concern which pesticide certification the client needs to apply chemicals legally in his or her particular situation, and the various requirements involved. An accurate response requires a thorough knowledge of the statutes and systematic questioning of the client. Information elicited from the client must then be utilized in a complex decision-making process to determine the proper answer.

Methodology

A decision table was developed as an interactive, dichotomous key to provide clients and staff, having little pesticide training or knowledge of the statutes, a series of relevant questions. The interactive nature of this program has the decision-making built in and automatically leads the user to the next question. In effect, the most difficult part of determining the proper pesticide certification, the decision making, is built into the system.

While the original version of the pesticide decision table was paper-based, there are several major advantages having an interactive, browser-based version. A primary advantage is the computerized nature of the program which allows users to click on an answer and be presented with the next logical question. The other main advantage of browser-based technology is the widespread availability of the Internet, making the interactive pesticide decision table easily available to clients and staff alike.

Once developed, the decision table was reviewed by Liz Braxton, the head of the Bureau of Compliance Monitoring at DACS, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The interactive pesticide certification decision table was also reviewed by several extension agents around the state who work with the commercial pesticide certification clientele. Using their suggestions, improvements were made and the decision table was added to the Professional Horticulture Services section of the Hillsborough County Extension website. It is available at http://prohort.ifas.ufl.edu/dectble.htm and must be opened by a web browser such as Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Explorer.

Conclusion

While this program cannot answer all pesticide licensing questions, it can save agents and staff considerable time by automating the difficult and time-consuming process of helping clients make pesticide-licensing decisions.

Proc. Fla. State Hort. Soc. 113:325-327. 2000.

THE MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS VEGETABLE GARDEN AT CROSS CREEK

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Abstract. **Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings became well-known worldwide due to her writings. Her story about Jody and his little pet deer Flag growing up together in the back-woods of central Florida won her the Pulitzer award for literature in 1939. While *The Yearling* was her crowning achievement, at least one of her other books, *Cross Creek*, was not far behind. In *Cross Creek* we find that Marjorie was not only a talented writer, but she was adept in many other fields. One in particular about which she writes at length was horticulture. It was her oranges that she knew most about, for her grove was what first attracted her away from Rochester, N.Y. to rural Florida; however, Marjorie relied heavily on her little back-yard garden for her daily meals. Let us now revisit that period in 1928-1941, her first years at Cross Creek, enter the old rusty gate to her kitchen garden, and look at what sort of vegetable garden she might have grown at that time.**

One of our state's little-known public treasures is the tiny kitchen garden located in the back-yard of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's home in the tiny hamlet of Cross Creek, Alachua County, Florida. Now a state historic site, the home and farm of this famous writer is seen annually by thousands of visitors.

I suppose I just missed meeting Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Baskin, for I arrived at the University of Florida in 1954, less than one year after her death in December, 1953. So while I never saw her personal garden, I am now a volunteer at her farm where I help take care of the garden. I have relied heavily on her book *Cross Creek* (Rawlings, 1941) which provides vivid details of her garden prior to 1941. In addition, various gardening guides written by the University of Florida's Extension Service in the1930's show us how a typical Florida garden would have been grown back then (Jamison, 1935), Table 1.

As in all of her endeavors, Marjorie seemed to approach gardening with a comfortable blend of academia and osmosis, graduating early from the school of hard knocks. Her understanding of the botanical and horticultural aspects of her crops and plants was amazingly accurate. For example, she found by trial and error that her craving for asparagus was not going to be fulfilled at Cross Creek, and she explained this demise correctly on the basis of the plant's lack of dormancy due to the warm winters.

Based on the cultivation techniques she describes, Marjorie does not appear to have been what we would call an "organic" gardener or farmer. She sent her grove man Snow Slater to town for fertilizer, and had him spread it in the orange groves, and probably on the row crops. But in the garden, she used humus, mingled with the droppings of her milk-cows Dora and Lady. Marjorie wrote in *Cross Creek*, "Hammock soil is dark and rich, made up of centuries of accumulation of humus from the dropping of leaves. I dig leaf mold from this hammock to enrich my roses and camellias and gardenias." (*Cross Creek*, p. 38).

Table 1. A typical Florida spring garden in Marjorie's time (Jamison, 1935).*

Crop	Variety	Crop	Variety
Beans, bush	Bountiful	Mustard	Southern Giant Curled
Beans, pole	Kentucky Wonder	Okra	White Velvet
Cabbage	Golden Acre	Onions	Bermuda
Carrots	Imperator	Peppers	Cal Wonder
Collards	Georgia	Potatoes	Bliss Triumph
Corn	Trucker's Favorite	Potatoes, sweet	Porto Rico
Cucumbers	Early Fortune	Squash	Straight Neck
Cowpeas	Brown Crowder	Tomatoes	Marglobe
Eggplant	Fla. Highbush	Turnips	White Globe

*Others: Beets, broccoli, Lima beans, lettuce, melons, peas, radishes, and spinach.

Her stance on the use of pesticides is even less clear, as is indicated by the following passage from *Cross Creek* (Rawlings, 1941): "The balance of nature is a mysterious thing, and man must fight on one side or the other with caution, or he will find that in his battle he has exterminated some friendly element. Old-timers in citrus growing do not believe in much of the spraying for unfriendly parasites, and some of the moderns are agreeing, for in destroying them, the friendly parasites are also destroyed."

To Marjorie, the seasons dictated what she would plant just as much as did her mere cravings. For that reason, her vegetable gardens followed the seasons as best seasons at the Creek could be distinguished.

Marjorie's Spring Garden

On page 116 of my book, *Vegetable Gardening in Florida* (Stephens, 1999), when discussing the best time to plant vegetables, I have this great Marjorie quote: "We say at the Creek,' when the first whipporwill calls, it's time for the corn to be in the ground'. The first whipporwill may call in late February or in March. I have never known frost to come after that first plaintive, heart-tearing cry." (Cross Creek, p. 248)

Whether possessed by a craving for a certain dish or by the sheer joy of preparing the products of her own garden and grove, or of the surrounding woods and wetlands, cooking was a pure passion with Marjorie. Just as did the seasons, this obsession instilled a desire and determination to grow a favorite vegetable. Marjorie said, "But the bacon itself is very tasty and is a requirement in cooking many vegetables. I can not conceive of cow-peas without a few thin slices boiled along with them, and even string beans, which here we call green beans or wax beans according to color, now seem insipid to me when cooked with butter or even with cream. Greens probably save more backwoods lives than the doctors, for they are the one vegetable, aside from cow-peas, for which country folks have a passion. Spinach as a green is unheard of, although it is raised for the northern market. Beet greens are not relished, but turnip greens, mustard greens, and above all, collard greens, cooked with white bacon, with cornbread on the side, make an occasion. Mustard greens are strong and hot and are best used sparingly along with turnip greens. Whenever mustard greens has been planted, it goes wild and spreads, so that today, ten years after my last planting, I can still go down toward the lake under the old seedling pecan trees and pick a good mess in season. Collard greens are my favorite of the three. They have a sweet nutty flavor" (*Cross Creek*, p. 214).

While Marjorie did not elaborate on the planting of several other common vegetables usually grown in the area's spring gardens, it is highly likely that she grew them. Few gardens of that day, and even today, were without such crops as pole beans, lima beans, cucumbers, melons, potatoes, pumpkins, radish, and the tomato.

Several lesser-known kinds apparently fascinated her sufficiently to grow them, or in certain cases, to collect them. Among them were asparagus, cassava, chayote, pokeweed, and roselle.

Marjorie found pokeweed flourishing nearby, and in the late winter or early spring the broad-leaved green shoots sprouted up all over her grove. At the Creek the leaves were used for "poke salat", or they were cooked like other greens. She hunted through the grove after a spring rain for the most tender shoots, cutting those from six to eight inches in length. She trimmed off the leaves and thin skin and cooked the shoots exactly as asparagus, then served them on buttered toast with a rich cream sauce poured over, and strips of crisp bacon beside them. (*Cross Creek*, p. 214)

Marjorie said she longed for asparagus, and imported some roots to plant in a deep rich bed. Her asparagus grew and thrived, but, according to her, "the year-round blandness of temperature here, with no long dormant period, excited it so violently, that it grew twelve months of the year, sending up long neurotic shoots every night, no larger than a bridge pencil. It grew so fast that there was never a moment of that crisp succulence in which to cut it. By noon, the thin sprigs had burst into ferny leaf. I was discouraged, but I think the asparagus was not, for after a generation of offering damp heads to a cold April northern sky, here were sun and heat all day long and the asparagus went wild with joy." (*Cross Creek*, p. 215)

Since Marjorie's experience with asparagus, we at the University have learned to cut back the entire plant to the ground twice a year, first in January, then again in July. The resulting spears are larger and more succulent, but still lack the quality of the northern-grown crop.

Today, next to her garden gate, there is a trellis completely enshrouded by a dark green cucumber-like vine. Since it is perennial, it may even be a holdover from her past. Marjorie described it thusly: "We raise here successfully an etheral relation of the squash family, the choyote. The fruit-like vegetable grows on a luxurious vine that has been known to cover an acre. I used it through a hot summer for a shade over my mallard duck pen. The choyote is the shape of a blunt, enormous pear, pale jade green in color." (Cross Creek, pp. 216-217). The spelling should be chayote.

Since I come from a Florida Cracker background, I am not surprised to see that she included in her garden roselle, or the "Florida cranberry", so-called due to the sweet drink, resembling cranberry juice, made from its immature pods.

Marjorie described it this way: "The roselle belongs to the okra and cotton and hollyhock family, and when the flowers, which we raise for ornaments, are just past full bloom, we make the jelly of the seed pods that have begun to form, seed pods that resemble rose hips, rosy pink, tasting like candied rose petals." (*Cross Creek* p. 221)

Cassava was one of the early pioneer Florida crops, sustaining man and beast, so the fact that Marjorie wrote of it is also not surprising: "There are several tropical edibles that are poisonous when improperly treated, notably the coontie palm root and the cassava. Both must be soaked and pounded to get rid of the poisonous element. The coontie palm root makes a starchy flour for bread, and the reason the Seminole Indians were able to hold out against us was their use of the root. The treated cassava makes a delicious pudding, amber in color, translucent, delicately sweet." (*Cross Creek,* p. 221)

When Marjorie cooked a possum, it was stuffed with sage, with sweet potatoes roasting on the side. She talks about her sweet potatoes (yams), and very likely she would have as a "side-dish" to her vegetable garden, a small plot of assorted culinary herbs. Her menu for a duck meal included: sweet potato, whole white onions, tossed salad of endive, chives, marjoram, basil, thyme, and tarragon.

Summer Garden

Marjorie wrote of things slowing down around the Creek in the summer, and that went for her vegetable garden as well. MKR:"I went then, the porch well cleaned, wet and glistening in the fading light, to water my garden. There were a few carrots that I had hoped to bring through the heat, a few zinnias, half a dozen desperate collard plants, poor things but mine own." (*Cross Creek,* p. 12). By early August, in a good year, her garden rows could have included sweet potatoes, cassava, eggplant, pepper, cow-peas, peanuts, and okra. Of okra she wrote, "Okra is a Cinderella among vegetables. It lives a lowly life, stewed stickily with tomatoes, or lost of identity in a Creole gumbo." (*Cross Creek,* p. 215)

Fall Garden

Although spring has always been known as the prime gardening time of the year, fall initiated a lot of green-thumb activity around the Rawlings household. This is what Marjorie had to say about her fall garden: "The second week in September I gamble on the season and plant most of my seedbeds. The broccoli will probably survive in any case, but if the storms with their rain do not come soon, the parsley and lettuce will never germinate, nor can I bring through my seedling flowers, for my well water is harsh, and the delicate plants resent it . . . ! When the September storms are over, we have some of our most superb weather. If they are not planted already, we hurry to put in our fall crops: beans, English peas, squash and cucumbers; our winter crops of cabbage, lettuce, carrots, beets, broccoli, turnips, collards, kohlrabi, cauliflower, and celery. The hurry now for the fall market crops is against the first frost. The beans are delicate and must make before the cold has touched them. The crops that have matured through the long summer are ready. Sweet potatoes are dug and mounded for the winter's use, the vines fed to the cows and the nubbins to the hogs." (*Cross Creek* p. 299)

The Winter Garden

Of the winter as a growing season, Marjorie's few comments were aimed mostly to the community at large: "Ahead of us is the good season, when growth is slowed and a very little hoeing keeps clean the farm fields, the groves, and the gardens. It is the tidy time," but of her own endeavors she adds: "My own flower and vegetable gardens are thriving, if they will thrive at all, and my citrus crop will not be ready for picking before Christmas."

Other Plants and Crops

From the foregoing it seems difficult to fully comprehend that her vegetable garden represented merely a small fraction of the multitude of chores, projects, activities, hobbies, pleasures, enterprises, and just plain hard work that encompassed the daily and seasonal routine of of this phenomenal and marvelously gifted woman. Her fields were planted and harvested for market, and included a range of crops from lettuce and cowpeas to peanuts and beans. Her yard and premises abounded with citrus, fruit and nut trees, berry bushes, grape vines, flowers, and ornamentals of all sorts. Her animal raising projects, whether for pet, product, or profit, are yet another story, as are her forays onto the lakes and into the woodlands for sport and culinary purposes.

And, yes. Oh, yes! Above all else, she was a writer—the creator of prose the likes of which we may never see again. Enjoy her works, but as you read, look not just at her garden of fables, but stoop to peer down the measured rows and into the foliage of her hyperbole; strip away the peel to reveal the core of her message; then perhaps you will be pleasured with one tiny seed that germinates, and the wisdom of her vision, understanding, appreciation, and concern for Cross Creek and all that it symbolizes starts to grow within you. Marjorie planted her garden well; now the cultivation is in our hands!

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