

Title: LavenderBlu, for Me and You!

By: Talia McCann and Aniyah Parris



(Left to right) Chuck and Lori Ros (owners of LavenderBlu) with Aniyah Parris and Talia McCann (UGA program participants) at the LavenderBlu table in Marigold Market.

At this year's Marigold Market in Winterville, UGA's Crop Genetics and Genomics Research and Extension Experiences for Undergraduates program (CGG REEU) gave students the meaningful opportunity to work hands on alongside local growers to better connect our time spent in lab with the consumers and producers most impacted by our research. Talia's work in the lab this summer consists of understanding sweetpotato genetics, crucial to protecting their production. Aniyah's research consists of understanding how pines are affected by droughts, key as climates warm. Both of our projects contribute to greater options and knowledge base for growers around the world, making lives and livelihoods easier.

Working with Lori and Chuck Ros, owners of LavenderBlu, we discovered that farming wasn't their original plan. The Ros's wanted to move away from the Atlanta Metropolitan area to a place more rural with more space for their RV. Upon finding a 21 acre listing in Winterville, they knew that the land would become much more than a spot for the RV. Having some family history of farming as well as knowledge of agricultural technology and botany, starting a farm became a reality. Lori and Chuck are experimental in nature, always trying different kinds of crops to see which best works with the land, but always crops that they like. The idea of lavender and blueberries popped into mind, both with a variety of benefits including health and market value. LavenderBlu currently has three greenhouses, $\frac{2}{3}$ acres of garden, $\frac{3}{4}$ acres of lavender, and an apiary. The greenhouses support everything from blueberries to peppers and flowers. LavenderBlu is taking steps toward becoming an ag tourism spot including building event space and a house for AirBNB, trying more crops such as apples, and continuing to expand sustainable drip-line and PVC irrigation systems.

LavenderBlu is passionate about supporting the local community, and have been very generous with their time in letting us work with them. Farmers truly do have to be everything from entomologists to meteorologists, and it is inspiring to know that the research we do goes back into solving their problems.