In the days before industrialized agriculture, many families depended on what they could grow themselves to feed themselves. Many farmers kept—and many do today—diaries documenting the weather, planting schedules, and outcomes of their efforts across the seasons and years. One such diary is that of James Evans, a resident of Cumberland County who farmed in antebellum North Carolina. Below are excerpts of his diary ranging from 1851 to 1859.

**1851**
We had a hard frost on Friday March 21 1851 ice a plenty, in fact the stump was froze hard we had to pour hot water in it to thaw it. Peach trees in full bloom. Friday night quite cloudy—rained on Saturday & turned quite warm. We had a little frost on the 9 & 10 of Apr. 13 & 14 cool & cloudy—on 15 we had considerable frost on the 22nd we had some frost, & on the 23rd we had a hoary frost, weather quite dry, consequently no serious injury—Aug 15 peaches & apples very plenty.

I gathered 2 qts Souppernong grapes on Saturday the 23rd Aug 1851.

**1853**
We had a real snow storm on the 5 March 1853—A very heavy frost on the 16 & considerable on the 24. Heavy Frost Apr. 8 some frost 27 Apr.

We planted Irish Potatoes on Good Friday the 25 of March 1853—June 15 complete failure, drought. Webedded slips on the 30 of March, sprouted very well. First li't out 24 June. No rain in May till 24 June. Co0mmenced planting corn Apr. 1 & finished on the 30 Apr. We planted New ground 12 & 13 May, Corn up awful bad, it being decidedly the drought & the coldest spring i ever saw—Planted peas June 15 finished July 6. Com hilling Corn July 1 finished July 20 1853—Com getting fodder. Aug. 22 Finished. Sept 22 First Frost — Sept 27 quite considerable.

**1854**
We planted oats on the 13, 14, & 15 March. It being too wet to plant them sooner. We planted some 31 March. Corn cut July 4. Finish 7 1854. We planted Irish potatoes on the 14 Mar. June 20 very good! Dug them all July 27. Very good. We bedded slips on the 31 May — Finished hilling July 15 — Aug 1 They look very well Sept 1 — proved good!

We com planting corn on the 1 day of April & finished on the 11 May — It came up very badly & continued planting till June 8/54. Commenced planting peas June 12, Finished June 20, commenced hilling corn June 27, Finished July 26, 1854 — Finished plowing 18, July — Comm. Fodder Aug 21 — Finished Sept 18, 1854. Entirely too wet till the 26 June — corn suffered very much from July to 7, good season from 7 July to Sept.

**Winter/spring 1857**
Ellick died on the 8 of Dec 1856 — 3 O'clock. A. M. Jan. 11, 12, 13,14, 15 & 16 clear & cold — 17 Cloudy rainy — 18 All powerful Snow Storm, wind high, desperate cold 19 & 20 clear & cold — 21 very cloudy, snowed some 22, 23, & 24, clear & very cold, Snow hardly melted any — 25, 26, 27 clear & cold — 28 Cloudy, Drizlty, Snow melting very fast — 29 Cloudy Drizlty. Snow nearly all gone. 20 quite cloudy but no rain, 31 Cloudy Rainy, some snow left yet — Feb 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, & 8 clear, mild & perfectly Beautiful — 9, 10, 11, & 12 quite cold 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 & 21, very warm — it rained a little on the 16 — 22, 23, 24, 25 clear & pleasant we had a good shower on the night of 25 — 26, 27, 28 somewhat cloudy, but mild. March quite cool & very cold. 3 remarkably cold, ice thick — 4 moderate — 5 quite rainy — 6 & 7 cold — 8 very cold & cloudy, snowed a little & Sleeted — 9, 10, cold & cloudy, 11 quite rainy — 12 clear & cold — 13 rainy & sleeted some.

**Summer 1857**
It is the general belief that this had been by far the coldest, most disagreeable & backward spring we ever had. Mulberries are very Scarce, & have just commenced ripening — my best corn is about 8 inches high — generally about 4 — I am not done seeding corn — The weather is very dry & the corn is missing badly — No potatoes set out, though the sprouts look well — I have no oats — but other peoples are about a foot high — The prospect generally, is decidedly bad. But oh! The flower Garden is filled with the choicest roses, & all nature is perfumed with thin fragrance.

**Fall 1857**
First killing frost Oct 12 — Tremendous frost & ice a plenty on the 22 (to) 24 Cloudy, drizzly — finished gathering corn Oct 28 — Dug ground peas Nov. 2. Turned out very well, few faulty ones. Dug Potatoes Nov. 2, 3, 4, 5, & 6. The first set out were tolerable good — The 7, Nov & night after was the warmest weather i ever saw in Nov — on the 8 it rained, & the 11 was clear & very cold — Miss Wheeler came here on 11 — Turnips very good (excellent) Misses Wheeler staid 10 days. got her 1.50 — It rained on the Evening of 19 Nov on the 20Days of ice one foot long — black frost plenty.

Freezing in the Sun all day — awful cold for season.

**1859**
We commenced hauling manure of the 18 Apr 1859 & Finished on the 28 — We planted the Flat swamp piece on the 16 Apr & the New ground above it, on the 30 — & The new ground on this, the 1859

First planting corn Apr. 1 & finished Oct 19 1859.

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Pages from James Evans diary documenting the spring and summer of 1854.

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