



NC STATE

Extension Master Gardener

2020 ANNUAL REPORT >>

NC State Extension Master GardenerSM
volunteers connect people to horticulture
through science-based education and
outreach that empowers North Carolinians
to cultivate healthy plants, landscapes,
ecosystems, and communities.

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MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS RESPOND TO THE PANDEMIC

HELPING OTHERS GROW

Restrictions on gatherings did not deter Master Gardener volunteers and Extension agents from delivering science-based education in 2020. In fact, Master Gardener volunteer guidance was in high demand as many families decided to try vegetable gardening for the first time. Questions normally addressed in-person flooded county offices. While agents worked to implement email and call-forwarding systems, Master Gardener volunteers enthusiastically continued to answer the public’s questions from home.

9,000 hours 6,700 people

In 2020, Master Gardener volunteers spent over 9,000 hours answering gardening questions from more than 6,700 people!

Did you know?

If you have a garden or landscape question, you can call your local N.C. Cooperative Extension county center for help.

Find your county in our [Garden Help Directory](#) >

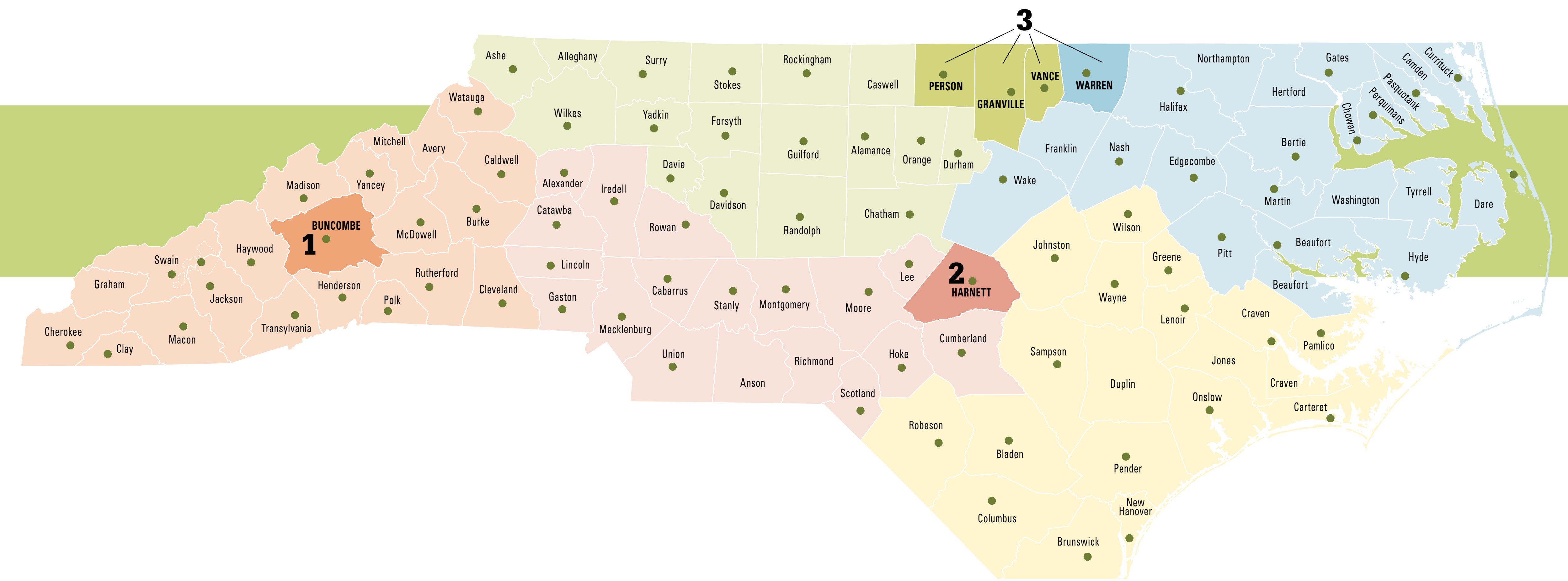
See how 3 counties helped others grow >



MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS RESPOND TO THE PANDEMIC

HELPING OTHERS GROW

County Highlights



1

Teaching Others to Grow | Buncombe County

Master Gardener volunteers in Buncombe County helped create videos that shared information on keeping a vegetable garden going year round, propagation from cuttings, straw bale gardening, and managing pests. Volunteers invested considerable time learning how to use, present, and host educational programs via Zoom. Videos were then carefully close-captioned and posted on YouTube for the public. The experience expanded their presentation skills and made programming available to a much larger audience. So far, videos have been very popular YouTube.

[Watch the Buncombe County videos on YouTube >](#)

2

InfoLine Stays Open | Harnett County

Working with their horticulture agent, Master Gardener volunteers in Harnett County responded to landscape care and gardening questions by email, USPS mail, and cell phone. Volunteers were assigned shifts and covered the InfoLine five days a week. In addition to helping others grow during the pandemic, this new work-from-home option creates the potential for more consistent staffing of the InfoLine in the future.

3

Sharing Garden Advice | Vance, Warren, Granville, & Person Counties

A partnership between Master Gardener volunteers in Vance, Warren, Granville, and Person Counties provided a new way for the public to interact with Extension. During weekly garden chats held on Zoom, participants were able to ask questions and receive garden advice. The chats also provided crucial social interaction for volunteers and members of the community during times of social isolation.



MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS RESPOND TO THE PANDEMIC

MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS

The pandemic increased food insecurity and disrupted traditional food distribution systems. Reduced access to fresh produce left many in need. In addition to teaching new gardeners how to grow food at home, Master Gardener volunteers cultivated community gardens to grow food and distribute it to the hungry.

14,000 hours

Across NC, Master Gardener volunteers contributed over 14,000 hours of service to nurturing community gardens.

**Did you
know?**

NC State has a dedicated website for Community Gardens with comprehensive, easy-to-use resources to start a community garden or find and support an existing one near you.

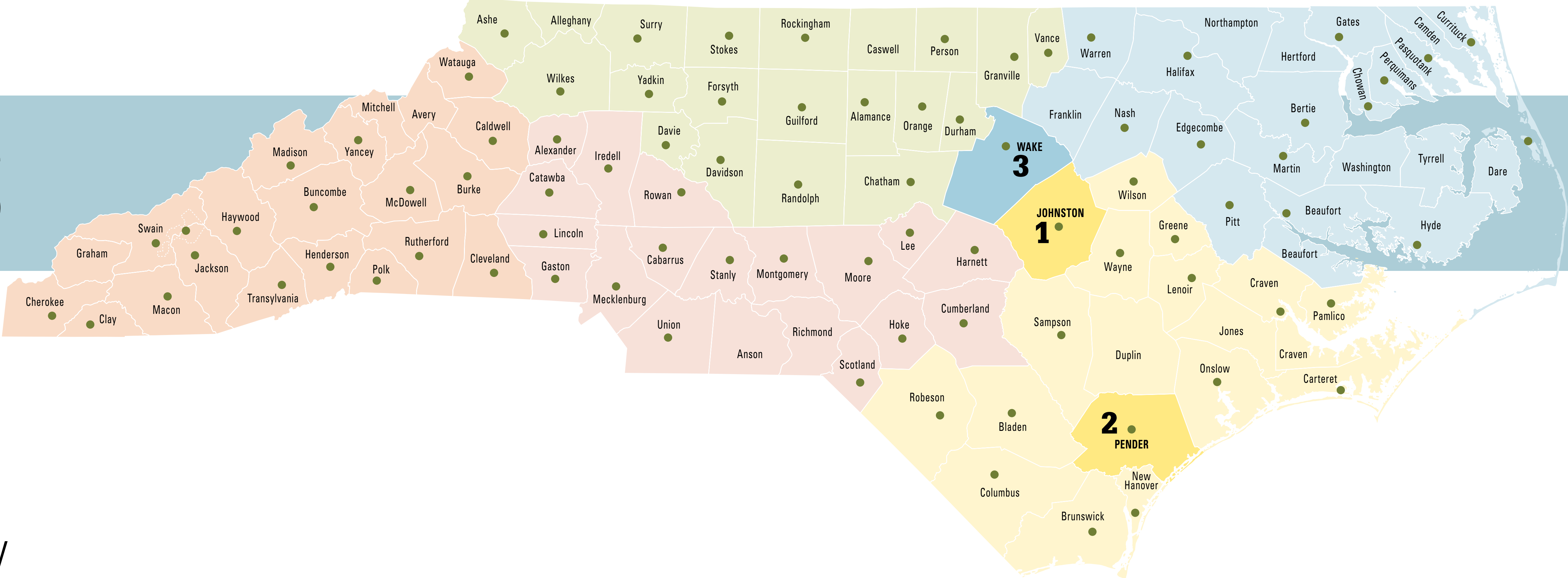
[View Community Garden Resources >](#)

[Discover counties meeting community needs >](#)



MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS RESPOND TO THE PANDEMIC

MEETING COMMUNITY NEEDS



County Highlights

1 4800 Pounds of Produce Feeds Families | Johnston County

By reaching out to the Clayton Area Ministries early in the growing season, Master Gardener volunteers in Johnston County were able to adapt the crops grown in the Clayton Community Garden to best meet the needs of hungry families. Shifting use of growing beds from less popular crops to those more in demand helped them donate over 4800 pounds of food to area ministries.



2 Planting Virus Victory Gardens | Pender County

When the annual plant sale was cancelled due to gathering restrictions, Master Gardener volunteers in Pender County found a way to distribute the hundreds of seedlings they had grown. They used their own neighborhood association websites to advertise plant giveaways and encouraged their neighbors to plant “Virus Victory Gardens”. Modeling social responsibility, plants were set up in volunteers’ driveways, enabling neighbors to pick them up with no contact. Donations collected covered material costs, the plants found a home, and communities continued to grow.



Learn how volunteers meet unique needs in Wake County



3

Supporting Therapeutic Partnerships | Wake County

The good work of the therapeutic horticulture program led by Master Gardener volunteers in Wake County was able to continue in 2020. Thanks to adapted delivery methods, two of the program's partner organizations were able to keep growing through the pandemic.

At Healing Transitions, an addiction recovery program in Raleigh, Master Gardener volunteers provided remote coaching to the volunteer that manages the vegetable garden. As a result, the garden flourished in 2020, providing fresh vegetables for residents and immeasurable mental health benefits for those whose rooms look out on the garden.

Master Gardener volunteers also continued to support the Triangle Aphasia Project (TAP) garden group, helping them provide seedlings to the Holly Springs Food Cupboard garden. Delivering programs via Zoom enabled participants to remain connected and drew two new members.

Behind the scenes, Master Gardener volunteers transcribed lectures from the Introduction to Therapeutic Horticulture course (co-taught by NC State and the NC Botanic Garden). Their careful work ensured course compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

[View Introduction to Therapeutic Horticulture course details](#)





MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS RESPOND TO THE PANDEMIC

ENGAGING YOUTH DURING REMOTE LEARNING

Remote learning denied children the opportunity to participate in hands-on activities that Master Gardener volunteers usually coordinate.

2,600+ hours

Generously contributing over 2,600 hours of service, Master Gardener volunteers assembled “home garden kits,” filmed educational videos, and collaborated in new, socially-distant ways to provide these enriching activities.

**Did you
know?**

The North Carolina 4-H Grow For It program provides curricula for educators and programming for youth about current issues in natural resources and agriculture.

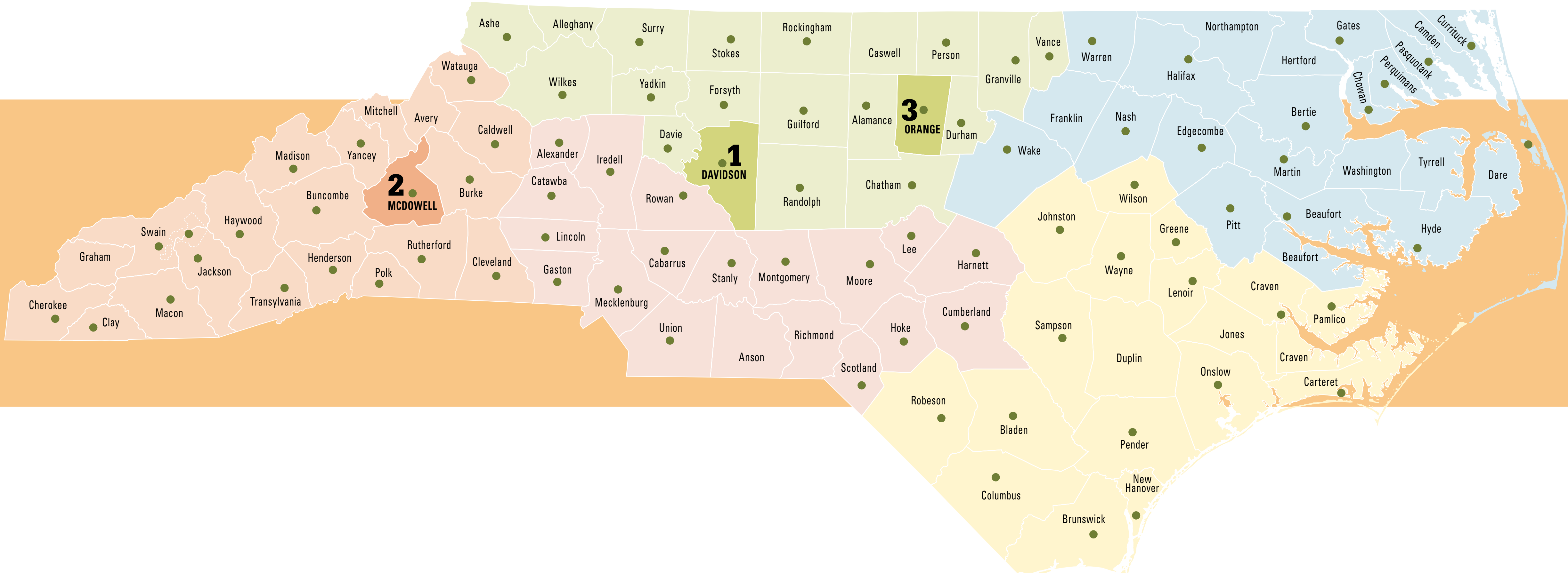
Visit the [Grow For It website](#) >

Learn how volunteers engage youth



MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS RESPOND TO THE PANDEMIC

ENGAGING YOUTH DURING
REMOTE LEARNING



County Highlights

1 Growing Pizza | Davidson County

Volunteers helped transform the traditional ‘Ag By the Slice’ fifth grade field trip into a virtual experience. By creating videos that illustrate how pizza ingredients are grown, the program reached more students than in a typical year.

[Watch Ag By the Slice >](#)



2 Bucket Gardens | McDowell County

In cooperation with Mission Hospital McDowell, Master Gardener volunteers helped distribute over 200 bucket garden kits to students in low-income households. The kits included instructions written by a volunteer for growing a garden in a 5-gallon bucket and provided students with a hands-on activity that encouraged them to eat more fresh vegetables.

3 School Garden Not Forgotten | Orange County

While schools were closed, volunteers cared for the gardens at Estes Hills Elementary School and donated the produce to TABLE, a non-profit organization that provides hunger relief and nutrition education services to children in Orange County.





EXTENSION AGENTS ADAPT INITIAL TRAINING FOR ONLINE DELIVERY

Several counties were mid-way through the Extension Master Gardener volunteer initial training course when in-person gatherings were prohibited due to the pandemic. Yet the training of new Master Gardener volunteers continued thanks to the dedication and ingenuity of Extension agents across the state. By reformatting training for online delivery, they enabled Master Gardener volunteer students to complete initial training and start their internships.

This was no small feat considering the learning curve associated with online teaching tools such as Zoom, Google Drive, and Moodle. Many Master Gardener volunteer students had never used Zoom, so training began with sessions to help everyone feel comfortable with the delivery platform. Thanks to the resilience of all involved, 238 Master Gardener volunteers completed training during the pandemic.

We applaud agents across the state for their commitment to Extension Master Gardener initial training and continuing education for all Master Gardener volunteers during the pandemic.



STATE OFFICE INCREASES EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

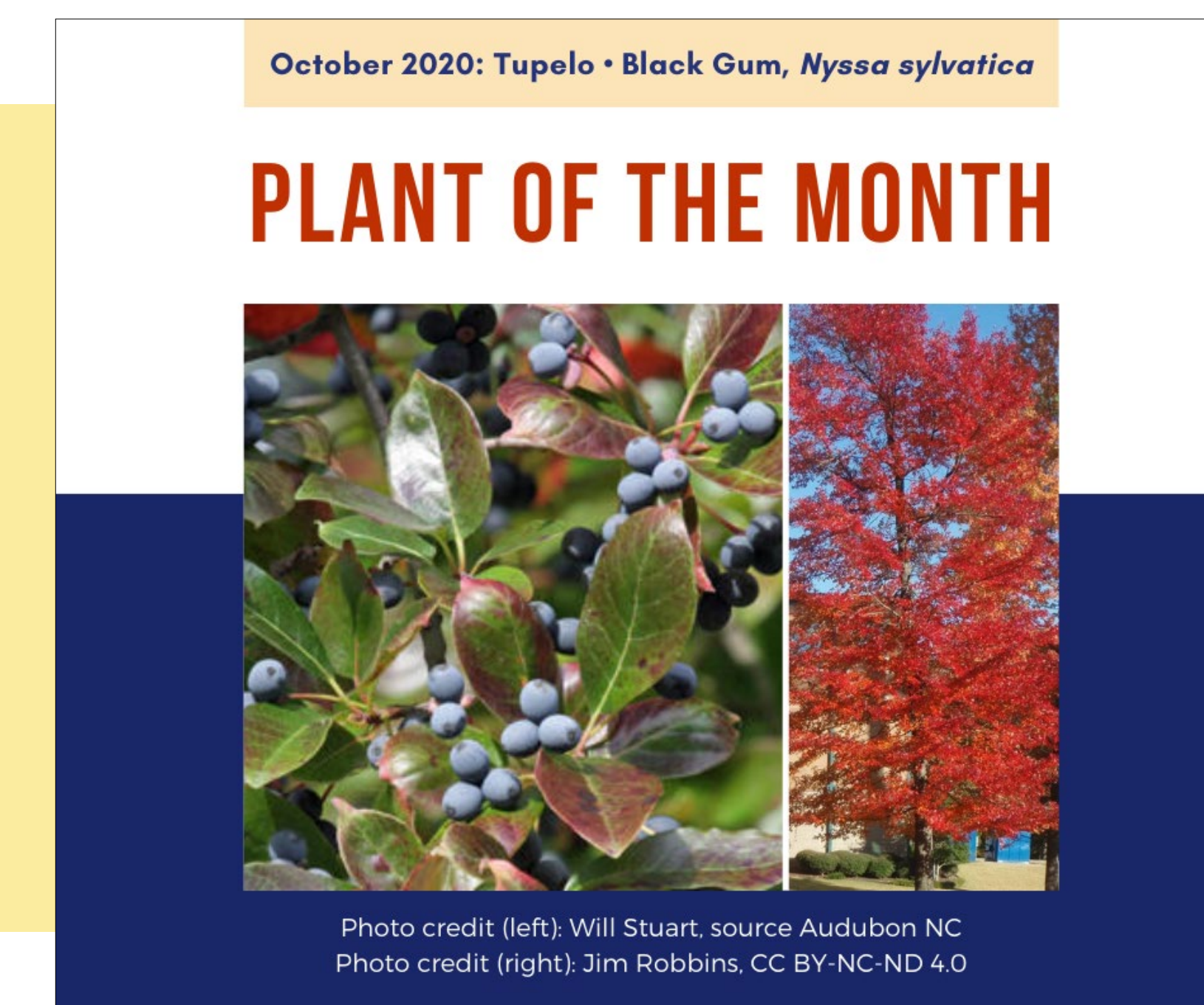
To encourage engagement during the pandemic, an expanded lineup of virtual learning opportunities was offered to Master Gardener volunteers across the state. Topics included:

Climate Change
Climate Resilient Gardening
Tomato Cultivation
Growing Spices

Persistent Herbicides
Weed Management
Inspiring stories from our 2020 Search For Excellence

In addition, the 2020 Plants, Pests and Pathogens webinar series available on YouTube provided timely information for volunteers to share with home gardeners. Held each month during the growing season, this series also featured a plant of the month and weed of the month.

To better connect residents with local volunteers, the state office created a Garden Help Directory. This website displays contact information for Extension Master Gardener programs in each county, along with a few popular Extension resources.



EXPLORE: Garden Help Directory > 2020 Plants of the Month > 2020 Weeds of the Month > Plants, Pests & Pathogens on YouTube > NCEMG on f NCEMG on i

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SUPPORT

A vital source of financial support for the Extension Master Gardener program comes from the NC Extension Master Gardener Endowment. The annual interest is used to further the work of Master Gardener volunteers across North Carolina.

A tax-deductible donation is a thoughtful way to celebrate a new class of volunteers, honor the service of an individual volunteer, or show appreciation for an Extension agent.

Give to grow and sustain our future >

SPECIAL THANKS to the many individuals and the following volunteer associations for their generous contributions in 2020:

North Carolina Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Association

Master Gardener Volunteer Association of **Brunswick County**

Master Gardener Volunteer Association of **Cabarrus County**

Master Gardener Volunteer Association of **New Hanover County**

Master Gardener Volunteer Association of **Union County**

Learn more about the



EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER
ENDOWMENT