



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

ANDY GIPSON  
COMMISSIONER

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **MDAC Releases Horticulture-Themed Podcast Featuring Guests from Pike and Tate Counties**

**JACKSON, Miss.** – Today, the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) released its latest Freshly Picked podcast, “Rooted in Horticulture: Growing Mississippi’s Specialty Crops,” featuring special guests Stephen Porter, general manager of Williamson Nursery in Pike County, and Larry Stephenson of Southern Cultured Orchards and Nursery in Tate County.

Porter’s nursery consists of two greenhouses, a composting facility and a retail space across its 11-acre grounds in Summit. Within this episode, he describes wanting to provide visitors with a serene and unique experience. Today, Williamson Nursery offers customers a garden setting to explore, complete with an array of pathways, trees and native plants. In addition, Stephenson discusses the process of developing his orchard and nursery that continues to flourish today in the small town of Independence. Starting with only a few apple and pear trees, his operation grew exponentially. Over the years, he successfully propagated rare varieties of trees that he now sells to customers. Stephenson describes his journey as “an example of a hobby that got out of hand and is now a full-time business.”

Together, these guests hold conversations with Host Claude Nash about the challenges of starting horticulture operations, different ways nurseries support local farmers and build stronger communities, and how they are working to keep Mississippi’s horticultural traditions alive. Tune in now to this educational and interesting episode by visiting [www.msfreshlypicked.com](http://www.msfreshlypicked.com) or any major podcast platform.

The Freshly Picked podcast series, developed by MDAC, 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 “Rooted in Horticulture: Growing Mississippi’s Specialty Crops,” airs today. Pictured L-R: Larry Stephenson of Southern Cultured Orchards and Nursery in Tate County; Stephen Porter, general manager of Williamson Nursery in Pike County; and Claude Nash, podcast host and editor of MDAC’s *Mississippi Market Bulletin*.**