

FARMERS AND CONSUMERS

MARKET BULLETIN

Two universities
are researching
cold-hardy
bananas.

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GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • GARY W. BLACK, COMMISSIONER • WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2015 • VOL. 98, NO. 1 • © COPYRIGHT 2015

Georgia farmers fill local fungi gap for state's restaurant industry

By Dallas Duncan



Georgia's niche varieties of mushrooms are primarily grown for use in restaurants and for sale at farmers markets, as seen here. *Photo courtesy Sparta Imperial Mushrooms*

The Peach State's capital boasts a burgeoning food and restaurant scene – and the second-highest consumption of mushrooms in the country.

That's what threw Suzy Currey and company "over the line" and into fungi farming.

Currey and her husband are co-owners of Sparta Imperial Mushrooms in Sparta, Ga. Their involvement in mushroom farming began when they were approached by a friend at Georgia Organics who was looking to start a for-profit agriculture business.

"We all looked and studied on what angle of the food business we could get into, and we ended up with deciding mushrooms," Currey said.

The Curreys converted a nineteenth-century cotton warehouse into a mushroom laboratory and greenhouse, and now grow three fungi – shiitake, lion's mane and oyster.

"You've got all those big mushroom producers in the Northeast who do the button mushrooms, portobellos, and we decided to do mushroom varieties that were more interesting medicinally and for health reasons," Currey said. "We thought they offered a more interesting product to our customers."

Most of Sparta's mushrooms are sold in

Atlanta restaurants, grocery stores and farmers markets, Currey said. So are the fungi grown by 5th Kingdom in Atlanta.

"We're in a highly urban environment," said Steven Bell, director of operations for 5th Kingdom. "I think that's the most important aspect of what I do. We're able to grow a tremendous amount of food in a warehouse, within a stone's throw of the State Capitol and the Braves stadium."

Bell, who has experience in landscape architecture, biology and agriculture, wasn't satisfied with job opportunities available to him in 2010. He began looking into Atlanta's food scene and discovered a gap that he could fill.

"We have all of these incredible chefs, arguably one of the most up-and-coming food scenes in the nation, but no one had been supplying mushrooms to the market," he said. "After a year of preparation, I received a loan and jumped in headfirst."

Bell likens mushroom cultivation to cattle farming rather than corn.

"You have mushrooms that physically eat a material. They don't move, but they consume the straw and wood and other products that we feed them, and then you get a harvestable mushroom," he said.

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Notice
Deadline to submit ads
for the Feb. 18 issue is
noon, Feb. 4.

New loan program offers low interest, flexible options for beginning farmers

By Dallas Duncan

Beginning farmers only account for 22 percent of America's producers, according to the US Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service.

Now, thanks to a new loan program from Georgia Development Authority, Josh Thompson of Moultrie, Ga., is upping those percentage points. Thompson was the first recipient of the Securing Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources Today loan program, which debuted at the Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition in October 2014.

Thompson first became involved in agriculture as a middle school FFA livestock showman.

"My family and I got into the cattle business back in 2000 to 2001, and since then we've grown from 10 to 15 head of mama cows to 60-plus head of

mama cows and 100-plus acres of Bermuda hay," he said.

Now Thompson is starting his own operation, focusing on cattle, hay and horses. His parents went through GDA back in the 1990s to purchase their land, and they advised him to do the same. He found Assistant Director Donald Wilder.

"I didn't really know about the [START] program and just went to ask a few questions," Thompson said. "He started informing me about the programs that the Development Authority had. He told me he'd help me any which-way he could, and he's been a big help to me."

Though it is a beginning farmer program, producers don't have to be youngsters to apply for the loan. A beginning farmer is anyone who's been

See **LOAN**, page 12



Joshua Thompson, left, accepts the state's first Securing Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources Today, or START, loan from Georgia Development Authority's Assistant Director Donald Wilder. *Photo courtesy Georgia Development Authority*

GEORGIA GROWN PROFILE: Georgia Seed Development Corporation bridges gap between breeders, seed suppliers

By Beth Mohler, fall intern

Since its inception in 1959, Georgia Seed Development has been helping Georgia agriculturalists by producing Foundation seed and promoting varieties developed and released from the University of Georgia. GSD, which started off as an agency of the Department, is now a nonprofit public corporation working to shorten the time required to bring new varieties to the marketplace.

"We provide the bridge between the University of Georgia plant breeders and the commercial companies by producing genetically pure Foundation seed and plants of new varieties, supply quality services that support the commercialization of new varieties and act as a catalyst to enhance plant breeding efforts," Executive Director Roger Boerma said.

GSD is Headquartered in Athens, Ga., and has another location in Plains that houses the peanut program. It serves a magnitude of crops important to Georgia agriculture, such as peanuts, small grains, soybeans, blueberries, turfgrasses and pecans. By offering services for so many crops, GSD focuses on helping the state's agricultural strength its diversity, Boerma said.

GSD decided to become a part of the Georgia Grown program to join other Georgia-centric businesses. It plans to include the Georgia Grown logo on seed bags, plant materials and on its website and hopes to participate in Georgia Grown educational programs. GSD encourages anyone interested to stop by

for a first-hand look at the progress of the past several years.

"We would be honored to provide you a guided tour and share with you our vision for the future," Boerma said.



Case lawn mower, 46-inch deck, Troy-Bilt tillers, all sizes and type. BJ **Gothard McDonough** 404-579-4628

Case six-foot, heavy swivel scrape blade, like new; \$295. Bud Green **Alto** 706-778-9302

CAT D6 C bulldozer with root rake and blade; good undercarriage, irrigation pipe. James Kinnett **McRae** 478-285-3486 229-868-2542

Chipper-shredder; Troy-Bilt, five horsepower, two extra screens in boxes, like new; \$550. Ron Wolfe **Albany** 229-291-4207

Ditch Witch 4010, A420 backhoe with trailer, works well; \$5,000 OBO. Alan Noon **Hampton** anoonpac@gmail.com 404-234-0212

Eight-disk Taylor-Way B&B harrow, new 24-inch disks (spring); \$850 cash or trade five-foot finish mower. William Mack **Maysville** 770-294-4994

Eight-foot scrape blade, Rhino, like new; New Idea Manever spreader; 16-foot Gooseneck dump trailer, metal, two-ton self feeders, three-axle. Julius Dozier **Appling** 706-447-1630

Eight-row KMC disk bedder and eight-row red ball hooded sprayer. Pat West **Pinehurst** 229-928-7427

Eight-wheel hay rake, three-point excellent, \$900; also four-wheel rake, three-point, both, \$1,100. David Odom **Thomaston** 706-646-9693 770-715-5761

Farmall 140 Super A front end loader for Shibaura SD4000AD-0. Clyde Parker **Chatsworth** 706-847-8517

Fertilizer spreader 400 pounds, power take-off driven, \$300; 5x16 bumper, pintle hitch wagon, lights, parade-ready, \$650 OBO. Roy Watson **Senoia** 706-538-1185 404-642-6766

Finishing mower, Woods, six-foot, heavy duty, like new; \$1,250, sells new \$2,750. Eddie Watson **Waco** 770-574-7020

Ford 3000 tractor, gas and five-foot Bush Hog; good rubber and sheet metal; \$3,800. Mike Crane **Bremen** 770-363-4378

Ford 4000 with Bush Hog brand Bush Hog; 1969 model diesel, good condition, with remote hydraulics; \$5,500. James Bryant **LaGrange** 706-302-7300

Ford 600 tractor, \$3,195; 8N Ford, \$2,200; all-purpose plow, \$350; scrape blade, \$300; harrow, \$450; boom pole, \$100. Norris Houze **Hiram** 404-791-6523

Ford 7610 with Q/C loader, 90-plus horsepower, dual remotes, good tires, new paint, good condition; \$16,800. Kevin Campbell **McDonough** 770-274-9093

Ford 8N, \$1,650; runs well with good tires, some three-point equipment. Nelson Massey **Conyers** 770-483-2639

Ford sickle mower, seven-foot cut; King Cutter finish mower, six-foot cut; \$200 each OBO. Stanley M Daniel **Thomaston** 706-975-1427

Four 9N Ford tractors. Robert Collins **Resaca** 706-602-9027

Four- or five-bottom plow; \$500; ready to plow. Danny Williams **Kite** danbo@pineland.net 478-278-6320

Four-foot pull-type side winder Bush Hog, some rust cuts, good manual height adjustable; \$250 OBO. Chris North **Carrollton** 770-842-4198

Galion motor grader, T-500-E, selling for parts; \$2,000. Everett Dubose **Carrollton** 404-406-7411

Harrell five-bottom switch plow, KMC Ripper Spider; 1086 International tractor, engine, transmission rebuilt, new clutch, pressure plate, steering pump. Larry Hart **Glenwood** 478-463-3140

Heavy-duty Case backhoe, 36-inch bucket, \$400; five-foot side winder mower, fair condition, \$300. L. Hanley **Hull** 706-433-1043

Heavy-duty dirt scoop for three-point hitch; \$250. Russ Berry **LaGrange** 706-302-4619

Hi-Low hay tacker; \$300. George Harper **Palmetto** 770-463-3702

I have a FM60Y five-foot finishing mower in great condition; asking \$650. John McCombs **Rockmart** 770-301-1843

John Deere 06 9970 cotton picker, 1,255 hours, excellent condition; \$125,000; harrow four-row stalk puller. Hugh Hosch **Waynesboro** 770-789-3258

John Deere 110 lawn mower with round fenders, not running; \$500. John Itson **Pelham** 229-294-0486

John Deere 1700 air planters, excellent condition, \$7,500; John Deere, 26-foot, 235 harrow, good disk bearings, field-ready, \$4,000. Bobby Akridge **Ocilla** 229-686-0140

John Deere 1972 4320 fully restored, new tires, with loader model 158. Lynn Schultz **Louisville** 706-526-7262

John Deere 3020, excellent condition, 90 percent, Kobbar; \$6,800. Randy Thrash **Ocilla** 229-347-2368

John Deere 6359 F pumping unit, high pressure 550 GPA per minute, 1,850 hours, sheltered, good condition. Floyd Knowles **McRae** 229-315-0409 229-362-4855

John Deere 7000, four-row bean planter; 12-foot rotary tiller with brackets for John Deere 71 planters. James Martin **Waynesboro** 706-558-5005

John Deere 7810, MFWD, P/S, cab, 8,032 hours, three SCVs, very good condition; \$49,000 OBO. Ted Milliron **Shelton** 229-317-3795

John Deere 913 F grain platform, good condition, field-ready; asking \$4,750 OBO. Dylan Kirkley **Covington** 678-725-4744

John Deere deer plot drill, seven or eight feet wide, works on three-point hitch; \$2,100. Royce Hulet **Hazlehurst** 912-253-0161 912-375-3008

John Deere model WH 53, offset harrow, 14-disk, pull-type with cylinder; \$1,100. Shirley Harrison **Carlton** 706-743-5787

John Deere MRX six-foot Bush Hog, like new; \$1,900. Harry Hughes **Warm Springs** 706-655-2475

John Deere sickle mower, nine-foot, \$600; John Deere round bale mover, hauls four rolls, \$3,000; livestock bumper-pull, four-foot, \$900. J. W. Adkins **Vienna** 229-805-0255

John Deere, hand start older, restored, \$3,500; flywheel engine, running, Maytag, \$275. Kermit Simmons **Jefferson** 770-867-7550

KMC peanut reshaker, hydraulic fold, new chains, sprockets and D drive bearings. John Hagan **Dixie** 229-263-2358

KMC six-row cultivator, 300-gallon tank and front mount; 125 Case IH flip plow with drag. Donnie Keene **Abbeville** 229-425-8055

Kubota 7200 BST; 17 horsepower, all fluids changed, new seat, in family since new, everything works; \$4,500. Larry Barnes **Cumming** 678-360-0266

L-3000 Kubota, four-wheel drive, power steering, diesel, 30 horsepower, Bush Hog, harrow, blade, cultivator, planter; priced separately. David Phillips **Carnesville** 706-498-5165

Late model 85 horsepower John Deere/Rainbow four-sixth-inch irrigation pump with three-phase generator, runs great. Danny Crumley **Tifton** 229-402-4484

Lawson pasture aerator, \$15,000; Massey Ferguson 43 grain drill, 12 feet, \$3,750; New Holland 256 hay rake, \$800. Ted Smith **Washington** Dangaflat@yahoo.com 706-214-0442

Lt40E15 Wood-Mizer; cuts 21-foot logs, winch log turner, 480- or 220-volt, three-phase. Tommy Jackson **Juliette** 478-986-9446

Mahindra, 65 horsepower tractor, 4x4, front end loader, 210 hours, six-foot box scrape; \$24,600. Daniel Holcombe **Adairsville** 770-608-2260

Massey Ferguson 230; clean tractor; everything works, no leaks, full engine rebuild with 99 hours. Philip Hengler **Snellville** philbrt4all@gmail.com 770-608-4790 770-972-2175

Massey Ferguson 245 tractor, 46 horsepower, diesel power, good conduction. Emory Thomas **Jefferson** 404-402-3824

Mini compost spreader, made in Canada, ground driven, can be pulled by ATV; 4x9x6 feet; \$475. H.M Greene **Talapoosa** 770-833-1035

MR1442 Hardee, hydraulic boom mower, 13-foot reach; two, four joysticks, no remotes needed, new; \$10,000. Joe Hood **LaFayette** 706-638-8644

New 66-inch box scrape; \$400. Wayne Morris **Dallas** 770-445-5347

New Holland 1049 bale wagon, 160 bales, Ford gas V-8, downsizing hay operation; \$12,000 OBO. Frank Fleming **Athens** 706-202-0533

New Holland 640 baler, auto, tie wide pick-up, good condition. Bob Hill **Griffin** 770-227-2383

New Holland hay rake, six-foot Bush Hog, 18-disk section harrow, 60 horsepower gear box, all good condition. Clay Pentecost **Winder** 770-601-3855

One Farmall Cub tractor with cultivators; with equipment. Jerry Taylor **Tyrone** 770-632-1278 770-632-1278

One John Deere 320 skid steer loader, good price; one Case CPX .610/ pkr, \$60,000. Ralph Nutt **Cordele** 229-276-5336

Peanut wagon, \$100; one-row cultivator, \$100. Tillie J Harris **Preston** 228-939-0214

Planters, cultivators, John Deere and Cole planters; subsoilers, Bush Hogs, 16-disk harrows, bottom plows; cash. Carl Crosby **Blackshear** 912-449-6573

Savage pecan cleaner, elevator, nut sizer; great condition; all for \$12,000 OBO. Thomas Clements **Rutledge** 770-335-6315

Sawmill under shelter with 48- and 54-inch blades; edger and large deisel motor. Melvin Thomas **Gainesville** 770-534-7163

Sitrex eight-wheel rake; \$1,000. Tommy Vaughn **Forsyth** 478-256-6395

Sitrex eight-wheel v-rake, \$1,500; New Holland BR7050 roller, 4x4 rolls, \$10,500. Ross Holcomb **Lexington** 706-540-1002

Six-foot box scrape with rippers, excellent condition; \$350. Raymond Harrison **Flowery Branch** 770-965-6287

Six-foot John Deere Bush Hog, \$600; six-foot Mowey John Deere, \$300; 14-foot John Deere tilt trailer, \$1,100. Ben Mcgreggor **Macon** 478-935-2700

Six-foot scrape blade, will offset if needed, Mohawk, \$425; five-foot scrape blade, Frontier, \$325. W.A. Allen **Commerce** 706-677-3300

Taylor-Way 28-foot harrow, like new disk with drag; in good condition, field-ready. Donnie Hopkins **Fitzgerald** 229-424-3261

Taylor-Way backhoe, 6.5, 18-inch bucks, green, red ball, six- or four-row hooder, sprayer, green. Lora Hosch **Buford** 770-945-3971

Three-point hitch, offset with power take-off tills, DPOPS seed and covers, good condition; \$2,500. Bob Brady **Augusta** 706-373-8397

Tractor: Massey Ferguson 245; good condition; 1984, '85; owned by same family entire life, garage-kept. Steve Graham **Powder Springs** 770-757-6197

Troy-Bilt horse garden tiller and attachments, Kohler engine; \$700; excellent condition. Shawn Davis **Marietta** 404-202-2599

Troy-Bilt walk-behind jet sweeper, leaf blower; 6.5 horsepower, good condition. Drucilla Stowers **Dawsonville**, 770-789-4052

Two 1960 Dexta diesel tractors, one good with bad transmission, other good transmission; \$3,500. Morris C Gilreath **Gainesville** 770-532-1424

Two five-foot Bush Hogs with power take-off shafts, \$400 each; dirt scoop, \$150; all in good condition. Kenny Crumley **Oxford** 770-787-5499



Alice Johnson of Elko, Ga., sent in this photo of cosmos flowers she grew. They were planted in February and bloomed until the frost. She said they were very pretty all year long.

Market Bulletin Ad Form

This form may be used to submit an ad. There is a 20-word limit for advertisements unless otherwise noted under category headings. The 20-word limit includes name, city, phone number and complete address, if provided. *Market Bulletin* staff reserves the right to edit notices exceeding the word limit. Only one notice per subscriber per issue. In order to advertise in the *Bulletin*, you must be a paid subscriber with a current subscription.

Category: _____
Please note some categories are not published regularly. In addition, some categories require documentation, such as a Coggins test or organic certification, prior to being published.

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Please include your name and full address on all correspondence sent to the *Bulletin* office. The following statement must be signed by the advertiser submitting this notice for publication:

I hereby certify that the above notice meets all the necessary requirements for publication in the *Farmers and Consumers Market Bulletin*.

Please mail ads separate from subscription payments. Ads should be mailed to Georgia Department of Agriculture, Attention: Market Bulletin, 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SW, Atlanta, GA 30334.

GUEST COLUMN: Preserving Georgia's agricultural history



FIELDS

A story that goes undocumented or an extraordinary individual who goes unrecognized is like a tiny bit of Georgia's history lost forever.

Over the past 18 years, as executive director of the Georgia Agricultural Hall of Fame, I have had the privilege of hearing the stories of some of the most influential people in the history of agriculture in Georgia. Thankfully, because of the Georgia Agricultural Hall of Fame, these stories and their lead character will not be lost to time, but preserved for the generations to come.

I'm captivated by the innovated spirit of the members of the Georgia Agricultural Hall of Fame. Like the agricultural pioneer Naomi Woodroof, one of the first women to receive a degree in agriculture in the United States, and the first woman scientist at the Georgia Experiment Station in Griffin and the Coastal Plain Experiment Station in Tifton. She was born in 1900 and her story was captured and preserved in the Georgia Agricultural Hall of Fame 97 years later.

Do you know the name Alvin Newton? Maybe not, but I'm sure you know the things he is credited with creating that changed the face of Georgia agriculture forever. Alvin Newton of Colquitt, Ga., installed the first center-pivot irrigation system in Georgia in 1967 and led the way for the adoption of center-pivot irrigation through his tractor and farm equipment business, Newton-Hamrick Co. He also built southwest Georgia's first hydro-cooler for sweet corn, which allowed the shipment of sweet corn throughout North America and opened up the vegetable industry to Georgia.

These are just two of the 76 extraordinary individuals whose stories are preserved in the Georgia Agricultural Hall of Fame, each one weaving a thread of ingenuity with the next to create a rich tapestry that is Georgia's agricultural history.

It's vitally important that we preserve our history and pay tribute to the individuals who shaped our state and laid the path for a prosperous agricultural future. The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Alumni Association is asking for your help in identifying nominations for its most distinguished award, the Georgia Agricultural Hall of Fame.

If you know a story that needs to be told and the story's lead character that deserves recognition for his or her outstanding contributions to Georgia agriculture, the CAES Alumni Association invites you to make a nomination. Recipients will be honored in Athens on Friday, Sept. 25, 2015.

Juli Fields is the director of alumni relations for UGA CAES. She can be reached at 706-542-3390. To obtain guidelines and a nomination form for the 2015 induction into the Georgia Agricultural Hall of Fame, please visit www.caes.uga.edu/alumni. Applications must be submitted by March 15, 2015.

Winter fuel tips



Courtesy Department Press Office

As cold weather hits and temperatures continue to drop, Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture Gary W. Black reminds *Market Bulletin* readers to properly handle and store fuel during the winter:

- ◆ Purchase recommended fuel. Lawn mowers and other small engine equipment are designed to run on gasoline blended with no more than 10 percent ethanol, or E10.
- ◆ Store fuel in proper containers. Never store fuel in containers with open or leaking spouts. Leaking spouts are a fire safety hazard and promote the absorption of moisture, which can cause fuel to turn stale quicker.

- ◆ Shake the fuel container for 30 seconds just prior to filling your equipment. This practice ensures the fuel is mixed properly.
- ◆ Always store fuel in a cool, dry area. This will reduce the formation of condensation inside the fuel container. Fuel should never be stored in houses or by open flames.
- ◆ Drain fuel from equipment's tank, or use a fuel stabilizer. When preparing to put your equipment into winter storage, drain all of the fuel from your equipment's tank or add a fuel stabilizer. Fuel stabilizers are effective only if they are mixed with fresh fuel and properly stored. Remember, nothing can restore old, stale fuel.

For more tips and information regarding proper fuel use and storage, contact the Department's Fuel and Measures Division at 404-656-3605 or visit www.agr.georgia.gov/fuel-measures-division.aspx.



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Gary W. Black, Commissioner
MARKET BULLETIN STAFF
Dallas Duncan, **editor**
Gerrie Fort, **circulation manager**
Merlissa Smith, **customer services specialist**

agriCULTURE

Letter from the editor



Happy 2015, folks!

One of my favorite sayings ever is “party like it’s 1999.” If you’re reading this issue and are under the age of 15, chances are you have no idea where that saying originated from. Let me indoctrinate you (from what I remember, being the tender age of 10 at the time).

In 1999, people thought that technology was going to implode on itself because whoever invented computers *may not have* built the year 2000 into the calendar, so people wouldn’t be able to save files, make changes to files or live life in general come Jan. 1. Hence, in addition to being the dawn of a new millennium, which in itself was a fabulous reason to stay up ‘til midnight, it was also what people thought would be the last day to send emails, instant messages or open Microsoft Word.

As I said, I was 10, so my memories of the millennium are as follows:

- ◆ It was the first night I remember being allowed to stay up until midnight
- ◆ I was so excited to dress up my American Girl of Today doll in a special “Celebrate 2000” outfit that involved lots of lavender glitter
- ◆ My brother and I argued over who got to play with Ty 2K, the commemorative Beanie Baby
- ◆ We started watching fireworks at breakfast on New Year’s Eve and it continued until New Year’s Day
- ◆ There was a boat that went around the world and crossed each time zone at exactly midnight

I was fascinated by the fact that in Australia, it was New Year’s Day when we were still celebrating New Year’s Eve. I will never forget watching “Good Morning America” that morning and seeing reporters show highlights of the fireworks show at the Sydney Opera House. As the day went on, we saw high-lights of London, Moscow, Hong Kong and pretty much every other major city ring in the 21st century with a spectacular light show.

Anticlimactically, the extended Duncan family lit sparklers in our backyard.

Once the new year was rung in and we all got approximately six hours of sleep, it was time to wake up, get to cooking and start the New Year’s traditions that require us to gather around the table. For those of you who may not be from the South, a typical Southern New Year’s Day menu includes black-eyed peas, cornbread, ham and collards, each of which signify different blessings for the coming 365 days.

The peas mean prosperity, cornbread and collards are money and pork stands for progress.

Reflecting on my own food traditions, and the myriad of celebrations worldwide, got me thinking: What do people elsewhere eat on Jan. 1?

With a little help from Martha Stewart and Epicurious, I bring you five celebratory dishes. Sorry these came a little late for 2015, but hey, there’s always next year!

- ◆ Grapes: Yeah, just plain grapes! In Spain (and Colombia, if you watch Gloria on the show “Modern Family”), people eat 12 grapes at midnight to signify what the coming year will bring. For example, if the second grape is a bit sour, February might be a rough month.
- ◆ Sauerkraut: In America, we eat collard greens to symbolize money. In Germany, they do sauerkraut. Hmm ... wonder if I ate a pork bratwurst topped with sauerkraut, if it meant I’d make more money this year ...
- ◆ Fishy dishes: According to what I found on Epicurious, lots of countries include fish in their new year menus. But Japan’s fish traditions take the cake. The Japanese eat herring roe (fish eggs) for fertility, shrimp for long lives and dried sardines for a good harvest. I wonder how many Georgia farmers are going to go out and buy sardines after reading this bullet point.
- ◆ Cake: It’s customary in many countries to enjoy a usually round cake or pastry of some sort. In Mexico, it’s the rosca de reyes, a ring-shaped cake with candied fruit; the Greeks have round vasilopita; and of course, doughnuts are popular. In addition to eating the cakes, many bakers hide trinkets and coins inside to symbolize luck and prosperity.

And farmers, I think I just found y’all an agritourism draw for New Year’s Day. In Belarus, unmarried women sit in a circle, place a pile of hay in front of them and wait as a rooster is let loose. The first girl to be visited by the rooster will be the first to get married that year.

Dallas Duncan is the editor of the Market Bulletin. Originally from Evans, Ga., she graduated in May 2011 with a double major in animal science and agricultural communication from the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. She previously worked for The Red & Black, The Times newspaper in Gainesville, Ga., and Georgia Cattleman’s Association.

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ARTY'S GARDEN: Winter flowers are a special lot

We have been conditioned to think winter is supposed to be bleak and plants are supposed to be barren or brown between November and March. In Georgia, however, our gardens can be as beautiful in winter as in any other season. With a little planning, we can even have flowers in bloom.

Some flowers in the winter garden are primarily autumn bloomers that escaped freezing blasts. Some are primarily spring bloomers, but have light dormancies and tease us with a few flowers during warm spells in January or February. Some fully belong to the season and display not a petal before December and hide their faces from the blistering heat of April.

I love the lot of them.

A few of the winter-flowering plants you can include in your landscape are pansies, violas, paperwhites, Algerian iris (*Iris unguicularis*), snowdrops, Bowles' Mauve wallflower, snow crocus, wintersweet, winter honeysuckle

(*Lonicera fragrantissima*), mahonias, camellias, winter jasmine, *Clematis cirrhosa*, winter-flowering Higan cherry (*Prunus x subhirtella* 'Autumnalis'), rosemary, *Daphne odora*, witch-hazels, hellebores, laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus*), flowering quinces (*Chaenomeles japonica* and *C. speciosa*) and *Prunus mume*. Thrift (*Phlox subulata*) has its main period of bloom in the spring, but some varieties will produce a few flowers throughout winter if planted in sunny, protected spots. Some candy-tuft varieties behave the same way.

Many winter flowers are small, concentrating their energies on pollinator-luring fragrances rather than large petals that may be lost to sudden blasts of frigid weather. Notable exceptions are camellias, which produce some of the largest flowers of any garden shrubs.

I remember placing deep red blooms of 'Professor Charles S. Sargent' on my grandmother's grave the January she died. A happier memory is a Christmas Eve spent



FLOWERS blooming in the author's garden on the first day of winter included wintersweet, laurustinus, 'Yuletide' sasanqua camellia, rosemary and paperwhites.

with a family friend in Charlotte, NC., with cut crystal vases of 'Debutante' pink camellias decorating her home. How fortunate we are to live in camellia country!

Although I love flowering cherries, I wish more gardeners would plant *Prunus mume* (pronounced PROO-nus MEW-may), another flowering tree that is just as beautiful. It is sometimes called mume or Japanese flowering apricot, but you are more likely to hear it called by its botanical name. Depending on weather and variety, it will bloom from January to March. Some blooms may get killed by the cold, but more will open. It is sweetly fragrant.

Some winter-flowering plants such as Algerian iris and *Clematis cirrhosa* are available from only a few sources. Some garden centers do not carry winter-flowering plants because most customers shop in the spring and purchase only what looks best at the moment.

If you are unfamiliar with winter-flowering plants and how beautiful gardens can be in winter, visit a public garden in January. A few Georgia gardens with winter flowers include the State Botanical Garden of Georgia in Athens, Atlanta Botanical Garden, Massee Lane Gardens in Fort Valley (home to the camellia collection of American Camellia Society) and Atlanta's Oakland Cemetery.

Some people are surprised, even shocked, when I come bearing winter flowers. I enjoy providing a surprise and telling others about winter flowers. They're special, and I wish I had room for a lot more.

Arty Schronce is the Department's resident gardening expert. He is a lifelong gardener and a horticulture graduate of North Carolina State University. Blooming in his garden on the first day of winter this year were paperwhites, rosemary, violas, laurustinus, gray-leaved conradina, old-fashioned Korean chrysanthemums, wintersweet and 'Yuletide' sasanqua camellia.

FEATURE RECIPE: Grits with mushroom ragout



Editor's Note: You read on page 1 that Atlanta consumes more mushrooms than almost anywhere else in the country. Whether you purchase yours from a supermarket, farmers market or neighbor's backyard farm, we think they'd work well in this recipe from Georgia Grown Senior Executive Chef Holly Chute. She recommends a blend of lion's mane, shiitake and oyster mushrooms. This recipe is rich and hearty enough to be eaten as an entrée with a side salad.

Ingredients:

1 pound assorted mushrooms, chopped	2 cups cream, divided
1 shallot, diced	4 cups chicken broth
8 tablespoons butter	1.5 cups stone-ground grits
1/3 cup white wine	2 cloves garlic, minced
	Salt and pepper, to taste

Instructions:

1. Melt four tablespoons butter in a saucepan. Add garlic and cook until fragrant. Pour in chicken broth and one cup cream and bring to a boil.
2. Whisk the grits into the boiling liquid. Bring it back to a boil, then lower it to a simmer. Add salt and pepper to taste.
3. Cook grits, stirring periodically, for 40 to 60 minutes, depending on the coarseness of the grits.
4. While grits are cooking, melt the remaining four tablespoons in a skillet. Add shallots and cook until soft.
5. Add mushrooms to skillet and continue cooking over medium heat until soft.
6. Pour wine into mushroom mixture and cook until wine is reduced by half. Add remaining cup of cream and salt and pepper. Cook five to 10 minutes, or until thickened.
7. Serve ragout poured over grits.

Valdosta farmer sets new record for highest corn yield

By Dallas Duncan



Randy Dowdy of Valdosta, Ga., produced the all-time high yield in the 2014 National Corn Growers Association contest. His 503 bushels per acre were a world record. *Photo courtesy Randy Dowdy*

Randy Dowdy is now a world record holder.

The Valdosta, Ga., corn grower set an all-time high yield record in the 2014 National Corn Yield Contest with 503 bushels per acre.

"You're going to have a certain amount of folks that don't believe it's true because they're not seeing it," Dowdy said. "But then you've got a lot of people who want to figure out what they can do differently. That's what it's about, having that open mind that the potential is greater than what they're seeing."

Dowdy is a first-generation farmer who planted his initial corn crop in 2008. He said he didn't know anything about growing corn, so he leaned on experienced producers and researchers.

"I tried things outside the box. I try to be a student of the crop, understand how it grows and try some unconventional things,"

Dowdy said.

Some of these methods included experimenting with fungicides, herbicides, lime sources and trying to plant populations higher than normal.

Dowdy gives credit to "God's favor" for his 2014 crop. He said he tries to have an open mind and understand what stresses affect yield production, so he can be a step ahead.

He first competed in the contest in 2010.

"We won the contest that year in Georgia and since then I've been a national winner on some scale, sometimes in multiple categories. This year we won six times nationally," Dowdy said. "God blessed us to have a new world record, and it's great that it came from Georgia."

The contest began 50 years ago with 20 entrants, said Rachel Jungerman-Orf, contest manager with National Corn Growers Association.

"It was basically just a friendly competition with your local neighbors to see how your corn was doing compared to your neighbor's corn," she said. "We try to keep it that way now that it's grown to 9,000 entries."

Farmers fill out an entry form detailing their hybrids and cultivation practices as well as a harvest form, Jungerman-Orf said.

Dowdy planted hybrids of DeKalb and Pioneer corn this year. He said there's no one answer to what varieties farmers should plant.

"I believe in diversification to spread risk across hybrids and across relative maturity dates and population," Dowdy said.

His 2014 crop, which goes into fuel and livestock feed, started out wet conditions and adverse weather.

"That tried my faith," Dowdy said. "But at the end of the day, God's grace was more than sufficient and he gave us great weather in the latter part of the season."

MUSHROOM: Indoor growth allows for cultivation statewide

From Page 1

To grow mushrooms, farmers must take mycelium, which is the mushroom tissue not usually visible aboveground, culture it in laboratory conditions and put it in their bag of growing medium. Bell uses pressure-cooked grain for his medium.

"You then transfer your pure culture into the material that it's going to eat. For our oyster mushrooms, we use straw and cottonseed hull," he said. "Most of those materials are from the state of Georgia. Ninety percent of our mushrooms are Georgia-grown on Georgia

straw and Georgia cotton."

Sparta starts out by inoculating organic rye grain – the farm is certified organic – with mushroom cultures grown on the farm. The grain is put in bags of sterilized hardwood sawdust, which are then put into greenhouses. After approximately eight weeks in the first greenhouse, the bags are moved to a grow house to fruit. Harvest is about a week later, Currey said.

Unlike Northeastern varieties of mushrooms, the varieties Bell and Currey grow re-

quire shaded light to mimic the fungi's native forest environments.

And though both Sparta and 5th Kingdom are located above the state's fall line, it is possible to grow mushrooms anywhere in the state.

"Because they are grown indoors, it can be done north or south, there are just some differences in energy costs," Bell said. "North Georgia is going to be more conducive to mushroom growing because of the cooler temperatures. You have a more mild climate, whereas you have a month or two more of heat

in south Georgia."

Bell, who grows oyster and shiitake mushrooms at the moment, said it's his personal mission to expand the market and introduce Georgia's chefs and citizens to mushrooms and their flavors.

"We're constantly trying out new strains and innovating in our ability to control the environment," Bell said. "The chefs appreciate good food, especially when they can have something they haven't had in the past that will make them stand out."

UGA, Armstrong Atlantic research growing edible, ornamental bananas in the South

By Dallas Duncan

Move over, peaches – Georgia is going bananas.

2015 marks more than a decade of scientists at the University of Georgia-Tifton Campus researching varieties of the fruit that could prosper in the state's climate.

"The US is a big importer. We spend at least \$1.5 billion each year to bring bananas to the US. If you add the plantain, it's \$1.9 billion that the US spends to bring bananas here," said Esendugue Fonsah, professor and Extension economist at UGA-Tifton.

The only places bananas are grown commercially in America is Hawaii. Florida is starting to host a small banana industry, and since Georgia's right next door, it makes sense to try them here, he said.

"We're not trying to grow the same bananas as Central America," Fonsah said. "[We can grow] Ethnic bananas, which is perfect for niche markets. If you go to the Atlanta supermarkets, you find Ethnic banana sales price ranges from \$1.27 to \$2 per pound, compared to the regular banana, which is 45 cents to 65 cents."

Georgia's banana project has been in the works since the early 2000s. Fonsah said more farmers are trying to cultivate them, but he's urging them to not get too far ahead – not enough research has been done yet for proper application and label usage on some chemical fertilizers, for example.

"We want to do it not just for the big guys, but for the little guys. The guys who want to do one acre of strawberries and one acre of bananas," Fonsah said.

But where the "big guys" come in is alternative energy. A portion of the banana plant is not eaten, but it can be crushed and turned into a biofuel. In addition, the entirety of the plant could proof an economic incentive. Banana blossoms, which are eaten as vegetables all over the world, can sell for between \$3 and \$5 each. The leaves can also be marketed, Fonsah said.



Researchers at the University of Georgia-Tifton Campus and Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah, Ga., have been cultivating new edible and ornamental banana varieties for more than a decade. Though not ready for commercial production yet, both industries hold promise for a variety of cultivars, including these pink *Musa veutina* ornamentals. Photo courtesy Richard Wallace, Armstrong Atlantic State University

There are possibilities for landscaping as well.

"Our ornamental industry is a \$500 million industry, so if we add bananas to the collection, that is a huge addition," Fonsah said.

That's where Georgia's second banana project comes into play, headed up by Richard Wallace, professor of chemistry at Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah. Wallace also focuses on ornamental bananas, which produce fruit that's not traditionally grown for consumption.

"They tend to be small, highly seeded, but they're very beautifully colored," he said. "They seem to be very well-suited for a variety of climates including those in south Georgia and Florida. They grow much faster than the edible varieties."

Wallace, an organic chemist by training, dabbled in backyard agriculture, specifically

tropical fruits. As he became more interested in growing bananas, he came across Fonsah's project. The two worked together for several years and now Wallace has his own banana breeding research, too.

"Just like everything else in science, there's so many aspects of it to be explored," Wallace said. "We found this one variety that has a very short fruiting cycle. It grows very rapidly; it produces fruit very rapidly. What I'm interested in doing is trying to bring some cold tolerance through selective breeding."

The reason bananas grow so well in the tropics is because there's no frost and consistent temperatures year-round, Wallace said.

"There are some bananas that are cold tolerant, but nothing that is cold proof. Every variety I've seen will die if it gets cold enough, which is within the winter tem-

peratures that we have here. Nobody lives through the winter as a green plant, even in south Georgia," he said.

That got Wallace thinking – what if there was a banana variety that was an annual, which could be planted, harvested and die back, like tomato plants?

"After we realized there was a variety out there that grew fast enough that allowed us to do everything in one season, I became interested in how can we make this better, maybe extend the season a little bit better," Wallace said.

Most varieties take 18 months to two years to put on fruit, so in areas like Georgia where the temperature drops too low for optimum production, a banana with an eight- to nine-month growth cycle would work best, said Katie Chafin, owner-manager of Going Bananas in Homestead, Fla.

"Florida and places in Georgia do get them to fruit pretty good if they want to protect them from the weather," she said. "As far as commercial [production], I really wouldn't advise it until we get something that can come to fruit a little faster."

Chafin's banana business began after Hurricane Andrew hit in 1992 and wiped out much of her tropical fruit trees – except for a few bananas. Her farm is now the only dedicated banana nursery in the country, with customers everywhere from the Keys to Alaska. She said her customers are determined to grow what they've been told is impossible in their area, including bananas.

Fonsah and Wallace's projects are far from over, developing cultivars that can be sold through nurseries like Chafin's, now for small-scale production and possibly commercial sales in the future.

"I don't think we're ever going to compete with Chiquita and Dole for banana production, but I think it'll give people who do smaller farming an opportunity for a different crop," Wallace said. "Plus it's a beautiful plant. There's not a lot prettier than a banana plant if it's healthy and happy."

LOAN: Development Authority's START program offers low interest rates

From Page 1

farming five years or fewer, said Thomas Carter, executive director of GDA.

"Everyone is concerned with the age of farmers in America. The average age is over 60 years old. In order to continue a good, reliable source of food for the nation, we need to do things to help the younger generation step into the footprints of the one's that's going out," Carter said. "We thought that probably the best use of funds would be for a beginning farmer program to get people farming to replace ones that are on the retiring side."

The START loan is available to beginning farmers, ranchers, agribusiness operators and those with limited financial resources or assets. According to the program website, applicants must meet other requirements, including having no prior ownership in a substantial amount of farmland and possessing an individual net worth of less than \$750,000.

The need for loans comes in part due to the rise in farm real estate cost, which "exacerbated" the challenges of acquiring farmland, according to USDA-ERS. The per-acre value in 2012 averaged more than \$2,600, up nearly 11 percent from

the previous year.

Beginning farmer loans are also available from the USDA Farm Service Agency and the Farm Credit System. GDA also offers other loan options for producers, including loans for agribusiness, land and equipment.

"This program lends the money out at the prime interest rate, which is 3.25 [percent]," Carter said. "The maximum loan amount is \$400,000. The loan has to be 80 percent of the appraised value of the property or the purchase price, whichever is lowest."

He said the interest rate is the biggest difference between START and GDA's other loans.

"They're going to be up in the 4 to 6 percent range depending on the term of the loan," Carter said. "We're going to not be quite as lenient on the credit standards with the regular loans. With the beginning farmer, we give them kind of the benefit of the doubt to help them out."

Thompson checked into some of the other beginning farmer options, but none fit quite right.

"I needed to have three years of paper history as being a

farmer myself for the USDA, and being that I just graduated from college two years ago this December, I didn't have three full years of history on paper where I'd been on my own," he said.

Carter said GDA set up a \$10 million revolving fund specifically for START, and added they'd love to lend all the money out.

"I think it's one of the best opportunities for a person trying to begin a farming operation. You can't beat the interest rate," Carter said. "They're getting an interest rate that's exclusive for the very best customers in the country. That's very hard to beat especially when you can lock it in for long-term."

Though it was the interest rates that initially intrigued him to the START loan, Thompson said it was GDA's support system that hooked him.

"This is a big undertaking: think of somebody 26 years old, and somebody standing there with me and saying, 'I believe in you and we can make this work together,'" he said. "It just gives you a little comfort to say they're putting their faith in you that you can do this, just get up every day and work hard."

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5th Kingdom: 706-766-6053

National Corn Growers Association: 636-733-9004

Armstrong Atlantic State University: 912-344-2576

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Georgia Development Authority: 770-207-4250

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