

News Article
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Roger Vines
County Extension Coordinator

Grazing Garden Now Complete

Coosa County now has a new park, but this park is not like most others. This park is called a “Grazing Garden”. It is like a small “Garden of Eden”, where visitors are welcome to eat of every fruit of the garden. The garden has many different fruit bearing plants but don’t worry, there is no tree of the knowledge of good and evil and hopefully no serpents.

Last fall, the Coosa County Extension Office wrote a grant to develop the “Grazing Garden” project. The idea came one day to County Extension Coordinator, Roger Vines, while he was sitting at his desk munching on an apple. The concept is really very simple. The garden is basically an orchard with a large variety of fruit trees and there is one main rule – all fruit must be eaten on site. So visitors are welcome to walk through and enjoy some fruit but “no carry outs” – no bags, baskets or buckets. This way more people can enjoy the fruit and no one gets more than a fair share. We especially want the students and teachers at Central Elementary, Middle and High School to enjoy the project.

A great site for the garden was made available by the Coosa County School System. When the property for the new Coosa Central Elementary and Middle School was purchased, it included a small house and corner lot in front of the school. Contractors used the small house for their headquarters while the school was being built. Once completed the contractors moved out and the school began using the house to store textbooks. Through another cooperative agreement between the Coosa County School System and the Extension System, the house was turned into a 4-H Club House. The “Grazing Garden” has now been established on the corner lot, adjacent to the 4-H Club House, which will be a great site for enjoyment but also for educational programs.

The fruit trees and plants are all still young and will take a few years before everything comes into full production, but it won’t be long before some “first fruits” are seen. A variety of fruit bearing plants are now in the ground including: peach, plums, pears, apples, oriental persimmons, figs, muscadines, blueberries, blackberries, strawberries, and even kiwis. The small fruit plants such as the blackberries, blueberries and strawberries should begin bearing in the next year or two while the tree fruits will take a little longer. There is also a large pecan tree that is already bearing great pecans. Signs are posted along the wooden fence that describes the many health benefits of the different fruits. There is also a small washing station, so fruit can be washed before consumption.

The “Grazing Garden” was developed through a grant from the Coosa Valley R., C. & D. Council. The project was implemented by a committee of Extension Agents and others including, Roger Vines - Coosa County Extension Coordinator, James Abrams - Abrams Lawn Service, Todd Wingard - Former Superintendent of Education, Jason Powell - Petals From the Past Nursery and Regional Extension Agents - Shane Harris, Chip East, Sharon Haynes, and Andy Baril. We also appreciate the support of incoming Superintendent of Education, Dennis

Sanford. Much of the installation was completed by Abrams Lawn Service. In addition to the grant, in-kind support was provided by the Coosa County Board of Education, Central Alabama Electric Coop., Bowater Forestry, and the Coosa County Commission.

Our hope is that the “Coosa County Grazing Garden” will be an asset to the community and our county. We want the students to learn that fruit really does grow on trees and that fruit not only tastes great but is also an important part of a healthy diet. The site will also be used for educational programs with master gardeners and others who want to learn more about fruit culture. So stop by and visit the garden and graze (or actually browse) on some fruit.