



## Farm to Table Vegetable Gardens, Canning Season, and the 4-H Club



The Hawley family moved on to the Franklin farm circa the Spring of 1960. I am not quite sure we had a vegetable garden that first year as there were a lot of other more pressing priorities – a new well, septic system, indoor plumbing, and central heating – to name but a few. But we almost certainly had a garden by the Spring of 1961. While actual photos of our garden are few and far between, there are home movies of our Dad and Ken plowing and dragging the garden with Becky and me running close behind the tractor picking up rocks and other debris.

Gardening was not new to our family. There are photos of garden plots in Madison and at our house on South 12<sup>th</sup> Street in Sheboygan. What was new and unique was the size of this garden. It was HUGE, and required the use of a tractor and multiple pieces of farm equipment to prepare the garden for planting. We also had a second garden that was used only occasionally.



*Garden on South 12th Street*

The remaining acreage on the farm was either left fallow, or was rented out to canneries in the local area.

Our Dad's Uncle Arthur and Aunt Letty visited the farm several times over the years. Arthur likely provided our Dad with advice on how to manage crops, when to let our fields lie fallow, and about the *soil bank*. He also *may* have played a role in our Dad's decision to plant the thousands of evergreen trees.

**The Soil Bank Act of 1956** was part of the Agricultural Act of 1956 passed by the U.S. Congress. This act created the Soil Bank Program, which removed farmland from production in an effort to reduce large crop surpluses after World War II. Land deposited into the Soil Bank was then converted into conservation use. The idea for the Soil Bank was taken from legislation from the 1930s dust bowl and was similar to many depression-era solutions to lower crop prices. Eventually, the Soil Bank act of 1956 was overturned by the Food and Agriculture Act of 1965.

**Brief History of the USDA Soil Bank Program | NRCS**

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail...>

Our Dad had lived and worked on farms in Hancock, Wisconsin in his youth, and also participated in 4-H club\* programs, so we closely followed his lead on what and how to plant – whether from packets of seeds, or seedlings that we had grown in the house earlier in the Spring. Eventually *Cold frames* were built using re-purposed windows and wood beams that may have been stored in our barn.

In agriculture and gardening, a **cold frame** is a transparent-roofed enclosure, built low to the ground, used to protect plants from adverse weather, primarily excessive cold or wet weather. The transparent top admits sunlight and prevents heat escape via convection that would otherwise occur, particularly at night. **Essentially, a cold frame functions as a miniature greenhouse to extend the growing season.**



*Corn Planter*

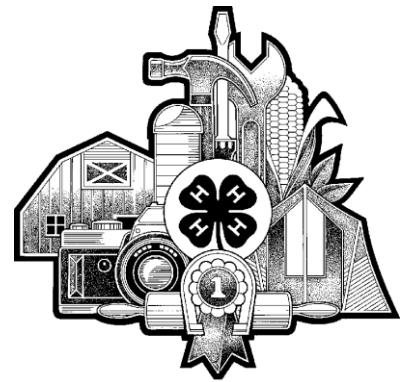
So, what did we plant? Rows of tomato plants, beans, sweet corn, cantalope, acorn squash, pumpkins, carrots, cabbage, cucumbers, and kohlrabi (German turnips). We also had a huge raspberry patch that ran down the center of the garden. A re-purposed 'outhouse' served as our garden equipment store room for hoes, garden rakes, hand tools, and corn planters. The vintage corn planter was something that you might find at an antique store and our Dad had to show us how to operate it.

### Gardening and the 4-H Club

Ken and Becky were the first to join the local 4-H Club that would meet at least monthly at the Howards Grove High School. Ken was raising rabbits by this time, and also had two Black Angus Cows. His



rabbits won **blue** ribbons at the Sheboygan County Fair, and he also sold them to a local farmer. The family also raised chickens, ducks and geese, and we butchered quite a few of them. We also butchered a few rabbits along the way, and by the way, they do taste just like chicken! Ken received numerous awards and accolades at the County Awards Ceremony for 4-H club members. As I recall, he spent more time on stage than in his seat in the audience.





Ken quickly assumed more responsibility over our vegetable garden and soon became the family's 'Master Gardener.' His prized tomatoes were sold by the bushel to locals in the area, as were many other surplus items from our garden. We all spent a great deal of time cultivating and weeding the garden – day in and day out. And as it was an integral part of our 4-H club project, our garden was viewed and graded by senior members of the club (e.g. weed control, planning and presentation). Vegetables from the garden may also have been entered into the county fair and judged there too.



*Becky in our Garden*



Other 4-H Club entries almost certainly included canned goods (fruits and vegetables, jellies and jam), homemade woodworking projects and school artwork. The family made many visits to the county fairgrounds to view exhibits and manage our entries. One of our favorite stops while visiting the fairgrounds was the area where new

tractors and agricultural equipment was parked. We climbed all over the new equipment and pretended to drive it. What fun we had!



*Becky Posing for Pictures with her 4-H Club Entries*

**Sheboygan County Fair History**  
[www.shebcofair.com/history.html](http://www.shebcofair.com/history.html)

**Sheboygan County Fair Did You Know**  
<https://www.schrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Aug-2017.pdf>

The Sheboygan County Agricultural Society was organized July 4, 1851. On October 1, 1851 the first annual fair was held in Sheboygan Falls on the hill behind the Free Hall, located on Madison Street.

## Canning Season



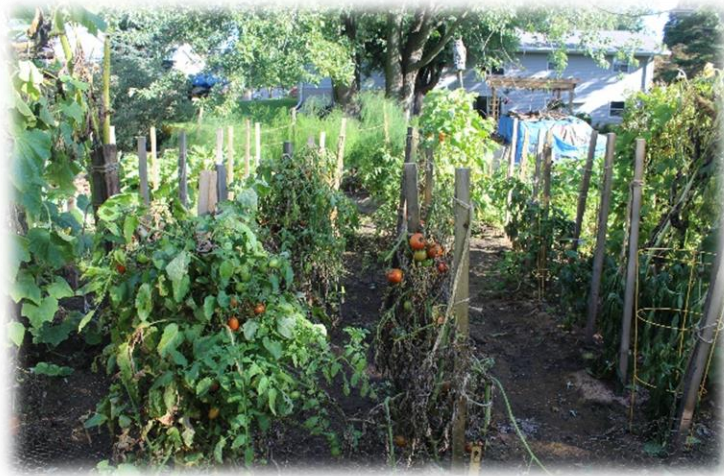
Canning Season in our household usually started as early as July and began with fruit and berries picked on our farm – apples, pears, raspberries, and currants. Our best apple tree only produced apples every two years, but they also were the finest apples for making apple sauce and apple pies. Raspberries starting coming in by July, as did the currants – and we went out and hand picked them for homemade jams and jellies that our Mom canned (in jars) and then stored in our basement. Our Mom also canned fresh beans picked from the garden, and tomatoes too. Some of the ‘veges’ were frequently served on our dinner table that same evening, but much of it was processed and canned for later use in the winter months.

Canning is a method of preserving food in which the food contents are processed and sealed in an airtight container. Canning provides a shelf life typically ranging from one to five years.

As I remember, the best part of summer and canning season was the homemade apple sauce, apple pie, rhubarb kuchen, and raspberry jam. I am amazed to this day that we all did not gain ten pounds during the summer with all of the homemade ‘farm to table’ food served at supper time. Menus included fresh corn on the cob that we had just picked right off the corn stalk and stripped on our front porch, creamed potatoes, chicken or meat loaf, and apple pie à la mode. Those were the days!

Ken and Jackie Hawley continued the ‘farm to table’ tradition after we moved West to Gallup, New Mexico in 1968. They managed the farm and the huge garden for several years before moving onto their own homestead in Howards Grove, Wisconsin.





*Ken's Garden / Ken and Kevin Tending to Tomato Plants*

Alexis and I also have had a garden since our move to Maryland back in the mid-1980's. We plant tomatoes, beans, green peppers, cucumbers, potatoes, and lots of herbs. We also have a raspberry patch. We tried sweet corn one season, but the racoons got to it just as it was ready to harvest. We also have been challenged by a herd of deer that visit our property every evening to forage on anything that is not fenced in or otherwise protected.



*Liberty – our Deer Spotter*

YouTube: Franklin Farm – Yesterday

<https://youtu.be/X2PEYuslmOc>

YouTube: Sweet Dreams of the Franklin Farm (early 1960s)

<https://youtu.be/RMNfn1fe5h8>

YouTube: Farmville – Franklin Farming (planting trees)

<https://youtu.be/8w1cQ7Ahkmw>

YouTube: What a Wonderful World

<https://youtu.be/4S1N62v2JP0>

**\*Note:** Our Grandfather, Lyle Herbert Hawley, was the leader of the **4-H Club in Hancock**, Wisconsin. He ran for County Clerk in 1934. Below was copied from his campaign flyer: "I have been active in organizing PTA Clubs, Community Clubs, Farmer Clubs, and in **4-H Organizations**. At present I am a farmer in Waushara County, Town of Hancock. I am President of the Oakwood Community Club, **Leader of the 4-H Livewires**, Treasurer of Waushara County Corn-Hog Control and Chairman of the Progressive League of Waushara County. If elected I assure you the office will be conducted in an efficient, courteous and businesslike manner."

(Authorized, paid for and circulated by Lyle Hawley, R. 2, Hancock, Wisconsin)



*June Hawley*



*4-H Club in Hancock, Wisconsin (1930s)*

**Photo Credit:** Hawley Family Archives; Rebecca Ann Hawley and her Kodak Brownie Box Camera; Alexis and John Hawley

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