

Station Facts

The Upper Mountain Research Station is located in Ashe County. The station, which was established in 1944, consists of 454 acres at an elevation higher than 3,200 feet.

UMRS has the capability of producing approximately 50 acres of crops, including forage production for livestock. Additionally, Christmas tree and woody ornamental work is conducted on appropriate sites.

A 105-foot wind anemometer was installed in May 2006 to measure the wind flow for Ashe and Alleghany County.

UMRS is the only location in the United States that has a planted range-wide seed source of the Carolina Hemlock.

Infrastructure

The station maintains 33 buildings, including five livestock sheds, three greenhouses, three tobacco barns and one multipurpose building. The station features a newly constructed greenhouse used primarily for tobacco production and recently the five renovated animal handling facilities.

Events

Burley Field Day is held at UMRS every third year and a Christmas Tree Expo is held every two years for growers in Ashe and Alleghany counties.

Local high school agriculture students are invited to the station for Farm Safety Day each September. The station also hosts the Ag Rescue Safety Training program every fall for EMS and First Responders.

Research Programs

UMRS is the highest elevation in the state and its research program reflects the diversity of agriculture in the mountains of Northwestern North Carolina. The main focus of research has been on cold tolerance and forage management. Due to UMRS location, continuing research is performed on Christmas trees, burley tobacco, small fruits, small grains, organic vegetable production, mushrooms and a vineyard.



Christmas Trees Northwestern North Carolina is the major producer of the Fraser Fir Christmas tree, with Ashe County being the leader in production. Since 1989, research has been centered on fertilization, ground covers, bud abortion, needle retention, shearing practices, vegetative management, integrated pest management, clonal archive and genetic tolerance to insect pests.

Burley tobacco Burley tobacco work has involved all agronomic areas. These studies have included projects in breeding, fertilization, insect control, disease prevention, weed control and no-till system development.

Forage Livestock work is centered on the utilization of forage. Like much of Northwestern North Carolina, the majority of the land at UMRS is unsuited for cultivation. Management-intensive grazing experiments are conducted with the cattle and goatherds. Past forage work saw the development of West Jefferson mineral, a supplement with selenium, which is very low in the mountain pastures.

Small fruits Work is being done on blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, and grapes to determine the best variety selections for the northwestern area. Researchers are implementing a growing system for the commercial production of strawberries in the region for five months out of the year. Research on the station has also led to the release of a new variety of red raspberry named “Nantahala.”



Livestock UMRS has started a 10-year study comparing the recommended management practices for a farmer’s pasture and herd in contrast to a farmer that is not following the recommended practices. Researchers developed an A-frame structure for goats that will aid farmers in cutting down their labor for trimming hooves. Past research saw the utilization of corn gluten and soy hulls, local by-products, as an alternative feed source for cattle.

Community Partnership

The UMRS stays active in the local community in a variety of ways. Tours are provided to school groups, local garden clubs, cattlemen's associations, goat producers, organic growers, vegetable producers, small fruits growers and anyone with an interest in agricultural research.

Each year, the N.C. State University Department of Soil Quality holds a class at the station on identifying various soil profiles for the installation of septic systems. The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service provides seminars and workshops on commodities that are grown in the community and on the station.

Provisions are made for the FFA and Ashe County 4-H to take the products that are grown on the station and sell them to raise money to attend their national conferences.

Produce is also provided to the Sparta Food Closet, Ashe Really Cares, Meals-On-Wheels and the Society of St. Andrews to help feed the needy in the community.

The station also played a role in helping the community during disasters. Staff assisted the community from the flood of 2004 in Operation A Brighter Day and the drought of 2007 in Operation AGWRAP, the Emergency Hay relief program.



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 N.C. 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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Upper Mountain

RESEARCH STATION

Ashe County



RESEARCH STATIONS DIVISION

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NC DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

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