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Hertford County small farmer Johnnie Powell examines a selection of his harvested peanuts at the Winton Farmers Market.

Small Farms Week returns for the 30th year

As organizers prepare for the 30th time to formally celebrate the accomplishments of small-scale farmers in North Carolina, March 20–26, it is with the certainty that Cooperative Extension is making a difference in the livelihoods of farmers. The 2016 Small Farms Week schedule is chock full of research-based and applied-science workshops that will demonstrate how farmers can improve food production and increase their profits.

Dr. Fletcher Barber Jr., program leader for The Cooperative Extension Program at N.C. A&T and lead coordinator of this year's events, says three decades of Small Farms Week observances demonstrate the beneficial partnership between the university and its agricultural audience.

"Of course the relationship between Cooperative Extension and farmers goes back more than a century, but this being the 30th anniversary of Small Farms Week gives us an opportunity to show how important small farmers have been to our state; that our farmers have proven their viability and their longevity, and that Cooperative Extension expertise at A&T has been there to help guide them," Barber says.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines small-scale farms as those that produce $250,000 or less, annually, in gross income. Of the 49,500 farmers in North Carolina, 43,723 of them are considered small-scale producers based on income standards.

Small Farms Week

Cooperative Extension at A&T has helped farmers: transition to other crops from the heyday of tobacco production; promote farm co-ops and community supported agriculture; engage in sustainable farm practices; develop such season-extension practices as high-tunnel production; develop and hone marketing strategies; explore funding sources; use new technologies to enhance their operations, and employ various other strategies to remain viable.

"What we look forward to in 2016 is to take some of our research from the University Farm and strategically apply it throughout the state using high-tunnel production," Barber says. "Our state is diverse in climate and we're demonstrating how farmers in the East, the mountains and the central part of the state can adapt high-tunnel production for those various climates."

Applying research-based education to communities is core to the mission of land-grant institutions such as A&T, which this year celebrates the 125th anniversary of its founding in 1891. Small Farms Week activities embrace that milestone in meaningful ways, starting with the theme of its own 30th-year celebration — Our Pride, Our Future: North Carolina Small Farmers. As part of this observance, Cooperative Extension at A&T is asking staff at all 101 Cooperative Extension Centers to collect at least 125 nonperishable food items during Small Farms Week, with the proceeds to remain in the respective communities and to be used to help feed food-insecure residents.

Small Farmers of the Year and their counties

2015: Louis and Magnolia Williams, Vance
2014: Ryan Wiebe, Yancey
2013: Bill Moretz, Watauga
2012: Albert, Ada and Sonya Beatty, Bladen
2011: Thomas Pierce, Martin
2010: Joe Thompson, Orange
2009: John L. Council, Hoke
2008: Mary and Nelson James, Pender
2007: Gary Morrell, Alexander
2006: Ann and Harold Wright, Bladen
2005: Kirby and Nathaniel Maram, Watauga
2004: Stanley Hughes, Orange
2003: Amy Locklear-Cummings and Ellery Locklear, Robeson
2002: James A. Davis III, Halifax
2001: Burnice Blanks, Robeson
2000: Willie Woolard, Martin
1999: James Dunn, Wake
1998: Barbara and Lesker Loyied Norris, Wake
1997: Barbara and Larry Pierce, Halifax
1996: Jackie Garner, Bladen
1995: Betsy and Alex Hitt, Alamance
1994: Harold Davis, Yancey
1993: Elton Smith, Halifax
1992: Charles D. Sneed, Franklin
1991: Linda Woody, Yancey
1990: Robert Edmonds Jr., Halifax
1989: Lonnie Harrison Jr., Warren
1988: Kenneth Tobler, Surry
1987: Roy Robertson, Stokes

Small Farms Week Schedule of Events — March 20 – 26, 2016

Monday, March 21
Small Farms Week Kickoff

Vance County Regional Farmers Market
210 Southpark Drive
Henderson, N.C. 27536

Presiding:
- Morris White, director, Vance County Cooperative Extension Center

9 – 9:30 a.m. Registration

9:30 a.m. Welcome & Greetings
- Wayne Rowland, agricultural and natural resources technician, Vance County Cooperative Extension
- Garry Daeke, chairman, Advisory Leadership Council, Vance County Cooperative Extension
- Dr. Fletcher Barber Jr., program coordinator, eastern region, The Cooperative Extension Program at N.C. A&T
- Jim Cowden, Extension director, north central district, Cooperative Extension Service at N.C. State University
- Dr. Rosalind Dale, interim administrator, The Cooperative Extension Program at A&T

Vance County Farmers Showcase
(Video highlighting Vance County farmers)

9:45 – 10:45 a.m. Panel Discussion: Farmers Markets, the Heart of the Community

Moderator:
- Anita Hicks, motivational speaker

Panelists:
- Pete Burgess, retired tobacco farmer and member of the Vance County Farm Bureau Board of Directors
- Thomas S. Hester Jr., Vance County Board of Commissioners
- Tracy Madigan, manager of the Vance County Regional Farmers Market
- Paul McKenzie, Vance County agricultural Extension agent
- Carol Brodie Robinson, co-owner Brodie Farms

10:45 a.m. Break

11 – 11:45 a.m. Growing Ag! Presentation

Noon – 1 p.m. Lunch & Screening of the 2015 Small-Farmer-of-the-Year Video

1:30 – 4:30 p.m. Tours of local farms *(weather permitting)*

LouMag Farms
735 Jacksontown Road
Henderson, N.C.

Louis and Magnolia Williams, the 2015 North Carolina Small Farmers of the Year, as named by The Cooperative Extension Program at N.C. A&T, have farmed as a couple for 41 years. They and their LouMag Enterprises were lauded for years of production, including row crops of watermelon, sweet potatoes and other vegetables, as well as extending their growing season into fall by using high-tunnel hoop structures, selling at farmers markets, and transplant production. The Williamses attribute part of their success to guidance from Vance County Cooperative Extension, whose staff member Wayne Rowland nominated LouMag for the farming award. The couple was also recognized as Vance County's Small Farmers of the Year in 2009.

Backroad Farm & Vineyard
120 Louis Williams Road
Henderson, N.C.

Deborah and Eric Price own Backroad Farm and Vineyard. Theirs is a 4th generation family farm that dates back more than 100 years in Vance County, and once included tobacco production. The current focus is vegetable production at the Farmers Market, and upon request. Grapes are harvested in the fall and wine will be available for purchase later in the year. Deborah Price is on the Farmers Market Advisory Board and is a master gardener for Cooperative Extension. The Prices were recognized as Vance County's Small Farmers of the Year in 2013.

Parks Farm
1589 Bearpond Road
Henderson, N.C. 27536

Joe Parks is known for his naturally grown food and as an advocate for better health. Parks Farm has been in the family since the 1940s and was once a landing strip to an airport and later used to grow tobacco. Today, Parks farms more than 8 acres of vegetables and fruit, and his location is a Vance County agritourist destination with pick-and-purchase blackberries. Wayne Rowland and Cooperative Extension have worked with Parks to tap into a new market for his vegetables and fruits. Parks was recognized as Vance County's Small Farmer of the Year in 2010.

Tuesday, March 22
Educational Forum

N.C. A&T
Alumni-Foundation Event Center
200 N. Benbow Road
Greensboro, N.C. 27411

10 a.m. Exhibitors' Setup

11 a.m. Registration

11:30 a.m. Welcome, Exhibitors & Lunch
Dr. Rosalind Dale, interim administrator
The Cooperative Extension Program at A&T

1 p.m. Making a Profit with Small Acreage
This workshop is based on the Virginia State University small-acreage production model. Participants will learn which vegetables to grow and market, to gross $1 per square-foot. Presenter: Cliff Slade of Slade Farms

2:45 – 3 p.m. Break

3 – 5 p.m. Concurrent Sessions

Topic 1: High Tunnel Microclimate and Vegetable-Crop-Production Calendar
Presenter: Dr. Sanjun Gu, horticulture specialist, Cooperative Extension at A&T

This workshop is based on three years of applied horticulture research conducted at the A&T University Farm and the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) in Goldsboro. The workshop will address climatic factors that affect high tunnel production. Also, participants will learn to maximize profits with high tunnels for small fruit- and-vegetable production.

Topic 2: Pastured Poultry Production
Presenters: William Carter of Spirit Level Farms and Grace Summers, Cooperative Extension associate, A&T

This workshop addresses how to start a pastured poultry operation, including advice on breed selection, production practices and marketing.

Wednesday, March 23
Small Farmers' Appreciation Day
N.C. A&T

9 – 11:30 a.m. Educational Forum
Godfrey Room, Coltrane Hall

9 – 9:45 a.m. Local Food Production: Connecting Small Farmers with University Dining Services at Minority Serving Universities
Presenters: Robyn Stout, NC 10% Campaign coordinator and Josie Walker, NC 10% Campaign local food ambassador at A&T

9:45 – 10 a.m. Break

10 – 11:30 a.m. "Protect Your Land and Increase Its Value"
Presenters: Sam Cook, forester, Center for Heirs' Property Preservation (CHPP); Joe Hamilton, woodland community advocate, CHPP; John Schellas, research forester, USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station; Alton Perry, consultant, Forest Management-Land Retention, Roanoke Electric Center; and Alfred W. Kwasikpui, attorney, Land Retention, Roanoke Electric Center

This workshop will address how to resolve heirs' property issues and start making land work for its owners.

Noon – 2 p.m. Small Farmers' Appreciation Luncheon
Alumni-Foundation Event Center
200 N. Benbow Road
Greensboro, N.C. 27411

Presiding
- Dr. Rosalind Dale, interim administrator, The Cooperative Extension Program at A&T

Welcome & Remarks
- Dr. Harold L. Martin Sr., chancellor, A&T
- Dr. Shirley Hymon-Parker, interim dean, School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, A&T
- Steve Troxler, commissioner of agriculture, N.C. Department of Agriculture

Thought for the Day & Lunch

N.C. A&T 125th Anniversary Video

Introduction of Speaker
Dr. Rosalind Dale

Speaker
TBA

Presentation of 2016 Small-Farmer-of-the-Year Award and Video

Special Presentations

Adjournment

Use this link to register for Small Farms Week: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/39MVVF3