

In the Sweat of Our Brow: Citizenship in American Domestic Practice During WWII— Victory Gardens

Char Miller

Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Genesis 3:17-19

There is no reason, then, for anyone forbidding us to see in the Garden, symbolically, the life of the blessed; in its four rivers, the four virtues of prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice; in its trees, all useful knowledge; in the fruits of the trees, the holy lives of the faithful; in the tree of life, that wisdom which is the mother of all good; and in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the experience that results from disobedience to a command of God. The punishment which God imposed on the sinners was just and, therefore, good in itself, but not for man who experienced the taste of it.

Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*,
Book XIII, Chapter 21, p. 287

In the sweat of our brow
We should eat our bread?
Good doctors don't allow
Eating when in a sweat
The Dog Star twinkles now.
Of what is this a sign?
In the sweat of our brow
We should drink our wine!

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*,
Section 39, of "Joke, Cunning and
Revenge: Prelude in German Rhymes"

Because citizens so hearkened to the voice of the state, even as Adam hearkened unto his wife, victory gardens remain one of the most compelling memories of domestic participation in the Second World War. Victory gardens, planted by individuals and families in surplus space to offset food sent to Europe, reveal elements of the relationship between the nation and individualism during the war, including the recuperation—as an element of state power—of one of the most powerful metaphors of an earlier notion of freedom: familiar self-sufficiency. Citizens were encouraged to become self-sufficient to benefit the state. Furthermore, gardening addressed concerns of a perceived loss of order in a world at war. Gardeners looked to their plots for

Dr. Char Miller is assistant professor of government and politics at George Mason University. He recently published "Taylored Citizenship," an examination of the roles of industrial discipline in configuring subjectivity in the twentieth-century United States. Currently he is completing an examination of the ways consumer desires influence our sense of self and society, to be titled "Affordable Desires."

conformation of a physical order in the world, and one added to domestic life through the increased introduction of efficient management and production methods. Finally, victory gardening was one of the earliest elaborations of the significant postwar configuration of citizenship as a function of consumption—often the function of mothers, wives, and daughters—to encourage efficient production. Planting a victory garden encouraged thrift through consumption. With no apologies to St. Augustine, there is no reason, then, for anyone forbidding us to see in the garden, symbolically, the life of the blessed.¹

Government

The term victory garden originated with the conclusion of World War I. During that war, the nation-state encouraged citizens to grow War Gardens. Following Armistice Day, the government continued to encourage civilian production but suggested a name change to Victory Gardens.² “The War Garden was the chrysalis. The Victory Garden is the butterfly,” rhapsodized Charles Lathrop Pack, president of the National War Garden Commission in its 1919 pamphlet, *Victory Gardens Feed the Hungry, The Needs of Peace Demand the Increased Production of Food in America's Victory Gardens* (6).

While there was no National War Garden Commission in World War II, the American nation-state did extensively promote the personal (and familial) production of food. Most of this national promotion occurred under the aegis of the Department of Agriculture. The department printed and distributed information for the victory gardener, including plans, “schemes,” timetables, and guides to ordering seeds (*Authentic Guide* 9, 11, 48, 49). In December 1941, Claude Wickard, Secretary of Agriculture, and Paul McNutt, Director of the Office of Defense, Health and Welfare Services called a National Defense Garden Conference in Washington, DC. Representatives of garden associations, clubs, seed and trade associations, the farm and garden press,

radio stations, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Federal Security Agency, the Work Projects Administration, the Office of Civilian Defense, national youth organizations, and other agencies met to discuss and encourage wartime gardening (*Guide for Planning* 3). Topics of discussion included the development of the Defense Garden Program and “M-Day for Gardening.”³

The Office of Civilian Defense directed volunteers to the leaders of existing garden groups for advice, using existing nongovernmental organizations for national purposes. The office also promoted a structure of authority for local defense councils to follow in the organization of the victory garden program. Local defense councils were encouraged to “appoint as Victory Garden chairman an experienced gardener with executive ability.” Councils assisted “the chairman of the Victory Garden Program in making contacts with all agencies, organizations, and individuals who might contribute to the program” (*Guide for Planning* 5).

Organizations such as the National Institute of Municipal Law Officers even participated in the distribution of authority by offering model ordinances on victory gardens for cities and municipalities. These ordinances mostly dealt with theft from victory gardens and the use of city property for the gardens (“Model Ordinances” 91).

Businesses, encouraged by the National Victory Garden Institute, participated in this distribution of national authority, encouraging employees to plan and plant (“How Many Gardens?” 15). Westinghouse, for example, promoted Health for Victory Clubs through advertisements, radio programs, and with employees’ clubs (to which they donated land). Club members met to discuss such germane topics as “Protective Cooking of Vegetables,” and “How to Pack Lunch Boxes” (Westinghouse advertisement 39). In Pittsburgh, B. P. Hess, a Westinghouse employee, received an honorary plaque from the National Victory Garden Institute for his work supervising the Westinghouse Educational Center Victory Gardens. This center

sponsored 192 victory garden plots that covered thirteen acres of the East Pittsburgh Westinghouse Works. In 1944, W. V. Foust, chairman of the center's gardening committee, predicted that Westinghouse workers would garden "at least 300 garden plots" (Mack 62).

Even more productive for the nation-state was the role that individual states played in the encouragement of gardening. Most states formed their own Victory Garden Committees. The Pennsylvania State Council of Defense promised to "assist civilians in every way possible during the current year, so that our civilians will be adequately fed, and so that some of the burden of civilian feeding will be removed from the shoulders of commercial food producers while they are engaged in feeding the greatest army of all times" (Martin iii).

Voluntary societies also championed victory gardens. The 200,000 women of the American Women's Voluntary Services, Inc. advocated the extensive adoption of victory garden programs ("Bulletin Board" 15). Magazines extensively promoted this aspect of the war effort—and not simply through advertising. "To lend a hand in that work *House & Garden* is offering to answer knotty problems that confront Victory Gardeners" ("Bulletin Board" 15). Household magazines such as *House & Garden* and *Better Homes and Gardens* encouraged the farming of victory gardens and distributed much information on their successful growth and planting. This promotion was very successful.

In 1943, the Department of Agriculture projected eighteen million victory gardens. The National Victory Garden Institute, however, predicted 20 million, and Gallup polls reported that, as of early spring 1943, 20 million gardens were being planned. *House & Garden* reported that 22 million "families" participated in 1942, and predicted that 25.5 million families would participate in 1943 ("How Many Gardens" 15). Such extensive participation not only demonstrated successful governmental organization, but even more clearly betrayed a widespread intellectual organization.

Freedom

The state benefited from many elements of this intellectual organization. Victory gardens consolidated an earlier language of self-sufficiency to the use of the state. Furthermore, the state extended its demands over the care a person takes over his or her own body. Finally, the discourse concerning victory gardens placed women in a position of provider in the interest of the family and in the interest of the nation-state.

"A fondness for rural things," claimed Peirce Lewis about American landscape design, "goes back into the misty recesses of American history" (9). John Dixon Hunt argued that "Gardens are created, adapted, or used to provide spaces and forms of a ritual or symbolic nature that inculcate certain values and norms of behavior having an implied continuity with the past; indeed, they often seek to establish continuity with a suitable historic past that could be objective not idealized but is largely factitious" (19-20). Hunt's account of the political function of gardens as a connection to a national past describes very accurately the connection between gardening and an American frontier past. The ability to turn to the land in an effort of self-sustenance was often counted as a significant element of American freedom. Frederick Jackson Turner's discussion of the importance of the frontier is an account of the importance of self-sufficiency to American understanding of freedom.⁴ "The first rough conquest of the wilderness is accomplished, and that great supply of free lands which year after year has served to reinforce the democratic influences in the United States is exhausted," he wrote at the beginning of the twentieth century (*The Frontier* 244-45). American notions of freedom and individualism were influenced by the ability of citizens to leave the ordered world of towns and communities and head out to live self-sufficiently off the land. "In a word," Turner wrote, "the unchecked development of the individual was the significant product of this frontier democracy" (25). World War II used the remaining shades of this understanding

of freedom to better consolidate power for the nation-state. "As World War II approached, the progress of American life away from the pioneer stage had reached the point of diminishing returns," began James Burdett's *Victory Garden Manual* (3). Calls to return to the land offered the opportunity to offset those returns.

Encouragement to agriculture relied on this earlier, more agricultural America, one of greater self-reliance. "My Father," wrote Samuel R. Ogden, "was raised in the country and when circumstances brought him to the city, where I was born, his love of the soil came with him" (v). This paternity symbolized the life of the nation: "In the time of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers far more people, proportionately, lived in the country. And in each family, from half-grown children up to grandparents, everyone was busy from sunrise to sunset. They were busy living" (1)—living by producing their own food. During World War II, such statements of individualism and self-sufficiency typically were connected to patriotic duty.

Better Homes and Gardens produced an 8 and 1/2-minute film entitled *Gardens of Victory*, donated to and approved by the Office of Civilian Defense. "It is our patriotic duty," the magazine announced for both itself and its readers, "to ease the strain on the nation's food supply by raising vegetables for our own tables ("Better Homes and Gardens is Proud" 67). Providing food for ourselves became a national duty. Self-sufficiency became another card in the deck of national power. In *Better Homes and Gardens*, Leslie MacRae added finer points to both the connection with an American past and the consequences involved:

"Those who don't work don't eat!" That necessarily was the American way in Colonial Times. It's not that bad now—but it *is* a safe bet that those of us who put in gardens this year will eat much better than those who don't . . . So all of us—everybody—must pitch in and grow our own. (28)

Richardson Wright explained the national interest in self-interest. "Our mere survival at

home, our daily feeding of the body with protective foods to ward off disease and maintain health may seem a selfish purpose. Far from it. What Victory gardeners grow and save leaves so much more for the men and women in the services, so much more for the people who face starvation" ("This Year's Victory Gardens" 55). Or, as he wrote in a different context, "Under the circumstances of total war all castles become bastions of the national defense. The business castle is laid under government regulations and the domestic castle under patriotic persuasion and the weight of public opinion" ("Gardens in a World at War" 5). Instead of an alternative to national interest, self-interest reflected the interest of the nation-state.

It became a patriotic duty to care for oneself, in that taking care of oneself was taking care of others. "Of course, you're planning a Victory Garden this year," enthused an advertisement for Vigoro Victory Garden Fertilizer. "You know that Uncle Sam is counting on you, and millions of other patriotic Americans to grow just as much of your own vegetable needs as you possibly can" (Vigoro Advertisement 94). Uncle Sam encouraged the family to produce their own food.

Opting out of the division of labor through a proclamation of agricultural independence enabled the production of food for others. By counting on one's own ability to provide that most basic of necessities, food, one's connections to others were not diminished but strengthened. "Last year the farmers hit an all-time high in food production," pronounced *House & Garden*. "Everybody had plenty . . . To repeat last year's record will be nothing less than a miracle. Don't count on a miracle. Count on yourself. Your government has commissioned the commercial packers to feed the Armed Forces. And, of course, you want it that way. Second come our gallant Allies. You want that, too" ("Primer for a Good Provider" 43). Citizens should count on themselves to produce their own food. Such self-sufficiency benefited others who counted on them—just as they desired. Self-sufficiency betrayed not an escape from civil society or the division of labor, but a consolidation of the

meanings of freedom within the nation-state. The individual by doing their part would benefit everyone and save a variety of resources. Food, metal, and transportation costs returned national benefits for the individual's agricultural labors.

Our Government urges you to raise food because in so doing you will save metal that would have been used for cans. You will save the fuel that would have been used to carry the food to your local store. You will save the space on railroad trains that is so vitally needed for the transportation of ammunition and supplies for our armed forces. You will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are doing your part in helping to win the war. (Proskauer 2)

Producing one's own food benefited the state in many ways, including the redistribution of commercially grown produce, the savings in transportation demands, and the savings in metals that otherwise would have gone to cans. Even as self-sufficient production was nationalized, the body of the consumer of the food was brought under increasingly direct attention of the nation.

State and the Body

This nationalization of individual food production was accompanied by an increased ability on the part of the state to use a logic connected to the utility, preservation, and health of the body. The body of the citizen met the claims of the state over that body. The physical demands of the body aligned national and individual interest.

One Del Monte advertisement featured the puzzled head of a woman confused by the alternate demands made in one ear by Uncle Sam to "Serve Nutritious Meals, Please" and a husband's supplication in the other ear to "Just Keep 'Em Appetizing!" (Del Monte advertisement 39). This same advertisement featured a reproduction of an Office of Defense, Health and Welfare Services poster that proclaimed, "U.S. Needs Us Strong. Eat Nutritional Food." Our treatment of our own bodies came under in-

creased state scrutiny and concern; in this instance, the king's two bodies were replaced with the power of the nation's singular body. The body of the citizen existed as the property of the nation. The citizen had dominion over that body until the body was used in a manner inefficiently related to state power. In this manner, the body's actions (in a wide range of avenues) submitted to the recognition of the nation-state. Even the most private of actions and attentions were organized to achieve national value. As Michel Foucault has recognized, the demand for healthy bodies has been established as a central location in the organization of social power. "Now it is over life," he wrote in *The History of Sexuality*, "throughout its unfolding, that power establishes its dominion" (139). The supervision of this life (and the range of factors associated with the individual body and the social body) was, according to Foucault, "effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulator controls: a biopolitics of the population*" (139). During World War II, these regulatory controls and organizations passed through many avenues of life, investing it with the value of the nation.

Reported Richardson Wright in *House & Garden*, "Equally necessary was it to maintain complete national health, to see that all benefited by the daily consumption of the proper fruits and vegetables, farmers and the children in their school luncheons as well as the average families of the land" ("Second Call" 31). Vitamins were much discussed in this framework. The Pennsylvania State Council of Defense distributed the play *Hoe! Hoe! Vitamin* by Carey O. Miller, chairman of the Dauphin County Victory Garden Committee. The one-act play opened with Privates Potato, Ato (Tom), and Parsley shining shoes and singing:

For he's a jolly good fellow
 For he's a jolly good fellow
 For he's a jolly good fellow
 This Vita-Min Hero of mine. (Mack 202)

The nation's possession of the body, very evident in time of war, promoted the consumption of vitamins and high-quality food by citizens.

“We were told by our government we did not eat enough of them for good nutrition, or cook them properly to PRESERVE their precious vitamins” (Burdett 1). Vitamins fueled the body in its national labor.

Victory gardens helped maintain healthy bodies through the consumption of healthier food and through the physical exercise of working in the garden. “‘What you need is exercise,’ has been the recommendation of many a doctor when people have asked what is the matter with them. Gardening will supply the finest exercise any doctor could ask for. It is all done outdoors in the pure fresh air and sunshine. It will help you get in better physical shape than you have been in for years. It will awaken an appetite and make you sleep more soundly” (Proskauer 2). Even in sleep, the body could be the location of nationalist pleas. “You can go ALL OUT for Victory,” advertisements for Ostermoor mattresses claimed, “. . . if you’re not ALL IN from restless sleeping” (55). The needs of the body were aligned with demands of the nation-state.

Order

The intellectual force of victory gardening addressed a perceived loss of order in the world exemplified by the war. Many gardeners saw their participation in the gardening process as a reactivation of natural order. Gardening, it was widely believed, would reveal to the world-weary citizen that there really was order in the seeming chaos of events. Order in this instance required the presence of the human. By participating in the physical world, people could discipline the chaotic and inefficient landscape of their yards, a practice that reinscribed them into the world as an ordered domain, in which plants bloomed according to given seasons.

The fear of chaos partially resulted from the power of the war to destroy notions of progress that had supplied much comfort through the twentieth century. It further echoed the death rattle of notions of human society as part of an

ordered world. If earlier individuals and societies faced the possibility that their lives, lifestyles, and civilizations could disappear on the wrong end of history’s slaughter-bench, the entire world now would (particularly with the creation and use of the atomic bomb) face the possibility of pointless disappearance. This threat consolidated the demand for new fundamentalisms—attempts to value life by its role in some plan or history.

Efficient planning was an element of this re-inscription of order. Planning ensured efficient expenditure of time, money, and effort. Planning also organized action to be judged by its success at achieving production. Inefficient action was relegated to less value because of its inability to successfully achieve a defined goal. Planning wrote order into the world, and ensured efficient expenditure of resources in the interest of the nation.

Efficient Planning

Franc Pomeroy Daniels’s overly precious book *Live at Home and Like It* included boxed suggestions from the author’s stick figure companion “Little Danny Do-It.” Danny encouraged planters to plan. “The plan’s the thing. You can take your time about planting—‘Rome wasn’t built in a day.’ But unless you follow a definite and carefully worked out plan, you’re sure to end up in a mess,” the little fellow warned (26). “Unless, however, the garden is intelligently planned and properly worked, the time expended, the money spent, and the waste of fertilizer and seed will become a hindrance rather than an aid to the war program,” predicted Gail Compton (8). Promoters of victory gardens turned this promotion into an opportunity to further champion the adoption of methods associated with scientific management in domestic practice, including planning. Magazines, pamphlets, and government publications all distributed garden plans to aid the neophyte gardener. Planning ensured the efficient use of domestic resources.

Control over Nature— Reestablishment of Order

The war, particularly its technological aspects, often appeared as humanity's unnatural domination of nature. "The salient feature of total war is the highly technological quotient in warfare, the increased control over nature turned towards destructive ends," wrote Hans Speier (89). Victory gardens offered a return to the natural order in which the rhythms and cycles of nature dominated humanity and would be used but not dominated by humans. Historically, gardeners had articulated different roles of humanity in nature. For example, during the eighteenth century, English gardens moved away in terms of style from highly geometric orders. The third Earl of Shaftsbury described this in terms that illustrate a greater belief that nature itself contains an order and that humanity did not need to impose one:

Things of a *natural* kind: where neither *Art*, nor the *Conceit* or *Caprice* of Man has spoil'd their genuine order. . . . Even the rude Rocks, the mossy *Caverns*, the irregular unwrought *Grottos*, and broken *Falls* of waters, with all the horrid graces of the *Wilderness* itself, as representing NATURE more, will be the more engaging, and appear with a magnificence beyond the mockery of princely gardens. (Cooper 125)

Victory gardens contributed to a conception of gardening in which human action was a part of nature. The active engagement of the gardener established order in a chaotic world in the midst of a chaotic war. This feature of gardening was much commented on in popular discourse, and often encouraged the planting of flowers as well as vegetables. More significantly, discussions of the ordering nature of gardening tied human actions into a larger plan or system.

"Gardening is to me," wrote Jessie Morris, "an escape from artificiality into a sane world of order and balance." Morris believed that gardening displayed the place of humanity within the

unchanging laws of the universe, in a world where rules were in constant turmoil. "It gives me a feeling of security, and satisfies a primitive need for the assurance of unchanging fundamentals. In my garden I find never-shifting values. I find the eternal laws of the universe in tangible form" (121).

Participating in this natural order supplied comfort and satisfaction. "Raising vegetables gives me physical comfort. When they grow beneath my hand, and gradually turn into fuel for the body, I am content in the knowledge that the larder need never be empty." The garden, furthermore, can be transferred from the production of the earth to products accumulated on the shelf. "In the winter, from the jars of vegetable on my cupboard shelves, my garden smiles at me!" (121)

Louis Bisch wrote of the importance of gardens as a reminder of the relationship between the earth and the physical bodies of humans. "May it be said, however," Bisch began, "that our own organ structure and its functioning are harmonious and rhythmic, the heart beats in regular sequence; the liver and other glands of the body operate according to a systemic schedule; the blood flows smoothly, evenly; all our physiological processes produce that inward sense of unity and co-ordination that communicates itself to the mind—and that of necessity seeks to complement the harmonious and rhythmic processes of nature outside ourselves" (52). This need for harmony resulted from a perceived loss of harmony evident in newspapers and human society.

But what we *can* do is offset as much as possible the gloom that, like a dark, menacing cloud, hangs over us. We can counteract the evil effects of what we read, hear, and see, what we fear ourselves. We can still find beauty! After all, what is life but a point of view! Your peace your happiness lies within yourself. See that your outlook remains as hopeful, courageous, and serene as possible because of the beauty that you have deliberately made part of your feeling. (52)

Human physical and spiritual health required the reaffirmation of ties to the natural world, and more importantly, to the natural order. Gardening, even when it did not promise a replacement within dislodged systems of order, promised to make the gardener feel order and could break through the unnatural isolation of the division of labor by returning the gardener to the essential relationship between people and the land.

The land produced the things whereby they lived; there was a direct relationship between human life and the soil. Even in the cities this was no doubt apparent and real. In these days of great concentration of populations, of specialization and industrialization, this fundamental relationship has almost completely been lost. Yet it is an integral part of the race heritage of each one of us. To lose our contact with the soil results in real unease and maladjustment; to recapture it affords profound joy and inward comfort. (Bisch 1)

Victory gardens offered a much needed medicine to combat the perceived loss of order and adjustment in the lives of modern citizens. Victory gardens promised to restore a sense of order, and, more immediately, to boost attitudes, morale, and feelings.

Feelings

Jessie Morris's garden work was often, according to her own account in *Better Homes and Gardens*, an elaborate attempt to produce particular feelings: "If my ideals seem futile, if my friends disappoint me, if my heart is sad, or my mind in turmoil, if my eyes are dull and my body sluggish, I can go into my garden and find faith, tranquility, comfort, and physical exercise, all of which give me a feeling of well-being" (121). Gardening reintroduced people to a perceived natural order and adjusted their emotions and feelings. Flowers and colors promoted tranquil and well-adjusted feelings.

"The question of flowers arises," remarked Ethelyn Keays in *House & Garden*. "What part have they in the war-time garden?" she asked. "A very important part indeed," the editors of *House & Garden* answered, "for they nourish the spirit just as surely as vegetables serve the body" (63). *House & Garden* stated, "Flowers we must still have, orange poppies to feed the soul as the orange carrots will feed the inner man," and they must be efficient, "but we must choose flowers that need no coddling, that will provide the necessary esthetic satisfaction without demanding constant attention" ("Iris, Peonies, and Poppies" 53). "At the same time," asserted Richardson Wright in *House & Garden*, "the Government recognized that the spirit as well as the body must be kept in health. It warned against destroying the serene beauty of lawns and colorful flower borders, as was done in World War I in a misguided effort to grow potatoes and other vegetable crops" ("Second Call" 31).

Flowers and color could be used more directly for nationalist purposes—red, white, and blue were the colors of choice. "For you who are proud of America, for you who are grateful . . . flowers could portray to the world the beauty of America—as well as make America more beautiful" ("Second Call" 31).

"We've mapped out spring-planting maneuvers," claimed the March 1941 *Better Homes and Gardens*. "But do plan on reds, whites, and blues this year. If you haven't space for a tri-color border, put a patriotic edging to your paths . . . remember this is one of the few countries in the world where people will plant flowers this spring. So grow your colors!" (Richardson, "Colors" 28). Roses also served a blatant nationalist purpose as gardeners were sold Douglas MacArthur roses—"the Commander's Rose"; the "Mme. Chiang Kai-Shek—A Truly Regal Mum"; and, of course, the "Pearl Harbor—The Memory Rose" (Wayside Gardens advertisement 75). Advertisements suggested the nationalist memories that flowers could produce. For example, the advertisement for Sutton Seeds titled "Remembrances from 'Over There'" pitched British flowers to Americans so that they would remember their fellow citizens

fighting in Europe, and reference future memories for returning servicemen and servicewomen. “In many an English garden U.S. soldiers find peace in the midst of war. You can grow the flowers they have smelled and admired—from seeds produced in England. They’ll be sweet reminders of the boys ‘over there’” (Sutton’s *Seeds* advertisement 75).

Flowers, colors, and gardening also calmed frightened nerves. “Now, if ever in our lives,” the *New York Times* gardening writer F. F. Rockwell wrote, “we will need the mental and psychological tonic which work with plants and close touch with the soil never fail to bring. Everyone knows what flowers will do for a sick ward in a hospital. For a sick world they do no less. This has been amply proved in war-ravaged land abroad, where gardening has proved to be one of the most practical aids to general morale” (10:5). Bisch wrote in *Better Homes and Gardens* of the tranquilizing effect of gardens at Sing Sing Prison. His guide through the prison pointed to the patch of garden “‘that,’ said my guide, ‘is tended by a ‘lifer.’ We think it’s been the means of preserving his reason!’” (22). Bisch explained that many different institutions of entrapment, punishment, and discipline used gardens to tranquilize the inmates:

Sanitariums for the nervously harassed, state and private institutions for the insane, institutions for the aged and chronically ill, all have made it a point in recent years to beautify their grounds by planting trees, flowering shrubs, and gardens so that the patients not only may enjoy outdoor space for recreation but also because psychiatrists and doctors generally realize the tremendous role such beauty spots play in restoring the mind and body to normality. (22)

Gardening allowed people in institutions of discipline, routine, and structure to perceive the world as conforming to a natural order, and soothed the resentment about this control and violence. Strikingly, in Bisch’s description the condition of citizens during the war was metaphorically placed next to prisoners, asylums, and other institutions of strict control. Paul Dempsey

extended this description to office, factory, and home: “Growing vegetables can be of particular value to the worker confined to office, store, or factory. Even the busy housewife will find that a few minutes spent in the garden renews her spirit and provides her with a much-needed change from the humdrum of household duties” (2).

Dr. Donald Laird informed readers of *House & Garden* concerning the importance of color for the modification of moods. In 1928 he claimed at the University of Chicago that football coach Alonzo Stagg had two different dressing rooms for his teams. “One room had soothing colors to help the men calm down and relax between halves, the other had stimulating hues and was used for the coach’s fight talks just before going back into the game . . . Coach Stagg had copied his colors from those in use for mood control in mental hospitals” (29). The colors that the mental hospitals used to control and soothe patients became colors that citizens should consider when decorating. Managers and administrators also benefited from the knowledge that colors designed to promote mental calm also promoted efficient labor.

The increased demand for economic efficiency used this attention to color and the mental power of different colors to ensure the productive power of football players and cafeteria workers. “Speaking of saving fuel,” Laird wrote, “that 65° temperature can be made to seem warmer by the right use of the new colors. Reds and oranges can make a room seem warmer without raising the temperature a bit. In industrial circles they are telling about the new cafeteria in an airplane plant. The employees, mostly girls, complained that it was cold and drafty.” The engineers were comfortable with the temperature so the industrial relations manager was brought in to change the colors and adjust mental thermostats. “The industrial relations manager had a wide band of vibrant red painted around the room, at eye height, between shifts.” When the “girls” returned from lunch, “they commented at once about the room being warmer, although the temperature had not changed a fraction of a degree . . . Thus wartime fuel was saved, and working morale kept higher for

the girls behind the men behind the guns—a pretty good job for a gallon of red paint!” (29).

This demand for efficient production—common in industry, government, and administration—came increasingly to bear on the domestic space of the home during this time through such vehicles as victory gardens.

Production—Consumption

Victory gardening was one rare avenue of domestic practice in which the state allowed and encouraged consumption of products, setting the stage for the postwar organization of citizenship around consumption—particularly consumption that promoted greater production. In a social world as geared to efficient production as the United States was during much of the twentieth century, even leisure became a location for well-managed production. But in distinction to the methods of efficient organization outlined by Frederick W. Taylor, domestic efficiency focused on consumption. In this way, a Taylorite interest in efficient production contributed to the great American drive for consumption.

Efficient production was highly promoted in garden journals as an important aspect of victory gardening. Garden plans, planting schedules, and produce inventories were all printed to assure the home gardener of the most efficient production possible. “BIG QUESTION is this: Which vegetables produce the most food per row?” asked Lou Richardson in *Better Homes and Gardens*. “Which do we need most? How can we get them to the table without loss of their precious vitamins and minerals? Luckily, nutritionists have been working for years to give us the answers” (“Greens” 30). Victory gardeners needed to be assured of efficient use of space and time. Experts, with their scientific studies, promised information regarding efficient food production.

Krider Nurseries sold a forty-eight-page guide to gardening for ten cents that “tells you what to plant and where and how to plant it” (Krider Nurseries advertisement 30). *Better Homes and*

Gardens printed planting charts to help organize the home production of vegetables. “Study these charts and the plan. There’s a lot to them you can’t take in at a glance. Working with your seed catalogs, you can tailor . . .” your home and yard to efficient production (“How to Plan” 16). The garden plot outline for a 30’ × 50’ piece of ground was “engineered for maximum output,” the magazine assured readers. *House & Garden* featured the cost-counting story of victory garden production in which the cost of seeds and time spent working the garden were tallied against the garden’s production. The article, subtitled “How a Victory Garden 40’ by 40’ produced \$79.80 worth of food,” listed expenditures and yield of the garden in columns to scientifically determine the productive capacity of a victory garden.

Magazines also featured step-by-step instructions of physical work, modeled on organizations of work developed by Taylor, who instituted a rigorous system of management and control over the workers’ day in the interest of efficient production, to structure the work of laborers under managers. The work of gardening was divided into particular steps that the home planter could clearly follow. Ferry’s Seeds offered a victory garden plan that contained “a handy folding pocket-size chart in four colors, showing how, when and what to plant” (89). This information and colorful charts were based on the work of those ubiquitous Taylorites, the experts: “Its down-to-earth gardening tips are based on the results from test gardens checked and double checked for home requirements by Ferry’s experts” (89).

Many home improvements were promoted as the means to patriotism, and more to efficient and sustained use of the home and its features. *House & Garden* promoted the use of casein paint as a way to avoid using essential war materials and yet protect one’s house. “You are being patriotic, too,” the magazine assured readers, “in revitalizing your rooms with casein in preference to ordinary paint” (Christie 64). This patriotism was closely tied to efficient use of resources. “Besides, saving money is a duty to your nation nowadays. You are saving when you buy this inexpensive

material and saving the cost of labor when you apply it yourself, which is easy to do” (64). This paint increased efficiency through its economical cost and through its ease of application, which had the additional benefit of allowing homeowners to do their own work.

Magazines brimmed with advertisements for products that would improve productive capacity in the garden, thus keeping the victory gardener’s labor in the most efficient alignment with the needs of the nation-state. Additionally, advertisements for a wide variety of products used victory gardens to encourage a wide range of consumer items, including birdhouses, plant hormones, and cigarettes. Peter Henderson & Co. told gardeners to “plant a Henderson collection that has been designed by experts to make full use of your ground, and to yield bumper crops of high quality vegetables” (90). Semesan claimed cost-efficiency for its “economical, easily-used,” seed treatment in “A Seed-Saving Tip to Victory Gardeners!” (88). Vitamist promised “more productive victory gardens” (91).

Hagerstrom Metalcraft studio sold a Victory Bird Feeder for \$3.50, Lincolnway Plant Market of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania sold a Victory Garden Plan Guide, and Semesan sold a substance that victory gardeners needed to fight seed decay and damping-off. Perhaps most surprisingly, Marlboro cigarettes assured readers of *House & Garden* that they were “*Right* to plant a victory garden!” and at least as importantly, “*Right* to relax with a MARLBORO . . . each puff a *conscious* pleasure” (Marlboro Cigarettes advertisement 71).

Two important aspects of this salesmanship were application of pressure for women to appear as good providers, and promoting many goods as means of improving production. L.L. Olds Seed Co. and Uncle Sam promised that their seed catalog would teach the reader, “. . . EVERYTHING YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT RAISING YOUR VICTORY GARDEN.” This knowledge would allow you to “cut your food bills with a victory garden.” Vigoro fertilizer company even manufactured a line of fertilizer specifically for victory gardens. “*Of course*, you’re planning a Victory Garden this year . . . but you

know, too, that vegetables . . . to grow plentifully, for perfection of size and flavor, for extra richness in minerals and vitamins . . . *must have complete, balanced nourishment.*” The sellers of Vigoro also relied on economic demands for scientific efficiency characteristic of F. W. Taylor. “Vigoro Victory Garden Fertilizer is a complete plant food . . . a real square meal . . . supplying in scientific proportions *all* the food elements growing things need from the soil. It produces results quickly and *economically.*” Your Vigoro dealer was not only prepared to sell you such a productive product but could also supply a free copy of “How to Make a Better Victory Garden,” a booklet that, readers were assured, was “prepared by experts” (Vigoro advertisement 94).

This productive capacity in the domestic arena was consistently tied to a demand for women in particular to be good providers. Victory gardens promised to help a woman supply and care for her family during the stark wartime. “You’ll like the new feeling of security that counting on your own efforts brings you,” encouraged *House & Garden*. “You’ll like that look in the family’s eyes when they estimate your new skill and ability to cope with a problem and come up smiling.” Furthermore, the magazine promised that this satisfaction was nourished by the bounty of your labor. “You’ll get double enjoyment next Winter from eating the fruit of your own labor.” “Furthermore,” the article continued, “here’s one hobby no man will make fun of, because he can understand your wish to batten down the hatches before the storm” (“Primer for a Good Provider” 43). In much of the popular discourse surrounding victory gardens, the value of the state was one step deferred. That is, the immediate value was personal or familial, but this value was consistently buttressed by the state. In this style of support, victory gardens were consistently promoted as important work for women—ensuring the affection and attention of husbands and children. Husbands were also possible garden workers.

“Husband gardeners, who will need co-operation from the kitchen department, may diplomatically inquire, ‘How many times shall we have bowl salad this summer, dear?’ . . . Or the

husband gardener may venture the mild suggestion: 'I see that nutritionists say you should serve one green, leafy vegetable every day,' and get the heated rejoinder: 'I would rather be dead than have to eat spinach every day!'" (Burdett 8). In this example, husbands helped in the garden as a professional conduit against a temperamental gardener, as it were—the voice of professionalism against feminine emotion. Advertisements voiced the terms of professional reason—that is, purchasing the pitched product would increase efficiency, nutrition, yield, and beauty.

Buying the best varieties became a patriotic duty, and essential to the productive garden. "Asleep at the Switch? You most certainly are if you're not planting the newer and better varieties," asserted Franc Daniels (34). The promotion of consumption as a patriotic duty fostered a gardening culture of catalogs, encouraged discussion of the winter joys of browsing, encouraged comparing prices, and increased demand for the latest varieties.

The wind whistles bleak around the chimney, but as the cold strengthens the day lengthens and the first harbingers of Spring will soon be here. Some of them, indeed, have already arrived—the seed catalogs—and this year it is more than ever important to give them early attention, plan the season's garden and get supplies ordered in good time. The biggest home gardening year in all history is on the way and though the seedsmen are confident of being able to cope with its demands, orders are already pouring in to the mail order houses from customers who want to be sure of getting the best varieties. ("The Pick O' The Bunch" 77)

Catalog browsing highlighted the connection between consumption, production, and self-expression associated with American gardening. Samuel Ogden equated the enjoyment of planting a garden with the art of purchasing the right plants. "Anyone who has delved into a seed catalogue knows its fascination. And as the home gardener may select any variety he chooses—of many that will thrive in his climate—the attractive descriptions and the tempting photographs are

likely to inspire him to great flights of self-expression" (3). Purchasing, in this example, was connected to the ability to express a self distinct from others.

Consumption entered into American political culture as an aspect of production and as an element in self-expression. Citizens (consumers) had to watch the catalogs closely for products and plants that would increase their efficient production, but also for products that would allow them to express themselves. They also were encouraged to monitor the use of their own leisure time. During WWII, the nation increased its demand to organize most aspects of life to efficient production and consumption, but gardening did supply a realm of activity in which order and structure—even if powerfully supported by others—could still be designed by the individual according to his or her own sense of order. For Ogden, the display of individuality in gardening was closely tied to the ability to purchase distinct goods.

One of the many advantages in having your own garden, in growing you own vegetables, is the privilege of choosing the varieties that you prefer. The vegetables on sale at the green-grocer's are produced commercially and of necessity are varieties that were not selected for their flavor or succulence, but for their ability to stand the rough treatment of machine methods of cultivation and harvesting, as well as for their hardiness to endure long shipments and many handlings. The home gardener, on the other hand, has a wide choice, alluringly displayed in the seed catalogues. He can choose on a purely personal basis, his selection governed only by the requirements of the family and the exigencies of the climate in which he lives. Thus he can place all the emphasis on texture and flavor. (Ogden 2-3)

Victory gardens exemplified the organization of domestic life to the needs of industrial and national production during World War II. Organizing domestic space according to these needs extended the range of social demands for efficiency. Applying national goals of efficiency to the household increased the range of social space in which citizens were to find value and meaning

by aligning their work to the needs of the nation. Even action carried out in leisure was to have a purpose, produce a result, and be directed to increased efficiency in the interest of the nation. The problem of the meaning of work being somehow removed from work “in itself” is a problem that can usefully be approached with the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. “In the sweat of our brow,” Nietzsche wrote echoing the *Genesis* account of the garden of Eden, “we should drink our wine” (57). Drinking the purpose of labor or work completed the circle—one’s own willingness to will the work completes it and justifies it. The actions of such a self require no superior recognition of value. Nietzsche’s metaphor of consumption opens up additional avenues of examination in the light of victory gardens, particularly in light of the nation’s willingness to promote consumption in this avenue.

The connection between consumption and production possibly planted the seeds of future vineyards. Nietzsche’s suggestion that in the sweat of our brow we should drink our wine seems an invitation to find value in a more extravagant consumption of our own energies, disciplined and ordered by the self. In Nietzsche’s joke, or poem, the wine to be drunk, the sweat produced by labor is not exchanged for objects of social value. Work, and its discipline, is not *for* something else; work is its own wine.

Perhaps freedoms offered by gardening could aid in the conception of such self-valuing. “It will be the strong and domineering natures that enjoy their finest gaiety in such constraint and perfection under law of their own; the passion of their tremendous will relents in the fact of all stylized nature, of all conquered and serving nature. Even when they have to build palaces and design gardens they demure at giving nature freedom,” Nietzsche further claimed (section 290). Or, in the words of landscape architect James Rose, “Informality does not exist for us except as an effect coming from the looseness and freedom in the use of form; the ‘leave nature alone’ attitude is complete childish romanticism, and, more important, an impossibility” (70). Form, for Rose, as he explained in 1939, was a result, not a goal.

“Form is a result and not a predetermined element of the problem . . . when we begin with any preconceived notion of form—symmetry, straight lines, or an axis—we eliminate the possibility of developing a form which will articulate and express the activity to occur” (73). The introduction of skills of development and creation not associated with the obedience to plans and orders contributed to conceptions of discipline outside of standardization and normalization.⁵

Gardening fit into the social order of America during World War II but also inculcated habits that contributed to alternatives to national recognition, particularly artistic organization and individualized consumption. Concepts that accorded with the idea of a self developed out of individualized disciplines organized to produce the citizen as a work of art. There is no reason, then, for Augustine or anyone else to forbid us to find in the garden an exploration of the ways that our love for others could contribute to and be tempered by the same expansive freedom that the writer of the Gnostic *Gospel of Philip* found in the Garden of Eden. “In the place where I shall eat all things is the tree of knowledge . . . That garden is the place where they will say to me, ‘Eat this, or do not eat that, just as you wish’” (Pagels 173).

Notes

1. Mara Miller writes, somewhat generally, that “the basis for the metaphorical significance of gardens lies in the perceived similarities between human beings and plants. These similarities are both biological and cultural, in the literal sense of providing care for, hence training and disciplining—in specifically human terms, education and government” (26).

2. “This means that the War Garden of 1918 must become the Victory Garden of 1919” (Pack 4).

3. *National Defense Gardening Conference* (Washington, DC, Department of Agriculture Auditorium, December 19-20, 1941); H. W. Hochbaum, “Developing National Defense Garden Program”; M. L. Wilson, “Farm Gardens and Farm Health”; M. L. Wilson, “M-Day for Gardening.”

4. “But the most important effect of the frontier has been in the promotion of democracy here and in Europe. As has been indicated, the frontier is productive of individualism” (Turner, “The Significance” 397).

5. Rose’s acceptance of an extremely wide variety of gardens and forms served the concerns of national pluralism—that is, he was concerned to demonstrate the variety of gardens (mostly European)

that contributed to the American garden. He quoted with enthusiasm the author who wrote in the April 1938 issue of *Landscape Architecture Quarterly* that “it is perhaps to this very eclecticism—the borrowing of styles that are native to other countries and other times—that garden design in America is most obligated for its wealth of expression as an art” (Rose, “Articulate Form”; Treib 75).

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