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Interview with Juanita Newman

Juanita Newman

Lisa M. Groesz

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Researcher's name: Lisa M. Groesz
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Place: Her home, 24276 Millwood Road, Howard, 2:00pm
Co-workers present: None

LG: This is Lisa Groesz interviewing Juanita Newman February 6, 2001. And, um, so did you learn how to can from your mom, or your father?

JN: I didn't learn from my mom. I observed my mom over the years that I was at home but it was many years after Yauncey and I before I thought, I am going to start doing a garden and I am going to start canning. And then of course, if I got into trouble I would call Mom.

LG: Uh huh. What was the hardest part when you were learning how to can?

JN: Well I think probably the most nerve-wracking part of it is to be sure that everything is sterile so that you don't have spoilage or take the chance of poisoning yourself. I think that was a big concern. And it's just hard to get your thoughts together about the volume that you want to preserve and how much you need to preserve in each pan or each quart, and then I was always at first very nervous about the canner. The, what is that canner?

YN: Pressure cooker.

JN: Pressure cooker. I finally got over that, learned how to be comfortable with the pressure cooker.

LG: So do you prefer that over the hot water bath or?

JN: Yes, it's faster and the hot water bath is messy because if you get it, when it starts boiling sometimes it will bubble up and bubble over everything. And I like the pressure cooker, more that it's just a faster process and I feel that it's probably more sterile. It really gets hot and the pressure is really high.

LG: So what all do you can?

JN: Well Yauncey and I have our own garden so we grow just a large variety of vegetables and I can and preserve everything that I can. We also have a large fruit orchard and I make jams. I prefer jam over jelly because I think jelly is a waste when you drain it and you have just the juice to make the jelly and the pulp is out the door. So I prefer to make the jam.

LG: What's the difference between jam and jelly?

JN: Jellies are made from juices. Jam is made from the full fruit, the pulp is in there. And I have learned in the last few years, just decided myself, to use the skins of the different

fruits. So what I do is just seed it and whatever has to be done and just put it through the food processor and just turn into a real pulpy thick juice and then I make the jam from that so not only do we have the flavor of the fruit but we also have some fiber in our jams and jellies and I have also taken up probably in the last ten years or a little less making the jams into jam with light surcell so I only use about, I take 1/3 of the sugar that Francis, our mom's, my mom and Yauncey's mom used to use. Because it was quite common to see them pour a five pound bag of sugar into their jams and jellies. Where I don't do that, I just use the light. And we think the flavor of the fruit itself is stronger because it's not overpowered by the sugar.

LG: That's interesting.

JN: It's very definitely a real strong flavor.

LG: Uh huh. And it's not too tart or anything?

JN: No, no. We had a crop of plums, the big purple plums, a year ago this past summer. And there were so many plums I thought what in the world am I going to do with these things. So I just seeded them and ran them through the food processor and just made lots and lots of jam.

LG: He he he.

JN: And it was extremely tasty.

LG: Uh huh. It becomes a good gift.

JN: Yeah, nice gifts. We use the jars as gifts and we almost always have sour cherries. We have one tree there. Well, I can that too because I make a lot of cherry pies in the winter. And in the summer when they're fresh, we always have cobblers and crisps and cherry pies and, but I do my cherries the same way now. Just seed the thing and run it through that food processor. And, um, the, the juice, quotes juice, that I use is very thick. And you have to adjust, a lot of my recipes were old recipes to make it with the old sugars, the volume of sugar. And then I spent years trying to use my recipes but cut the sugar down so then you have to adjust the amount of time that you boil it. It's a little more. You have to boil it a little more. And finally I've got them all perfected and I make a lot of yellow tomato marmalade, yellow tomatoes. And it's real good, it's great for toast just like you would use any jam or jelly but it's also great for a sauce, well if you do roast pork, if you just put this yellow tomato marmalade on the top of that thing it's yummy.

LG: Oh, that sounds really good.

JN: It's good for sauce. I suspect, for instance, you could use my jam on a ham, for the sauce over a ham. Cherry jam would be good.

LG: Yes.

JN: A lot of the jams I use to make a cookies. Like a layer of the dough and then you put a layer of this jelly or jam and then you put the top on and bake it and it's like a layered cookie.

LG: Uh huh.

JN: And I like to use oats, rolled oats, with my stuff because of the fiber. So, I use the jams, I use my things we preserve in as many different ways as I can think of.

LG: That's cool. And do you do red tomatoes too?

JN: I've done red tomato marmalade and I've also done red, green tomato marmalade, but the yellow is prettier. The yellow is a pretty product and we use, uh, I make our own ketchup. When the tomato crop is ready, I make our own ketchup. That's a long process because you have to boil it all down. Get the stuff boiled down to the consistency and add all the spices and the vinegars. And then you are back up and you have to boil it down again because you've put it back up, see, and now you've got to boil it down. It's at least a good day to make one batch and one batch will consist of about four pints. And you start out with a peck of tomatoes so you know how much volume you have to cook down. Then I make our own tomato soup and we make, naturally you have tomato juice and just tomatoes.

LG: Right.

JN: And then I make a tomato cocktail that Yauncey really likes.

LG: Oh.

JN: And it has a lot of spices and it has vinegar. He likes vinegar. It has vinegar in this cocktail. And I found a, a friend of mine in Florida recommended a book called Putting Food By. And I like that book a lot because those recipes, the tomato soup recipe and the cocktail recipe, those are in that book. It's a very good book.

YN: [says something that is not intelligible on tape]

JN: Well, yeah, that's apples. We've made our own vinegar. We've had the apples made into cider and then we put the cider into wooden barrels. And allowed it to turn to vinegar. And we did that, that was with my mother's fruit wasn't it, her apples, and we still have, we're still using that vinegar.

YN: We did it fourteen years ago and we've still got 12 gallons down there.

JN: Apple butter, when we have an apple crop, we make apple butter. And that's another real long, long process to cook that stuff down because then after it's cooked down, it's just like the ketchup, you add things and then you're building that liquid up in there so

then you have to cook it down again. So it's a long process to make apple butter but it's really good.

JN (2): [unintelligible]

JN: Well, that goes sort of without saying, apple sauce.

LG: Uh huh.

JN: All the apples that I don't do anything with, you think, okay time to make apple sauce. And I freeze all of it.

LG: Okay.

JN: But there again I don't peel those apples any longer. I used to. I used to run everything through squeeze which took out the seeds and the rinds after it was cooked. But I began to think when fiber is so important to our diet, I thought, now wait a minute, I'm wasting pretty good fiber, plus, a lot of really good ingredients of an apple are in the peeling. So I thought, I'm wasting this good stuff. So I thought, why can't I put this through the food processor. And then I cook it usually first and then put it, in the case of the apples, then put it through the food processor. And it's just real thick. And it will depend on the type of apple. I may get a really red apple sauce because I'm using those peelings.

LG: Uh huh.

JN: And if the apple is bright red, then the sauce becomes red. So if it's a yellow delicious apple, then the sauce is more like what most people are used to seeing from a can from the store, it's yellow. But I've discovered it depends on the apple.

LG: Hm hmm.

JN: And all the garden produce is either canned or frozen. Now, for instance, the green beans I like them canned. But the corn, I like it frozen. So I just, which ever way we like to eat it is the preservation method that we choose.

LG: Do you prefer a type of preservation? Like, do you prefer canning? Like just the process or base it entirely on taste?

JN: Mostly taste. Mostly taste. Now, the one thing about using cans, canning it, is that if and when we have an electrical pattern or something like that where we can no longer store frozen stuff, we have to turn off the freezers, then the can products are going to be there. So, if you're going to, if you can anticipate, then they should be canned. And most everything you can can. Uh, I just, I just prefer some of the things canned or frozen. I have canned corn and it's just as good as frozen corn. Maybe it's a little more convenient

to do the freezing of some of them. Because if you're canning you always have this pressure cooker method that once it's in the jars it has to be heated in some manner.

LG: Hm hmm.

JN: And so, I may just prefer freezing over that heating process. Although it's not difficult, it's just you stand there and watch it. It takes a lot of time to make sure the pressures don't get too high and that you don't steam your arm off when you open the pressure cooker. So it's just a process but you have to take the choice. But I could can it all if I really needed to and we could eat comfortably from that. We mainly eat from what we preserve and just the store trips, and the store trips are just for things like bread and milk. Although I do bake my own bread too but.

LG: Oh, I've really gotten into baking bread.

JN: Have you?

LG: It's so much fun.

JN: Yeah, it's good too. And it doesn't have a lot of preservatives in it.

LG: Right.

JN: But I would say probably I'm getting more and more to the canning point because I feel one of these days we won't be able to run two freezers. We run two freezers continually to keep it all. And then you learn to cut back.

LG: Right.

JN: We know that, I know that two cannings of the tomato soup is enough for a year. And usually one canning of the ketchup is enough for one year. So that way you don't have stuff that gets old on you. But I've got canned goods in the root cellar that are really old but as long as the seal stays tight, then the food is okay. Just, but if you see a jar, and you can see the lid on the jar is domed up and you can make it wiggle. Then do not use it, it's going to be bad. It may look okay.

LG: Right.

JN: A lot of them now, I have learned, because I have been doing them for so many years. I can go down and look at my jars and I can tell if one of them is spoiled.

LG: That's cool because I know if there's mold or something you can visually tell but sometimes it's not obvious.

JN: Yeah, and the longer, in the spoiled condition, the longer it sits, the more obvious it is that it's spoiled. For instance, tomatoes will turn almost black. There won't be mold or anything but they'll just start getting darker and darker.

LG: Uh huh.

JN: So if you were to find something down there, that the lid is loose but the color is still normal, you don't use that, because that means that the seal is loose and that the oxygen has reached the product.

LG: Do you ever dry?

JN: Yes. I finally found a dehydrator about 3 yrs ago and I had this humongous crop of roman tomatoes and I dried roman tomatoes till we thought they were going to come out of our ears.

LG: He he he. And I know drying takes a long time. Like, sometimes it can be 12, 24 hours.

JN: Right, right. That one. The roman tomatoes, they're much more flesh, heavier flesh on the tomato, so there wasn't as much need to dry them so it took about 8 hours for about 4, our dehydrator holds four stacks. For weeks, we were dehydrating. And then, I froze them. Just threw them in bags and froze them and I'm thinking all winter long, I've got these bags and bags and of dried tomatoes. What do I do? I used a lot of them in pastas. And then I discovered a recipe for a, I guess you would call it a spread more than a dip, made with dried tomatoes. Wonderful. It's good on vegetables, good on crackers, it's good on bread. So I made a lot of that. I don't know, maybe this year, I might have to do some more Roman tomatoes. I use the Roman tomatoes to do all the spaghetti sauce.

LG: Okay.

JN: I of course make our own tomato sauce which is just tomato. And then I either can or freeze that. But then I also make spaghetti sauce which has the spices and everything already in it and the other fresh vegetables: onions and bell peppers, everything right out of the garden so that I make the sauce. Sometimes I can it, sometimes I freeze it, depends. I will probably find myself going more and more towards the canning because of the electrical problems that this country is beginning to have.

LG: I know, especially on the west coast.

JN: And I think that we will possibly see some of that this year, this summer, when the air conditioners have to come on and all that. Let's see, what else can I say about canning and preserving.

LG: Well, I had a question. You said you started when you started your garden?

JN: Hm hmmm.

LG: But at that time you were working full time... with Kenyon?

JN: Well, when we first started, I was in Florida.

LG: Okay, so how did you find time?

JN: Well, always planned for the weekend. But many, many nights, for instance, peas, English peas. You have to get them when they're ready. They may be ready mid-week and you best not wait until the weekend because they will begin to get hard.

LG: Uh huh.

JN: So many nights, we'd be up canning and shelling produce until 3 o'clock in the morning and then you get up and go to work anyway. But basically, in Florida, I made a lot of pickles. Dill pickles and sweet lime, crisp pickles, and relish. And what our moms used to call bread and butter pickles. I did a lot of that when we were in Florida and those had to be weekend projects. For instance, the lime pickles had to be soaked in lime. Regular lime that you buy from the farm store. And you had to soak them over night in that and then you had to soak them a little longer, you put a little water on. So I would always start them on Thursday night, yeah on Thursday night, so they could be canned on Sunday. So you just, you just knew, how you had to time this stuff.

LG: Right, right.

JN: The other pickles and relish didn't require that much soaking overnight, so I could make those. Yauncey liked the dill pickles so I always made dill pickles for him. In that particular recipe you would use dill seed as opposed to fresh dill or dill weed, dill seeds. So, I don't do the pickles now as much because of the cut back on the salt. And almost all of the preservation of those kinds of products, you use salt. And this year, I experimented with cabbage. We had great cabbage and I had never made my own sauerkraut. So this year...

LG: Which is so good!

JN: So this year, I had this huge red cabbage up there. And I was so curious, it was so big and so solid and I thought, I wonder how much this thing weighs. So I brought it to the house and it was six pounds.

LG: Oh my god.

JN: It was big.

LG: It's a baby.

JN: And I thought, how am I going to? What am I going to do with this. I can't eat that much cole slaw. So I decided to make sauerkraut with it. And I had found a recipe of Yauncey's moms. And I thought, well I'm going to do it. And all you have to do is, well they slice the cabbage thin, but I use my food processor. If I didn't have a food processor, we wouldn't eat because I use it, I would say, pretty close to daily. So I just threw the cabbage in the food processor and processed it to a rather coarse chop. And stuffed that into quart jars and put a teaspoon of salt over the top of it, pour boiling water on it, and put the lids on and just let it go.

LG: Yeah, and hope it doesn't explode.

JN: And hope it doesn't work to the point where it blows the lids off. It worked to the point where Yauncie and I thought we better put this in a plastic pan. So we put it in the door of the root cellar and covered it with old towels. In case it did blow, it wouldn't get all over the walls and the ceiling.

YN: [can't hear him]

JN: Yeah, you don't put the lids real tight.

YN: [can't hear him]

JN: And it did.

YN: [can't hear him]

LG: Okay.

JN: And it did work, and it seeped out and all down in the pan and we thought, oh no. But it worked as long as it needed to. And now, we've tested it several times now and it is very good and I'm going to do it again.

LG: Uh huh. And I love it on mashed potatoes.

JN: He he he.

LG: I had no idea. And I love how it looks like potpourri.

JN: It does, the red cabbage made it very pretty. This coming year, if we have good cabbage again, I want to make the white so we can compare. But the red cabbage, when it turned to sauerkraut, had a kind of sweet taste to it. And we were surprised because sauerkraut is usually very tart. So we'll experiment with the white this year and see if it has the tart flavor.

LG: Yeah.

JN: And I raise pomentos so that it's so hard, I cannot get my bell peppers to turn red that are supposed to. I have purchased bell peppers that are supposed to be red

LG: Yeah.

JN: And they're not. I don't get red bell peppers out of those guys.

LG: That's interesting.

JN: So I raise pomentos so that, and banana peppers, so that I have red, green and yellow to do my canning because it looks pretty. The old fashioned way, the old fashioned way to can, is to make it look pretty in the jars. And if you do peaches, you do the seed side of the peaches outside so you can see it because it's pretty, it has a little reddish color to it and then the peachy color of the flesh and it's pretty.

LG: It's an art.

JN: Yeah. And that probably came from the 4-H clubs and the grange things that were judged at county fairs and they not only wanted it to taste good but they wanted it to be pretty. It had to be pretty.

LG: Moving to Ohio, did the climate effect what you grew as compared to Florida?

JN: Well, not what we really grew, but it grew in a different way. For instance, in the sandy Florida garden, the carrots just grew huge and just very, I don't think any carrot seed failed to make a carrot. And here, I find it more difficult to get carrots to grow. Yeah, they're real short and kind of fat, where the ones in Florida would not be so big around and long. I raise beets and I can beets and made

YN: Harvard beets.

JN: Well, no, that's when you cook them. You turn them into Harvard beets.

LG: Oh, and it's just the cooking that turns them into Harvard beets?

JN: Yeah, you just take a regular jar of beets and then the sauce that you make makes it become a Harvard beet. If you open the jar and just heat it with maybe butter, salt and pepper it's just butter beets and then you bake the sauce for Harvard beets.

LG: Okay.

JN: Um, but beets are very painful to work with because they stain everything.

LG: Okay.

JN: They stain your hands, they stain the cloth that you use to wipe up and they stain your countertop. They are cantankerous little fellows.

LG: He he he.

JN: So I have pretty much resorted to buying, just buy some fresh beets now, and be very careful with how I work with them. And we raise a few in our garden and just eat them right then because I don't want to work with all of that messy stuff. And your hands, if you don't wear gloves with beets, you are going to have a stain on there that will last two weeks.

LG: Like hair dye.

JN: So, and just in the last four years maybe, five years, started raising herbs. And having fresh parsley, maybe a couple kinds of fresh parsley in the garden, and oregano, and chives and the common Italian spices that you use. And then, just out of curiosity, when fall comes and we just hate to see those pretty plants frozen, so Yauncey and I transplant them into filler pots and bring them into the house. And this year, we brought one of the parsley plants until about a week or so ago. And I cut the last one down and it's not keeping up. And the other plant there you see in the corner, the spiky one, is rosemary. And there's oregano. That hasn't done very well in the house. Chives, we transplanted and brought them in but they were not happy with us. They didn't stick around very long. So I like to have plants in the house because of the oxygen that they give off and they take our carbon dioxide. And I like fresh plants so I thought, why have plants that you can't eat so why not have plants that you can eat so the herbs are here now.

LG: Do you dry any of your herbs?

JN: No. I haven't, I just use them fresh out of there and when that goes I just wait until I plant my new ones.

LG: Yeah, we had a roommate last semester who was into plants. Um, and she went abroad this semester but we always had fresh rosemary. Which is so nice when you're cooking, just to be able to peel it off and rinse it.

JN: [unintelligible] it off, yeah. So, that's different. And I just experiment really with the herbs. And I've gotten some that were.... Last year I bought one that was called lemon savory and I thought, it smelled so lemony, and Yauncey loves lemon, and I thought, this would be great. We eat a lot of fresh salmon.

LG: Yeah.

JN: And I thought, that would be great on that salmon. So the first time I made the salmon, I got a nice sprig of that and made it pretty on the salmon. Couldn't even taste it.

LG: Really.

JN: Extremely mild. Once it was baked with the salmon. So, I don't think I'll invest in that one again.

LG: It's like tea. Sometimes tea smells so good and then you heat it up and it's not good.

JN: Let's see. What else can we talk about? We have our own, for the apple orchard, we have our own cider press. So if we have a lot of apples, we get the Kenyon students to come over and help us pick them and it's a hand cranked cider press so we go through the whole process with them and they always enjoy learning and say, "Oh." And it's an all day process, actually probably more than that because you could spend a day of picking them and then another day processing. It's not a fast process. So, but the kids always seem to enjoy learning.

LG: Yeah.

JN: They always think cider is, comes out of something in the store.

LG: Right, right.

JN: In the early years when we first moved here, my mom had apples, and we lived out by my mom. They had, there was an old cider press out there, a place where they did it. And we would get the students to help pick that in the mornings early, then we'd feed them a big lunch, then we'd all go to the cider press and they'd watch that process of processing those apples. And that was much faster than what we have because it had the shoe and there would be spigots of water in the shoe where they watched the apple as they traveled to the top to the chopper and then they all came down this tube and somehow, a chute and they had big burlap, but they'd have

YN: It was all operated by all the old fashioned belts that they used to have in the mills and the thing that powered it was an old V8 engine, 1940 ford or something and it was the most cantankerous thing you ever saw to get started. That was probably the most fun, to see if it would start. Once it got going, it ran fun. But it was a cantankerous thing to get started.

LG: That's awesome.

JN: They enjoyed that. The layers of apples separated by these burlap, blankets, I would call them, these huge things. There would be a huge stack of those. Because he'd, he would chop your apples and press all of your own apples and he'd just have a big press of them. We would have bushels and bushels, hundreds. We would give the students who helped us a gallon of cider to take back to the dorms.

LG: Yeah, yeah.

YN: Some of them, 2 or 3, if they had several living in their room. Like where you are.

LG: Uh huh. That would be so good. Warm it up on the stove.

JN: Yeah, what else do we have out there? Oh, we have apricot trees but we've only gotten one small crop. They are the first to bloom and always get frozen in Ohio. This year we are going to plant, we've got ordered some blueberries.

YN: Pear trees.

[side B]

JN: Somebody, something. We had a good crop of pears last year.

YN: they were huge.

JN: I can the pears. For mostly salads, bits of lettuce and a couple pear halves sprinkled with sharp cheddar cheese.

LG: Oh, I am loving this project because I just love food. I love listening. But, um.

JN: But what else, what other fruit.

YN: And the birds are into them before we even get a chance to get them picked.

LG: Uh huh. Well especially if you have the crows coming for bread.

JN: But they don't bother it.

LG: Oh, okay.

JN: Hummingbirds, robins. And the cherry trees have to be caged. We have big huge nets that we've purchased and you have to net those trees. Now, this is a project. You come to as near divorce as you'll ever come if you're trying to net a fruit tree.

LG: He he he.

YN: [unintelligible]

JN: So we finally had to enlist the help of our neighbor.

YN: [unintelligible]

LG: Because you have to get up on the ladder.

JN: And the nets are huge. They are what, 60 by 60? They are huge.

LG: Uh huh.

JN: And they're heavy and then you have got to lift them real high to get them up over the tree.

YN: [unintelligible]

LG: Right.

JN: And so we've finally got our neighbor and we use the pickup truck—get up in the bed of the pickup truck now and try to get those nets, they just get so big, the trees, that you're in trouble when it's time to net it. Yauncey tries to keep the trees trimmed back so that they don't get oversized but

YN: [unintelligible]

JN: And that one sour cherry tree of ours, when it produces, which is about every other year, there will about anywhere from about 40 to 50 quart of cherries on that tree. And the whole, we get the whole, we usually have a Kenyon student or two pick those cherries and the garage will be just full of cherries. Hustle, hustle to get those. And it's not fun pitting the cherries, it is a long tedious job but they get done, all of it, eventually. We have a lot of good desserts then, fruit desserts, cobblers, and the crisps and the cherry pies.

YN: [unintelligible]

JN: And I've made a, when a fruit is bearing, I try to do everything I can think of. So when the cherries are on, there will be cherry pancakes, there is cherry muffins, there is, I put them in everything to use it see so it's not wasted. Cherry pancakes are wonderful. Run them through the food processor again and throw them in the batter, yum, it's good.

YN: And then we have two or three other families come and pick them and we still have some left.

LG: And it must be so nice to decide what you want to make and just go into your basement and get the cans you need.

JN: Yeah, yeah. And it's nice in the summer to just go to the garden and get whatever it is you think you're going to want that day.

LG: Yeah.

JN: Because we raise green beans and we raise english peas and black eye peas and we have horticulture beans and lima beans and we do spinach and charred

LG: Charred?

JN: Yeah, charred.

YN: Squash.

JN: And lots of squash, butternut. Zuchinni.

YN: Acorn.

JN: Acorn, I've done spaghetti, I've done spaghetti squash.

LG: Uh huh, have you ever tried to sell anything?

JN: No, we always have more than we can use but we just give it away. There are always people. Our neighbors help us a lot and they both work so we give them a lot of our produce but he likes to raise potatoes so he'll give us a winter supply of potatoes. Oh, they're good.

LG: Were those the potatoes you used for the?

JN: He didn't, they had some bad luck last summer, she had a problem with her feet, so they didn't plant their potatoes. We've had to buy the ugly stuff at the store.

YN: We're going to get after them this year to plant them.

JN: I'm going to tell them, hey! I'll weed the garden for you if you just plant the potatoes. We've planted potatoes here

LG: Uh huh.

JN: And, oh, potatoes are easy to grow in Ohio and that one year we had seventeen bushel of potatoes and there was no way two people were eating 17 bushel. And it's fun, I really like to plant potatoes because I like to dig them. And you go down there in that dirt and lift it up and there's all of those potatoes. I just get so excited. And the bigger ones, the bigger ones the better, oh look at those guys. And, speaking of big, last year we had a great crop of peppers. And I have to tell you a secret about peppers, they do not like fertilizer.

LG: Oh.

JN: And when we finally learned this

LG: Yeah.

JN: And quit fertilizing a space at the end of our garden for our peppers which was last year, we had huge peppers. I had bell peppers like this, and there was one that weighed a

pound and a half. One bell pepper. It was huge, real thick. The pulp was thick. It was beautiful. And the pomentoes were healthy and the banana peppers just drove us crazy because there were so many. And we don't have, we try not to use chemical fertilizer. We use animal fertilizer or sometimes none. But we try to avoid the fertilizer. We do have to lime it to keep the pH balance for what we're growing. We are going to have to lime it this year.

LG: What does that mean?

JN: Just buy a lime at the farm store and spread it on there.

LG: Oh, okay, just squirting the juice?

JN: No, not a lime, not a lime fruit. You buy lime, it's white. You don't go out and squeeze these things. It's a white patterned thing, almost reminds you of flour. It's commercial lime.

LG: Okay.

JN: And it will probably need to be limed.

YN: [unintelligible]

JN: And with the tomatoes, we have a old friend in Florida who told us how to make tomatoes and you dig a circle around the tomato about one foot out from the spot, stick out your foot and dig this circle around it, about four inches deep, and you get chicken manure, it is highly acid, and you fill that little trench. Sprinkle a little dirt over and that's it for the fertilizer for the tomatoes and you'll get these jobbies like this.

LG: That's awesome!

JN: And they just have a fantastic flavor.

LG: Uh huh.

YN: so you line the whole garden.

JN: And they love it. They absolutely love it. We thought, oh yeah sure.

YN: Yeah, right.

JN: But we did it, and we and then we had to say, oh, he is right, the tomatoes are great. But what we were having happen to ours, because there wasn't enough acid, they bloom and the blooms would fall off before the fruit formed. And when we put the, topped it out with that chicken fertilizer, they didn't fall off, they would just hang there and the next thing you'd know, you'd have big plump tomatoes all over the place. And our, I am a

little old fashioned. I still put wire, a little house, around the tomatoes because my father-in-law did that. Yauncey's dad did that. And it's a wire circle so they grow up through it and there's not all these tomatoes hanging on the ground. Sometimes these plants will be as tall as I am. Either still in one of the circles, or if it's a short circle, they just grow up above. And if they start to grow over, they grow over off of the circle. Basically, our tomatoes are not on the ground which I don't like digging around on the ground and getting tomatoes. Because if they crack ever so slightly, which will they do when they too full of moisture in the summer, then there are bugs that go in.

LG: Okay.

JN: And they're ruined.

YN: And the turtle and the tomatoes.

JN: Oh yes, in Florida, something was eating our tomatoes. And I caught it one day. And I said, Yauncey, would you, I found the culprit, come here and check this out. And there was a turtle

LG: Oh.

JN: And he was up on his back feet.

YN: Can you imagine that? A turtle on his hind feet.

JN: And he was eating that tomato.

LG: That's so cute. I know it must have been obnoxious but it's cute.

JN: It was cute. You little devil.

LG: He he he.

JN: We let him. Because we had plenty of tomatoes and he ate all the tomatoes that he could eat on the bottom. We had plenty of tomatoes. But, um, there isn't anything, oh ochra in Ohio. It's kind of a forbidden fruit in Ohio. Most Ohioans don't like ochra.

LG: I know. It's interesting.

JN: And Yauncey and I learned to eat it, I learned how to cook it so we could eat it, in Florida.

LG: Uh huh.

JN: And so we raise ochra here and there's an ochra fritter that I make that's just wonderful but it takes a lot of ochra, tomatoes, and onion.

LG: Uh huh.

JN: And cornmeal. And you just, in the hot griddle, fry those things, and they are absolutely the best. And we also like fried ochra with the corn meal because we don't like ochra when it's slimy. And it's a very obnoxious, guess you'd call it, veggie. Is there only two ways? Well, I like it in soups. I will cook it in, and throw it in to soups. And I also have an ochra gumbo that's very good, I serve it over rice.

LG: And that's what I always hear it put in.

JN: So, we raise ochra. And we do eggplant. And, uh,

YN: [unintelligible]

JN: It's hard to remember. Oh, and the lettuce, and radishes, and onions. There's a bunch of stuff, and I've spaced, yeah, the back part of our garden, the very south part, has a row of twenty giant sunflowers growing.

LG: Oh, beautiful.

JN: And so you can see them, I can see all them happy faces and they smile down on us all all day long in the summer. Those are for the birds, before basically before we can even cut them off, the red birds, cardinals, have eaten them. A lot of it. Any other bird that likes sunflowers. This year, we didn't get any cut. So we, and we compost all of our kitchen scraps and leaves and grass to make compost. We have a big composter up there that we use.

YN: [unintelligible]

JN: And then when it's done cooking, we have some real nice black soil that we just put back in the garden. So that's a process. We do that, probably seven or eight months out of the year. Because when it gets really cold, freezing, you can't do that.

LG: Okay. Is there anything you grow that you don't can or freeze?

JN: Well, we have asparagus out here. A patch of asparagus and we always eat it all before it can be canned or frozen. And we have, um,

YN: [unintelligible]

LG: Uh huh.

JN: We have that mint, that just stays there and it comes up every year so we don't bother to preserve it.

LG: Yeah.

JN: I like to mint tea in the summer when that's growing. Usually, and there's a lot of black raspberries along our woods here and they never get canned or frozen because we eat them as fast as they turn ripe because you have to fight the birds. So there's not too much, I've gotten in the habit now, when the peas, the english peas are ready, I usually pick them all and cook a big pot of peas and then I freeze them. And they're already cooked so you just flash them out of them and they're ready to eat. Just reheat. Or if I make cream peas, it will be the same thing. A big pot of cream peas and then freeze meal size portions and it's all done. Real fast, and so tasty. And

YN: Onions and cabbage....

JN: And I preserve onions and bell peppers too. I will just run the onions through the food processor and I will just package the onion one cup of onion, fresh onion, and freeze it. And then when you're making soups and sauces, you just pitch in one bag and that's a cup.

YN: Radishes.

JN: Radishes, no. Radishes you don't, we just eat those. Um, bell peppers I've done the same thing. Chop them in the food processor and then put them in plastic bags, a cup, cup packages. And the same thing, sauces and soups, and so forth, in goes a cup. This year though, this past year, we used all the onions. There were none reserved. And the same with the peppers. We pretty much used all of those.

YN: What I like is, when I get a hunger pain, like a cow grazing, I go over and grab a pepper or some cherry tomatoes or a cucumber. And some squash.

JN: He has a salad just walking through there.

YN: I have a salad.

LG: It's so nice, just the ease of it.

JN: It's a lot of work to do a garden and preserve it. Because it starts, in our case, in March because I've discovered the wall of water. Plastic tubing. And you, I have planted, oh, about 6 or 8 tomatoes in April. And normally you can't do anything in Ohio until the end of May. But I get my tomatoes and I put a wall of water up. And you fill these tubes with water and it's like a teepee thing and you squeeze it together above your tomato plants and it protects them from freezing.

LG: Okay, okay.

JN: And it has frozen cold before but our plants never freeze.

LG: Because it keeps it warm

YN: Yeah, the sun will warm

LG: The sun.

YN: in the daytime, and at night, it doesn't cool off to the point where, the freezing point.

JN: Now, if the tomato plant gets up the wall of water, then it will freeze a little bit. It can go to 20 degrees or more and it sill won't freeze it. So, therefore, with those six plants, we are two months ahead so we have fresh tomatoes two months ahead of the normal tomatoes. Because I have those six buds, then I plant another row or two of tomatoes. That come up normal probably about first of August but we will be eating fresh tomatoes in June. Just two or three but that's enough for fresh tomatoes right away. And we hate those things at the store. Can hardly eat those anymore.

YN: Corks.

JN: Corks. So we pretty much, we have a lot up there.

LG: How big is your garden?

JN: I knew she was going to ask that.

YN: It used to be a, almost an acre. So it's, I guess, it's 85 feet by 65 feet, I think.

JN: Could be.

LG: That's amazing.

YN: So it's less than a quarter, I think.

JN: We have twenty rows in it to plant and there's three feet between the rows because Yauncey needs to get the tiller between plants at first when they're small. They are 65 foot rows and there's twenty of them and so, I will start out with like a row. I will pick one row for onions and I will plant onions when I can first start. And then a month later, I will plant another third of a row of onions and then finish the row out later. So we have onions. Same with the radishes. And, oh, we usually plant cantalope. I've had watermelon but I've quit doing that because we've cut the garden. Watermelon takes a lot of space. I used to when it was big and we planted corn. I would plant the watermelon in with the corn because it could run around in there all it wanted to and not be a problem.

YN: [unintelligible]

JN: We had some pumpkins yet but now that it's smaller, I kind of knocked out some of the stuff like watermelon, we can buy pretty good watermelon locally and corn. Coon

was a problem with the corn, he usually got to it before we did. And then just save it for the beans and peas and that kind of stuff.

YN: Problem wasn't just that the coon ate some of the corn but they'd knock it down. They'd take one bite of it and then they'd leave it and go knock down another so they've ruined it

LG: Right.

YN: If they just got their fill and left and came back, I'd be fine, but they just go through and ruin the whole crop.

JN: And deer is a problem around here with the garden. But I've learned a really neat trick. I've, all the years we've done the garden in Ohio. Now, in Florida, you didn't have a problem because you just didn't see as many deer as there is in Ohio. Now finally, I've used human hair, I've used everything that anybody would mention. Then I read somewhere that you could use soap.

LG: Oh.

JN: This is soap that you shower with.

LG: Uh huh.

JN: And I said, uh, okay. Now, I have an endless supply of soap at the White Oak Inn. Because after the guests leave, there's soap left. Those little bars. And they just pitch it. And so I said, okay, I'm such an environmentalist, I said, okay don't throw that soap away. That's a waste. Why, what do you want with it? They're thinking, "What's she doing now?"

LG: He he he.

JN: And I said, I want it for my garden. So the first I soaped my garden.

LG: So did you grate it?

JN: No, I took the bars and I placed the bars about that far away from the little plants. Now, these plants are little. The rabbits like them when they're just tender.

YN: And the groundhog.

LG: He he he.

JN: And so, I, it would be about this far, and I would place it lengthwise. And I just lined the rows. Now, if there were three rows of beans, I would go down this side and all way across the end and then up this end so that I didn't have to soap both sides of every row.

LG: Right.

JN: Nobody will cross that. Whether it has the human smell.

YN: ... They smell it and think there's a human some place.

JN: It works like a charm.

LG: Wow.

YN: He he he.

JN: Now the one problem

LG: This is so ironic, because you think soap, clean, positive, thing. You know, it's just, it scares them away.

JN: Will not pass it. We've had something come up and it looks like it might be mice or something. Come up and take the bar of soap and eat it.

YN: [unintelligible]

JN: They wouldn't eat it all and there would be little toothmarks.

YN: Chipmunk.

LG: They can't digest that well, I don't think.

JN: I wouldn't think so.

LG: You know.

JN: So it works, the only problem is, when it rains it takes your soap away pretty much. So then you have to resoap.

LG: Uh huh.

JN: It will go through a few rains.

LG: And if it's free.

JN: Yeah, if you had a big source. Now, the normal average person will never be able to collect that much soap to soap the size garden that I have. Now, there are things that they will not touch. They do not want to eat tomatoes. They do not like squash plants. They don't care for eggplants.

YN: They don't care for ochra either.

JN: They never bite off the ochra. They don't bother the pepper plants. But they love peas and beans and lettuce.

YN: [unintelligible]

JN: And the radish tops. So I just soap whatever they like to eat. That's interesting, finally I found something that works. Now, I don't think it work if you shaved that soap to make it go further. Because the odor and it would dissolve very quickly. One rain and it would be gone. So I don't think that would work. And what else have we discovered that?

YN: That's it. Now, I put wire fences around the fruit trees.

JN: Oh no, I was going to tell her how to do the buds.

YN: [unintelligible]

LG: And do you have a hard time with the bugs because you stay organic?

JN: Well, we stay organic but no. There's an old fashioned way to treat for bugs. And it's simply to take that lime that I mentioned that you put in, and I have a sifter, like a flour sifter, it just has a handle and a white sieve on the bottom and you go up there with your lime and you shake that thing over each plant and the bugs hate lime. They won't

YN: [unintelligible]

JN: They won't. You can just see them scurrying. It's kind of a pain because everytime it rains, it washes the lime off. But for a time now, after the plants get bigger and tougher, the bugs don't bother them. But when they're little and delicate, I have to lime it. And I watch it very closely. And the tomatoes, you don't have to do tomatoes, a lot of the plants you don't have to do. But, um, green beans and peas and for some reason, there's some little black bug that comes when the plants first come up and are so tender and those black bugs will just, just demolish the plants, so I, I spend a lot of time lining my little plants when they're babies. But it works so we don't have to use insecticides or pesticides.

YN: When you get bugs on the tomatoes, they are big enough you can see them and you can just pick them off and stomp.

JN: And I can find them because I go up there and, "Aw, got a tomato worm." And the leaves are gone. There are all these chutes but no leaves. You know he's there. And if you've really got a keen eye, which I have now, I can tell where he is by his droppings.

LG: Okay, the scat.

JN: I can look on the ground and look right above there and in that area of the tomato plant and I find that little devil. And he's, he's gone. But we didn't have tomato bugs last year. The more and more organic we get, the fewer pests we have, and the better the soil is.

LG: That's interesting.

JN: The plants are more healthy and they can seem to reject the bugs. Because now there is the, on the green beans, and some of the peas, there is a beetle that will kill them, because they just turn the leaves into lace, and when that happens, then the plants can't grow anymore. Um, and they don't like lime either. But the problem with that is that they get under it. And when you lime it on the top, you don't really get to them. So, most of the time, we just shake them. The ochra gets, for some reason, those Japanese beetles. They love ochra plants. But you can go up there and just knock it, knock the beetles off or pinch them with your fingers. I see Yauntcey, and I think "What is he doing in the ochra?" Then I think "Uh oh, the beetles are in there. Scrunching beetles." So you just, you kinda learn. But our soil is getting really good because we have two farmer friends. One will bring, uh, he has horses. He boards horses. And he will bring the spreader with his, and spread it for us, and it has a lot of straw so that keeps the soil moist, plus the fertilizer. And then we have another, we just go and get the fertilizer from another horse farm and he uses sawdust and bark. Ground bark wood for his bedding and that's even better than hay or straw because it doesn't have weeds, weed seeds. So if you use the straw, the straw is better than hay, because if you use the hay, then you have a lot of weeds to pull up and that's the problem. And that's another problem that is time consuming—to weed a garden. And then once it starts producing and you start preserving, then you don't have time to do the weeds anymore. And that's when it gets out of control. They get as big as me. Scary. But what we try to do, is, the english peas are the very first things to come off. So what we do is get them off, then Yauntcey starts cultivating that, those three or four rows to try and keep the weeds under control. Which it will, with the, with the tiller, you know. It will keep them down. But when you're still, for instance, I found a brand of green beans. And green beans usually, you'll pick them maybe three times and then the plants are done, you just don't get anymore. But I found this blue lake bush green bean and that thing just produces all summer. It doesn't stop until it freezes.

LG: Yeah.

JN: So that one you go to be able to keep the leaves out. It'll be there all summer and you don't want a weed as tall as I am under this little green, they only get so tall, but they make green beans until, until winter. And I've never had green beans that do that. And when I first got the Blue Lakes, I thought, "Oh, just plant the same number. This will work." Then we thought we would be covered over with green beans. So now I've learned on the green beans to plant one per row, one per row. And then have really nice plants of green beans right up through fall. Ochra is the same way. Once you can

convince ochra to grow in Ohio, and I've learned that it has to be the last one planted when the ground is really warm. But the seed wants to be cold. You can put the seed in the refrigerator. Another thing I've learned is that if it is kind of a dry spring and if you're wondering about the rain, I soak my seeds in water the night before I plant them, so that they're already getting puffed up and getting fat, and so then there is just enough moisture in the ground to bring them on up.