

# Market remains popular as coronavirus safety stays priority

By Jarrett Whitener  
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Each week, the Union County Farmers Market brings customers from around the area in search of locally sourced products.

Fortunately, there are a variety of vendors who frequent the market to fulfill these needs, including Dianne Hendry, who sells baked goods for people looking for a quick, sweet snack.

"Everything I make and sell is gluten-free, and I try to keep it low sugar," Hendry said. "I just want to make an alternative for people. I was a regular baker, then my brother developed a gluten allergy, and I started experimenting with different types of flower and made a niche for gluten-free."

"I make scones, cakes, muffins, brownies and other things. I make about 15 different things. I have been baking

for about eight years and doing the gluten-free for five. I have been at this market for around six years. It is wonderful and I love it here."

The market also recruits and promotes vendors who make their own clothing and wares. Woody Ham with Two Crows Farm is just such a vendor. He sells items made from the alpaca fibers that come from the animals on his farm in Murphy, North Carolina.

"We have 65 alpacas, and we are a sustainable alpaca farm," Ham said. "The alpacas are born on our farm, and they can live out their entire lives on our farm. We make all of our different products from all of the different parts of their fiber that we harvest."

"We have anything – from the yarn to make your own (items) to the ready-made scarves, gloves, hats, rugs, saddle pads, felted soap and anything else we can make. I

actually have 10 local fiber artists that work with me and make these products."

With the great variety of items available via so many vendors, including fresh produce, customers at the market have plenty of options to find exactly what they're looking for while supporting those in the community.

The Farmers Market has also made it a goal this year to keep people safe via COVID-19 precautions. These efforts have not gone unnoticed, as attendees like Patty White of White County feel the market is a terrific place to shop without having to worry too much about catching the virus.

"I think this is the best market we have ever been too, and I say that with sincerity," White said. "Them enforcing social distancing and masks means a lot to me, because older people like me can feel safe while going to get food for the house."

"I can go to a big store and feel disgusting almost because of how closed in it is. I know they have mask rules now, too, which are wonderful, but I still prefer the outdoor setting."

Added White, "If I were to pick my favorite thing here, it would be the different flower vendors. I love to do gardening, and I love that there are so many options here for gardeners."

"That is what I like the most, that there are a couple of every vendor here, and that gives people options. It is just a wonderful place, and I am thankful that they have it."

For more information on the Farmers Market, which takes place Saturdays from 7 a.m.-1 p.m. and Tuesdays 2-5 p.m., visit [UCFarmersMarket.com](http://UCFarmersMarket.com).



Among both vendors and customers, mask-wearing for COVID-19 is commonplace at the Farmer Market. Photo by Jarrett Whitener



Dianne Hendry specializes in gluten-free baked goods that she sells at the Farmers Market. Photo by Jarrett Whitener



## September Garden Chores from your Master Gardener Extension Volunteers

Plant a fall garden: sow seeds/transplant seedlings of mustard, spinach, turnips, beets, carrots, kale, radishes, broccoli, lettuce, onions, collards, and cabbage.

Have your soil tested. Stop by your local Extension Office for a soil testing bag and instructions.

Plant garlic now for harvest next summer. Autumn is a good time to add perennials, trees and shrubs to your garden. Plant fall blooming perennials such as aster, chrysanthemum, goldenrod and black-eyed Susan for fall color.

Do not prune or fertilize trees/shrubs now. Pruning and fertilizing will stimulate new growth that could be hurt as temperatures drop.

For good selections, purchase daffodil, tulip, hyacinth and other spring blooming bulbs as they arrive at your nursery. Store in a cool area and plant in October when soil temperatures are in the 60's or cooler.

Cover crops like annual rye and crimson clover planted in unused areas of your garden help hold the soil in place and add organic matter when tilled into the soil next spring before planting. Fertilize chrysanthemums now for lots of blooms this fall.

Gardening lore says plant trees, shrubs, and perennials in months which have the letter "r" in their names – September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April.

Clean up your vegetable garden space to decrease your pest problems next season.

Divide overcrowded groundcovers like ajuga and liriope and overgrown clumps of daylily, iris and coneflower this month.

Lightly trim and check your houseplants that have spent the summer on your patio for insects and disease and if necessary, treat them (following label directions) before moving them inside for the winter.

Dig sweet potatoes before frost. To keep weed seeds from blowing into your cultivated garden area, keep turf surrounding your garden mowed, directing grass clippings away from your garden area.

Not all spring flowering bulbs bloom at the same time; check varieties and bloom times. For early color, "Early Sensation" is a daffodil variety that blooms in January.

Fertilize bulbs when you plant them because it is hard to locate them until they come up next spring.

Begin collecting dried materials for fall and winter arrangements and decorations.

Mulch trees and shrubs to protect your plants from temperature extremes and to keep the soil evenly moist. Keep mulch back 3 inches from the trunk to prevent damage and disease. Plant your pansies and violas as the weather cools.

Fertilize roses one last time

for the season so they will have time to slow down their growth before cold weather arrives.

Rake up fallen leaves and add them to your compost pile to create a rich soil amendment. If you do not have a compost pile, start one.

Edge and weed existing perennial beds. Use a granular weed-preventer (following label directions) to reduce winter weeds and apply mulch.

Azaleas and rhododendrons are forming flower buds now for next year so keep these plants watered to insure good bud formation and flowers next spring.

Take cuttings of coleus and geraniums to grow inside until next spring.

Replace mulch under trees and shrubs to prevent diseases on next year's foliage. Fertilize fescue lawns following label instructions.

Perennials perform better in soil that drains well. When digging beds this fall, add compost and soil conditioners to help with drainage.

Remove faded blooms from pansies to keep them blooming and healthy.

Do not apply pesticides when temperatures exceed 85 degrees or when it is windy. R

Root leaves of African violet plants to give as Christmas gifts.

Jo Anne Allen,  
Master Gardener  
Extension Volunteer

## Back to School...from Page 1A

said moments before children began arriving Monday morning. "Our custodial crew and our maintenance crews have been working super hard since then."

"Our teachers have been preparing for every possible scenario – starting online, starting face-to-face, doing both at the same time, transitioning at a moment's notice. But as educators, we all live for the first day students come back in the new school year."

"So, the excitement's high, the preparation's been done, and now it's time to get it moving down the road and do it as safely as possible."

New this year is the systemwide integration of Google Classroom, to be used by both face-to-face and online-only students to enable teachers to keep everyone on the same page, including in-person students who need to leave the classroom setting because they get sick or need to quarantine.

The digital learning platform will also allow teachers who fall ill or need to quarantine to instruct from home and to virtually take over the classes of other teachers should the need arise.

All the schools will be using the first week or two to get students situated in whichever setting they may be working.

For online kids, the focus will be making sure they are signed into Google Classroom and the appropriate classes, while face-to-face students will go over COVID safety precautions, get logged into the necessary digital spaces, and begin acclimatizing to the school routine.

"The first week, it's always crazy anyways, with people running around like chickens with their heads cut off," High School Principal C.T. Hussion said. "Just learning the traffic flow, learning where to park, where to go, where their classes are, who their teachers are."

"It's a learning curve that takes usually two weeks to get down, but we've got the added safety measures, so that's going to kind of slow everything down a little bit. If people approach it that way and just slow down and focus on the safety aspect, everything will go smoother."

Among the numerous operational changes amid COVID-19 are daily temperature checks for staff and students; strict bus-riding protocols to include dedicated a.m./p.m. routes for students; systemwide assigned seating on buses, in classrooms, at the cafeteria, etc.

Seating charts will help the schools and Health Department more effectively conduct contact tracing to keep more students in seats as the virus continues to spread. Custodial staff are also



UCHS Assistant Principal Pat Donaldson greets a car-riding student entering the building for the first day back to school in five months. Photo by Shawn Jarrard



Union County Schools Police Officer Keith Lockwood directed traffic at the Glenn Gooch Bypass Aug. 17. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

implementing especially stringent disinfecting measures in school facilities, including deep cleanings on Fridays, which the district has selected to serve as an at-home digital learning day for face-to-face students.

The schools are strongly recommending that students and staff wear masks on campus, but their use is not being mandated. Additionally, Superintendent John Hill has said everyone will distance as much as possible, with the caveat that "schools are not designed for social distancing."

For their part, Natasha Rooker and her two children – an eighth grader and a kindergartener – are happy that school is back in session. As a parent, Rooker feels confident that students will be safe on campus.

"You're exposed to so many diseases all the time – (COVID-19) is not more dangerous than other things that you're exposed to, really," Rooker said after dropping her son off at the primary school Monday. "For some people it is, but it's the same way with other diseases."

"Anybody with a compromised immune system, they're going to be more at risk if they're exposed to stuff."

Given the reality that the virus is continuing to circulate in the community, Superintendent

Hill said he wants to remain transparent about the presence of the disease inside the school system.

That's why the district posted the first of a series of weekly COVID-19 situation reports to the "Union County Schools" Facebook page Friday, noting that "this information is in no way intended to alarm anyone; it is simply provided as stakeholder information."

According to the Friday post, a total of two students and four staff members had current positive diagnoses for COVID-19, while 27 students and 17 employees were being quarantined for possible exposure.

"I think it's important to keep our stakeholders informed, especially our staff and parents," Hill said. "This helps all of us make the best decisions that we can based on the information that we have."

"We will also be discussing data with our COVID Task Force and Board of Education to continue making decisions that are in the best interest of students, staff and the community."

"In the event we see a sharp uptick in cases, we will seek advice from our Task Force (that includes medical professionals) as to the correct measures we should take as a school system."