

Gaston Grower Spotlight- March 2022



Tomatoes in March?

A warm start to March has given everyone an early dose of spring fever this year. As you walk along the garden center at big box stores you may already see plants like tomatoes out for sale (I know I have). Unless you have some form of indoor accommodations for those plants I would just hold off for another month or two, until we are free of frost. The tomatoes you see pictured above are container grown greenhouse tomatoes being grown by [Lewis Farms](#). It is their first year trying a crop within their newly built greenhouse.

Greenhouse tomato production allows for local producers to market tomatoes through the early spring to early summer. The advantage is that unlike the summer market, which is saturated with locally sourced tomatoes, greenhouse growers can demand a premium price due to the lack of local

supply. Another advantage is that there are less insect pests and disease risks due to the controlled environment and the time of year. Disadvantages for these growers come in the form of energy cost for heat and ventilation, which is another reason the product demands a premium price. While we have a couple of greenhouse tomato producers in Gaston County, more market gardeners utilize [high tunnels](#) and are planting their tomatoes now in order to have a crop earlier than their outdoor competitors.



Spring Gardening

Cooperative Extension of Gaston County has made some renovations to our raised bed demonstration garden this growing season. While wooden beds remain a cheap viable option for raised beds they must be replaced every 4-5 years, due to deterioration. We have ripped two of the old wooden beds out and have added galvanized beds, a vinyl bed, and a few fabric growbags. The purpose of these beds is to showcase a variety of options for gardeners to consider. We also would like to utilize these beds to showcase what crops folks could be growing at certain times of the year. Crops currently planted include lettuces, spinach, peas, onions, potatoes, carrots, and swiss chard. If you are planning a spring or summer garden you can utilize the [Central North Carolina Planting Calendar](#) as a useful guide.



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Gaston County Center, 1303 Dallas-Cherryville Hwy, Citizens Resource Center, Dallas, NC 28034