

Station Facts

The Mountain Research Station was established at Swannanoa in Buncombe County in 1908 and moved to the present 398-acre location in Haywood County in 1944 when the U.S. Army selected the Swannanoa site for a general hospital. An additional 13.3 acres at Lake Junaluska were purchased in 1996. This satellite acreage is primarily dedicated to row crops and horticultural crops. At both locations the various soil types and elevations, which range from 2,600 to 3,200 feet, are representative of the region. Although the average yearly temperature is 55 degrees Fahrenheit, this location offers extremes that range from -22 degrees Fahrenheit to 98 degrees Fahrenheit. Average annual rainfall is 48.77 inches and the growing season is approximately 160 days.

Infrastructure

There are adequate facilities on the station to address the needs of each research area. For tobacco research, there are three curing barns and an environmentally controlled room for tobacco grading. Horticultural crop research facilities include a 30' x 96' greenhouse. The beef cattle program maintains a barn with 8,000 square feet of paved lot and a trench silo holding 500 tons. Small ruminant animal facilities include 43 acres of pasture, forage variety grazing plots and a barn with feeding and gravel paddocks. Two office buildings provide facilities for an area livestock specialist, a regional agronomist and the research station staff.

Events

Visitors are welcome at any time. However, the peak growing months of April through October are usually more informative. Field days are arranged according to producer needs and new research developments.

Research Programs

The research program at the Mountain Research Station reflects the diversity of agriculture in Western North Carolina. The station program strives to provide information addressing the diverse needs of mountain farmers and needs identified in other areas of the state, as well as expand the economy by researching new enterprises. Research activities include work with field and forage crops, horticultural crops, Christmas trees, burley tobacco, and livestock.

Horticultural Crops Horticultural crops research is an important part of the station's program. The station maintains an intensive tomato program with emphasis on breeding new varieties for increased production and disease resistance. Many of the most popular varieties grown in Western North Carolina and the Southeastern United States were developed at the Mountain Research Station. Other horticultural crops include specialty crops such as heirloom tomatoes, lettuce and pumpkins. The station is also conducting a research project involving native mountain herbs.

Christmas Trees The Christmas tree program began at the station in 1972 and has progressed to the areas of studying and developing genetically superior trees and seed sources. Research begins in the seedling stage and follows through all phases of production, harvesting, and marketing. Field research includes fertilization studies, insect populations and control methods; effect of growth regulators; herbicide evaluation; progeny testing of White Pine and Fraser Fir; clonal archive, ground covers and various management systems and cultural practices.

Burley Tobacco The Mountain Research Station is the center for North Carolina burley tobacco research. Research involves all phases of burley production. The first three burley tobacco varieties released in North Carolina (129, NC2 and NC3) were bred and developed at the Mountain Research Station. The station is researching the production of tobacco transplants from flotation beds in greenhouses. Other research includes investigation of no-till, ground covers, minimum till, soil enrichment, utilization of compost materials and alternative curing and harvesting systems for tobacco. Research continues to be performed on disease control through treatment and through the development of disease resistant breeding lines.



Livestock A beef cattle demonstration program designed to accommodate the needs of area beef cattle producers involves more than 100 beef cattle under various feeding and management systems. The station also researches preconditioning systems for cattle and screening animal health products and programs. The station houses a bull test facility, which can accommodate up to 60 bulls during a performance trial. The sale of bulls from this program has greatly improved the quality of cattle produced in Western North Carolina as well as across the state. Small ruminant animal research began in 1990. This program studies feeding and management systems, controlled grazing, and pasture renovation with the goal of developing superior stock for North Carolina's growing meat goat industry.



Community Partnership

School groups, civic organizations, commodity groups, and local agriculture agencies represent a few of the community partnerships that the station has developed.

The station supports the community by hosting Field Days, station tours and educational workshops for various area groups. Camp New Life, which is part of the property managed by the research station, provides a meeting space for community and family events and hosts day camps every summer for area children.

The station also provides community support by selling surplus hay, vegetables and various other surplus commodities. Surplus vegetables are gleaned and donated to area non-profit organizations such as soup kitchens and shelters.

Area disaster relief efforts are supported by providing manpower, equipment, storage space and other services as needed.



Research Stations Division

Working together for one cause

Mission

To manage crop and livestock facilities that serve as a platform for agriculture research to make farming more efficient, productive, and profitable, while maintaining a sound environment and providing consumers with safe and affordable products.

Partnership

Agriculture research in North Carolina dates back to 1877, when state legislation established the North Carolina Department of Agriculture along with “Experiment Stations” as a division of the department. Since that time, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services’ Research Stations Division, in partnership with N.C. State University, has established 18 statewide locations. Each facility has unique climate and soil conditions, giving researchers a living laboratory in which to investigate a variety of regional crops, forestry concerns, livestock, poultry, and aquaculture. The Division supports these studies by providing land, water, equipment, buildings, and staff who work around the clock to help build a stronger foundation for the future of agriculture.

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