



# ***GROWING***

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WHEN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAY  
AND STRAW WAS MORE FAMILIAR THAN  
LEFTS & RIGHTS, IRISH DANCING & U.S  
CIVIL WAR MARCHING WAS TAUGHT  
WITH INSTRUCTIONS OF:

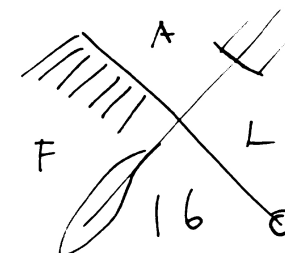


A Fair Land is a project conceived as a viable living system; one that might be established and functional within a matter of days. The system produces food, creates its own product and industry, its own income, and finally a house to suit the requirements of a person servicing the system. The ambition of this venture is to create a way of life to learn from, with all elements of the system becoming a learning experience. For many people today such an education might prove fundamental – that food can be grown and things can be made that work. These are curious, almost miraculous, activities.

These initial moments are only the beginning, and from hereon a continuing education might be extrapolated. There is no need of a teacher; the learning process is communal and the Internet holds the knowledge. This is a kind of utopia – one that does not expound tinted windows and personalised number plates, but instead is a stripped down, elemental vision that few people would be really satisfied with – one that offers no luxury, but life and learning. Such ascetic visions have often been

advocated, from the Jains of India to the early Christian Anchorites, and many, many times since. The offer is super flawed: If you have too much then it might seem attractive, even life-style; if you have too little it may hold even less appeal. And we all more often feel that we have too little.

So, if the idea is that the system supports you, then what? What purpose are you supported for? What is the real product of your life? Many utopias have been torn apart wrestling with this dilemma. It is not enough just to live well and lightly in the world – we are programmed to desire more, to wrest territory, to create capacity. Perhaps an alternative means might be to resist this impulse and instead work to improve distribution and fairness, and most problematically of all to accept there is no particular aim in being. As John Ruskin vividly said: 'there is no wealth but life.' That's it. That's all you really get – make the most of it. The value is in the miracle of birth, growth and death. See it here, try it, experience it, and learn from it. But don't do the death bit – I promised the healthy and safety people you wouldn't.







## PROFUSION AND PLENTY

### THE HARVEST IN IRISH TRADITION

The harvest comes as a time of abundance and fruition, with crops that grew in unhurried determination through the wind and rain of spring now standing ripened and ready for gathering. For our forebears, this was a time of great celebration, as it marked the point at which the lean months of June and 'Hungry July' (where the year's stores were at their lowest) gave way again to profusion and plenty.

In Ireland, the harvest season was understood to commence on the 1st of August, and was known as Lammas (or Lúnasa in Irish). This date is marked as one of the four 'Quarter Days' of Irish tradition, so called as they divide the year into its seasons of winter (Halloween / Samhain), spring (St. Brigid's Day / Imbolc), summer (May Day / Bealtaine) and autumn (Lammas / Lúnasa). The Irish language names for the autumn months likewise tell of the reaping season, with September and October being known as Meán Fómhair and Deireadh Fómhair ('Middle Harvest' and 'Late Harvest') respectively.

Despite the autumn traditionally beginning on the 1st of August, celebrations welcoming it typically commenced across the island of Ireland on the last Sunday in July, on what was commonly known as 'Garland Sunday' (a garland being a term to describe a decorative wreath of flowers, as well as more generally referring to a party). Other English language names for this day were 'Big Sunday', 'Height Sunday', 'Mountain Sunday', 'Rock Sunday', and 'Bilberry Sunday' (to name a few).

Despite the variety of names, these celebrations had a common theme; the tendency on this day was for groups of young people to remove to hills and heights in their local districts, ascending to their summits and gathering there to sport and play. In some parts of the country wreaths of flowers were woven and scattered across hilltops or left at sites of worship and devotion, berries were picked and eaten in their droves, and there was music, dancing, courtship, and the consumption of

intoxicating liquors. In some instances, with young men having retired to the public house for the day (and duly indulging in the refreshments offered therein) faction fights broke out (sometimes even being arranged to take place among neighbouring parties at this time).

Races and contests of athletics and strength were also common at the hilltop gatherings of Garland Sunday, and in certain places men even raced horses into lakes and bays in a state of undress; an exuberance which drew scorn from the authorities of the day. A magistrate writing in 1833 referred to the prevailing 'disgraceful practice' and 'shameful custom' of naked men riding horses through the water at this time. Horse-swimming races like these are also recorded as having taken place in the harvest celebrations of England, Scotland and France.

All was not drinking, courting and skinny-dipping however, as pilgrimage, prayer and reflection also played an important part of Garland Sunday celebrations; this day saw communities across the island make their way to various holy sites in their districts – blessed wells and graveyards for example – to perform rounds of prayers there, the most notable instance of which can be seen today in the tens of thousands of diligent pilgrims who ascend to the summit of 'The Reek', the sacred mountain of Croagh Patrick situated just outside of Wexford, Co. Mayo, where St. Patrick observed a 40 day ritual of fasting and penance. Weary and woeful was his time on that good mountain, and he suffered great hardship there, being surrounded we are told, by demonic birds who blackened out the sky above him.

Before even St. Patrick's time however, the mountain of Croagh Patrick, and indeed celebrations marking the arrival of the harvest in general, were associated with pre-Christian sun-god and divine champion Lugh. The festivities that came to be associated with him bear his name to this day, and in the Irish language the month of August is known as Lúnasa; Lugh being the name of the god, with Násadh referring to games, or an assembly (the county Louth also derives its name from him, as does the city of Lyon, in France).

Lugh is said in antiquity to have established Aonach Tailteann, or 'The Tailteann Games' (at modern day Telltown, in county Meath), a large



The Scyth Men, Donegal, 1937  
 [Image Reproduced by Permission of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin]

gathering which took place at the beginning of the harvest period, and which was held in honour of the deity's foster-mother Tailtiu. These festivities are described in our early literature as having great throngs of people in attendance, with royals and nobles being found alongside merchants, musicians, athletes and other entertainers, and survivals of these open-air assemblies of old are to be seen in the Garland Sunday observations of more recent tradition.

With the passing of Garland Sunday, and with celebrations duly having ceased, the heavy work of the harvest commenced. Crops of corn (namely rye, oats, barley, flax and wheat) were now taken in from the fields, and men and women (along with their children) would travel in their droves to begin the heavy work of reaping with scythes and sickles.

Harvesting involved laborious effort, though certain individuals were credited in folk tradition as possessing a supernatural ability to cut enormous amounts of corn with little exertion, owing to their possessing a magical charm which guaranteed that their reaping hook always had the sharpest of edges. The one who had ortha an fhaoir or 'edge charm' so called, would write it on a piece of paper before sewing it into their clothes, so that mowing would no more prove a hardship to them. Others with 'edge charm' who might take pity on a mower struggling with a poor scythe, were able to share their gift simply by taking the blighted implement from its owner, rubbing their hand along the blade, and returning it. Their companions working alongside them without the benefit of this charm however, were doomed to struggle; stopping to sharpen their blunted blades again and again before continuing on in the heat and sweat of the long summer evenings. The sharpness of one's reaping blade was not a concern in Ireland alone, and in certain parishes in England it was considered most unlucky for a mower to cut on his first swathe, a grey or coloured snail through its middle. Such an event, we are told, would make the hook so blunt as to render the rest of the day's work quite useless – the only cure for which was to go home and rest for the remainder of the day!

All was not struggle and misery however, as the harvest (in bringing together men and women from across the community) served as a time in which symbols and tokens of affection and fancy were passed to and





Tying Stacks of Oats, Armagh,  
1965  
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Tying of Oats  
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fro among individuals. These find their most beautiful expression in the 'harvest knot', a small and delicately plaited wisp of straw given by men and women to one another as a symbol of affection, a custom introduced here from our sister island of Britain. These items were often woven from grass, as well as flax, oats and wheat, and were constructed by taking straws of equal length and fastening the ends, before delicately turning one straw over the next, rotating them in a delicate weave which was tied off at the ends. Harvest knots worn by women had the seeds of grain still attached, while these were cut away in the knots worn by men.

By the end of September, the work of reaping the grain was nearly finished, although no harvest was complete until the cutting of 'the last sheaf' (or bundle of corn in the field), had taken place. In a moment that was treated with a certain symbolism and joviality, this final bundle of grain left standing in the field was ceremoniously plaited from bottom to top before being cut. Reapers would at times stand back and throw their hooks at it to cut it, sometimes being blindfolded and spun around before doing so, to 'add to the hilarity', and in a great many places across

Europe, the cutting of this final sheaf was marked with great cheers. In some quarters this cutting of the last sheaf was known as 'putting out the hare', and it was considered that the spirit of the corn, now hiding in this last sheaf, would flee from the site of its final reaping, much to the jubilation of the onlookers. The hare in folk tradition has long held particularly malevolent associations, being understood to be the form most often taken by shape-shifting women who would disguise themselves as this animal before travelling to their neighbour's land in order to supernaturally attack them and steal away their luck for the year. William Camden, the English antiquarian and topographer of the late medieval period, in giving account of the manners and customs of the Irish in the 16th century, describes how those farmers who found a hare among their cattle would 'kill her, for they suppose she is some old trot that would filch away their butter'.

The association of the last sheaf in the field with a particular animal is common; apart from its representation as a hare, in various parts of Europe the spirit of the corn was known (depending on the region) to take the form of a wolf, dog, fox, cock, goose, quail, cat, goat, cow, pig or horse. This last sheaf was also often personified as a female, and was commonly referred to in tradition as 'the maiden' or 'the queen', as well

as being known as 'the hag', the cailleach or 'the granny'. Terms used to refer to the last sheaf tend to personify the corn as both mother and daughter, symbolic of the dual aspects of femininity present in both; in the grain newly ripened, and the grain yet to provide future abundance, in next year's harvest.

The cutting of the last sheaf was met with great jubilation and cheering, and the lucky reaper who managed to cut it was often showered with drops of whiskey or water, before hosting a clousúr ('closure') or 'harvest home'; a celebratory feast which marked the end of the harvest, to which all were invited, and which had the last sheaf as its ceremonial centrepiece. This feast would feature an abundance of freshly home-brewed beer, as well as sides of bacon, rounds of ribs and new potatoes. Food and drink was consumed in earnest at such a gathering, healths were drunk and there was music and dancing until late into the night, and the harvest season has even lent itself to traditional tunes and dances to accompany them, namely An Staicín Eorna (The Little Stack of Wheat) and Baint an Fhéir (The Haymaker's Jig).

The last sheaf was hung up in the house until the next harvest, and was held to bestow good luck and plenty upon its possessor. It was also understood to have certain curative powers, and grain taken from it and fed to animals would ensure their robust strength and good health throughout the year. With the gloomy weather of October fast approaching, and the last sheaf hanging securely above the door, life turned inwards again in advance of the long nights of winter; the earth now lying fallow and bare.

This then is the season of harvest; a time of reaping and fruition, of abundance and plenty wrought in struggle, by the sweat of one's brow. Let us be glad of the fruits we have reaped; planted in care by those who have gone before us! Let us be glad especially of this Fair Land; of the wealth of profusion and bounty it offers up to us, and of the earth from which it springs, the earth to which we return generation after generation, season after season, unceasingly and without end.





Fieldwork, Dún Chaoin, Co. Kerry [Image Reproduced by permission of the National Folklore Collection University College Dublin]



A Day's Work Done; Armagh, 1920  
[Image Reproduced by Permission of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin]





Cutting the Cailleach, or 'Last Sheaf', Co. Armagh  
[Image Reproduced by permission of the National Folk-  
lore Collection University College Dublin]



Wheat From Chaff - Hand Scutching of Corn, Galway,  
1943 [Image Reproduced by Permission of the National  
Folklore Collection Dublin]

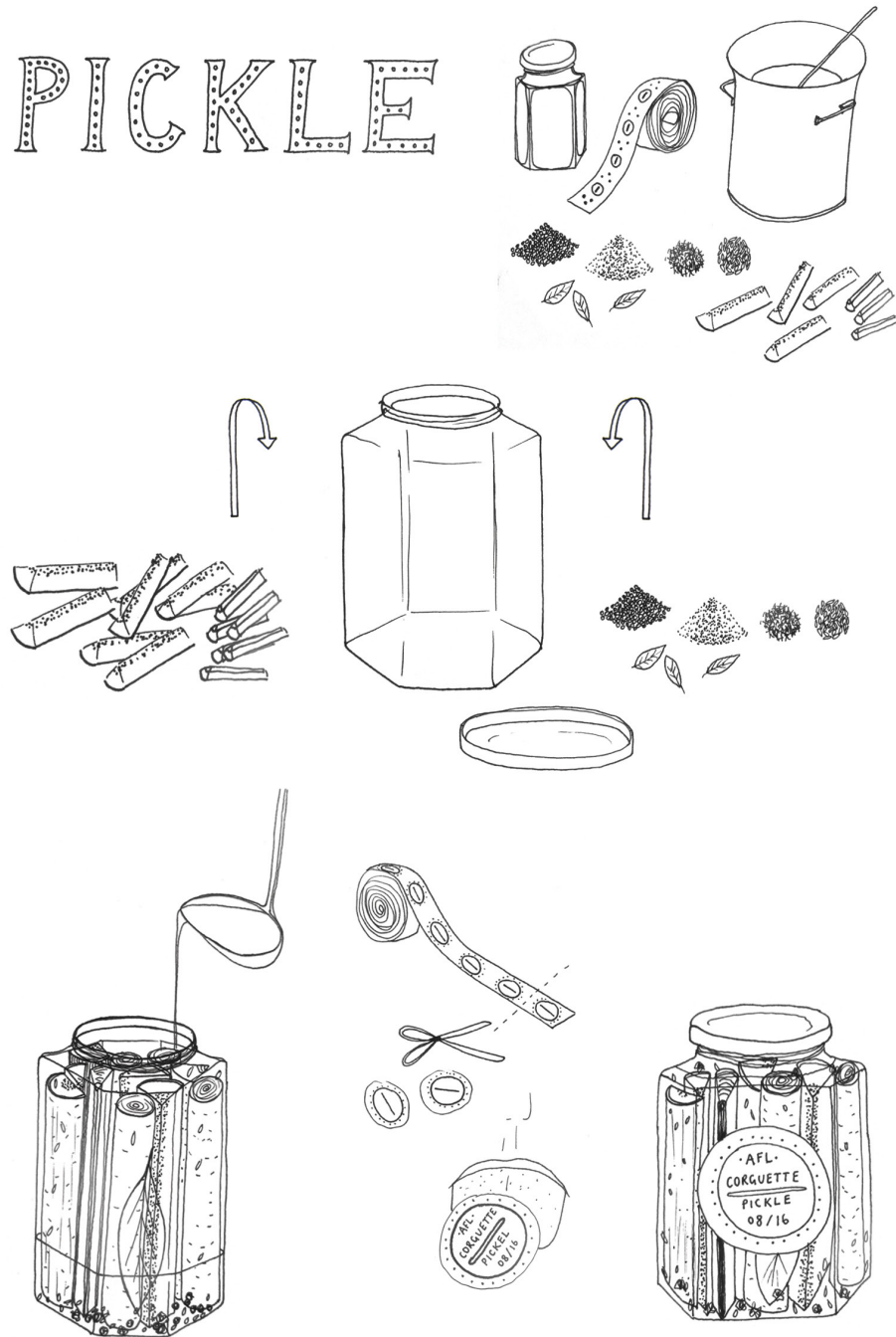
DUBLIN'S NO. 1 TOURIST ATTRACTION



WORLD'S BIGGEST!

Tony Louth's compost heap

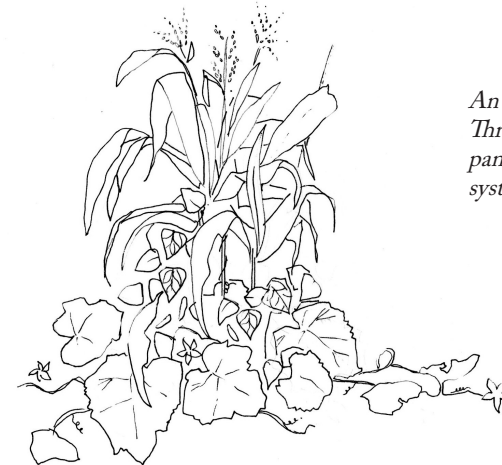
# PICKLE



## CUCURBITACEAE

*Cucurbitaceae* are a curious botanical family; one of the earliest and most actively domesticated plants, they are now almost unknown in the wild. Carbon-dating places their first farming in Mesoamerica during the Neolithic farming revolution, between 7,000 to 10,000 years ago; wild plants have been dated 2,000 years prior to this. The farming of *Cucurbitaceae* was followed by that of corn and beans several thousand years later, and the three were grown together as companion crops in a method known as the Three Sister system. This method, first employed in milpa ('maize-field') structures by the Mayans, creates a micro-environment in which the three plants flourish; the maize stalks facilitate climbing of the beans, and the squash leaves create a micro-climate that retains moisture at the roots of all three plants. The bean-stalks feed nitrogen back to the soil, which nourishes its companions. The traditional Three Sister method calls for eight years of fallow resting between two-year growing periods in what H. Garrison Wilkes, a Boston-based maize researcher, describes as 'one of the most successful human inventions ever created'.

Currently, the most commonly grown cucurbits include squash (*cucurbita*), cucumber (*cucumis sativus*), watermelon (*citrullis lanatus*), other melons (*cucumis melo*) and various loofahs (*luffa aegyptiaca*). Although its ancestors were present before humans in the Old World, our humble courgette is an infant in cucurbit terms as it was developed near Milan in the late-1800s. It belongs to the *Cucurbita pepo* family, which was collected in the New World as a curiosity by Columbus and brought back to Europe.



An example of the Three Sisters companion planting system.



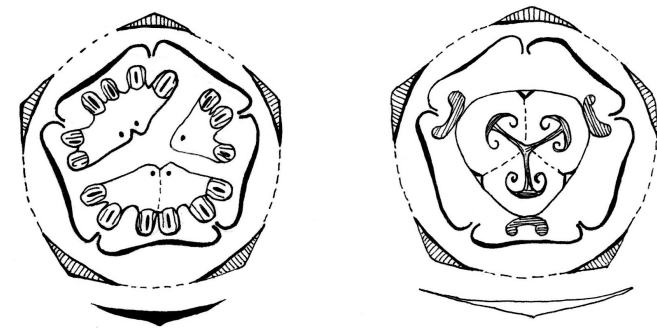
Images and mentions of *C. pepo* begin to appear in European art and writing shortly after this, the first of these just sixteen years after its transoceanic voyage. Jean Bourdichon's *Grandes Heures d'Anne de Bretagne* is a personal prayer book commissioned by Anne de Bretagne, Duchess of Brittany and twice-queen of France, and contains several cucurbits among its 300 plant drawings. Before the fairly recent discovery of this book it was thought that the first European images of *C. pepo* were those seen in the frescoes of the Villa Farnesina in Rome, painted in the early 1500s. Here, Raphael Sanzio's illustrations of Cupid and Psyche were festooned by sumptuous borders by his assistant Giovanni Martini da Udine, who filled them with thousands of fruits, vegetables and botanicals. The fruits represent the fertility and voluptuousness of nature (including a romantic moment between a squash and a fig), are accurate and complete with defects and diseases, and were drawn from the specimens of the viridarium in the surrounding gardens of the villa.

During the Renaissance, *C. pepo* appeared in botanic herbals as unfettered but scientifically accurate drawings; in addition, members of the family cropped up as colourful pumpkins in paintings of the time. There are few recorded visual examples of *C. pepo* between the mid-17th and mid-19th centuries, which is why the work of the French botanist A.N. Duchesne provides an invaluable resource for tracing its history and that of its cultivars. Between 1769 and 1774, Duchesne created 364 drawings of cucurbits, including the fruits of almost 100 cultivars and their offspring by cross-pollination. His collection contains a far smaller proportion of edible fruits than we know today. Duchesne presented his work in instalments at the Académie Royale des Sciences in Paris, in a series of performative lectures accompanied by paintings and documentation. The memoir has been lost, but we can assume the delivery was lengthy and detailed, taking up 3 days of the Académie's programme.



*A bottle gourd as it appears in a botanic herbal by Leonhart Fuchs*

*Curcubita pepo* is one of most variable species in the entire plant kingdom regarding plant characteristics. Horticulturally it contains 8 edible species: pumpkin, marrow, courgette, and cocozolle (subspecies *pepo*) and scallop, acorn, straightneck and crookneck squash (subspecies *ovifera*). The plant is distinguished by 'acutely and prominently lobed leaves with harsh spiculate hairs; strongly angled, hard fruiting pedicels... and uniformly pale tan seeds with a raised margin'. The fruit is a *pepo*, a particular type of berry produced from an inferior ovary. The flowers are either male or female, bright yellow and five-pointed, and open for pollen-collection in the early morning. Traditionally, they are attended by solitary bees of the *Peponapis pruinosa* or *Xenoglossa* families, who became oligoleges (pollen specialists) of cucurbits. These bees evolved to match the cycle and anatomy of the plant, flying before sunrise and developing large eye spots to help them see in near-darkness.



*Contrasting structures of male and female C. pepo flowers.*

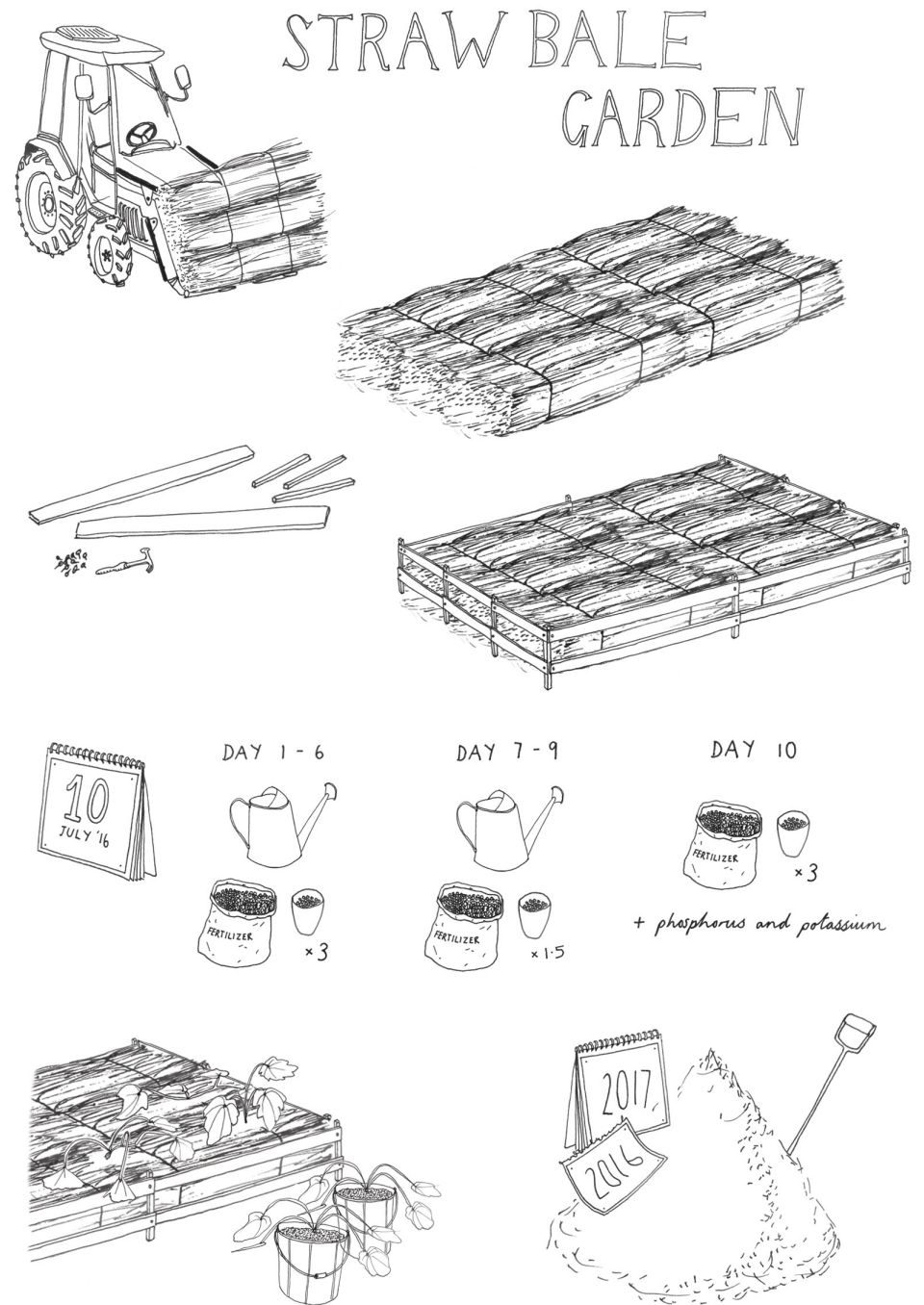
In terms of usage, the cucurbit family is global and multifarious. Simultaneous cultivations seem to have happened at great distances in separate parts of the world, a mystery to botanists for many years. However, recent studies suggest gourds floated between continents, following currents and depositing their seeds safely on arrival. On land, the seed dispersal of cucurbits ranges from the peaceful to the explosive; at one end of the spectrum, the Javan cucumber (*Alsomitra macrocarpa*) produces seeds with papery wings, spanning half a foot and equipped to glide long distances. Others have a more violent form of seed dispersal: when perfectly ripe, 'squirting cucumbers' (*Ecballium elaterium*) pop off their stalks like champagne corks, traveling up to 95 miles an hour.

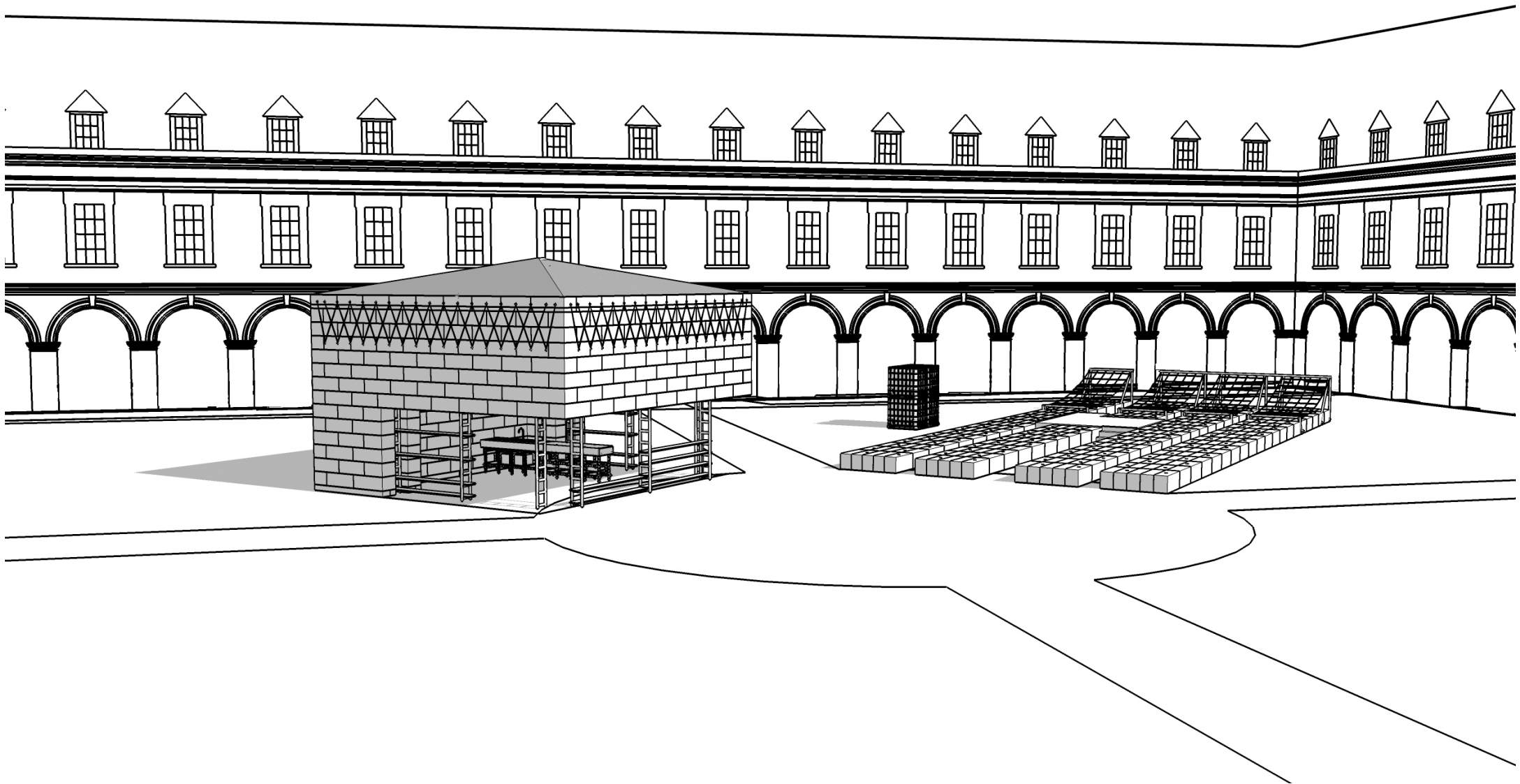
Pliny the Elder warned that if cut ripe the ‘seed spurts out, even endangering the eyes’. These particular squirting cucurbits are bristly and inedible, but the seeds were thought to have had strong medicinal properties; they also provided the drug *elaterium*. Other medical uses for cucurbits include a recommendation to sleep on a bed of cucumbers in case of a fever. Surprisingly, despite their form, courgettes and cucumbers are not traditionally aphrodisiacs; Leonhart Fuchs (16th century German botanist extraordinaire) includes the Greek quote ‘let a woman weaving a cloak eat a cucumber’ in his 16th century herbal. Weavers, as Aristotle reminded us, are ‘unchaste and eager’ - eating a cucumber was said to settle them.

Cucurbits have been used in a multitude of contexts globally. In addition to a vast range of culinary applications, they are also used as fishing buoys, bonnets and masks, building materials, musical instruments, carrying and storage vessels and as decorative and ceremonial objects. Regarding edibility, the flesh, seeds, flowers and stems of the plants are consumable, and there is an infinite number of global variations on recipes. However, for those dazzled by the astonishing variety, diversity and history of *Cucurbitaceae*, there is a practical Sicilian proverb to bring us back to earth: *Falla come vuoi, sempre cucuzza è* - however you cook it, it’s still just squash.



An appearance  
of *C. pepo* in  
the frescos  
of the Villa  
Farnesina



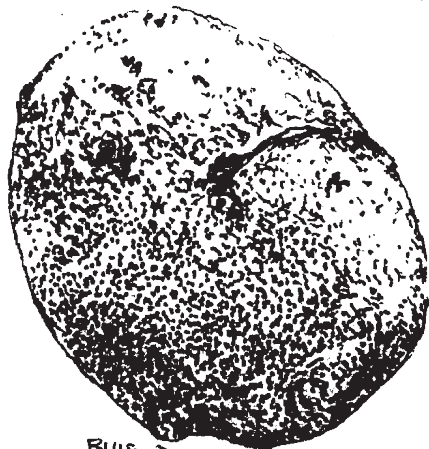


Public Works and Karen Guthrie

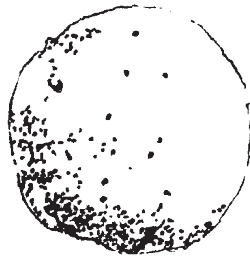
Plan for a barn and glut field, to be made as a straw bale garden in the  
IMMA courtyard



## A POTATO PLOT.



BLUE DANUBE



SHARP'S  
EXPRESS



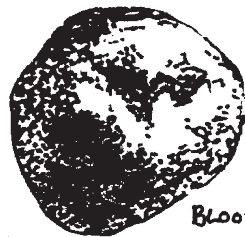
RED DUKE OF  
YORK



SKEERY BLUE



INTERNATIONAL  
KIDNEY



BLOOMER

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## COURGETTE & LEMON CURD

*1.5kg courgettes, yellow if possible*

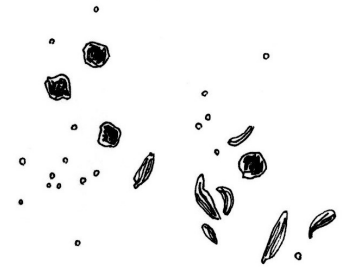
*225g unsalted cubed butter*

*700g sugar*

*Zest of 5 lemons*

*120ml lemon juice*

*3 eggs & 2 egg yolks*



Peel the courgettes and quarter them lengthways. Slice thinly. Transfer to a saucepan, and cook uncovered over a low heat until soft (add no oil or water!). When soft, drain off most of the liquid and puree in a food processor.

Prepare a bain marie by setting a heatproof bowl over a pan of barely simmering water (the bottom of the bowl should not touch the water). Transfer the puree to the bowl, and add butter and sugar. Stir until butter has melted.

Whisk together eggs, yolks, zest and juice and add to courgette mixture. Stir frequently until curd thickens and a lifted spoon leaves a trail on the surface. Transfer to warm sterilised jars and seal. Allow to cool and refrigerate for up to one month.

The pastry recipe below can also be used to make little tart cases for lemon curd filling. Use pastry to line a 12-hole muffin tin and blind-bake until golden. Add curd, berries and sugar to taste.

## ROAST COURGETTE TART

### *Pastry:*

*250g plain flour*

*100g cold butter*

*Enough cold water to bind (roughly 30 - 45ml)*

Using your fingertips, gently and lightly rub butter into flour. When the mixture resembles breadcrumbs, add 30ml water. Mix roughly with a knife or pastry cutter, and bring together by hand. Add a little extra water if necessary. A slightly dry dough is better than a sticky pastry, and best handled as little as possible! Wrap and chill for at least 30 minutes before using.

### *For the tart filling:*

*2-3 courgettes (2 biggish-medium, or 3 smaller)*

*2 eggs*

*3 egg yolks*

*200g ricotta*

*60g finely grated parmesan*

*100ml double cream*

*Handful of basil, roughly torn*

Slice the courgettes into discs, approximately 4mm thick. Lay out in a single layer on a tray, drizzle with oil and season well. Roast at 180° for about 20 minutes, or until starting to brown.

Roll out the cold pastry and use to line a tart tin. Prick lightly with a fork all over, and set aside in the fridge to rest for 15 minutes. Line with baking paper and dry beans and bake blind at 200° for 12-15 minutes. Remove from oven and reduce oven temperature to 170°; remove paper and beans and bake tart shell for a further 5 minutes.

Beat together the eggs, egg yolks, parmesan, basil, ricotta and cream. Season well and set aside.

Scatter roast courgettes over tart base, and pour over the egg mixture. Season once more!

For a wide low-depth tart, bake for 25-30 minutes at 170°, or until golden and risen in parts; a deeper tart will take an extra 5-10 minutes.



## PICKLED COURGETTES

### *Zucchini en escabeche (for older or bigger courgettes):*

*3-4 medium courgettes, sliced thickly lengthways*

*600ml vinegar*

*400ml water*

*3 bay leaves*

*A few peppercorns*

*Heaped tablespoon salt*

*4 cloves of garlic, peeled and thinly sliced*

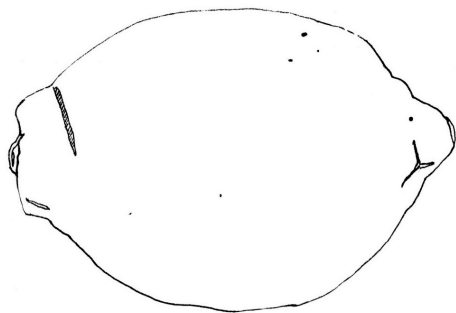
*Big handful of fresh oregano, or 2 tablespoons dried*

*1 tablespoon chilli flakes*

*200ml olive oil (perhaps more depending on size of jars used)*

Bring the vinegar, water, bay leaves, peppercorns and salt to a slow rolling bowl. Add the courgette slices in batches, cooking for a couple of minutes until just tender (they should be flexible but still keeping their shape). Set aside until all the courgettes have been cooked. Layer the courgette slices in sterilised jars, tucking slices of garlic, a sprinkle of chilli and some oregano between the layers.

Mix 200ml of the vinegar-water solution with 200ml of olive oil. Pour over the courgettes and spices, filling each jar almost to the top. More pickling liquid can be made if necessary by using a 1:1 ratio of olive oil and vinegar/water mix. Finish each jar with a glug of olive oil, leaving ¼ inch of space between the contents and the lid. Tap each jar firmly on your work surface to remove any air bubbles, or use a thin skewer to disperse any trapped air. Seal tightly, allow to cool to room temperature and store in the fridge. Leave for at least a couple of days before eating, and for up to one month.



### *Simple pickle (for younger or smaller courgettes):*

Choose small courgettes, ones that will fit neatly into jars whole. If courgettes are bigger, cut into thick fingers.

Prick small courgettes all over with a clean needle.

Pack tightly into jars (young leaves and stalks can be tucked in among the courgettes, but the flowers contain an enzyme that can lead to soft pickles)

Add a small selection and amount of spices and/or herbs to the jars. The following is just a suggestive list:

*Mustard seeds*

*Fennel seeds*

*Coriander seeds*

*Celery seeds*

*Peppercorns*

*Bay leaves*

*Fresh dill or parsley*

Make a pickling solution with:

*400ml vinegar*

*200ml water*

*130g golden caster sugar*

*1 tablespoon of salt*



Bring to a gentle boil, and allow sugar and salt to dissolve. Pour pickling liquid over courgettes, filling almost to the very top of the jars (leave ¼ inch or so of space). A weight is recommended to keep the courgettes submerged. Tap to remove any air bubbles, before sealing tightly and allowing to cool to room temperature. Store in the fridge, and allow to rest for a week before eating. They will keep for at least several weeks.



**IMMA**



**GRIZEDALE ARTS**

Editors: Kirsty Roberts and Miranda Vane  
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