

Morning View Kentucky
28 August 1958

Hello Mr. McCarthy,

On those days when the mud didn't threaten to engulf me, I have been busy in the garden area of the pond-field. Though my gardening years are few and the ways of a growing vegetable not infrequently fill me with confusion, I have noticed one odd result of this season's rain and consistently high humidity.

No crop has been merely average, or just fair-to-middling this summer. They are all either quite superb or perfectly horrible. The weeds, incidentally, fall in the superb category. For a little over a week it was too muddy to touch them and they availed themselves of the opportunity to take off with such a fine running start that I have been unable to overtake them, despite the assistance of a power cultivator.

My tomatoes are awful. There must be a million green ones - more or less -- large enough to ripen, but most of them refuse to do so, turning instead a ghastly greyish-green, then collapsing into mushy nothingness. The few that ripen are watery and weak in flavor.

The lima beans presented a problem through no fault of their own. Some one at the seed company became confused, and I discovered one day that my bush limas were prowling like so many kudzu vines. I pick lima pods from the corn and the green pepper plants, and others have tangled among the recalcitrant tomatoes. Some even went so far as to intertwine with poison oak along the fence.

That poison oak, by the way, has its merits. Whenever I plan to remove it, I have a small debate with myself, and it remains. Birds thrive on its berries, it turns a lovely color in the fall, and no one is going to climb a fence enveloped in poison oak to raid the garden. I am untouched by it.

The green beans rivalled my best weeds in exuberance, the little stalks tilting uncertainly under their loads. After preparing several bushels of them for the freezer, I found myself resolving bitterly, as I do each year, not to plant them again. I am not the philosopher Thoreau was about his famous beans; but then he didn't have to snibble them up for the freezer. I enjoy planting them and feeding them and cultivating them, and even picking them. However, I quickly reach a high point of irritation when I must sit and snap and snap and snap them. I tried reading as I worked, which proved most disastrous, since a close watch must be kept on the beans themselves. Later I experimented with pursuing an interesting train of thought, which was almost as unsatisfactory, for I concentrated on my thinking until my eyes no longer saw beans.