

### *Rooted in Gratitude*

As undergraduate students participating in UGA's Crop Genetics and Genomics REEU program, we were given the opportunity to volunteer for the Marigold Market where we met Ariel and Bradley Wheeler, who told us their story.

What was initially a hobby 10 years ago eventually grew into the prospering Foxwood Farms of today. Ariel and Bradley Wheeler intended to produce fresh, healthy food for just their family, but that soon expanded to the whole community. Located in Bowman, Georgia, Foxwood Farms specializes in a variety of mixed vegetables, including eggplant, peppers, and lettuce.

Ariel and Bradley's path eventually led to their recruitment at the Marigold Market's Co-Op, with this being their second season participating. The Co-Op helps the involved farmers in times of low harvest to support each other since they sell their produce collectively. As the couple stated, "This market brings the community together," reflecting on their goal of supporting other farmers and to cultivate the land using organic and sustainable practices.

Their background in food and agriculture gave them insight into industry regulations, which inspired them to seek healthier options for their family. Though they faced challenges such as tilling the land, navigating unpredictable weather, and figuring out which crops suited them best, they discovered their strength in growing a variety of vegetables. Looking ahead, the couple hope to expand by offering more value-added or artisan goods in upcoming seasons.

Although academia mainly focuses on large-scale farming, hearing the Wheeler's journey on a small farm allowed us to see agriculture from a different perspective. It humanized the farms that we tend to see and helped us relate to their struggles as garden owners ourselves.

Since Foxwood Farms offers natural, hand-tended produce grown with the community in mind, it reminded us that success comes from your own effort and how you make the most of what you have. This has further encouraged us to continue learning about plants and all aspects of agriculture. As Bradley said, "Farming transformed my life and made me humble. It helped me appreciate the land and allowed me to grow into something better."

Images from Marigold Farmers Market - 6/21/2025



Image of Ariel and Bradley Wheeler holding fresh produce.



Image of Foxwood Farms' fresh produce sold at the Marigold market.

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Jayna Burch  
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Images of the Co-Op booth in collaboration with other farm vendors working together in selling their produce.