

Newsletter

April 2019

Birmingham Foodways Cultural Traditions in Home Gardening



Picnic Time. Birmingham Public Library (BPL) Archives 829.3.45.

Rural Southerners and immigrants from many foreign lands made possible the Magic City's spectacular rise in the late 19th and early 20th century as the iron making capital of the South. Everyone brought their appetites, cooking customs, and their seeds, planting them in their home gardens and in the city's culinary traditions.

This year's plantings and talks at Grandmother's Garden explore cultural traditions in our city's "soul" food.

April 13	Native American	Squash, corn, and beans – the three sisters
May 11	Scotch-Irish	Potatoes, oats, and rye
June 8	African	Okra, cow peas, fish pepper, collards, and watermelons
July 13	Italian	Eggplant, peppers, cardoon, basil, tomatoes, and googootz
August 10	Greek	Oregano
September 14	American	Corn
October 12	German	Hops

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 Please join us for
Second Saturdays
 at Sloss

Walks and Talks
 in Grandmother's
 Garden 2019

April to October,
 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Grandmother's Garden
 10 North 32nd Street
 Sloss Quarters

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About Grandmother's Garden

Located adjacent Birmingham Historical Society's 1905 house in Sloss Quarters, where industrial workers once lived, the garden recreates a home garden of the early 20th century, the days before commercial fertilizers, hybrid seeds, and highly mechanized practices. Then and now, plots separated by gravel walks are laid out for a family's vegetables, kitchen and medicinal herbs, fruits and flowers. See Grandmother's Garden at Sloss Quarters on Facebook for photographs and more information on educational programs.

Among Our Gardeners and Talk Leaders

Sallie Lee is a horticulturalist who serves as Urban Regional Extension Agent for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

Kitty Lineberry and **Mary Marconi McLaughlin** are master gardeners of Scotch-Irish and Italian heritage.

Katie Tipton is a publication editor and aficionado of Italian cooking.

Antonia Viteri is an architect, landscape architect, and herbalist.

Marjorie White is an historian and director of Birmingham Historical Society.

Cultural Traditions in Birmingham Foodways



April 13 **Native American** Squash, corn, and beans
—the three sisters

Native Americans began cultivating fertile lands along the area creek beds as early as 1,000 A.D. Lacking beasts of burden, women and girls worked garden plots with rods and planting sticks. Dietary staples were squash, corn, and beans and wild-caught fish and game.

LEFT: Three sisters' planting time, 1,000 A.D. *Alabama: The Making of an American State*.

May 11 **Scotch-Irish** Potatoes, oats,
and rye

Pioneers coming to this area following Alabama's statehood in 1819 and the first sale of federal lands included Scotch-Irish yeoman farmers from Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. They cut down the forests and plowed the earth to establish family farms, planting oats, potatoes, and rye and breeding sheep, pigs, and cattle.

RIGHT: Pioneer settlers. *Republic Steel Scrapbook*, BPL Archives 448.1.1.



June 8 **African** Okra, collards, cow peas,
fish pepper, castor
beans, and watermelon

African food staples—collards, cow peas, fish peppers, and watermelon—provisioned slave ships and became prominent and enduring subsistence crops in dooryard gardens. Vegetable stews and black-eyed peas for New Year's remained popular in the healthy soul food diet of those who came to work in Birmingham mines and mills.

LEFT: Gardening Class, Industrial (now Parker) High School, 1933. BPL Archives. Birmingham Board of Education photograph 131.





July 13 Italian Eggplant, peppers, cardoon, basil, tomatoes, figs, and googootz

By 1910, Italians, and especially Sicilians, had become the largest immigrant group in the Birmingham Industrial District. Families cultivated home gardens and ran large truck farms and groceries across the city. Favorite foods included figs, tomatoes, basil, peppers, and eggplant, as well as cardoons and the googootz.

LEFT: Dominico Lusco Farm, Idlewild. BPL Archives. 829-2.80.

August 10 Greek Oregano

Early Greek immigrants to Birmingham established confectioneries and fruit stands, while later arrivals opened restaurants featuring fish. Opened in 1907, Bessemer's Bright Star is our state's oldest family restaurant. The Fish Market, Michael's, Zoe's Kitchen, Nabeel's Café and Market, and hot dog stands continue this tradition. Oregano is the preferred spice and the basis for secret family spice blends.

RIGHT: William Bosbonos Fruit Stand, 422 20th Street N., BPL Archives 829.2.21.



September 14 American Corn

Corn—in more than 250 varieties—has been a staple of the American diet for 7,000 years. Thought to have been first cultivated in Mexico, it spread to North and South America to become the most widely grown crop in the western hemisphere. Popular local specialties include grits, hush puppies, corn ponies, and corn bread.

LEFT: Women in the Cornfield, North Birmingham. BPL Archives 829.5.21.

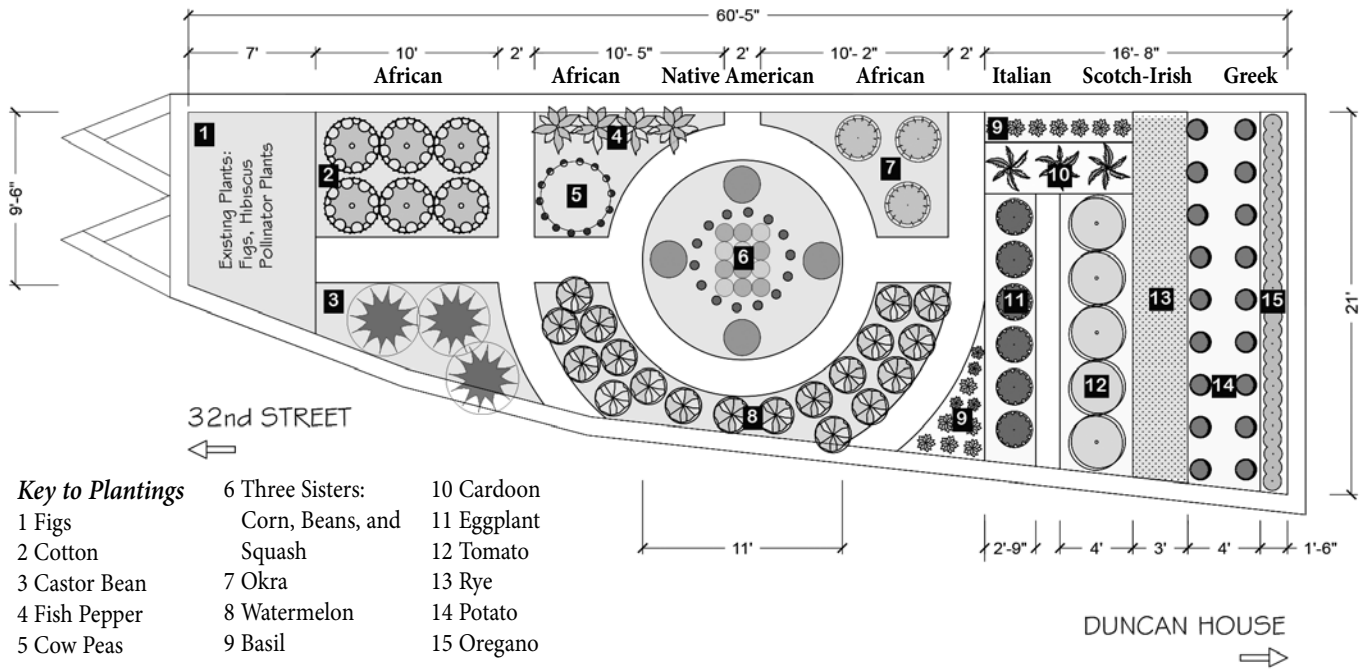
October 12 German Hops

Germans formed the largest immigrant group coming to Birmingham in the late 19th century. Phil Schillinger's Birmingham Brewery, opened in 1884 on Southside, became the city's largest brewery. Hops grew in many home and commercial-scale gardens, but whether any historic ones were in Birmingham remains unknown.

RIGHT: Phil Schillinger, Rex Vulcan, King of Birmingham Mardi Gras, 1886. BPL Southern History.



Grandmother's Garden Birmingham Foodways Plantings, Spring 2019



Earth-Wise Consultancy Group, Antonia Viteri landscape designer.



Preparing for spring plantings are master gardener volunteers Carole Bonner and Barbara Cusimano, *far left*; Tommy Robinson and Ann Brasher fashioning a raised bed for the googootz from the pallets upon which our Shades Creek book were delivered, *center*; and Kathy Sherrer, *right*. February 27, 2019.

Garden Party, Sunday October 13, 3 p.m.
(Details coming later)

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

One Sloss Quarters
Birmingham, Alabama 35222
www.bhistorical.org

