

“IT’S EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT LIFE”

And other true confessions of why you tend a garden

Well if you need a boost to get yourself out into the garden this year, just read what we have here. Planning, tending, picking, preserving, giving it away and getting help—for some reason it’s all good. If only we had the space to publish more of these, we could brighten your day for months. We did add more to our Web site.

BECAUSE OF MABEL

Surrounding our home is one of the most beautiful flower gardens in Person County.

In the middle of the backyard stands a huge black walnut tree, the largest of its kind in North Carolina. It is estimated to be centuries old. Around the base of the tree, like a colorful wreath, are seasonal flowers, such as impatiens in the summer and colorful shades of pansies in the spring—all planted by my wife, Mabel.

Other colorful and fragrant flowering plants grown and cultivated by my wife during the growing season attract interesting wildlife, such as birds that sing praises to their beauty. Plus hummingbirds, butterflies, bees and wasps enjoy their nectar.

The pleasure we enjoy from this surrounding beauty during our later years is due to my wife’s determination to learn how to enrich the soil to cultivate healthy plants.



Herbert Garrett, Timberlake | Piedmont EMC

Thanks to everyone who contributed. Next month we’ll publish your reports of the perfect place for a picnic. [Deadline was Feb. 15.] For other themes and rules of our “Nothing Could Be Finer” series, see page 24.



IN THE ZINNIAS

Gardening brings beauty and happiness. It’s good for the soul. This is my mom and some of her dear friends in the zinnias.

Jan S. Clark, Indian Trail | Union Power Cooperative

TO LEARN ABOUT LIFE

Gardening is a leap of faith. You sow seeds with a positive attitude not knowing the outcome. You tend the garden faithfully even before you see results. Then, one day, two little leaves show their colors, and then there are four leaves. You feel a sense of accomplishment as the season moves along and you reap the rewards of your labor in the harvest.

When all is done, you tend to the garden beds to put them to rest. What I learned from gardening is everything there is to know about life: faith, patience, hard work, rewards and the universal cycle of life.

Gardening puts everything in perspective for growing up and becoming a fine person. It shows how everything and everyone cannot go it alone. We all need to work together to reap the rewards of life. At the end of our harvest, we rest like the garden, only to see the future in the generations and the past in our memories.

I’m a gardener because it fills my soul with happiness and accomplishment. When having a bad day, I just go to my garden and work it to feel right again.

Michele Strubeck, Waynesville | Haywood EMC

FOR STEPHEN

Growing up in rural North Carolina, gardening was a means of providing food for the family. My grandfather taught me how and when to plant in order to gain the best harvest. My mother and grandmother patiently taught me the fine art of canning, freezing and preserving. During the years of raising my own family, I continued that heritage. Canned goods, jellies and jams lined the pantry shelves to prove I had learned the lesson well.

However the love of being a gardener took on an entirely new meaning three years ago. Our oldest son died, his life unexpectedly over, a beautiful flower plucked right from the garden of our hearts. In an attempt to focus on living, we decided to plant a weeping willow tree in our yard in his memory. With this effort "Stephen's Garden" began. We planted all the flowers from his funeral. We built a gazebo as a place for quiet reflection. On Stephen's birthday or Father's Day or any other day that we feel the need, his children and I make garden stones. We tenderly place them in the garden and watch our memories grow. The harvest has been one of acceptance and appreciation. Acceptance of growing a different garden and appreciation for precious memories that thrive there.

Betsy Hinson, Gastonia

RAISING A SON AND A GARDEN

At the time, my son was 5 years old and a finicky eater. He just did not like any kind of vegetable. So I made a plan. I told him that we would go to the seed store in the spring and he could pick out as many packets of seeds as he wanted as long as we ate everything that we grew. Of all the colorful packets in the displays, we came home with a bundle. That year he worked with me planting, waiting for the seeds to sprout, watering and weeding. We had an enormous crop.

Ever since that year he is the one who makes sure we have our potatoes started on time, that we have a healthy mixture of summer vegetables for the table, and that we have enough extra so that we can enjoy our preserved food through the winter. He enjoys everything from our first peas to our last turnips and cabbage. Sometimes it pays to be tricky.

Larry Strap, Durham | Wake EMC

TO STAY FOREVER STRONG

I have been gardening since I was 15 years old. I am now 93 and still raise most of my vegetables and share them with friends, relatives and neighbors. I like to see things grow. I raise turnips, green peas, field peas, white potatoes, sweet potatoes, cabbage, cauliflower, corn, tomatoes, yellow squash, zucchini, peppers, pears, grapes and blackberries. All work is done with a tiller, rake and hoe.

I thank God for the strength and ability at my age.

Theodore Coppee, Newport | Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative

SO DAD CAN KEEP WATCH

My mom and dad have been the real reason I enjoy gardening. My parents always seemed to have flowers and vegetables growing around the farm. Dad's mom had a real green thumb, and he seemed to have inherited it from her. Although Mom was busy raising two young'ns and Dad farmed and then worked off the farm for years, we put something in the ground each spring. He retired from Lowe's Home Improvement in 2003 at age 82 because of health problems, but with a lot of help from Mom he put in his garden in 2004. He said that garden was his "physical and mental therapy" and would keep him going.

They filled up any available piece of ground and pot with flowers and vegetables. Many times when he was too sick to be outside or had to spend a few days in the hospital, we would talk for hours about the next garden he would put in, or what I should try in my garden here in the mountains.

Dad died in October 2005. This picture was made in 2004 in his last garden. He and Mom had a bumper crop of green beans that year. Mom and I canned, and Dad gave away more beans that I can ever remember in the years past. I think the look on their faces shows just how much they enjoyed what they were doing.

We're planning another garden this year, one on the farm and one up here at my house. I 'spect Dad will have a good seat helping us tend these gardens and watching them grow.



Karen Hargett Moll, Grassy Creek | Blue Ridge Electric

TO BE CLOSER TO THE LORD

Growing up on a farm, at age 9 I was given a small plot of land next to the family garden where I could grow flowers. I have continued for over 80 years. I enjoy the entire process of gardening: looking at the seed and flower catalogs in the winter, deciding what and where to plant, keeping the weeds out, then gathering in the items as they mature and sharing and selling the results. I have a small farmer's market at my home.

For me, gardening is pleasure and not work. I tell people that a little dust in the house does not bother me, but the weeds in the garden do. I am closer to my Lord while "playing" in the garden than anywhere else on earth.

Ruby McGee, Lenoir | Blue Ridge Electric

GETTING INTO IT WITH ASHTON AND LUKE

I love to till the soil and watch seeds sprout into plants and then grow to vegetables. I also love to watch my blueberries, grapes and pears produce fruit. We are able to freeze, can and preserve our fruits and vegetables so we can enjoy them all year.

I especially enjoy my grandsons helping me prepare the soil for planting. This is a picture of my 2-year-old grandson, Ashton Rasberry, helping me prepare the soil for planting.

He is "my little dirt farmer." As you can see he really gets into his work. We had dug our potatoes and were preparing our soil to plant another crop. He and his 5-year-old brother, Luke, help me do everything in the garden from tilling to gathering the vegetables. It is an education for them and a lot of fun for all of us when we are gardening. 🌱



*Dalton Tyndall, Walstonburg
Pitt & Greene EMC*

Send us your best **Earn \$50**

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

May 2006
The Ugliest Lamp I Ever Saw
Send us the pictures.
Deadline: March 15

July 2006
I'll Never Eat That Again
A bad experience with food.
Deadline: May 15

June 2006
The Best Summer I Ever Had
By kids age 16 and younger.
Deadline: April 15

August 2006
How I Almost Flunked
What were you thinking.
Deadline: June 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. One entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mailed 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. We retain reprint rights.
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.)
9. Send to: Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616
Or by e-mail: finer@carolinacountry.com
Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com

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