



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

ANDY GIPSON
COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASE

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Tuesday, March 22, Proclaimed as Agriculture Day in State of Mississippi
In Conjunction with National Ag Day, MDAC Announces Funding Availability for School and Community Gardens

JACKSON, Miss. – Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Andy Gipson joined Governor Tate Reeves as he signed a proclamation declaring March 22, 2022, as Agriculture Day in the state of Mississippi.

“I’m honored to join Governor Reeves today as we recognize the contributions of agriculture that provide food, fuel, fiber and shelter to our communities,” said Commissioner Gipson. “Agriculture, Mississippi’s largest industry, makes an enormous impact on our economy and employs nearly one-fifth of our workforce. In 2021, the farm-gate value of agricultural commodities produced in Mississippi was \$8.3 billion, setting an all-time high record.”

This designation of March 22 as Agriculture Day in Mississippi coincides with National Agriculture Day. National Ag Day was started in 1973 by the Agriculture Council of America as an effort to encourage every American to understand how food and fiber products are produced, to appreciate the role agriculture plays in providing safe, abundant and affordable products, to value the essential role of agriculture in maintaining a strong economy, and to acknowledge and consider career opportunities in the agriculture, food and fiber industry. To learn more about National Agriculture Day, visit www.agday.org.

“Mississippi is synonymous with agriculture,” said Governor Tate Reeves. “Our farmers and ranchers play a critical role in feeding Mississippi families and contributing to our state’s economic success. They deserve to be recognized for their hard work and many contributions to communities across Mississippi. I’m proud to proclaim March 22, as Agriculture Day in the State of Mississippi.”

Also, in conjunction with National Ag Day, Commissioner Andy Gipson is excited to announce the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) is making funds available for schools and communities to plant gardens.

Growing Lunch, a school garden grant, is a great interactive and educational tool for teachers to incorporate agriculture and healthy eating into their everyday classroom. Schools and early childhood learning centers can apply for a grant of up to \$500 to purchase supplies needed to develop a school garden or to further enhance an existing school garden. All schools, K-12, and pre-schools providing appropriate documentation, in the state of Mississippi are eligible to apply.

Let's Plant, a new community garden grant program, is designed to encourage community involvement and interest in growing fresh produce. Community organizations, local governments and non-profits are eligible to apply for funds, up to \$750, to purchase supplies needed to develop or expand an existing community garden.

“There is nothing quite like growing and harvesting fresh produce,” said Commissioner Gipson. “By incorporating school and community gardens around the state, we hope this will not only bring awareness to the hard work and dedication of our farmers, but also encourage healthy eating and interest for the next generation of farmers in our state.”

Garden grants for both programs are on a first-come, first-serve basis. Only one grant can be awarded per school or community. Schools that have received a *Growing Lunch* grant from MDAC in the past are not eligible to apply for additional funds at this time.

This project is funded through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program through the United States Department of Agriculture. For more information about the program or to view the application, visit <https://www.mdac.ms.gov/bureaus-departments/market-development/garden-grants/> or contact Susan Lawrence at 601-359-1196 or susan@mdac.ms.gov.

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Photo attached.



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