

N.C. Cooperative Extension
NC State University
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Jackson County Extension

Location: Jackson County

Program Area: Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences

Immediate/Site Supervisor: Minda Daughty

Other Mentors and Supervisors: Rob Hawk

Position Description/Responsibilities:

The Agriculture-Horticulture Intern will work under the mentorship of County Extension Agents to bridge the gap between university research and the local community. This is an immersive, field-based role designed for students pursuing careers in plant science, agronomy, or agricultural education. The intern will play a key role in supporting local growers and residents through technical assistance, field diagnostics, and public outreach.

Key Responsibilities

- Develop original research-based educational materials (fact sheets, infographics, and social media content) for homeowners and commercial growers.
- Assist in the planning and execution of public workshops, including "Garden Life Series" classes and Master Gardener training sessions.
- Create and edit video content or blog posts addressing seasonal horticulture trends and pest alerts.
- Accompany agents on site visits to local farms, nurseries, and orchards to analyze plant vigor and health issues.
- Utilize the "Four Perspectives" photography method and diagnostic tools to document plant stress, disease, or insect pressure.
- Assist in drafting follow-up recommendations for growers based on observed field conditions and specialist consultations.
- Lead soil and tissue sampling efforts across various production sites to monitor phosphorus, nitrogen, and pH levels.
- Manage the preparation and shipment of samples to the NCDA&CS Agronomic Division lab for analysis.
- Help translate soil test reports into actionable lime and fertilizer recommendations for local clientele.
- Review existing grower protocols for irrigation, integrated pest management (IPM), and harvest safety.
- Assist with on-farm research trials, including data collection for variety trials or new "Climate-Smart" agricultural practices.
- Participate in audits of invasive species or pollinator-friendly landscape designs to improve local biodiversity.

Preferred qualifications/previous coursework:

- Academic majors in Horticultural Science, Plant Biology, Agronomy, Agricultural Education, or a related field.
- Strong written and verbal communication
- Ability to translate technical science into "plain language" for the public.
- Must be willing to work outdoors in summer heat and humidity
- Must possess a valid driver's license and reliable transportation for travel within the county.

Benefits/skills student will gain through this internship:

- Develop a "clinical eye" for identifying nutrient deficiencies, fungal pathogens, and insect damage in a variety of North Carolina crops.
- Master professional protocols for soil, tissue, and water sampling used in commercial agronomy.
- Learn to navigate the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) reporting systems to provide data-driven recommendations.
- Gain confidence by presenting to diverse audiences, from commercial farmers to suburban homeowners.
- Gain firsthand experience in the "Land-Grant Mission," a prerequisite for many future roles in government and university extension.
- Receive weekly 1-on-1 coaching sessions with experienced Extension Agents to discuss career goals and professional ethics.
- Build a portfolio of published articles, program curriculum, and field reports that can be used for future job or graduate school applications.
- By the end of the summer, the intern will be able to manage the "Diagnostic Cycle"—from identifying a field problem to providing a research-based solution.

Additional Information

An Internship in Jackson county provides a mutually beneficial experience for students to gain hands-on Extension experience and for the Jackson Extension Center to expand its local programming. We very much appreciate the mentorship opportunity.



National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



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