

# Story Time

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by *Delores Campbell*

July 2011

## Penny's First Garden

When it came time to plant a garden this year, I set my big foot down and told everyone I was not planting one. Penny said, "Well, I am! And you are going to show me how."

So, we got Ronnie Spencer to plow it. He got stuck the first thing. Then, we went out to drop seeds one day. One of Penny's dogs got snake bit down in the woods. I thought to myself, "This will be the end of planting a garden"—but, not so. Even though it took a while for the dog to recover from the snake bite and to top it all, one of the other dogs ate the snake!—it didn't hurt it.



Penny bought a big bunch of cow manure and put it under each seed she planted. I went to the Dollar Store and got her the craziest straw hat I could find. I told her to put on her straw hat and rubber boots, so she wouldn't get sun burnt or snake bit.

Penny had never used a hoe to dig up grass, so I showed her how to use the hoe, instead of pulling grass up with her hands. It was an exciting time for her when the plants started coming up. As they grew, she almost did a dance when anybody told her she had a pretty garden.

It came time to gather in the greens, which included a mixture of turnips, mustard, rape, tender green and kale. We gave a lot of them away, and still had plenty. Penny had never canned and wanted to know how. So, she went down to Claudia's with several big bags of the mixed greens and turnip greens. It took them from twelve noon to about ten o'clock that night to fix nine jars. She came back home and said, "Do you know how long it took us to fix those things?!" I laughed, because I knew.

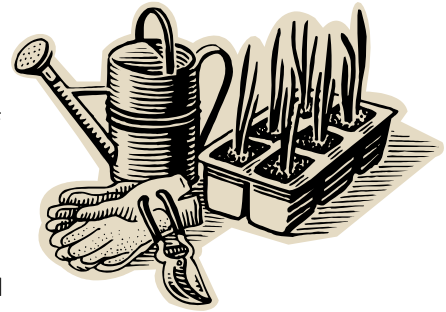
She went with her uncle to get tomato plants and brought back forty! I asked her why so many? She said that her uncle said that you can never get enough tomato plants. We had to plant them in the onion middles. She claimed she didn't like greens, but after tasting the mixed greens, she changed her mind. She declared that I had too many squash plants, but when the squash came on, who was there, but Penny wanting to plant more squash—along with more mixed greens. We had planted Irish potatoes in April, and she dug them up after the beans started blooming. She said, "Look, we have big potatoes!" We had thought about making sour kraut, but by the time she gave several people cabbage heads, we had only two heads left in the garden.



Billy Wayne works at Bernhardt with a preacher that they call Cloud. He came to see the garden and

told Billy Wayne that Penny had a beautiful garden. Everyone that sees it says that. This makes her so happy that she wants to just keep on planting. She bought home pepper plants and got one plant that said it was “the world’s hottest pepper.” I asked her why she bought it and she said, “I picked it up and thought I wanted it.” When she told a friend of Billy Wayne’s about it, he said not to plant it with the other peppers or they will be so hot you can’t eat them. She ended up giving the plant to Max Spencer, my brother.

Penny has tended to this garden as if it were her baby. If a plant dies or looks like it is going to, she gets all upset. A mother deer and her baby have been eating on some of the plants. I think that is why the corn plants are so uneven. They like to eat the leaves off of her sweet potatoes, too. Penny is not a bit happy about this. I dropped some cantaloupe seed down between some snapdragons that I planted in the garden, and here came Penny wanting to know who had planted cucumbers in between the flowers. I said, “I don’t know. I put some cantaloupe out there. Did they come up?” She asked me to come and see. I hadn’t covered the seeds with dirt, but almost everyone I had put there had come up. In a few days from now, Penny is going to have to can beans.



So far, she is enjoying her first garden. I thought when she started that she would only last two weeks, but she is looking forward to growing more vegetables even though it has been very hot. Penny started out not liking anything in the garden, but beans, potatoes, cucumbers, and corn. Guess what? Now, she is eating squash, mixed greens, and Rhubarb No Fool Pie. She also loves tomatoes and, if nothing happens, she is going to have more than she can eat. She said I made her grow a field when she started out, but now she says she needs another field because she didn’t get to plant watermelon, cantaloupe, pumpkin, or as much corn as she’d like. There wasn’t enough room to plant everything. I just thank God for letting Penny’s first garden be so beautiful.

