches of good forest mulch mixed with bulb food, the row of bulbs, one inch of sand around bulbs, two inches of forest mulch, two inches of sand and mulch mixed together, and finally one inch of sand on top.

Much to my delight, the following spring, all my bulbs began to poke their leaves above ground. I had won the battle. All my bulbs were blooming and I was ecstatic.

*Nita Resler
Taylorsville
EnergyUnited*



FOR TOMATOES AND OKRA

In the fall of the year, I get the weeds and grass out of my garden. I take my push plow and plow two rows, one for tomatoes and one for okra. I put lime and compost in the rows. In the winter I put all the potato peelings and eggshells in rows. Next spring, a week before I plant, I put fertilizer in the rows. I put newspapers on each side of the rows, which will keep the weeds and grass from growing around my okra and tomatoes. The day I set out the tomatoes, I put a tablespoon of Epsom salts under each plant and water all the plants real good.

It is now November 6, and I still have two tomatoes from this year's garden to eat.

*Monnie Sullivan
Lillington
South River EMC*

A 1950 FARMALL CUB

My husband, Mark Oliphant still cultivates using his grandfather's 1950 Farmall Cub tractor. Through the winter we place horse manure on the soil to prepare it for spring planting. He is the hardest working man that I know, and clearly the success of our garden.

*Christel Oliphant
High Point
EnergyUnited*

TO KEEP CABBAGE AND POTATOES

People in the mountains a while back had to improvise to keep the food they grew all winter. We all have heard about root cellars and springhouses, but here are two unique ways to save cabbage and potatoes that few flatlanders have heard. To save cabbage, pull it up by the roots, turn head down and bury back in the ground with only enough root showing to pull back up. To save potatoes, dig a hole, line with straw, put in potatoes. Cover with tarpaper and straw and finally, dirt piled up. This could take the boredom out of pintos and fatback on a cold winter day.

*Randolph Rash
Dudley
Tri-County EMC*

STAY STRICTLY ORGANIC

My gardening secret is hardly a secret at all. I loudly and proudly proclaim it to anyone who will listen: I am an organic gardener. Most people are amazed at the quality and abundance of my produce. All of this is accomplished without pesticides, herbicides or chemical fertilizers.

There are many reasons to garden organically. First, it is very cost effective. Because my organic kitchen and yard waste is composted to provide nutrients

Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

MAY 2004

"What We Did When the Power Went Out"

Smart – and maybe not-so-smart – ways to cope during an outage.

Deadline: March 15

JUNE 2004

"Being a Teenager Today"

What are you going through? Or: How does it compare to when you were one?

Deadline: April 15

JULY 2004

"Our Money Pit"

What was the biggest waste of money you remember?

Deadline: May 15

AUGUST 2004

"Was I Wrong!"

Lessons you learned the hard way.

Deadline: June 15

SEPTEMBER 2004

"My Favorite Photo"

North Carolina people and places. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and printable size.

Deadline: July 15

OCTOBER 2004

"If I Were Governor of North Carolina"

What would you do?

Deadline: August 15

NOVEMBER 2004

"Mama's Cooking Was Always the Best"

Send a recipe, if you have one, and photos.

Deadline: Sept. 15

DECEMBER 2004

"Meeting Your Grandparents"

Something you never knew about a grandparent.

Deadline: Oct. 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less. We retain reprint rights.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mail or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
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for enriching my soil, I don't have to purchase costly fertilizers or other amendments. Herbicides and pesticides are also products I need not buy. Second, my husband and I are able to eat food that is free from chemicals and toxins. Last, my gardening does not negatively impact the environment. Since we live on a creek near the Neuse River, this is of critical importance.

I have gardened organically for over 30 years. It's the only gardening technique I'd ever use.

*Paula Kology
Oriental
Tideland EMC*

ENJOY YOUR PLANTS

My gardening secret is to enjoy my plants, especially those given to me in memory of my parents. I have kept them alive through the years with careful watering and correct placement for sunlight. I am able to preserve a wonderful memory of country living by planting a flower in a tree trunk. I took a rotten dogwood stump from my homeplace and filled it with soil. The tree trunk is upside down (root side up) in my flower garden, and I planted a pansy in it for joy and remembrance. (See photo, page 18.)

*Perry Smith
Huntersville
EnergyUnited*

FIVE TIPS, GUARANTEED

My tried-and-true vegetable gardening secrets are absolutely, positively guaranteed to work.

1) Get your husband to do it. I mean the tilling, the hoeing, the hauling of compost and mulch, etc. You might want to keep the picking chore for yourself. You have to contribute something, after all.

2) Don't overlook your local neighborhood produce stand. You can buy stuff there and tell everyone that you grew it yourself.

3) Be careful what you grow – you might have to eat it. Example: In July, "Gosh, this okra is so good! Better put up as much as we can." September: "Still good okra." November: "I'm getting tired of okra." January: "I hate okra."

4) Let the grass take over your garden. You can find neat things in there. I have found cats, shovels, snakes, contorted vegetables, even missing jewelry.

5) If you get a clear shot at the groundhog, take it. You will be sorry later if you don't.

*Jeannette Haynes
Maiden
EnergyUnited*

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