

JUNE'S GARDEN

It sounded like high voices of many children yelling and screaming at the top of their lungs. The sound seemed to be coming nearer and nearer. Audrey scrambled up the bank, alerting me, "June, get your dog in the truck, fast."

The only sound we had heard before was the wind rustling the branches of the spruce trees in an area that we could see logging roads for miles that snaked through hills and high peaks.

I grabbed my dog Ezzy's collar and hurriedly joined Art and Audrey. All four of us squeezed into their pickup truck. At a distance we saw a pack of coyotes racing through the forest swerving down to the gully near where we had been picking wild blackberries that grew over stumps in cleared areas that had been logged.

Audrey commented, "I think that pack of coyotes caught the scent of your dog." Art started the truck and we headed out to the main road, our buckets only half filled, but enough to later enjoy wild blackberry pie. This is just one of the many adventures I had with my friends Art and Audrey Smith who introduced me to the bountiful gifts one could find in the forests, sand dunes and sea life.

In his younger years Art had been a logger until an accident had left him crippled. This caused him to find other means of support. With the help of Audrey, who could also swing an axe and stack a cord of wood, they supplied many households with firewood they gathered from the leavings of logging companies in the nearby northern coastal range. With a small mowing tractor, Art also cut lawns.

Art knew every logging road that laced through the forest, as far east as Saddle Mountain and south to Onion Peak. He was also a mechanic and kept his pickup truck and car running in top shape. He told me once his secret was baling wire, but on those excursions when I was with them berry picking or wood gathering I never doubted his old truck would get us there and carry us home. Art seemed to be able to fix anything that went wrong.

Their home was on a large piece of property on the north side of Cannon Beach. They planted fruit trees and berries and raised some vegetables. Before city codes restricted the raising of chickens, Audrey had a flock which provided them with fresh eggs.

In the summer months as the wild blackberry, salmon berry, thimble berry, blackcaps and huckleberries ripened, Audrey would pack a lunch and they would spend the day gathering berries for her to can or make jam.

I first met the Smiths in the early 1960's when they delivered a cord of wood to my parents' summer home. Many years later when I moved here permanently I had the opportunity to join them on some of their excursions. On one of these trips, Art pointed out a large-leaved plant growing alongside a small stream. He said, "June, have you ever heard of the Devil's Walking Cane?" This large plant has maple-like leaves; the stem and leaf veins are covered with thorns. He added, "When we loggers used to find one growing in a swampy area, we'd cut it down and peel it to make a walking cane." Grinning, he said, "Those thorns made pretty good tooth picks."

In Leslie Haskins' book on "Wild Flowers of the Pacific

Coast," this plant is identified as Devil's Club (*Oplopanax horridus*). Haskins wrote about Indian lore, and how they used the plant as a valued medicine. The shamans wore amulets of this wood to accomplish prodigies in the overcoming of supernatural beings, and they decocted the bark to make a violent emetic, and the natives considered vomiting the quickest means of obtaining strength and purity. A wound from the thorn of this plant, if left unattended, can cause much pain and possible infection.

One summer we spent hours crawling on our bellies gathering the small wild strawberries in the sand dunes north of Gearhart. They were so tiny my whole day's picking yielded only two pints of jam, but the flavor was the true essence of strawberries.

They found the remains of an abandoned farm south of Saddle Mountain. A chimney was all that was left of the house, but the old orchard was still producing fruit of apples and pears. When the fruit was ripe, our day was spent gathering what had fallen. Worm holes, bruises or not, our pailfuls made the best applesauce and pear butter.

In the spring we also collected a plant they called Woolen Britches. When cooked it tastes somewhat like spinach or Swiss chard. The plant looks similar to the Waterleaf plant, *Hydrophyllum tenuipes*, but I have yet to identify its true Latin name.

After taking a class identifying edible wild mushrooms and with the help of experts, I felt confident enough to gather chanterelle mushrooms. The three of us found areas where they grew thick on moss-covered banks under spruce trees and along elk trails.


When I first started my garden, Art brought me fertilizer from the horse barns and lumber to help build some of the raised beds. They introduced me to what they called Yellow Finn potatoes, which still grow profusely in my garden.

When the brown, lightly mottled small flowers of what Audrey called Rice Lily blooms, I think of her. Audrey gave me the small, white, bell-shaped bulbs, thickly covered with plump, rice-like scales. When the scales slough off the main bulb, the scales resemble grains of rice. Riceroot is the more common name. Latin name is *Fritillaria lanceolata*. This plant's bulbs were collected by the north-coast Indians. They dug and boiled the roots for food.

Audrey died some years ago and Art, because of a stroke, is now living with his daughter in Brownsville, Oregon. I will always be grateful to have those memories of the many trips we took together learning from them the flora and fauna of the north coast forest that surrounds the Pacific coastline.

Many of us gardeners pay homage to Dorothy Lindsey's teachings of creating a successful coastal garden. Her artistic abilities of composition combining stone, earth, boundaries, structure, patterns and colors produced a style that many of us have since tried to duplicate. Next month, the story of Lindsey's garden.

Please send your comments, suggestions and questions to *June's Garden*, P. O. Box 74, Cannon Beach, OR 97110.



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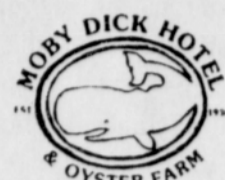
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