

Farmers Market Season, Finally!

With the coming of spring, my mind turns to this year's plantings of vegetables and flowers. Along with the planning of my own gardens, my thoughts are about getting together with the farmers who will be supplying farm-fresh produce, baked goods, local honey, cut flowers and other items at Downtown Gainesville's Market on the Square, from 2:30 – 6:30 p.m. every Friday through October.

The Downtown Gainesville Market is more than just a place to stop by and get some fresh-picked vegetables. The Market is becoming a part of Gainesville's community, recalling a time when local markets were a unique feature of our central commercial district. The Market reflects North Georgia's agricultural heritage, as well as being a weekly meeting place for city locals and the area's farming community.

We are pleased to announce that craftspeople are returning to the Market this season. Handmade soap and clothing, jewelry, quilts, handbags and other crafts made by local artisans will bring an added dimension to the Market.

Applications for farmers and vendors are available on the website, as well as my contact information if you have any questions.

This year, we will be repeating the cooking competitions between local restaurant chefs, with a new twist. Instead of using a particular fruit or vegetable as the main ingredient, chefs will be given a box of produce and other ingredients to prepare within a one-hour timeframe. Most of the ingredients will consist of what the farmers bring to the market on that day. These cooking competitions will take place every other Friday beginning in July.

Each Friday will also see cooking demonstrations featuring fresh, seasonal produce and other items available at the market. These will be quick demonstrations, lasting anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes, and will give shoppers some great, quick and easy recipe ideas to use at home.

For more information about the Downtown Farmers Market, visit the website at www.hallfarmers.org.

The website highlights all three Hall County farmers markets:

Hall County Farmers Market

Located off I-985's Exit 24, at Jesse Jewell Parkway and East Crescent Drive.

6 a.m. - sellout Tuesdays

7 a.m. - sellout Saturdays

Spout Springs Library Farmers Market

Spout Springs Library parking lot on Spout Springs Road

4 p.m. - 7 p.m. Thursdays

Downtown Gainesville Market on the Square

Downtown Square, Gainesville

Main Street and Spring Street

2:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Fridays

Community Gardens

This year, we have an exciting opportunity to begin the development of a community garden on Green Street. Talks are just beginning with the property owner and a gardening group. If we can make this a reality, community residents will have a quarter-acre site to garden in raised beds. Plans will include building some beds that will be available to people with physical limitations and will be wheelchair accessible.

A proposal for a neighborhood garden on a third-acre is being discussed for the Ridgewood-Bradford Historic District. This garden should be big enough for 8 large raised beds, or 16 smaller raised beds, that will be made available to neighborhood residents.

Planning these types of gardens takes a lot of work. Deciding what kind of garden – vegetable, flower or a mix; who will oversee the garden; forming task-specific committees; raising funds; and building the beds. All this needs to be done before any planting can get started.

If you are interested in helping with either of these gardens, contact me at steve@hallfarmers.org.

While we are on the subject of community and neighborhood gardens, why not take a look around your neighborhood to see if there is any suitable unused space. Looking at established community gardens, and talking to the people who built them, can give you an idea of what it takes to get started. Last year, Gainesville's Newtown neighborhood established the Ruby Wilkins Community Garden as a place for residents to grow their own vegetables. A visit there could be a good starting point. More

information can be found online, at websites like www.communitygarden.org.