



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COMMERCE**

ANDY GIPSON  
COMMISSIONER

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 31, 2024**

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### **Agriculture Commissioner Andy Gipson and Local Hydroponic Farmer Leigh Bailey Join the Freshly Picked Podcast Featuring Specialty Crops**

**JACKSON, Miss.** – Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson and Salad Days Produce Owner Leigh Bailey joined this week’s episode of the Freshly Picked podcast titled “Cultivating Conversations: Specialty Crops and Sustainability with Commissioner Andy Gipson.”

Within this episode, these special guests held conversations with Host Claude Nash about specialty crops, focusing on blueberries, native plants, hydroponic farming, lettuces and much more. Commissioner Gipson provides insight into the heartwarming story of how a Mississippi elementary class led the fight to make blueberries, a superfood, the state’s official fruit. Gipson goes on to discuss his family’s cattle and tree operation and all the crops grown on their farm in Simpson County, including native plants. He credits his son for having a passion for conservation and bringing back native trees, grasses and wildflowers to improve the local habitat.

Gipson also talks with Leigh Bailey about her operation, saying, “Salad Days Produce is one of the great success stories of Mississippi and I was honored to be at their recent groundbreaking ceremony to mark the beginning of a major expansion for this unique farm.” Bailey and her husband, Jamie Redmond, own and operate their hydroponic lettuce farm in Flora. Currently, Bailey’s all-lettuce farm is housed inside an 18,000 square foot greenhouse. She supplies local restaurants, grocery stores and other businesses with different varieties of lettuce. Since the demand for her products has outpaced what they can supply, Salad Days is expanding, beginning with the construction of an all-new 65,000 square foot greenhouse.

Bailey’s passion for growing lettuce stems from the desire to have fresh, locally sourced salad ingredients readily available for consumers. The majority of lettuce in the United States is produced in California and Arizona, a long way from the magnolia state. Bailey believes a perishable product like lettuce does not need to stay on a truck for 3,000 miles and if it can be grown here, why not grow it? She adamantly says, “Let’s grow it here and eat it here, and supply healthy produce to Mississippi.”

Part of growing healthy, organic produce for Bailey at Salad Days revolves around the hydroponic farming process. She describes hydroponic farming as growing without soil. First, they dissolve all their

nutrients and fertilizers in the water, which in turn, delivers exactly what each plant needs directly to its root system around the clock. This sustainable method promotes rapid and uniform growth, while also preventing pests and disease. Bailey says growing lettuce hydroponically is both water and land conservative.

Hear these inspiring stories, practical information and much more during this week's episode of the Freshly Picked podcast series. Tune in today at 9:30 a.m. by visiting [www.msfreshlypicked.com](http://www.msfreshlypicked.com) or on any major podcast platform.

The Freshly Picked podcast series, developed by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, will feature 24 episodes and include specialty crop farmers, experts, entrepreneurs and/or chefs as they tell the stories behind their farms, businesses and the unique products they offer. Listeners can find new episodes every Thursday through February 2025 at [www.msfreshlypicked.com](http://www.msfreshlypicked.com), Spotify, Apple Podcasts or other major platforms.

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**Photo attached.**



**The latest episode of MDAC's Freshly Picked podcast, titled "Cultivating Conversations: Specialty Crops and Sustainability with Commissioner Andy Gipson," airs today at 9:30 a.m. Pictured L-R: Andy Gipson, Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce; Leigh Bailey, owner of Salad Days Produce in Flora; and Claude Nash, podcast host and editor of the *Mississippi Market Bulletin*.**