

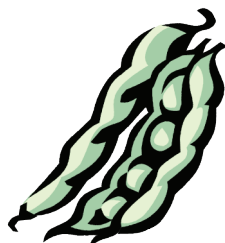
The Three Sisters

Kentucky's native peoples have grown corn, beans and squash together since prehistoric times. Early settlers followed their example.

Corn is the first sister. Corn grows high above the others, reaching for sunlight.



Beans are the middle sister. Beans climb up the cornstalks while they enrich the soil with nitrogen.



Squash is the third sister. Squash grows between the corn and beans, shading the soil and keeping it cool, moist, and free of weeds.



Did you know ... 

- Corn, beans, squash, tomatoes and peppers all came from the Americas.

Plants, People, and Place

As prehistoric peoples domesticated plants and came to rely on them for food, the plants domesticated the people. First as foragers, and later as gardeners and farmers, plants tied people ever more closely to the land.

Arrival of Europeans

Europeans were also foragers and farmers. These new Kentuckians brought some crops with them, like **wheat** and **oats**, but also took advantage of the rich plant life in their new American home.

On the Kentucky frontier, the major crop was **corn**, but most families also grew **wheat, oats, beans, squash, turnips, potatoes,** and **melons.**

Do you know anyone who ... 

- Forages for wild plant foods?
- Grows food in their garden or farm?

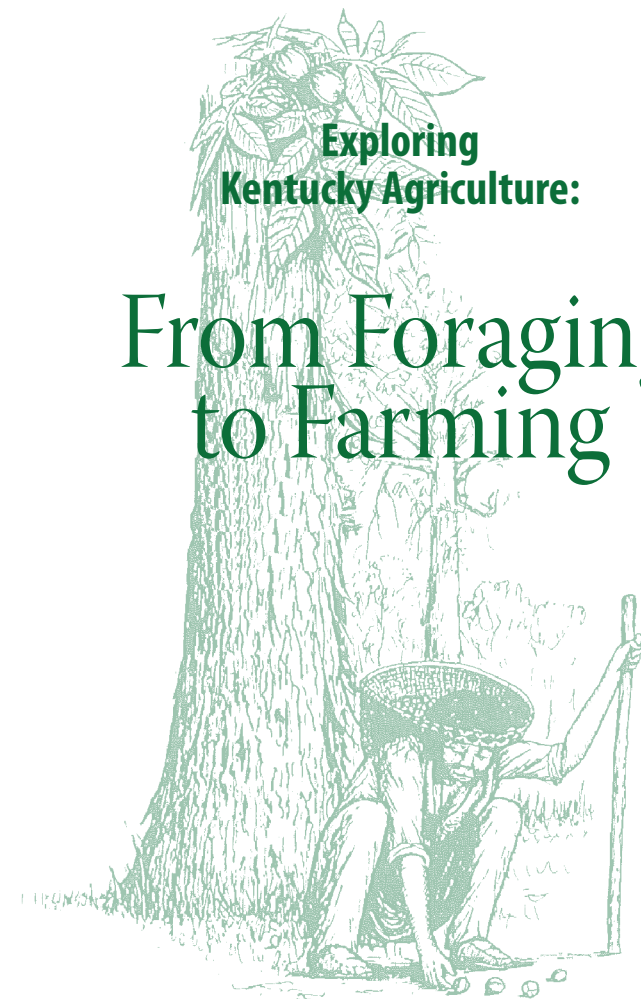
Families gathered wild greens like **dandelion, yellow dock, wild lettuce, pigweed, lambsquarters,** and **poke.**

Today, Kentucky's major crops are corn, soybeans, and wheat.

Front panel artwork courtesy of the Kentucky Heritage Council.

Exploring
Kentucky Agriculture:

From Foraging to Farming



The Kentucky Children's Garden



University of Kentucky and Lexington Fayette Urban County Government

The Arboretum
State Botanical Garden of Kentucky

500 Alumni Drive
Lexington, Kentucky 40503
859-257-6955
www.ca.uky.edu/Arboretum/

Foraging for Food

People have always been foragers. When you *forage* you search for food. Have you ever picked a wild raspberry or cracked open and eaten a walnut? While most of our food now comes from farming, this hasn't always been the case. The earliest Kentuckians relied on foraging and hunting to meet their needs.



Black walnut.
Image courtesy of
Derek Ramsey,
Chanticleer Garden

Wild Plant Foods? It's What's For Dinner!

Wild plants were very important to prehistoric peoples. They collected many plant parts including **roots, fruits, nuts,** and **shoots.**



Staghorn sumac.
Image courtesy of
Sharon Barotz

Some of the plants they ate included:

- Catbriar (*roots*)
- Grape, sumac, and paw-paw (*fruits*)
- Hickory and walnut (*nuts*)
- Tender spring greens like poke (*shoots*)

Can you find the following plants?

- Staghorn sumac
- Black walnut
- Black raspberry
- Paw-paw

Prehistoric Gardeners

About 3,000 years ago, prehistoric Kentuckians began to save the seeds of weedy native plants that sprouted and grew on their trash heaps.

In the spring, they planted these seeds in small garden plots near their camps. In time, they domesticated these plants and became gardeners.



Lambsquarters.
Image courtesy of
Syngenta

If you like to garden, you may pull up some of these plants and throw them away as weeds. But to people long ago, they were a source of nutritious seeds.

Which of these plants do you eat today?

Some of the plants prehistoric people grew included:

- Sunflower
- Maygrass
- Lambsquarters
- Marshelder
- Squash
- Gourd

Sunflower.
Image courtesy of
Thomas Barnes

Prehistoric peoples also grew **tobacco**, but not for food. They smoked it during ceremonies and used it as offerings.

Can you find the following plants?

- Squash
- Tobacco
- Sunflower
- Gourd

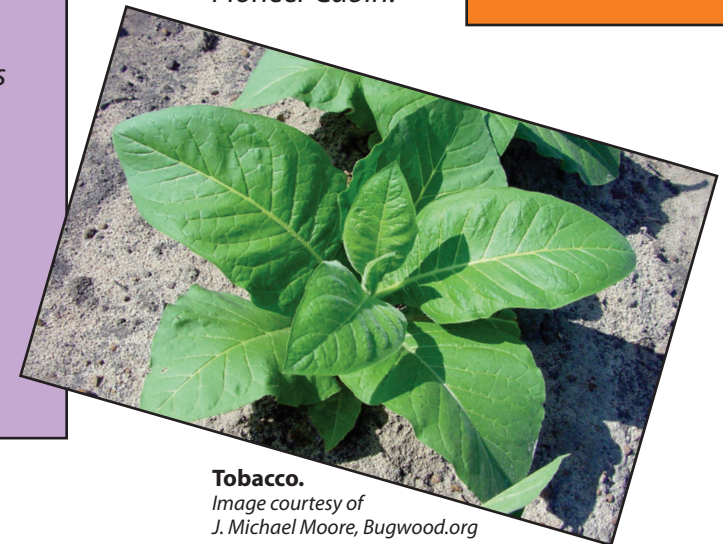
Kentucky's First Farmers

Prehistoric people turned to farming about **1,000 years ago**. They still grew some of their ancestors' plants, but they also planted new crops that came from far away in Central America, like **corn** and **beans**.

In the Children's Garden, look for some of these plants near the *Native American Encampment* and *Pioneer Cabin*.

Can you find the following plants?

- Beans
- Corn
- Pokeweed (poke)
- Serviceberry



Tobacco.
Image courtesy of
J. Michael Moore, Bugwood.org