Enslaved African Americans were involved in every aspect of planting and gardening at Monticello, both for themselves and for Thomas Jefferson and his family. Jefferson’s 1,000-foot-long kitchen garden on the southern slope of Monticello is legendary for the variety and scope of its vegetable production. Yet even with such a large garden, the Jefferson family still required outside sources to provide food for the table. Although more than 300 vegetable varieties were documented, the emphasis was on using the garden as a laboratory rather than on producing for the dinner table.

Jefferson supplemented his vegetable diet with purchases from Monticello slaves, whose gardens established an alternative economy based on the production and sale of produce, chickens and eggs.

Archaeological excavations of slave cabins at Monticello indicate the occasional presence of root cellars, where personal treasures, root crops and other vegetables were stored. Conversely, inventories of the Monticello cellars omit garden produce and are dominated by fancy imported delicacies like capers, olive oil and Parmesan cheese. Vegetables harvested from slave gardens at Monticello included more everyday garden staples, such as cabbages and potatoes, rather than the new and unusual gourmet vegetables, such as artichokes and sea kale, found in Jefferson’s large experimental garden.

Jefferson’s Memorandum Books, which detail virtually every financial transaction that he engaged in between 1769 and 1826, as well as the account ledger kept by his granddaughter Anne Cary Randolph between 1805 and 1808, document hundreds of transactions involving the purchase of produce from Monticello slaves. This documentary record of the purchase of 22 species of fruits and vegetables from as many

Enslaved people at Monticello received a weekly ration, which included a peck of cornmeal, three to four fish, and a half pound of fatback pork or pickled beef per adult. To supplement the meager rations, enslaved families worked in their own gardens at night and on Sundays.
as 43 different individuals suggests the vitality and entrepreneurial spirit of the Monticello African American community.

African American contributions to foodways in the United States can still be seen and tasted in the 21st century. At Monticello, enslaved families grew fruits and vegetables that were African in origin in their own gardens. Their influence was seen in Jefferson's gardens, where head gardener Wormley Hughes and other enslaved laborers tended okra, gherkins and sesame. In the kitchen at Monticello, James Hemings and Edith Fossett, enslaved chefs, contributed to developing an “American” cuisine, incorporating their knowledge of African, European and Native American traditions.

The Monticello kitchen expressed new culinary traditions based on these recent garden introductions — French fries, peanuts, johnnycakes, gumbo, mashed potatoes, sweet potato pudding, sesame seed oil, fried eggplant — and perhaps such American icons as potato chips, tomato ketchup and pumpkin pie. The Western traditions of gardening — in England, France, Spain and the Mediterranean — were blended into a dynamic and unique Monticello cookery through the influence of emerging colonial European, Native American, slave, Creole and Southwestern vegetables.

### The Granger Family

Bagwell and Minerva Granger, enslaved by Thomas Jefferson, spent much of their lives working as field laborers on the tobacco and wheat farms of the Monticello plantation. The Grangers and their children lived in a one-room cabin with earthen floors and a wooden chimney, similar to the recently reconstructed home of John and Priscilla Hemmings on Mulberry Row. Many of the Grangers' precious evening hours were likely spent working in their vegetable garden. At dusk, they may have lighted animal fat kept in cast-iron pots and pans to continue their work into the dark of night. On Sundays, the Grangers sold their produce to Jefferson family members at Monticello or at the market in Charlottesville. In these interactions with the people who considered them property, the Grangers negotiated prices for items including cucumbers, melons and squash. The money earned was used to acquire household items and more seeds for planting.

Bagwell Granger also planted a large hops garden to support Jefferson’s beer-brewing operations. In 1818, Jefferson paid Granger $20, a significant sum for the time, for more than 60 pounds of hops. The Grangers also sold hay and timothy seed to Jefferson, suggesting their cultivation of a grass plot.

Minerva Granger's father, Squire, likely taught her how to garden. Squire, whose last name is not known, sold pattypan squash, lettuce, beets, potatoes, watermelons, apples and cucumbers to Jefferson's family. The knowledge of gardening was passed down through families like the Grangers, establishing a rich tradition of African American horticulture.

#### Unearthing Clues to the Past

Monticello was a 5,000-acre plantation, divided into separate “farms.” Monticello mountain was the plantation's “home farm.” Outlying lands were divided into manageable parcels known as “quarter farms” and were run by resident overseers.

This vast estate was home to Thomas Jefferson and his family, along with scores of free workmen and hundreds of enslaved African Americans and their families, whose skills and labor powered Jefferson’s agricultural and industrial enterprises.

The social, economic and ecological dynamics of this complex society are a major focus of research being conducted by Monticello’s Archaeology Department. Ongoing initiatives, such as the Plantation Archaeological Survey, are continuing to yield exciting new insights into this vanished world. The survey will provide a complete inventory of the unique archaeological resources located on the 2,500-acre tract currently owned by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, which includes the Monticello home farm tract and three outlying quarter or satellite farms, named Tufton, Shadwell and Lego. The plantation survey is revealing that dramatic changes in domestic and agricultural landscapes occurred at Monticello from initial European and African settlement circa 1740 to the present day.

A second ongoing initiative is the Quarter Farm Household Archaeology Project, which further explores the domestic sites discovered by the plantation survey. Many of these sites were home to enslaved agricultural laborers. The project aims to decipher and explain variation in the organization of households within these sites and the extent to which household members participated in the larger consumer economy. Current archaeological research at Site 6 — occupied by three households in the early 19th century — points to increased inequality among enslaved households on the Monticello home farm.

To learn more, visit monticello.org/enslaved-households.
"No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden."

— Thomas Jefferson

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