

This is the season for garden gleanings. Looking from a distance at the weedy expanse that was our summer garden, it might be hard to imagine the quantity of food that was grown there. And, in fact, we did have some failures this year. Due to the cool, then very dry spring and even drier early summer, it took a long time for many kinds of seeds to come up. Some never did emerge from the soil. We even had to replant certain crops. So, while it looked for a time like we would go hungry this winter, that will not be the case. The bounty was in some cases delayed, but we have a root cellar, fruit cellar, and freezers full of the good organic food that is sufficient to sustain two adults through another winter season.

And, while it may appear that the garden is finished for the season—we had early September frosts on three occasions—there are still good things to glean from the brown, weedy beds. And, in the little unheated greenhouse, celery, peppers, and lettuces flourish now in the cooler weather.

The main culprit I encountered through August, September, and even now was the Japanese beetle. These little creatures did not bother most of the crops in the garden, but they were bent on destroying the foliage on the primocane raspberries in the little bed on the west end of the garden. I picked bugs every day in August and most of September, dropping them into a yogurt container of water and then crushing them under my feet on a hard surface. I did quit bothering about them a week or so ago, since berry season was nearly over, and they don't harm the berries as much as they do the green leaves. There are still beetles to watch out for when picking berries.

Most of the raspberry crop has ripened now, but I still have picked a pint or so every afternoon. The fresh berries are a wonderful treat at the end of the season.

There are still beets to pull, some broccoli to pick, carrots to pull, kale and chard to harvest, peppers—both red and green—to glean from the long row, and, there are still plenty of tomatoes. It is the season to pick and choose, and we have gotten pretty fussy about tomatoes this time of year. If possible, I pick the Opalka fruits. They are very large paste tomatoes and make a nice sauce, and they also seem to keep far longer than the juicier Volkov, Amish Past, or Oregon Spring fruits.

And, we have cabbage! The wonders of a little salt and some days of fermentation have transformed several heads into

sauerkraut, some flavored with dill and lemon, other batches with carrots, garlic, onions, herbs, and spices. Coleslaw with lots of chopped apples will take care of some of the bounty. But, the red cabbages are destined for Christmas Eve—cooked in sweet and sour dressing along with some bacon, apples, maple syrup, and onions. And, while we later wait for the Christmas season to continue, we will remember to take some time to check the seed catalogs that come before the end of the year. One season blends into another, and the winter goes on, but with the taste of spring again on the horizon.