POLLEN | 2015


JANUARY HARVEST 2015
1. MIZUNA
2. TATSOI
3. RADISHES
4. CARROTS
5. MUSTARD
6. ARUGULA
7. SCALLIONS

GROW APPALACHIA | POLLEN 2015

Founded in 2009, Grow Appalachia is a partnership between David Cooke, Director of Berea College's Appalachian Fund, and John Paul DeJoria, entrepreneur and philanthropist. We are guided by a basic mission—to help as many Appalachian families grow as much of their own food as possible. To accomplish this, we provide financial and technical assistance to regional community organizations, which then recruit locals to participate in community and home gardens. In 2009, Grow Appalachia had only five of these partner sites. Today, that number has grown to over 40, all spread throughout five states in Central Appalachia. Thanks to this grassroots approach, our big family has been able to harvest over 1,760,000 total pounds of healthy, organic food while the Grow Appalachia Headquarters operates with a staff of just six: three full-time employees, one part-time employee, and two AmeriCorps VISTAs.

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EDITOR
Jeffrey Helton

The stories contained within this issue of *Pollen* are works of fiction. While many of the featured works are inspired by real events, they have each been transformed by the imaginations of their respective authors. Any resemblance to actual happenings, places, or people living or dead is ultimately coincidental.

Our thanks to Laura Poulette for alllowing us to use her watercolor *January Harvest* as the cover photo for our introductory issue.

CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

In the right light, everything we do can be seen as a story.

The world is, after all, electric with change. It's filled with stillness, longing, downfalls, triumphs. If that seems too dramatic, consider the arc of our lives, from birth until death. In the precious space between those two certainties, we grow, grieve, learn, love, and transform again and again, acting out countless narratives before the close of our final chapter. While the stories that we live are often messier than those that we can find in novels and films, they nevertheless belong to us and shape our worldviews.

When we're not busy living our stories, we're telling them. Storytelling is the practice of soaking in the craziness of the world and wringing out whatever significance we can. Storytelling is essential to being human, and nowhere is this more apparent than in Appalachia, where folktales have blossomed across generations, where people craft a sense of community and shared meaning by laughing together about daily disasters and victories over a hot meal.

Of course, Appalachia's own story is not perfect—a fact often repeated by outsiders to the region. Unfortunately, many of their criticisms only serve to reinforce age-old stereotypes about Appalachian culture: that it is disconnected, backwards, dying. That we are in need of being saved. In truth, Appalachia is full of complication and paradox. But it's also a richly-textured place where diverse voices interact to preserve tradition while also seeking a footing in the changing world. Appalachia is a place that must—and will—save itself.

That principle is our compass at Grow Appalachia. Although Grow Appalachia's story is an odd one, involving chance encounters, a billionaire philanthropist, and the right phone calls to the right people, our mission is simple: to revitalize Central Appalachia by helping people help themselves. We empower our gardening participants to grow their own food, form meaningful connections within a tradition and community of growers, and transform themselves and their towns,

which are often food deserts, by taking their livelihood into their own hands.

Pollen was envisioned as a continuation of this self-empowerment. Grow Appalachia collects a lot of hard data on our partners, including participant demographics, their leveraged resources, and the pounds of food that they harvest, but we've never provided them with a space for storytelling. Such a space is essential. After all, behind every Cherokee Purple tomato, you'll find the hard hands which grew it, their palms creased like an old letter, brimming with both history and promise.

Although *Pollen* was originally intended to showcase only the art of Grow Appalachia participants, the final product features pieces from an assortment of artists, some established, some new—all grounded in the worlds of gardening and Appalachia. In thoughtfully tackling themes of community, mortality, and gardening across generations, our diverse contributors combat the flat stereotypes perpetuated by those who comment on Appalachia from the outside. They use the lenses of photography, poetry, and prose to fill their experiences with new narrative meaning while shaping the evolving story of our region.

One admirable thing about gardens is that life tends to prevail, even when the garden itself is imperfect. In our rapidly shifting world, Appalachia may never be what it once was, but we believe that, as with all good stories, its beginnings hold the seeds of its future. While agriculture is vital to restoring our region, no one knows what the full picture will look like until we get there. All we know is that winds of change are blowing, and we must drift like golden motes of pollen across the landscape, seeking new places to bloom—and seeking the stories to come.

(**Jeffrey Helton** is a native of Western North Carolina and an alumnus of Berea College, where he studied English and Philosophy. He's now an AmeriCorps VISTA with Grow Appalachia and spends his free time writing and playing racquetball. His fiction has been featured in *Still: The Journal.*)

AFTER SUPPER

Chris Green

In the evening after the mirage of heat
seeps into silence, the four o'clocks call
with petal-beaks creeping into a barrage
of purple, red, yellow. The heavy heads
of the sunflowers fail to float & drip
their energy downward, sinking onto
the echinacea whose purple points
lie stark against the background garage,
the mirage of the grey basketball court
whose plastic squares are forced upward
by grass and weeds and seeds that meet
my daughter's feet as she plays away
from the edge of day before her bath
and stories and milk and night.

SUNFLOWER NODS TO MOON

Philip Smith

MATER RAP

Linda Parsons Marion

We got maters red and green, every shade
in between, we got sunhit, coonbit, wormy
seams split. Got your knobby, cheeky,
your starry insides. Your Early Girl, Best Boy,
Cherokee Purple, Israel, Beefsteak coming
to your table, raise your Mortgage Lifter
off the ground, squeeze your Brandywines.
Got your strayed vines, staked vines, plumb
gone-to-seed vines, your Benton's BLT,
your granny's tommy toes, got your white
bread, mayo, nothing else is finer, your hotass
summer, your cornmeal, buttermilk, fry-em-up
supper. Got your eyes closed, real tight, juice
down your chin, got your cherry, your grape,
your honey's sweet behind. Your June night
picked ripe, sliced in a pie, got your salt
shaker, skeeter bite, Norris Lake picnic
spread on a quilt. Got your pressure cooker,
popped lids, jewels in a Mason. Shorter
days, late bloomer, leaving sooner light,
long time coming, long time gone,
burst through your teeth. The last one,
apple shine, polished on your seat.
Good, I say good.
Good, I say good.

BREAKING BEANS

Misty Skaggs

We are an agricultural assembly line.
Weathered human machinery
tucked away under a rusty tin roof.
Sweating and solar powered,
lost in the task at hand.
The front porch hums with
the rhythmic sound
of breaking beans.
Plump, green pods
snap and pop
under the pressure of steady fingers.
Female voices rise and fall
punctuated by a scattered thump,
a handful of Kentucky Wonder
bouncing in the bottom
of a five gallon bucket.

The sun is sliding down to meet the hills.
We swim in damp, evening air.
When it beads and condenses into fat drops
on my upper lip,
I can smell the garden it came from.
And men come up from the garden.

Broad hats and broad backs
wind up a long dirt path
to pause at the front porch,
delivering pails labeled "Fischer's Lard"
loaded down with a tender pick bounty
That spills out around our feet…

Greasy beans and half runners,
bush beans and pole beans
and turkey beans
And green sleeves.

JARRING

Tabitha Surface

I am brined
til my tongue talks in bitters.
My soul puckers,
waiting for that snap.

But I'm boiled in.
No escaping
the pressure seal.
The only thing to read: Ball
scrawled over glass.

All I do is steep,
wait
to be halved or quartered
by the sink of strong teeth.

GARDENING

Dale Mackey

I thought I was fine with my
flesh dissolving in the bellies of worms,
of living again in the root of an onion
that never knew my name.
But what, when you go first,
when it's your flesh, your worms, your onion?
Will I start to believe in a garden above
with a wrought iron bench where you'll
wait for me in the afterlife, letting
your beard grow out so our first kiss
after death will scratch my cheeks,
or will I spend the rest of my days
in a wide-brimmed hat, hands in the dirt,
careful not to pierce with my spade
the wriggling creatures who carry you with them,
digging up onions, peeling them layer by layer
and looking for a trace of your cheekbones?

HOMEMADE

Aaron Gilmour

THE SOIL MUST BE DARK

Laurel Dixon

and full of coffee grounds, egg shells,
banana peels—breakfast fed
to the mouth of the ground.
Buy a tiny green plant
from a blue-eyed botanist
with speckled arms
and dirty palms
who tells you
that mint leaves make good tea.

You don't catch his name,
just a plant and his smile.
He's right—mint is the best for everything.
If your stomach burns, mint calms it.
It melts tension from the body
like black oil.

Crouch in the exhale
of summer heat to tease
its roots into the soil.
Inhale the sweet-sharp notes,
the bite of the sugar,
the round-toothed leaves
melting on your tongue.
Lean your lips close
and speak a few words.
If you are a girl who is silent
and shy of shadows
mint will listen, spreading its wild arms
with every exhale, an offering.

But first, the soil must be dark.

FLOWERBEDS

Whitney Naylor-Smith

You see monuments in those lifeless slats, the flat pieces of unstained wood you bolted together into chairs, covered in canvas all gray-stained and dusted with coal. You watch the way your little rented house shakes when the trains rattle by. The brittle bones of marigolds—sprouted, never bloomed. The upward spread of yard, twigs and broken branches and crinkles of leaves flitting over the dry grass, the rawness where the earth inched away from the concrete. You bought pond pebbles and poured them all along that sunken hollow. You strung up wind chimes and a bird-seed house from the slanty shingled roof, hung candle-lanterns from nails on the wall. You wanted a tribute to the seasons that all left you long before you started trying to keep them.

The flowerbed from when you were little has stayed with you. The smooth gray swoosh of the stones beneath your feet, swatting mosquitoes and chewing on the ends of onion grass as you circled the garden barefoot. It was your garden, your bed. Your mother told you of your birth in the bedroom of that house. How she buried your placenta by an evergreen tree and how rooted you all were in that place, that life. Those early years you spent with your family, every summer weekend drawing your sand-dreams on the coast until the seasons switched and the feet and the feet of snow fell. You remember the snow, stepping over it carefully, lightly, walking as if on water over the thin crust of ice between you and that white blindness. The rest you don't remember quite as well, but you've heard over and over how one winter second lasted years, wiped all that away. How, swiftly as a snowdrift on a windshield blade, your mother skidded across the ice, into the tractor trailer—its tires stuck in sand—and she hit the dash so hard her jeans and her collar bone split open.

Years later, she told you all about her hospital dreams: A sensation like the presence of God. You drowning, her lifting you out of the water. She

had never left you before that broken car ride. She told you how close you came to not having life.

It was a long while after the crash (after your mother shed her halo, the pins in her head, her body cast of white plaster that kept you rigid and out of her arms, after her dreams of recompense that never came) until the suffocating debt that flooded in with the accident swept your family all down south to find relief. Relief, in any extra money her parents had. In the mildness of winters, the absence of threat. Pressed to your mother's temple: your new shotgun-style house, with its molded window panes and ratty carpet—dry rotted, the color of defeat. There were none of your gardens or beds, no births in that house. The only flowers were wild patches of peonies, irises; your planted dead thorns refused to be roses. You, left with the slightest understanding of your mother's mourn for garden stones and paper white birch trees, the white house with black shutters on a hillside, her shining New England life.

You grew up among the wild patches. You learned how to hide things there: that you were poor, that you owed something now, that your parents paid by the month for all from your clothing to the cracked linoleum you walked on. You had no accident, no loss, but you grew up and built a world like hers. You birthed a daughter in the dim-candled dark, moved her from the room at your parents' to the first apartment to the house where the trains shake by. You filled that house with things that didn't grow: quilted placemats and crotchet-edged curtains, ceramic antique pots, thousand thread count Egyptian cotton linens, bohemian lace bed skirts, value furniture slipcovered in embroidered cloth. You needed that brilliance to fill you, that thrill. Only it wasn't the stuff of life like you thought—you built your home with block castles and bedtime stories, kitchen floor ballroom dances and giggles and tears. And your daughter—what will she care of those Adirondack chairs and hopeless flower pots you never could afford? What will she know of your monuments, your tribute? She can't miss your memories, your gardens and beach sands and ice-crusted snow. And what would she make with your dreams?

LAURA'S HOGS

Josh Nittle

THE RING

Heather Richie

As Erin and her sister pick from the first of the blueberry bushes, their feet teeter at the edges of the dirt mounds. The trenches are long, and the dirt falls in heavy, moist clumps from the place where the bush roots stretch into the ground.

The sun catches the highlights of Becca's hair, red as the earth that they walk on.

Erin once read that there were two main kinds of dirt—sandy and clay—and that you either needed to add more sand or more compost to get good growing soil. This dirt is mostly clay. The sun illuminates the specks of gray and black in it, and Erin wonders what minerals they might be. Limestone, she hopes. Papa Williams once told her that a person could never get enough limestone.

She keeps quiet, trying to nourish the near-silence between the two of them, but Becca keeps laughing to herself like she's remembering the punchline to some great and secret joke. Erin knows that Becca wants to talk—not so much about anything serious, though just as easily about something serious. She knows that Becca would say anything, really, to be heard.

"I looked into electrolysis," Becca says. She hates her eyebrows and wants to have the strays permanently zapped. "It's really expensive, though, like a thousand bucks by the time you're done, and it takes a year. But you know, to never have to pluck again, or even think about tweezers." Her eyes wander up as she marvels at the possibility. "And you pay in installments, like fifty bucks, so it's really worth it, you know?"

"What about your braces?" Erin asks. Becca has had them for six months. Her insurance won't cover braces for adults. They say it's cosmetic, and with no job, she can't pay the bill.

"Yeah," Becca shrugs, looking at the berries. "I've got to take care of that, too."

They each carry a gallon-sized white bubble gum bucket for the berries—the blue, yellow, and red labels so faded that Erin can't read

them anymore. Papa fastened each of the buckets by its handle to an old leather belt, and now the buckets hang like holsters from the girls' hips.

"Becca, Erin!" Mama Williams' voice, light and musical, calls from the back door. She approaches, carrying a full jar of sweet tea in each hand, with lemon wedges sliced and balanced on the rims. The rate at which she hikes the little hill is surprising. She is seventy-six, and her body shifts in the same rhythm as the cubes of ice in the tea.

She gives them the jars and smiles at their delight before throwing her hand up above her brow to block the sun.

"I can't stand in this sun too long," Mama Williams says, emphasizing her own mortality. "I'm gonna get to the dishes," she adds, and she turns down the hill as quickly as she came.

Erin and Becca finish their tea with loud gulps, the jars sweating through the napkins that Mama Williams had given them. Becca puts her empty jar on top of a fence post, and Erin puts her own on the ground beside it. Erin turns back to the bushes and begins picking, her energy renewed. Their buckets fill slowly and at nearly equal rates.

They pick with their right hands, grabbing at the limbs with their left. Erin keeps an even gaze down the hill, lost in thoughts and images. She snaps out of it when Mama Williams comes back to the door and scrapes leftovers into Scooter's bowl. Papa's little dog runs around the corner of the house from the front yard and discovers the scraps of biscuits and gravy from breakfast that morning.

The house pushes back into the steep hill that they had climbed to reach the garden. Rows of cucumbers lie on the ground, fat and overripe. Behind the vines are supports built from two-by-fours and chicken wire where new tomatoes grow and a maypop turns in the air like a fat ballerina.

Erin uses two hands. Her bucket fills faster than Becca's now, she is sure. She doesn't even need to look at the berries. Instead she looks at Becca's mouth, filled with metal, and thinks of the night before when Becca picked her up in Athens, when Becca yelled at her for always being the one to drive. It was as if Becca was certain she cared more than Erin.

Erin feels a pang of guilt for not liking Becca—for not being able

to forget the fighting. She gazes down the hill and sees Papa's reflection turning in the glass. He has cancer for the third time and started chemo just three months ago. Smiling, he moves closer to the glass and waves at the girls. Erin must have been staring. He thinks she wants something. His rosy lips shine with moisture, and his arms extend outward like the banks of a river. There is a glow to him, electric, as if someone has stepped behind the old man and plugged him in. Light seeps from his small chocolate eyes.

Six months later, they'd bury him in the ground.

Erin would find her way to the front of the room, the pulpit. Her palms would be damp with moisture. Her voice would shake. When she returned to her pew she would weep loudly and bury her head into her mother's shoulder. Her mother would whisper that everything would be all right, and these words would mean nothing.

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Mama Williams was there in a pastel gown and housecoat, sipping coffee from the mug with the blue geese and pink flowers on it. Steam tumbled up over her nose as she gazed out of the kitchen window. Wave petunias and a fluorescent potato vine ran and twisted away from Mexican heather in the heavy window box.

Erin and Becca were awake just in time to watch their grandmother make biscuits. Becca sat by Mama Williams with a grin too wide for so early in the morning.

Erin watched as Mama Williams reached into the wood-paneled pantry, removing one of her many aprons—yellow this time, with orange and white flowers and white-laced edges—and tying it around her waist. She took the great wooden bowl, shallow and unfinished, filled with flour and kept clean by a clear, cinched shower cap around the bowl's rim. Mama Williams' hands turned the wire crank of the stainless steel sifter, the flour that had been clumpy and dense in the sifter's basket now floating from its bottom with the lightness of powdered snow. The flour landed and built a mound like a cloud. The sifting was what made the biscuits so light. The instant Mama Williams' fingers, weightless as they were, cut the clouds, the angel powder grew dense and returned again to worldly clumps.

Mama Williams pushed the flour over and onto itself and poured

thick buttermilk from a quart-sized carton into the popping folds of dough. The whole thing was like a quiet and simple orchestra. She pulled her fingers into her hands, and then released them, and then pulled them again, until the dough was moist all through. She worked the sticky dough off each finger by circling it with the fingers of her other hand and pulling it back into the bowl.

She never removed the golden band on her ring finger. She didn't have to because her knuckles sat perched on her fingers like spider knees and wouldn't allow the ring to slide off. Her knuckles looked like this because she was the twelfth daughter of a sharecropper and grew up picking cotton. This was why, too, when she pulled at anything, like the lint from Erin's sweater or bread crumbs on the tablecloth after supper, she did so with her thumb flattened to her forefinger, plucking away at cotton that was not there.

Mama Williams pulled open a cabinet drawer and took out her biscuit cutter. It was steel and thin—a ring with a handle on top of it.

"I have two of these," she said as she began pressing the dough into perfect circles.

This felt wrong, her giving them things. There was a reason for the giving, a series of thoughts, a logic about her own dying.

"Really?" Becca's response ridded the room of its mounting silence. "That'd be great. We could each have one."

Mama Williams smiled with her, and Erin nodded her head to agree and show her appreciation. She wondered about those days when Erin and Becca were not there, when this silence didn't break, and it was the two of them. What kind of quiet was it? The kind Erin wanted when Becca wouldn't shut up, spelling out her thoughts as if they were not real until she said them, or the other kind—the lonely kind?

Mama Williams placed each biscuit on a sheet pan covered thin with Crisco. The dough remained weightless in her touch. Each biscuit slightly touched the sides with another on the pan, a sea of melted butter glowing yellow and flowing between them.

***

Becca looks up from a bush and says something about one of Erin's moods.

Their buckets are almost full. They've picked for nearly an hour,

and the sun makes the work hard. Erin had heard wooden bowl and realized that Becca was talking about their dying. Erin doesn't have a lot of memories the way Becca does, but it doesn't matter. She is happy and knows what's important. Things are like anchors, tying you down to places and people. Erin doesn't want that bowl. She doesn't want Becca to want it. She just wants Becca to understand that those things, that things, don't matter.

"I want her ring," Erin says, surprising herself. She steadies her gaze down the hill. She sees Papa's reflection turning in the glass. This moment is weighted with a meaning too great to hold on to.

Papa has cancer for the third time. He started chemo three months ago. Smiling, he moves closer to the glass and waves at Erin. She must have been staring. He thinks she wants something. She nods and gestures with her hand as if to say that things are fine, but he stands there a moment, lowering his arms, his smile dropping. He does not believe her. She smiles again, reassuringly, and turns toward a bush she hasn't worked on yet.

Six months later, they'll bury him in the ground.

"Are you finished?" she asks Becca. "I'm hungry."

Becca says okay and shrugs. She is easy to please but acts like a cat when she doesn't get her way. Today though, being here, she is agreeable—almost calm. Today Erin does not mind her.

They move out of the rows and turn down the hill. Erin glances at Becca's bucket and notices it is nearly as full as her own. At the bottom of the hill, Becca goes to the door and leaves Erin to rinse the berries. Erin tosses the first bucket a few times and runs the hose into it, but the water goes right to the bottom. She sits down and holds the hose in one hand, turning the berries over with the other. She stops when Mama Williams pushes open the screen door.

"That's enough," she says. "Come on in."

Through the screen, Erin sees Papa hovering over a big watermelon. He pushes his weight into it and cuts it masterfully with a butcher's knife. Becca sits next to him drawing long gulps from a tea jar.

"Here babies," he says, his words drawn out as he places slices of melon onto squares of paper towels that Mama Williams has folded. "I grew this down there in the bottom," cocking his head in the direction

of a second, bigger garden. “Alton picked it yesterday.”

Erin moves through the door, her body heavy with the heat, and into the room where a wide, long window covers an entire wall. She places the buckets at the side of the table, near the old man’s feet. Taking a seat on the bench, she sees Mama Williams come from the kitchen carrying fresh tea. As they begin to eat, Papa says that this is a good thing, them picking the berries.

He does not need to say that he is tired from the cancer or that he could not have done it.

Instead, he says that Mama will be able to can now, that the berries would have fallen ripe to the ground, that this is a good thing. He sinks his teeth then into a wide slice of melon, his delicate and shining lips sliding over the fruit and pulling at its juice.

MAN SURE IS STRANGE

Matthew Sidney Parsons

Why, I saw him grooming
his feathers, eating dinner out of a box
and playing with his toys in the black
earth. The earth turned up to smile
at him, at me when I go to my plot –
to play amongst the little trees.
I am a great beast who was made to
reach down my long neck
and take a bite out of life.

Do children often imagine themselves
this way? As beasts or soldiers or pirates? As
beings that take as they want? I guess
the funniest thing is
I don't even like to steal, but I would
just as soon man a pirate ship and
take plunder from kings and queens
as take food from the green earth.

That's what it means to grow older
and ripen in the sun like any old tomato.
Oh yes, I guess I will learn
some day, to lay down the tools and
abide by the rules I was given by the
Father of the world. Then I'll start chasing girls.

Man sure is strange.

A WAIL GENTLE

Kevin Murphy

(Note: "A Wail Gentle" also appears in the current issue of The Pikeville Review)

I heard them each morning, from October to the first killing
frost, a wail gentle, sadly endearing, they're silent
now, dull brown on earth

Green tomatoes delicious when fried, the reds fine with
a burger and beer on a hot August evening
as fireflies appear

Peppers abundant, I gave scores to neighbors as they talked
at the fence of dead husbands, grown children, and
day trips to Knoxville

But in December the neighbors are silent, seldom step out of
their houses, I leave work in the dark, unlocking my
door to the drone of the furnace

and an unfinished book, here is how it feels when the
heart caves in on itself, when everything hurts,
its pages remind me

Knees on the ground, harvesting kale on this cold, moonless
night, leaning forward, the scent of the earth
wiggles my nose

MORNING DAISY

Philip Smith

BEFORE THE REDBUD

Chris Green

Though torn by April
frost and May drought,
though its slender
trunk had been rent
by late wind,

Stretched between
sidewalk and brick
street,

The remaining
leaves of that sapling held
open their broad, tender
palms to the sky,

all passers by

BEAR RIDGE BEACH

Misty Skaggs

The thick woods
at the low end of the garden
are an ocean.
My version of a salty vastness
I've never laid blue
bumpkin eyes on.
Leaves are waves,
ruffled by brisk wind.
Lacy locust, lazy maple
shiny, resilient oak,
and even heavy boughs of black pine
bounce.
Ride invisible currents.

Uncle Rick cranks
the sputtering red plow,
a crippled speed boat.
Baby rabbits scatter
like sand crabs,
and he hobbles
up and down,
up and down,
back and forth.
Following an imaginary
shore line.
Poplar leaves turn belly up to the wind,
buoys bobbing,
begging for coming rain.

A GOOD YEAR

Laurel Dixon

For days, your mother Jean prayed for rain.
At last God has obliged.
Red apples quiver
in their camouflage—the crops
are still. In front
of the clean white barn,
we stand like bookends
and watch
the trees toss their heads in the distance.
Your face is lined and leathered.
You light up a Pall Mall
with a black-greased hand,
adjust your red ball cap
and say,
“Well, we needed it.”

We watch the clouds roll in,
quivering and full-bellied,
shooting off shards of light.
Your tired face is carved
with relief. Maybe
we can start saying
it’s been a good year
and believe it.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Laurel Dixon lives in Lexington, Kentucky. She first developed her love of green and growing things at the age of fifteen while working on a farm in Hebron, Kentucky. She now works as an AmeriCorps VISTA member with Seedleaf, a community gardening organization that addresses food access issues. Her poetry has been published in *Words Dance Magazine*, *Voicemail Poems* and *The Legendary*. She spends her time writing, gardening, and drinking more coffee than is strictly advisable.

Aaron Gilmour grew up in the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina and is a recent alumnus of Berea College. He was an associate photographer and photography manager for the *Berea College Magazine* and is currently a photographer for Empire Photography in Madison, WI. His work has been featured in *Kentucky Monthly*, *The Lexington Herald*, *The New York Times*, and many Berea College publications.

Chris Green has been writing poems for about twenty-five years and learned about loving the earth at his mother's side as he watched what she planted come up. Chris is the Director of the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center at Berea College, and his close relationship with Grow Appalachia helps him thrive each and every day. (If you'd like to read more of his poetry, check out his Facebook page.)

Dale Mackey is a regular contributor and editorial assistant for *The Daily Yonder*. Her poems have been published in print and online publications, including *The Medulla Review* and the Knoxville Writers' Guild's *A Tapestry of Voices* anthology. She has taught poetry workshops in prisons, jails, and women's shelters in Iowa, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

Linda Parsons Marion is an editor at the University of Tennessee and author of three poetry collections, including *Bound*. She was poetry editor of *Now & Then: The Appalachian Magazine* and has received literary fellowships from the Tennessee Arts Commission, the *Associated Writing Programs' Intro Award* and the 2012 *George Scarbrough Award in Poetry*. Her work has appeared in *The Georgia Review, Iowa Review, Prairie Schooner, Southern Poetry Review, Asheville Poetry Review, Shenandoah, Birmingham Poetry Review, Nimrod, Louisiana Literature, Negative Capability,* in Ted Kooser's syndicated column *American Life in Poetry*, and in numerous anthologies, including *Listen Here: Women Writing in Appalachia, The*

Movable Nest, Sleeping with One Eye Open: Women Writers and the Art of Survival, CrossRoads: A Southern Culture Annual, and *The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volumes III and VI.* Her collection of poetry, *This Shaky Earth*, will be published by Texas Review Press in 2016.

Kevin Murphy is a gardening enthusiast who loves celebrating Appalachia. As a long-time resident of Middlesboro, Kentucky, he knows the trails of the Cumberland Gap National Historical Park like the back of his hand. He's had the pleasure of being sprayed by skunks while backpacking the Appalachian Trail in the Shenandoah National Park and has explored many an eastern Kentucky cave. His writing has been accepted in *Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel, The Pikeville Review,* and *The Emancipator*.

Whitney Naylor-Smith grew up in Hurricane, West Virginia and is a graduate of Marshall University. She currently lives in Colorado Springs, where she teaches high school and college English.

Josh Nittle grew up in Eastern Pennsylvania along the Blue Ridge Mountains. As a boy, he was intrigued by the art and photography of his grandfather, a self-reliant outdoorsman and professional artist. Josh has followed in his footsteps, inspired to study and capture the beauty of all life around him. He is a self-taught creative working as a professional interaction designer and has exhibited work in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. More of his work can be found online.

Matthew Sidney Parsons is an Appalachian Studies major at Berea College. He serves as the assistant to Silas House, the current chair for the National Endowment for the Humanities. His work has been featured in the Summer 2014 issue of *Still: The Journal.* Matthew is from West Virginia, where his mother works at The Appalachian South Folk Life Center, a Grow Appalachia partner site.

Laura Poulette lives on a homestead in the hills outside of Berea, Kentucky where she makes art, tends gardens, and builds with her husband and two home-schooled boys. She is a founding member of the East Ridge Community Garden, a Grow Appalachia partner.

Heather Richie received an M.F.A. from Sewanee: The University of the South and studies Documentary Arts at Duke University. Richie was raised in relationship

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Misty Marie Rae Skaggs resides on her Mamaw's couch at the end of Bear Town Ridge Road in Elliott County, Kentucky, where she is amassing a library of contemporary fiction under the coffee table and perfecting her buttermilk biscuits. She and her Mamaw have a garden where they grow everything from taters to watermelons. She is completing her B.F.A. in Creative Writing at Morehead State University. She is an Associate Editor with *Night Train Magazine* and her writing has been published in journals like *Limestone, New Madrid, Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel* and *Inscape*. More of her work can be found on her blog.

Philip Smith is a librarian at Lincoln Memorial University, where he volunteers at the Grow Appalachia garden. When not helping to plant, grow, and harvest delicious, organic vegetables, he enjoys nature and hiking, and he sometimes carries along his rugged Pentax WG to capture scenes of the lovely nature all around.

Tabitha Surface has grown up with gardens, their mythology, and their practicalities. She received her M.F.A. in Creative Writing & Publishing Arts from the University of Baltimore in 2012, and she has written much of her work while snacking on home-jarred food. Her online publications can be found at her Wordpress.