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# Forsyth County Urban Farm School

Seed to sale program model provides training and networking for new, small, urban market gardeners, and individuals seeking agricultural employment.



Production Planning

Crop Establishment

Classroom Learning

Farm visits

Field Maintenance

Harvest, Wash, and Pack

Marketing Produce

## The Need

The Forsyth County Urban Farm School (UFS) is addressing pain points of our changing agriculture system in an urbanizing county. With rising land prices and urban space limitations, growers looking to supplement or replace income via crop production must maximize their crop production efficiency in small spaces. Growers have self-reported that primary challenges to new producers and beginning farmers include access to land, capital, and training in farm business planning highlighting a need for more targeted learning opportunities for individuals seeking knowledge and connections to resources for small scale urban food production and marketing. Additionally, fresh food access in Forsyth County and many other urban NC counties is inconsistent (Winston-Salem ranks 7th on a national list for food hardship), further positioning urban food production education as a key focus in horticulture programs.



## Participants

40 students enrolled in the '22, '23, and '24 UFS classes of which 37 graduated from the program.

**At Enrollment, participants self reported:**

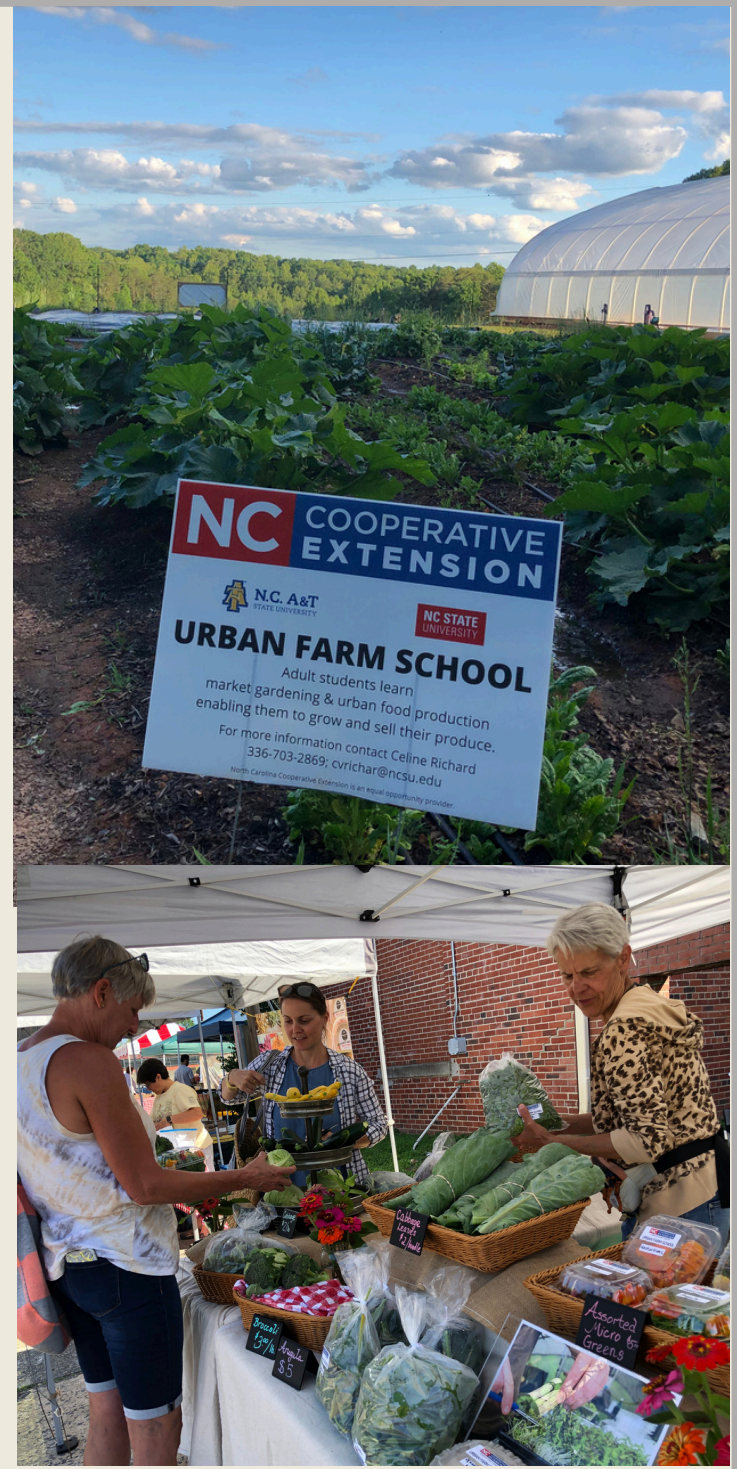
71% were part-time or unemployed.	72% have access to less than an acre for growing.	44% reside in zip codes containing documented food deserts.
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## About the Course

This 12-week, 72+ hour UFS course provides hands-on market-garden training to equip new, small and urban farmers with experience, resources, and connections to increase career and business opportunities as well as local food access. Students are responsible for attending program sessions twice a week in both the classroom and the field during which they establish and maintain field plots with spring crops. The class takes students through field preparation, seeding, transplanting, food safety, harvest and concludes with the sale of their produce.

### Topics Summary

- |  |                      |                                      |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Soil Health & Fertility Management   | • Farm Safety        | • Record Keeping & Business Planning |
| • Crop Selection & Production Mapping  | • Crop Establishment | • Pre & Post Harvest Produce Safety  |
| • Field Preparation                    | • Specialty Crops    | • Marketing Best Practices           |
| • Integrated Pest & Disease Management | • Local Food Systems | • And others!                        |



## What are Program Graduates Saying?

"I'm walking away with the important first step to becoming a successful farm, armed with resources to continue learning."

"I appreciate ... being able to learn real time with a garden plot asking questions and working as a group."

"I now have a client for value added goods sales. My interest in the class sparked an interest in floral jellies that I plan on further developing as a constant product offering. Having a buyer lined up has made upscaling this idea exciting."

"The overall class helped to jump start our Farmers Market journey. All that I learned in class helped me to develop a plan. I believe the farm visits allowed me to see a complete picture of how it can be done."

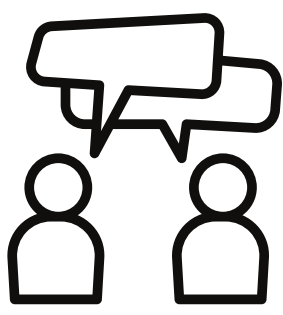
"As someone on benefits that needs to stretch every dollar, being able to turn a \$2 pack of seeds into endless fresh produce is major for my family. But I now can also share what I learned with my family and friends who are interested in urban gardening."

"The amount of in-depth research based factual information that covers all possible areas of market gardening was excellent. Just having the knowledge about the resources available are phenomenal!"



## Impacts

2022-2024



Class participants shared knowledge gained with at least 1243 people.



Participants indicated that they **have saved (47%) or anticipate saving (43%) money on household food expenses** by growing their own produce as a result of this course.

Knowledge Gain	Site Selection	Soil Health	Production Planning	Irrigation	Crop Establishment	Fertility Management	IPM	Business Best Practices	Value Added Farm Products	Marketing	Produce Safety	Farm Safety
Pre-test (n=15)	13%	40%	13%	0%	13%	20%	7%	7%	7%	13%	0%	13%
Post-test (n=15)	85%	85%	70%	74%	74%	63%	63%	59%	67%	67%	81%	78%
Percent Change in perceived competencies*	72%	45%	57%	74%	61%	43%	56%	53%	60%	53%	81%	64%

Changes in Reported Practices	Conducting soil test prior to applying soil amendments	Making a site plan	Identifying harmful and beneficial insects to determine whether chemical control is needed	When pesticides are used, following the directions on the label	Developing & carrying-out an on-farm food safety plan	Composting	Record keeping	Growing fresh vegetables, herbs, or flowers for sale	Producing value added farm products for sale
Pre-test (n=40)	15%	20%	25%	33%	15%	55%	25%	28%	15%
Post-test (n=36)	40%	56%	64%	74%	64%	61%	64%	39%	22%
Percent increase in practice implementation*	25%	36%	39%	42%	49%	6%	39%	12%	7%

\*Percentage of respondents who self-reported their knowledge level as "excellent" or "good" before and after completing the UFS course.

\*Percentage of respondents who self-reported incorporating listed practices at rates of "all the time" or "sometimes" before and after completing the UFS course.



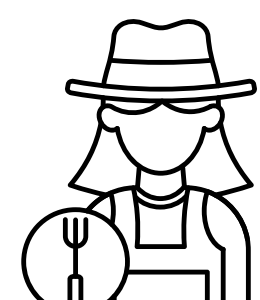
863.66 pounds of produce was grown and harvested between '22 and '24 by UFS students in class field plots.



100% of graduates completed a draft business plan.



11 participants gained employment in a agriculture or gardening related field.



7 participants are operating a small farm business within 2 years of graduation.