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Name of Author: Brenda Kay Ledford

## SEED CATALOG

Each year when the seed catalog arrived in the mail, a clock alarmed inside Mama. She got her Blue Horse Notebook and made a list of the seeds she wanted to order.

With sapphire eyes, Mama peered at each page of the Gurney's Seed Catalog. Her face glowed as she planned her vegetable garden.

*Do you want Silver Queen corn this year? she asked the family. What about Big Boy tomatoes? Green beans? I'll plant those pink pea seeds I saved last year. Okra, carrots, lettuce and onions. We'll get our potato seeds at the Hayesville Hardware Store. Dad always planted his taters early in February.*

*I need to check on the poke salad. Wonder if it's come up yet? There's nothing better than frying it with eggs in bacon grease. Poke salad won't poison you if it's picked when the plant is tender. That will cause you kids to have rabbit in your heels, she added with a laugh.*

As Mama made out her order for seeds, I dreaded working in the garden. Bending and sowing the seeds would break your back. Not to mention hoeing the weeds, chasing off the critters, and harvesting the vegetables.

Sweat ran down your face as you picked the vegetables or dug the potatoes. Stringing and breaking tubs of beans on the front porch never ended. Shucking the corn and cutting it off the cobs was a mess. The juice splattered in your face, in your eyes, and covered your clothes with a sticky gook. I even dreamed about working up the green beans and corn. Canning the food was a hot, hard job. We had to wash and sterilize the canning jars, fill them up, gather wood to light a fire under the washtub. That was before we got a freezer and pressure cooker. Water bath canning outside was a long process and you had to keep refueling the wood under

the tub. But I still recall how good the canned vegetables were when Mama would pop open a canning jar in the winter and fix mouth-watering meals.

But Mama came alive each spring when the seed catalog arrived. She lived to run her rotor tiller and work in the dirt. *There's nothing any better than stepping out your backdoor, and picking fresh vegetables from the garden,* she said with a smile.

Sometimes I wonder why Mama lived to be 98-years-old. Perhaps it was her connection to the good earth and having something to satisfy her soul. Faith that her hard work would bring an abundant harvest, gave her the strength to keep on keeping on.