



# Giving Back: Extension Demonstration Garden Providing Fresh Vegetables to Local Food Banks

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Gwinnett County, GA, has a population of over 900,000 and continues to grow. One rising issue of concern is food insecurity. According to the Community Foundation of North Georgia, 10% of the population lacks proper nutrition access. The Georgia Department of Public Health estimates the number of residents living in food deserts, where people do not have convenient access to healthy food, which is 8%.

UGA Extension Gwinnett addresses the issue by donating fruits and vegetables harvested from the demonstration garden at McDaniel Farm Park in Duluth, GA. (Figure 1), A 134-acre park in Gwinnett County is designed to preserve part of a disappearing piece of the county's rural heritage. Tenants on these farms also planted personal vegetable gardens near the tenant houses where they cultivated tomatoes, beans, and others. The family canned and preserved the vegetables for food during the winter.



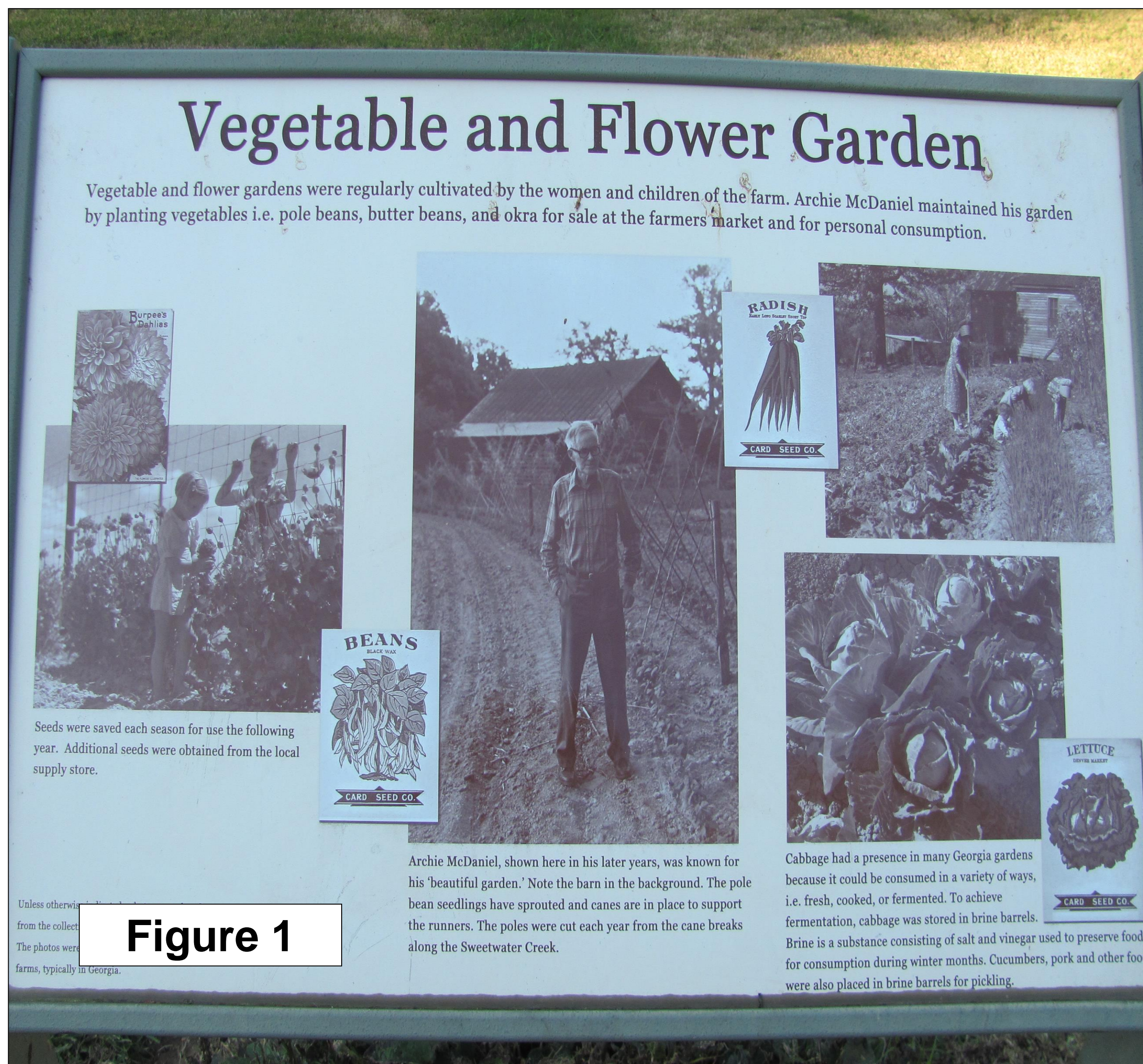
**Figure 2**

The public frequently asks gardening questions when volunteers are present, and they have made over 2,000 contacts since 2017.

To help address Gwinnett's food insecurity issues, the Master Gardeners have grown and donated over 3,500 (Table 1, Figure 4) pounds of produce to local food banks, most notably the Hands-of-Christ Ministry in Duluth and the Southeast Gwinnett Co-op in Grayson. They will continue to utilize the garden as a fresh food source for these ministries and seek new ones. Plans are in progress to expand the garden area to increase its size and production capability. The McDaniel Farm Park Garden has inspired other community gardens to donate their harvest to various charities.

**Table 1**

Year	Pounds of Produce	Volunteer Hours	Contacts
2017	1,045 lbs.	779 Hours	560
2018	850 lbs.	958 Hours	821
2019	1,100 lbs.	941 Hours	552
2020	965 lbs.	402 Hours	97



**Figure 1**

Figure 1. Near the entrance to the garden area, a sign with information on the original vegetable grown by the farmers helps visitors to understand the historical nature of the demonstration garden.



**Figure 3**

Since 2006, the Gwinnett County Master Gardener Extension Volunteers, under the direction of UGA Extension Gwinnett, have planted and maintained a vegetable garden at McDaniel Farm Park. (Figures 2 and 3) The garden is based on the original ones planted in the early 20th century by the owner, Archie McDaniel. The Master Gardeners meet one day a week to plant and maintain the garden. The demonstration garden is visible from walking trails and accessible to visitors.



**Figure 4**