

# The Market Minute

Jessica King, Local Foods Coordinator

UNION COUNTY FARMER'S MARKET MONTHLY UPDATE

## Flowers! From Seed to Bouquet



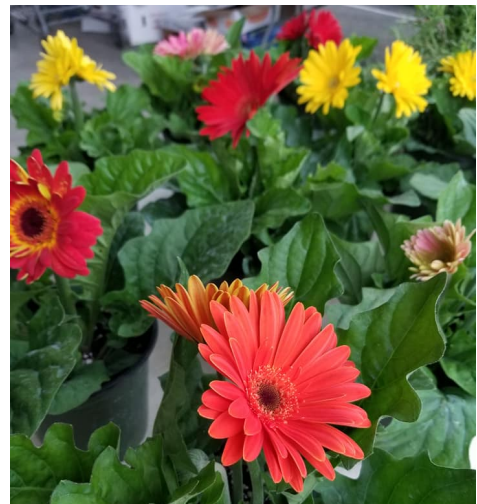
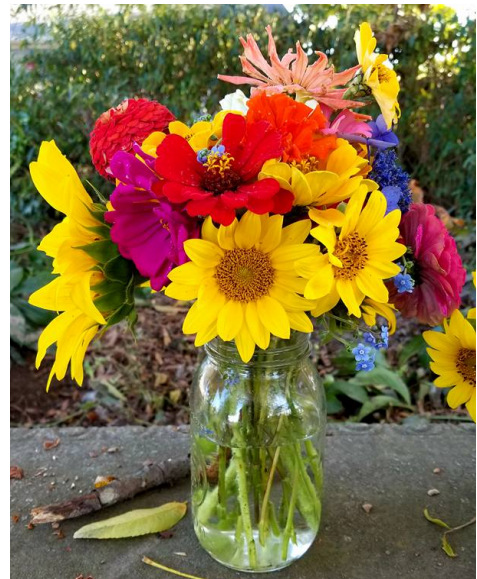
As the saying goes, "April showers bring May flowers." We here in Union County truly live by that! With our compliant climate farmers are able to grow a tremendous variety of fresh cut flowers for our local community.

Farmers work hard to grow these fresh cut stems year-round. It takes many hours of research, planning and labor. Once harvested the work then shifts to the marketing and selling standpoint. The Union County Farmers Market is just one outlet to sell as well as our local florists, wedding venues, and even restaurants.

Many beginners stick to the tried and true varieties such as colorful zinnias or sun bursting sunflowers but as confidence builds through experience you begin to see more unique varieties and color contrast. But where does it all start? Well the research starts with our climate. What grows best and when in our Union County weather? Many farmers invest in greenhouses or high tunnels to have an advantage over the current weather conditions. These structures allow them to have better control and extend the growing season. The next step is to pick the varieties you want to grow. This seems like the toughest decision for me! Of all the unique varieties that we are able to grow in our weather zone, how could one possibly choose? Flipping through numerous catalogs, admiring the vibrant pictures, circling or dog-earring pages to add them to the wish list, these admirations can add up pretty quickly, literally! But eventually decisions are made, and flower seeds are picked. After the order is placed space and prepping become the priority. Farmers must calculate the projected harvest date of each flower variety, when to plant the seed, figure out what temp it needs to be outside to plant the transplants, all while making sure they are all blooming at the same time to produce a beautiful bouquet for you!

Seeds are planted and tended to for weeks prior to the last frost that we generally see in April. Most varieties are planted outside the greenhouse after that time. But before those transplants are put outside most farmers will have a greenhouse or tunnel full of colorful blooms in March or April that they have been nursing all winter. As the days begin to get warmer and longer the pops of color begin to appear everywhere. Here in Union County Daffodils and Tulips seem to be our, "sign of Spring," in most yards. These are the first flower varieties we see in the market. From there the bouquets become more exciting and interesting.

Our flower farmers currently have over 25 varieties of fresh cut stems for their weekly bouquets. Tall elegant Snapdragons paired with clusters of Ageratum, or rich Dahlias with flowing Queen Anne's Lace. We have some incredibly talented flower farmers here in Union County! If you would like to enjoy these beauties don't wait, come to any of the Union County Farmers Market locations to get yours! **We are open every Saturday 8am-Noon at our Downtown Monroe location on Skyway Dr and our Downtown Stallings location inside the Stallings Park located at 340 Stallings Rd.**



### *Flower Farmers @ the Market*

- Callisto Gardens
- Cane Creek Farm
- Cracked Pot's Garden
- Creekside Farm
- Five Forks Sustainable
- Greenworks
- Kiker Farm
- My Fellow Friends
- Old Barn Farm
- Pocket of Poppies
- Vang Flowers