



Shades of Green

Agriculture & Natural
Resources E-Newsletter
September 2025



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

EXTENSION

Athens-Clarke County

A Note from Athens-Clarke County Agriculture & Natural Resources

Hello readers!

This month is a special issue where we are highlighting a recent programming effort: Great Southeast Pollinator Census. In addition, we are featuring Dr. Laura Ney's work with Marigold Collective in Winter-ville, GA. Featured are excerpts of the larger article, which was published in the UGA Almanac. We encourage you to go check out the real thing!

Included in this issue...

Articles

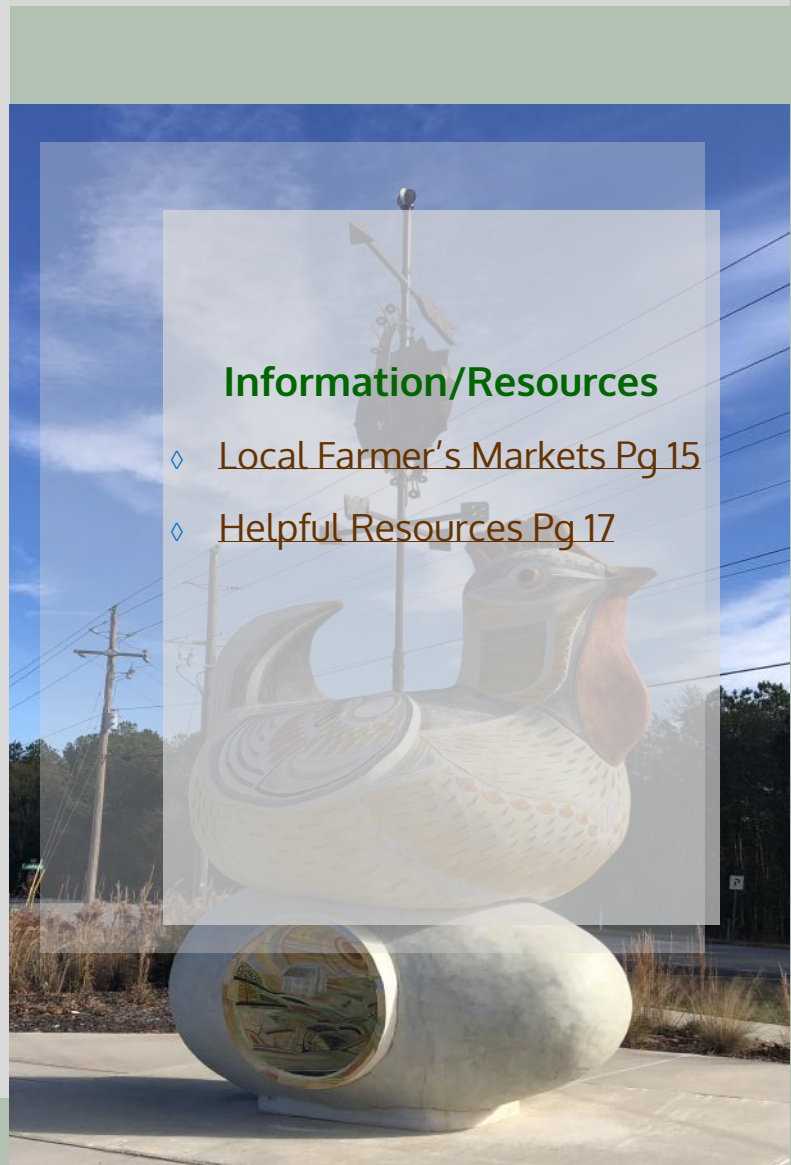
- ◇ [Great Southeast Pollinator Census Events in Athens-Clarke County! Local Schools, August 23rd Event at ACC Extension](#)
- ◇ [Marigold Collective: How a Georgia farmers market grew into a movement, Emily Cabrera](#)



Newest visitor to the ACC Demonstration Garden, Charles the groundhog. He is causing quite a stir!

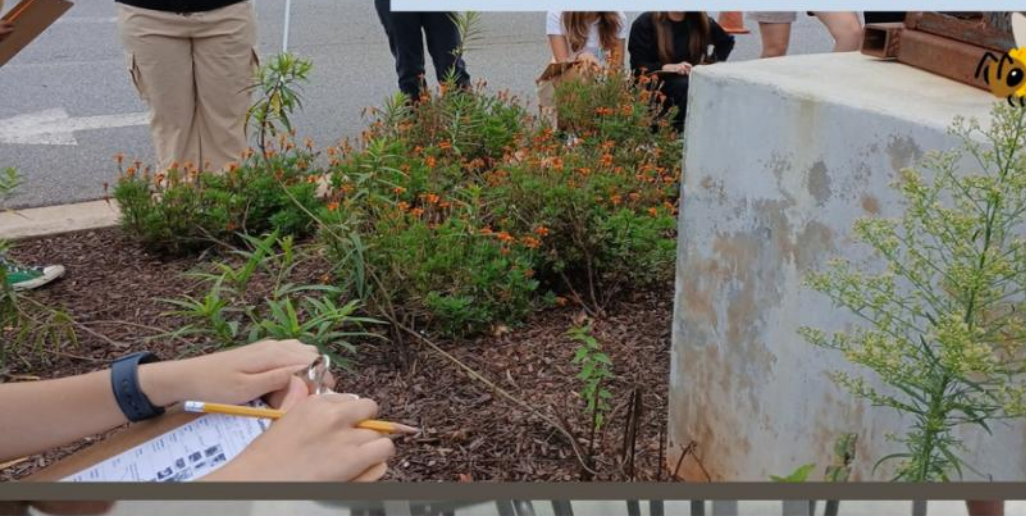
Information/Resources

- ◇ [Local Farmer's Markets Pg 15](#)
- ◇ [Helpful Resources Pg 17](#)



Students at Hilsman Middle School conduct GSPC

~150 students participated on August 22nd!



Great Southeast Pollinator Census Events in Athens!



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Students at Barnett Shoals Elementary learned about GSPC and Monarch Migration through Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom program

ACC Native Landscape

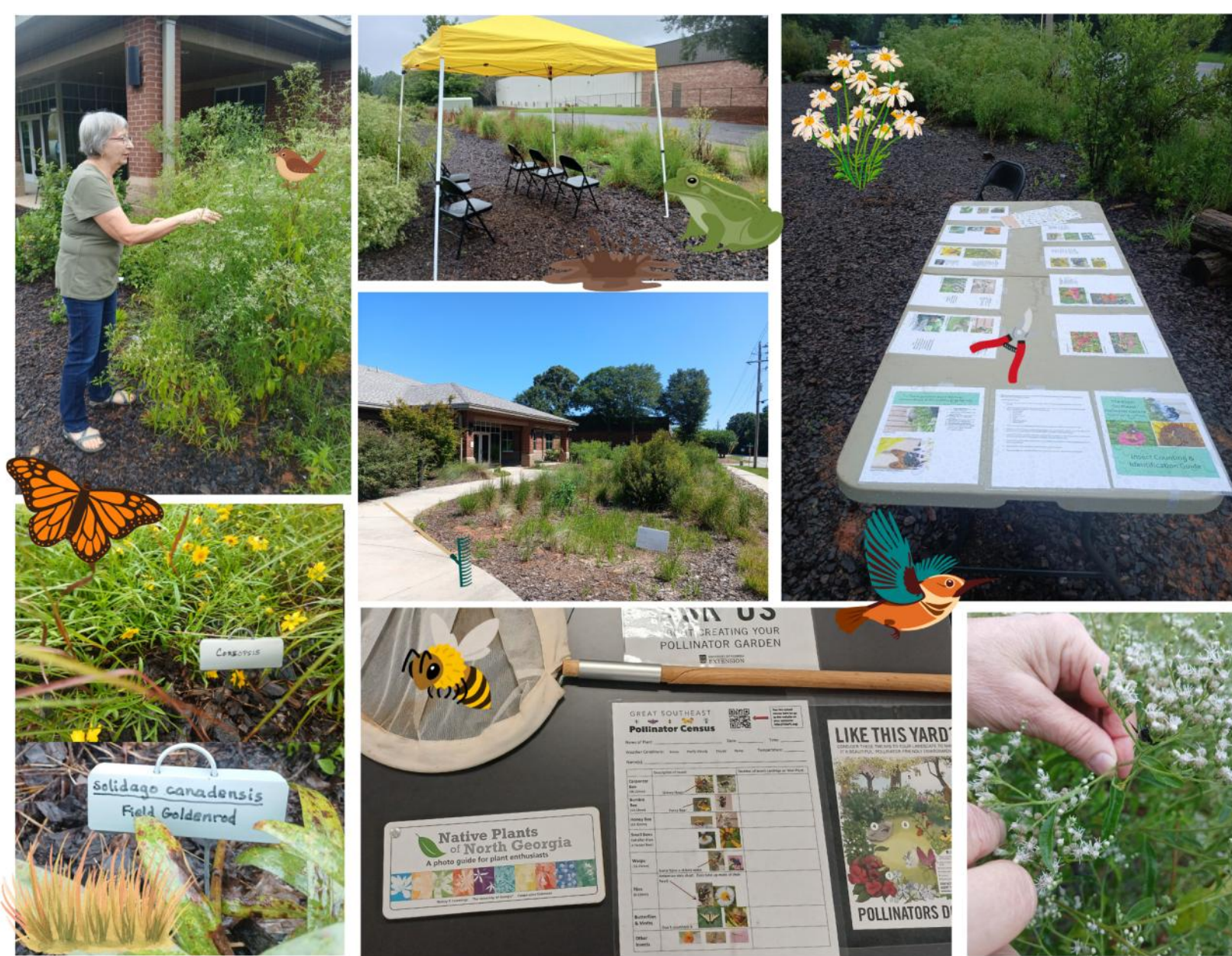


Great Southeast
Pollinator Census Event,
August 23rd, 2025

<https://gsepc.org/>

Despite the rainy weather, we had a fantastic time counting pollinators and making crafts on August 23rd at our Great Southeast Pollinator Census Event! There were so many fun moments including face painting, life cycle craft, Monarchs of Georgia, native bee ID and honey bee info, in addition to outdoor counting and inputting count sheets into GSPC database. I could not, unfortunately, include every picture, but I tried my best!

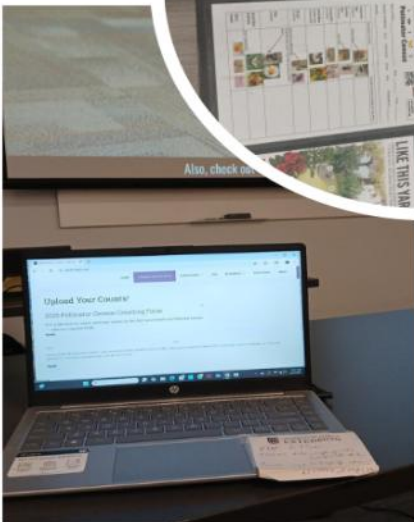
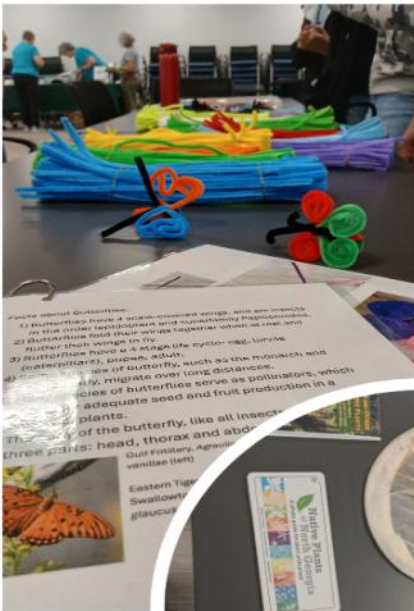
The Great Southeast Pollinator Census is a citizen science project where everyone is welcome to participate– it is open to residents of Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Participants can go outside on count days (typically third weekend in August) and count pollinators on a plant for 15 minutes. Data can then be uploaded to the GSPC database, where it is compiled every year. Check to see if your local county extension, garden club, or community group is taking part in the census!



Activities on August 23rd

Outdoor: Usually, our native landscape is teeming with pollinators, but because of the rain, most of the insects were still asleep! We did manage to count a few small bees and one bumble bee curled up inside some leaves. A few of us did still enjoy walking outside and checking on the status of our native pollinator plants, and utilizing insect ID guides provided by Great Southeast Pollinator Webpage: <https://gsepc.org/>

Indoor: Our volunteers and visitors enjoyed facepainting, butterfly lifecycle craft, butterfly rings, Monarchs across Georgia pollinator balance game, native bee and honey bee information, as well as information on native landscaping and GSPC counting guides. See next page to enjoy all the fun we had!



Marigold Collective: How a Georgia farmers market grew into a movement

Story by Emily Cabrera, UGA Almanac

Illustrations by K-Fai Steele

Photos by Dennis McDaniel, Katie Walker and Katrina Ohstrom

Note: These are excerpts of a longer article. For full article, please visit [Collective Good](#)

In Winterville, Georgia, a small market grew into a movement. Meet the people behind the Marigold Collective, where farmers, volunteers and neighbors band together to transform fresh food into shared growth.

Founded in the 1840s as a train depot, [Winterville](#) is a modest city with deep agricultural roots. Known as the City of Marigolds — a tribute to the resilient flower that symbolizes friendship — this close-knit community is home to farmers, artisans, musicians, nonprofits and small businesses, all connected by a spirit of collaboration.

Twice weekly, community members gather at the [Marigold Farmers Market](#) in Winterville's historic town square and connect over fresh produce, home-made goods and a shared commitment to local food.

The market is just one element of the [Marigold Collective](#), a grassroots movement working to make fresh, local food more accessible while creating economic opportunities for small farmers and food entrepreneurs and strengthening the foundation of the community itself.

The sense of connection is tangible here. Farmers share space and resources, and a traveling musician provides a cheerful soundtrack while an entrepreneur perfects a new recipe in the market's shared community kitchen. Every element, distinct on its own, blooms into a greater whole.

The collective supports more than 20 small family farms across eight Georgia counties.



Marigold Collective: How a Georgia farmers market grew into a movement

Laura Ney, UGA Extension agent

Behind every aspect of the Marigold Collective, you'll find [Laura Ney](#) — and her unwavering support for her community. As the Agriculture and Natural Resources agent for [UGA Cooperative Extension](#) in Athens-Clarke County and chair of the collective, Ney's expertise and vision quietly shape and guide the collective's work, ever-present and essential to its mission.

Ney was the one Winterville Mayor Dodd Ferrelle and other city leaders approached with their vision, and she immediately got to work coordinating with local entities and seeking grant funding to turn the dream into reality. As the group prepared to launch its first farmers market, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought everything to a halt. Rather than letting momentum fade, Ney and the market manager shifted the market to a drive-through format to connect vendors and customers.

As restrictions eased and safety measures improved, the market transitioned to an in-person experience and has grown steadily ever since.

"It's not just about providing a selling space for our growers and small businesses," she said. "It's about getting into the community, into the schools — teaching kids about farming, supporting local entrepreneurs, and ensuring people have access to fresh, nutritious food. It's about identifying needs and finding ways to meet them."

A soil scientist by training, Ney understands that strong foundations are essential for both healthy plants and thriving communities. She helps secure funding for farmers in the collective to attend field days and grower conferences, giving them opportunities to expand their knowledge and improve their operations.

Whether writing grant proposals or troubleshooting irrigation issues in a farmer's field, Ney's tireless efforts have transformed ideas into tangible benefits, making the Marigold Collective a model for addressing food insecurity and strengthening the local food system.



Dr. Ney and Dodd Ferrelle, the mayor of Winterville



Debbie Dyer, Athens Area Master Gardener, Ask-a MG booth

UGA Extension supports local agriculture and community

In every Georgia county, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension is a part of the local community — meeting people where they live and connecting them to the knowledge and resources they need to grow and thrive in every stage of life, from youth development through 4-H to family and consumer sciences to agriculture and natural resources.

An Extension agent isn't just part of the community; they help the community define what it wants to be. And Extension isn't just for farmers. All are welcome, and there's something for everyone at your local Extension office. All you need to do is ask.

Marigold Collective: How a Georgia farmers market grew into a movement

Passport for Produce farm-to-school initiative brings the farmers market to first graders

In 2024, Hovater received a \$2,500 Innovation Grant from [Wholesome Wave Georgia](#) to launch Passport for Produce, an interactive program connecting Winterville Elementary first graders with local farmers and fresh, seasonal food. Students learn about nutrition, agriculture and budgeting through classroom visits and hands-on activities, including using grant-funded tokens to shop for fresh fruits and vegetables at a Mini Mobile Marigold Market. Families also receive tokens to use at the farmers market, reinforcing the connection between local food and community.

Farmers who are part of the Marigold Collective visit the students to talk about native fruits, vegetable production, and even bee-keeping and honey extraction.

“The Marigold Farmers Market is a cornerstone of our town, and this is a wonderful way for students to see firsthand where their food comes from,” said Rosanne Mann, a first-grade teacher at Winterville Elementary.

Community seed bank cultivates sustainability

In 2024, Marigold Collective Communications Director Katrina Ohstrom coordinated a new partnership with the [Cooperative Gardens Commission](#) to serve as a seed hub for distributing donated food seeds. Community members also contribute heirloom varieties to the community seed exchange, sharing crops like super-hot peppers, peas and Choctaw sweet potato squash.

Hovater grows the squash seeds as a tribute to her roots as a tribal member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. She has shared these heritage seeds with farmers in the collective, helping to continue the cultivation of these meaningful varieties.

The hope is that the seed hub will inspire residents to start their own gardens and contribute to the seed bank with saved seeds at the end of the season, fostering a collaborative and sustainable effort.

This year, the remaining funding that helped kick-start the market will be used to pay farmers to grow selected, nutrient-dense crops that are culturally significant and well-suited to the local climate. The goal is both to provide seeds and to encourage farmers to grow, save and share seeds from their best plants for future use, reinforcing the idea of a continuous cycle of growth and long-term sustainability.

Community garden and compost facility

Long before the Marigold Collective took shape, community members transformed an abandoned parking lot in the town square into a flourishing community garden.

Through educational talks and consulting, Ney helps to ensure the success of the [Winterville Community Garden](#), securing a Zero Waste Grant to establish a compost facility at the garden where community members can drop off compost materials. The materials are processed through a disposal system that quickly breaks down waste and feeds into a vermicompost bin. The worms, also grant-funded, are part of a closed-loop system: leftover market funds purchase excess food from farmers, [VISTA](#) volunteers turn the food into meals for community members, meal scraps feed the worms, and the resulting compost nourishes the garden — bringing the cycle full circle.

From community kitchen to market

Supporting local food producers is central to the Marigold Collective’s mission, and its shared community kitchen helps turn ideas into viable businesses. The kitchen provides small food businesses with a certified space to safely prepare products for sale, making it easier for aspiring entrepreneurs to get started.

For food entrepreneurs like Wayne Campbell, who makes hot sauce, access to a licensed kitchen isn’t just a convenience — it’s a necessity. Health regulations require that any food sold to the public be prepared in a licensed facility, ensuring compliance with state and federal safety guidelines. For small-batch producers who can’t afford their own commercial setup, shared kitchens eliminate a major barrier to entry, allowing them to scale their businesses legally and sustainably.

On market mornings, the kitchen is buzzing with activity. Campbell, a veteran with a passion for plant breeding and regenerative agriculture, is busy bottling his latest batch of hot sauce. His ties to Winterville run deep — his children attend Winterville Elementary, and his wife, Molly, a doctoral candidate at UGA, is assisting Jonathan Scott with the archaeological dig at the historic blacksmith’s shop just steps from the market.

Marigold Collective: How a Georgia farmers market grew into a movement

From rails to trails: Winterville's history as a transportation hub

Winterville, originally known as Six-Mile Station, was established in the 1840s as a Georgia Railroad depot east of Athens. In the 1850s, the Winter family, German immigrants, settled in the area and became integral to the growing community. The depot was renamed Winter's Station after Heinrich Winter, the first section foreman. In 1866, when his cousin, John Winter, became postmaster, the village officially became Winterville. With the railroad's influence, Winterville thrived well into the 20th century.

Digging history at the smithy

Sharing space on the town square, the historic blacksmith shop is set to become the future home of the Marigold Collective grocery store — preserving history while serving the community in a new and meaningful way.

Currently, Jonathan Scott, chair of the [Winterville Historic Preservation Commission](#), is leading an archaeological excavation at the 1850s-era blacksmith shop. As restoration and rehabilitation efforts move forward, the dig provides valuable insight into the site's past, uncovering artifacts that help piece together the blacksmith shop's role in Winterville's early development.

How bicycles connect paths to produce

Winterville, which was incorporated in 1904, is situated along a section of the abandoned Athens-to-Savannah railroad spur. Now, Athens-Clarke County is developing the old rail route into a paved walking trail called the [Firefly Trail](#), which will eventually connect to the [Georgia Hi-Lo Trail](#), creating the longest paved trail and longest arboretum in the United States.

[BikeAthens](#) is a nonprofit organization that works to build equity in transportation, advocates for safe and connected cities, repairs bikes for people who need them, and teaches safe cycling to people of all ages. The organization can be found at the Marigold Market from time to time, offering free bicycle inspections and tune-ups.





Winterville
Community Garden





Athens Farmer's Market

<https://athensfarmersmarket.net/>



Marigold Farmer's Market

<https://marigoldcollectivewinterville.com/>



Concerned about the state of your garden?

Are weeds taking over your landscape?

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Handbook](#)

[Pesticide Applicator
Info](#)

[Georgia Certified Plant
Professional](#)

[Bugwood— Pest Images](#)

[UGA Center for Urban
Agriculture](#)

[Extension Publications](#)

[OnlineLandscape Alerts](#)

Athens-Clarke County Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources

Mission Statement

The UGA Athens-Clarke County Extension's mission is to respond to the people's needs and interest in Agriculture, the Environment, Families, and 4-H/youth in Athens-Clarke County with unbiased, research-based education and information.

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