

# Program Update for Chatham County Board of Commissioners

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# Cooperative Extension's **Growing Small Farms** Program for 2020-2021

- Advising Farmers' Markets & Farmers on Covid-19 Protocols
- Webinars
- Other Presentations
- Pollinator Paradise Demonstration Garden
- Social Media to Promote Agricultural Literacy
- Farmer Consultations
- Boards & Committees

# Immediate Impact of Covid-19 on Farms & Farmers' Markets

- The early days of the state-issued stay-at-home order to flatten the curve on COVID-19 in March 2020 was a confusing time for farmers and farmers' markets throughout the state
- When mass gatherings were prohibited, some farmers' markets were shut down by the towns or institutions that hosted them
- All the independently run farmers' markets - the primary source of income for so many small farms throughout the state - were scrambling to figure out how to adapt to stay open

# Immediate Impact of Covid-19 on Farms & Farmers' Markets

- Farmers' markets had to quickly figure out how to operate and maintain social distancing with proper hygiene practices in place to keep vendors and customers safe; individual farmers also had to do these same things
- One of the strengths of Extension is we try to be responsive to changing needs and priorities
- I worked with farmers' markets and farmers to help them adapt to this rapidly changing environment

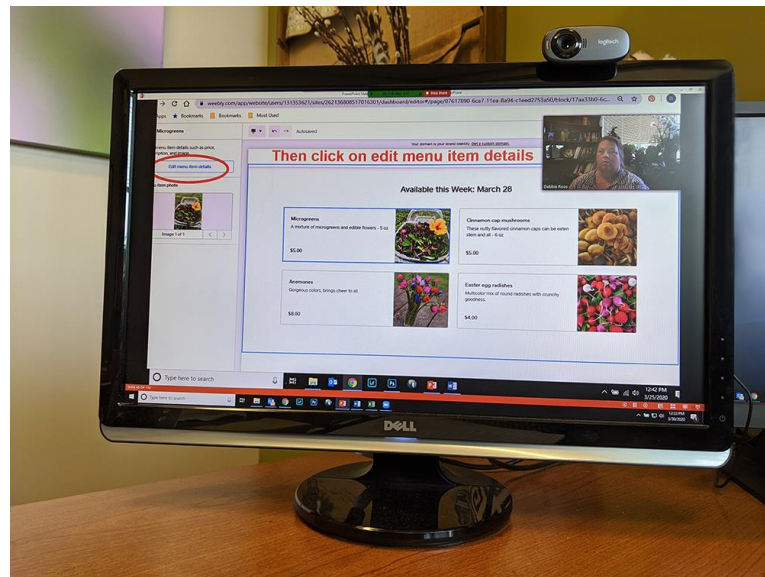
# Article on COVID Farmers' Market Protocols

- In mid-March 2020 I wrote an article and posted photos on what the Carrboro Farmers' Market was doing to “flatten the curve on Coronavirus”
- This article on my Growing Small Farms website was shared all over the state by groups like the NC Farm Bureau and growers' associations and even nationally by the Vegetable Growers News
- It helped many other farmers' markets make appropriate changes so they could stay open



# Webinars on Developing Online Farm Store

- Farmers were trying to figure out how to reduce contact to keep everyone safe
- One way to do this was to have customers pre-order everything and pay in advance
- I conducted webinars on how to set up a free online store; the first webinar was so popular that I ended up doing five of them for a total of ~1,000 participants from across the country
- I then recorded it and posted it online which has been viewed by another 700 people



# Using Citizen Science to Conserve Bumble Bees Webinar

- In April 2020 people were adjusting to stay-at-home orders and looking for things to do
- In celebration of Citizen Science Month, I conducted a webinar to get folks outside with the family for a fun activity that could benefit science
- I conducted a two hour webinar and had 200 attendees; an additional 700 people have since viewed the recorded webinar!



# Climate Webinar

- In April 2021 I conducted a two hour webinar with the Assistant State Climatologist for 100 participants
- Topics included the NC State Climate Office, Weather Patterns & Statistics for 2020-2021, Climate Outlooks, and Climate Change





# Fall 2021 Webinars

- In November I am doing a two hour webinar on **Creating Wildlife Habitat with Native Plants**
- In November and December I am doing a two-part **Blueberry Production Webinar**
- Hundreds of registrants so far!



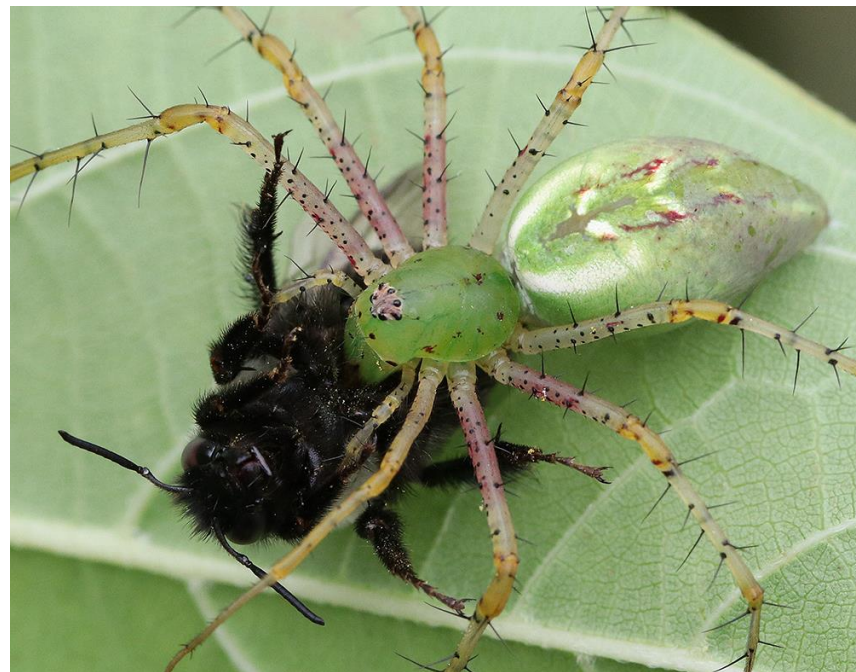
# ForestHer NC Webinars

- I am part of the ForestHer NC team that conducts statewide workshops
- Since Covid we have converted to webinars and have done 12 webinars since spring 2020
- We did a four-part series on **Managing for Wildlife**; a three-part series on **Enjoying your Woods**; and a three-part series on **Protecting your Woods**; plus two webinars on **Prescribed Fire**
- Recordings of all sessions available on-line



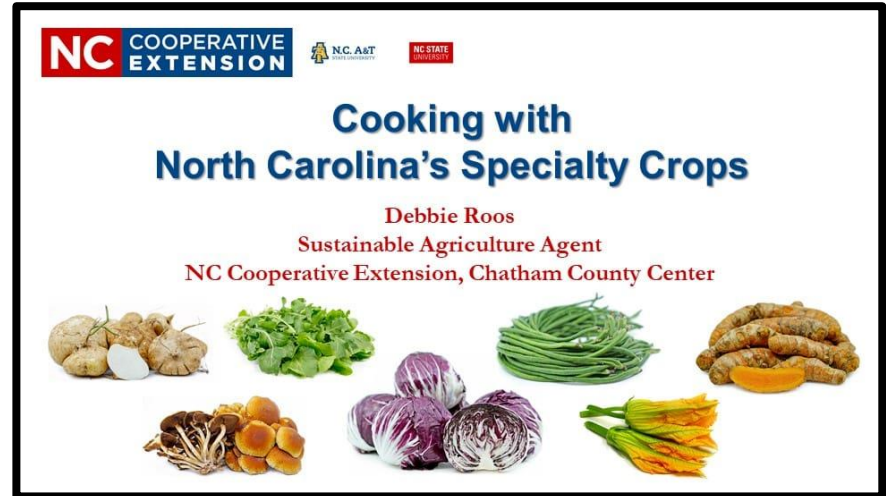
# Chatham Conservation Partnership Webinars

- I am on the CCP Steering Committee and we transitioned to webinars during Covid
- Topics include:
  - Water Resource Planning
  - Spiders
  - Healthy Yard Alternatives
  - Community Conservation
  - Dragonflies & Damselflies



# Other Presentations

- In addition to the webinars and programs I conduct in Chatham County, I did 30 presentations for other groups around the state, including:
  - NC State University classes
  - Museum of Natural Science/DENR
  - Audubon Society
  - Native Plant Society
  - County Master Gardener Volunteers
  - Beekeeper Clubs

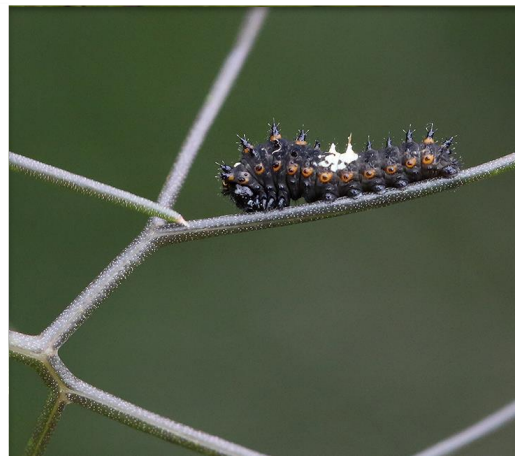
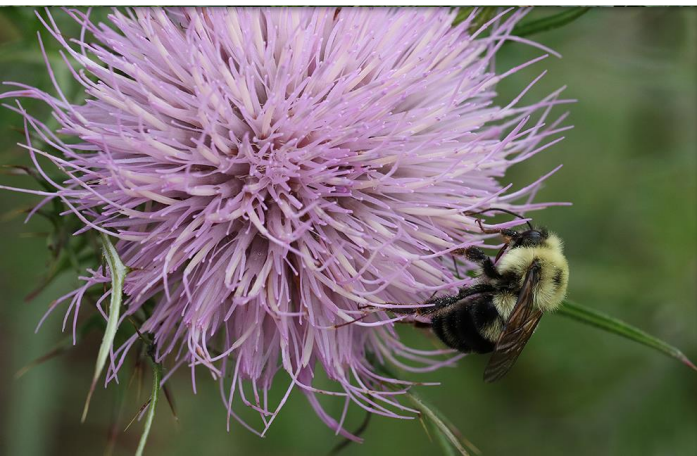


# Pollinator Paradise Demonstration Garden

- I furloughed my volunteers for a few months in the spring of 2020 due to Covid so maintained the garden by myself
- No in-person tours in 2020 so started doing virtual garden tour videos and slideshows which were very popular
- Resumed in-person tours in 2021; conducted 32 public and private tours this year for 600+ people



# Pollinator Paradise Demonstration Garden

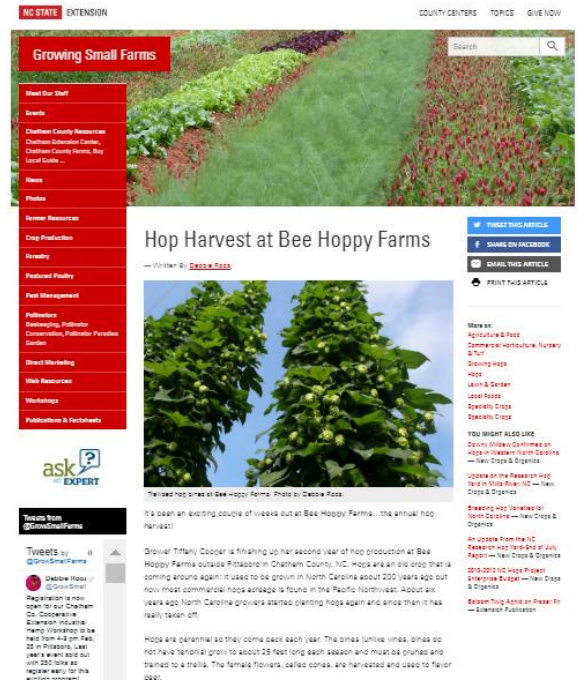




# Growing Small Farms Website

[growingsmallfarms.ces.ncsu.edu](http://growingsmallfarms.ces.ncsu.edu)

- Created in 2002 to educate farmers and consumers about sustainable agriculture and our local food system
- The website grew to over 600 pages and has averaged **256,000 page views per year** for 2020-2021





# Improving Agricultural Literacy

- An important part of my job is educating the public about:
  - Agriculture, farming, and the local food system
  - Pollinator conservation
  - Forestry & natural resources



# Farm Visit Snapshots

- Another new feature I added to my Growing Small Farms website is the Farm Visit Snapshots
- These photo stories capture one day on the life on a farm
- I post them as a way to improve agricultural literacy

# Farm Visit Snapshots



# Farm Visit Snapshots



# Sometimes Agricultural Literacy = Bragging About Our Awesome Farmers!



# Social Media for Ag Literacy

- I am very active on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- I use social media to educate and raise awareness and promote local farms
- This article I wrote in December about Robin Hood's Kitchen had 28 shares on Facebook in less than a day



**Debbie Roos**

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I love Chatham County! It's been a rough year for so many folks, and this new group has formed to help food insecure families by turning food waste into delicious and nutritious meals. I hung out with the [Robin Hood's Kitchen](#) volunteers on Monday as they cooked up amazing meals at [Angelina's Kitchen](#) and delivered them to the [CORA Food Pantry](#). I pos... See More



[GROWINGSMALLFARMS.CES.NCSU.EDU](#)

**Robin Hood's Kitchen Converts Food Waste to Meals for Food Pantry**

  Angelina Kay and 74 others    3 Comments    **28 Shares**



# Farmer Consultations

- I conducted farm visits as usual in spite of COVID and followed proper protocols
- Addressing proactive issues as well as immediate problems



# Boards & Committees

- NC Farm School
- Chatham Conservation Partnership Steering Committee
- Chatham Community Food Council
- ForestHer NC Workshop Committee
- NC Pollinator Conservation Alliance
- NCSU Climate Office Advisory Committee
- NC State Extension Farm Planning Portal Team



# Thank You for Your Support!



Questions?

