

# What's in Bloom Engages Volunteers & Educates the Community

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**EDUCATIONAL GOAL:** The goal of What's in Bloom is to increase community members' knowledge of plants suitable to grow in the Piedmont region of North Carolina and to strengthen Extension Master Gardener Volunteers' skills in plant identification and horticulture research.

## INTRODUCTION

In April 2020, while visitors were sheltering at home due to COVID-19, the "What's in Bloom" page of the Extension website was created to share photographs of plants in bloom at Extension's two public gardens in Forsyth County.

Due to its popularity, the page continues to be updated. In 2022, Extension Master Gardener<sup>SM</sup> Volunteers began collecting photographs and growing information about plants blooming weekly. In this way, the page serves a dual purpose: (1) to inform community members about plants that grow in the Piedmont region of North Carolina and (2) to develop skills in plant identification and horticultural research in Extension Master Gardener Volunteers.

## OBJECTIVES

- Forsyth County residents will increase their knowledge of appropriate plant selections for the Piedmont region.
- Community members will visit Extension's public gardens as a result of viewing the What's in Bloom website.
- Forsyth County Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (EMGVs) will strengthen their skills in plant identification and researching growing information for landscape plants.
- What's in Bloom scouting will provide a flexible opportunity that can provide service hours outside of regular working hours, thus increasing the diversity of participants in the Forsyth County EMGV Program.

## PROGRAMMATIC EFFORTS

- Volunteer slots for What's in Bloom scouts were posted weekly from March through October 2022.
- Volunteers collected up to 4 photographs of plants blooming each week in one of two Extension gardens. In addition, volunteers wrote a 2-3 sentence description of each plant, including identifying information and growing requirements.
- Photographs were updated on the Extension website weekly.
- What's in Bloom photos were shared on the Extension Facebook page throughout the season.
- During winter months, the What's in Bloom page displayed an overview of photos from the previous season.

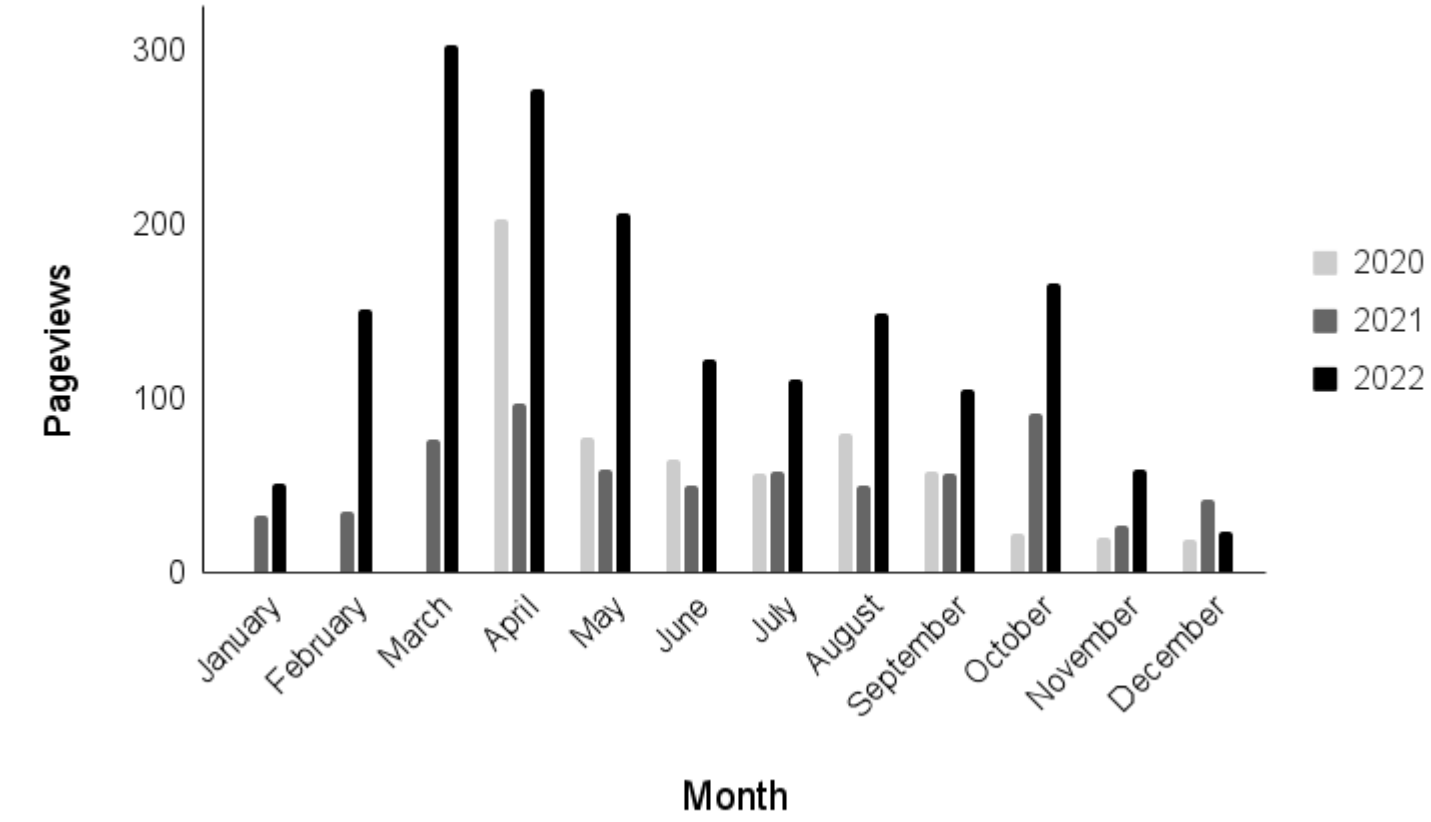


Figure 1. What's in Bloom Website Monthly Pageviews from 2020 through 2022. The page was created in April 2022.

## RESULTS

- The What's in Bloom website received a total of **3,045 pageviews** from 2020 through 2022. Pageviews have increased every year since the creation of the page (Figure 1).
- **Twelve volunteers** served as What's in Bloom scouts in 2022.

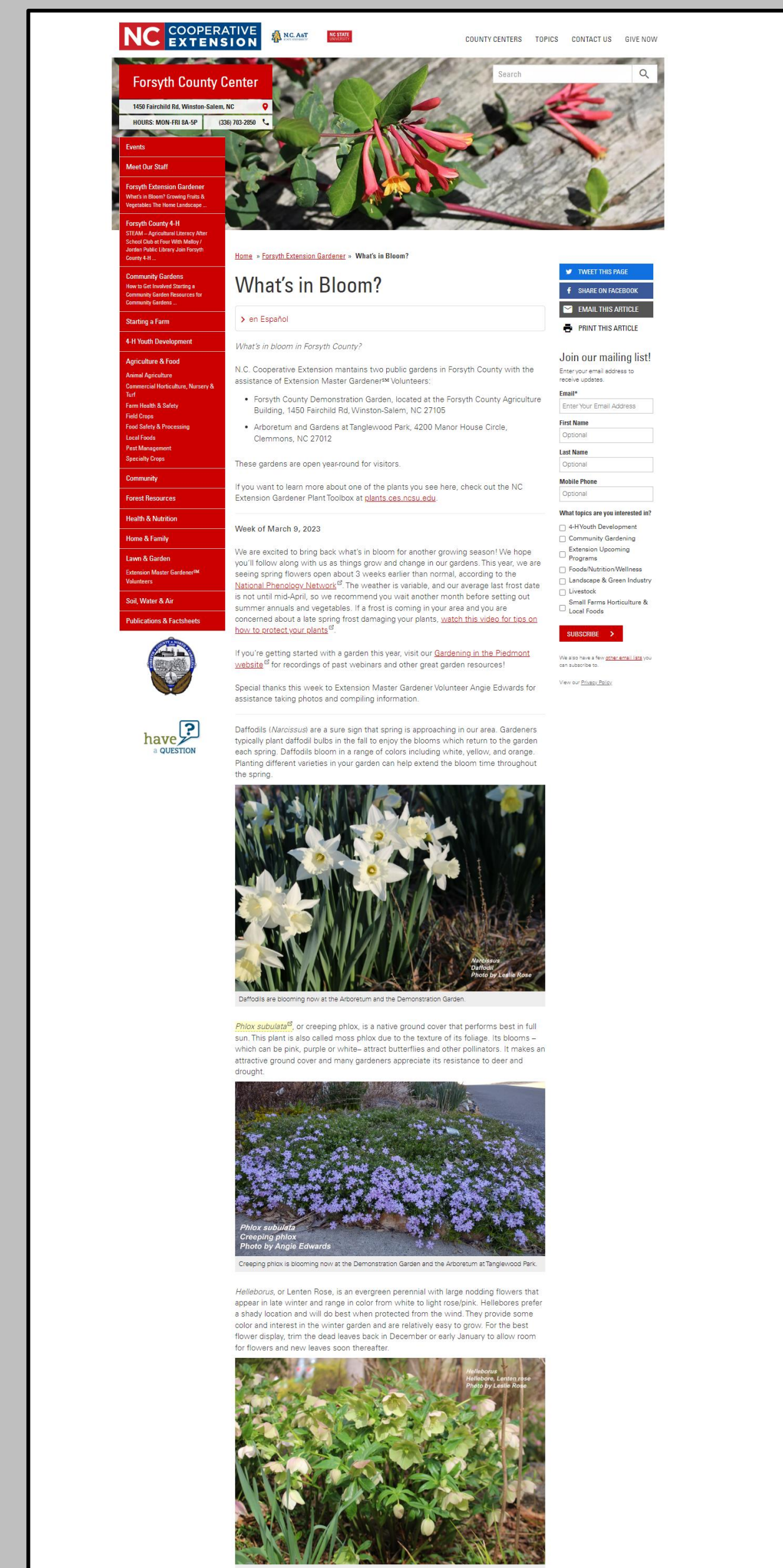


Figure 2. A screenshot of the What's in Bloom website.

## IMPACTS

- Based on feedback from website visitors, **96% gained knowledge that was helpful in their garden.** Two people reported visiting Extension's gardens after viewing the What's in Bloom page.
- Volunteer evaluation feedback showed that **100% gained skills in plant identification and researching growing information for plants.**
- 50% of volunteers who served as What's in Bloom scouts work at jobs that prevent them from participating in other regular volunteer activities.

**"This program increased my interest in bees and butterflies...I have found a passion in learning about butterflies and their host plants."**

- Forsyth County Extension Master Gardener Volunteer



Visit the site:  
<https://forsyth.ces.ncsu.edu/whats-in-bloom>



**"I see plants here I may not have thought about planting myself."**

- Website visitor

## Acknowledgments

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