

Points East

By:
Ike Adams

I know that Carson Back, a transplanted Lecher County man who lives in Ohio generally still gets his peas planted in February because he writes about doing so in the Mountain Eagle nearly every year. But here in The Knobs if a neighbor sees you out in the garden with a hoe and a seed bag this time of year, you may soon find yourself surrounded by men wearing little white coats and carrying a strait jacket.

Known enough about growing peas to assure you that they will come up and make a crop if you plant them now. For that matter you can sow lettuce, mustard, spinach and put out onion sets if you don't mind the soil being a little muddy. And in doing so you can beat your neighbor who waits till the first of April to commence his gardening by maybe a week when it comes to putting soil on the table.

When I was growing up on Blair Branch, just about everyone on the holler started gardening in February, not so much because they had to but because opportunity presented itself and somehow the act of digging and planting offered visible reassurance that we had made it through another winter. So every little fence was grubbed up and planted in peas.

Nobody that I remember grew the kind of peas that had to be hulled out—tough hulls, they were called. We all grew a variety of snap peas called tender hulls that you broke up just like beans. You couldn't buy seed for those as I recall. Every family saved enough seed or borrowed from a neighbor if they forgot to save any to start a patch the next year. When Burpees or whichever catalogue company announced the development/discovery of sugar snap peas, my Mom ordered some and promptly declared the old fashioned ones ten times better.

If any of you readers have seed of those old tender hull peas, I'd pay good money to get a start of them again. I haven't seen any of them since leaving Blair Branch in 1973.

From the time I was in third grade till I started high school, I would send off to American Seed Company in Lancaster, Pennsylvania for two hundred or so packs of flower and vegetable seed every year in January. The exact number of packets depended on whatever premium I had my heart set on. Sell 25 packs, for example and you could get a Hardy Boys title, 50 earned you some sort of functional toy or cheap fishing tackle.

100 packs meant a fairly useless B pistol, but 200 packs got you into the Daisy air rifle. The more you went over 200, the better model rifle you could get.

The company sent the seeds without any money changing hands up front. I had a list of about 30 houses on Blair Branch, Doty Creek, Spring Branch and Black Bottom, neighborhoods that lay between our house and the Jeremiah, Kentucky Post Office. I would survey these households on my Grit newspaper route which I ran every Saturday morning and get a good idea of what they would buy before I placed my order for an average of about seven packs total per household. Anyway, I would pick all the seeds up at the post office and sell them on the way home, covering a distance of about five miles up and down the hollers. The next Saturday I'd send the money back and wait for my BB gun in the mail.

The company offered about 500 varieties of flowers and veggies, but I generally ordered only eight in any serious volume. Black seeded Simpson and Iceberg lettuce, 7-top mustard, Crimson Crisp radishes, pickling cucumbers, mixed zinnia and mixed marigolds. A few folks wanted early Flat Dutch cabbage and Rutgers or Beefsteak tomato seed. And that was about it. Of its 500 seed varieties, American Seed Company produced 490 that you couldn't give away in the lower end of Lecher County.

But I would always order at least

ten packets of stuff that nobody else grew to see what they would turn out to be. Not only that, but the company would always throw in a dozen or so packs of new stuff for free which is the reason I know you couldn't give it away. I tried.

I promise you that I had the first eggplant that anybody had ever seen on Blair Branch and nobody, including my Mom, had a clue how one went about making it fit to eat. People would say, "It sure is pretty, but how do you eat it?" Suffice it to say that eggplant is not very palatable if you boil it in big chunks like potatoes. On the other hand, the stir fry concept had not caught on in Lecher County by the late fifties either—, and Parmesan Cheese (pronounced locally PAR MEE SHUN) was about as popular in a Blair Branch kitchen as hog manure. Some people insisted that the latter actually smelled better.

Over the weekend I ordered over 500 varieties of vegetable seed from four different seed catalogues and I'll probably order at least that many more before the season is over. I have five different kinds of peas coming and I'll plant them in March if the Good Lord's willing and the creek don't rise.

And if Carson Back is reading this he's probably shaking his head and thinking to himself that I'm a little teched in the head. I may not have my peas planted yet but here on Lowell Branch it sure does feel like Spring is just around the corner.

Library News

By Pam Chalfitt

According to the "experts" the growing season saw its shadow, so what happened to six more weeks of winter??? These fifty degree temperatures certainly don't feel like winter, but with a couple more weeks in February, anything can happen. I believe more every day the saying that if you don't like the weather, just come to Kentucky, it will change in a day or so. I suppose that I pay more attention to the weather since I am on the road on the bookmobile. I have had some problems with the generator that is necessary to operate the auxiliary heater on the bookmobile, but it is working properly now. Of course it would warm up when I get the heater operating again.

I have missed some of the bookmobile routes due to snow and cold temperatures. Hopefully I will have

made it around to the stops that I missed by the time that you read this article. I always tell the folks to get extra books, beginning in November, and most of my regular patrons know to do this. I never want to be without something to read, and I know there are lots of you who feel the same way.

The library is open six days a week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. On Thursday the hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and on Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Beginning in March the library will be open until 8 p.m. on Thursday. Mrs. Lynda has story time on Tuesday at 1 p.m. She would be glad for you to stop by with your children for a visit. I am sure that once you visit you will want to become a regular at story time.

We encourage you to stop in at the library and take advantage of the services that are available, books, videos, audio, reference material, computer access, and yes those dreaded tax forms. I hope to see you in the library or on the road.

Our Readers Write

Dear Editor,

I am deeply concerned about how this town is equipped for the handicapped. It is tremendously hard for handicapped people to motivate in this town. I would like to express my problems. I do not want to run this town's name in the ground. Although, I think this town should do something about handicap accessibility.

If anyone has ideas that might help get Mt. Vernon more accessible to persons who are physically challenged I would appreciate them contacting me by mail or e-mail. Thank you and God bless you.

Sincerely,
Amanda Isaacs
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