

Gardeners and their gardens

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she harvested "about a five gallon bucket" of peaches.

Roman Wendholt was raised in a multi-generational household and remembers being tasked even as a "little bitty kid" with helping in the family garden. Even now, he feels he is carrying on a family tradition — most particularly his mother's. "That was her garden," Wendholt says of the plot he tends, "and that was her pride and joy. That was her garden, she never worked anywhere, but she had that garden. We got all our vegetables off of it."

And Henke, who grew up in the Schnellville area, describes a childhood typical of Dubois County. Like the other two gardeners, he was a farm kid. Henke's childhood home was sandwiched between his grandmother, Marie Welp's farm, and her brother's, Lee Miller. "The people that influenced me on my garden," he calls them. "That's where I got my work ethic."

The gardeners utter phrases like *that's just what you did, it was just a part of life and it's how we fed ourselves*, regarding the constant upkeep and care of fruits and vegetables on

their childhood homesteads, and all admit to having learned by rote.

"Some things they did buy — the flour and sugar and stuff like that," tells Wendholt of his family. "But other than that, they pretty well [raised] everything."

3) They accept what is out of their control.

Weather is unpredictable, and 2018 has been no exception. The winter chill extended well into Spring months, so that many gardeners didn't begin planting crop until April, including those crops that traditionally go out in March. Each of the three gardeners sowed late crop, excepting some plants that "like the cool," as Wendholt put it. The late season sowing made plant hardiness unpredictable.

Then came the unseasonable wetness.

The gardeners wished I had visited sooner. "It looked a lot better last week," Henke told me. Brown and stunted, the leaves of his tomato plants were shriveling. The same was true of Wagner and Wendholt's tomatoes. Incessant rain and humidity had made for a too-wet season. The only tomatoes in any of the gardens that were hardily producing were the predictably plentiful cherry tomato varieties.

"It's so wet," says Wagner. "It's just been so wet. It's terrible."

Spring storms caused other problems. Peppers withered and broccoli and cabbage were plagued with bugs. Across the street from Wagner's yard industrial corn had been laid flat by high winds, and her own corn had been affected.

These gardeners rarely get discouraged, choosing instead to try, try again. Each of the gardeners relayed stories of digging up wasted, unhealthy crop, clearing beds and starting again with fresh planting.

"I'll try turnips again this year," nods



One of Wendholt's incredible dahlias. They bloom all summer in stunning shades of delicate pink and haughty purple.

photo by Casey Uebelhör

Henke. "Last year I didn't have no luck with it, but I'm gonna try them again."

Even amid unexpected setbacks, for the most part the experts choose to keep spray out
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