

Rutherford County

FROM THE GROUND UP



August 12, 2025

Rutherford County Extension Hosts Annual Grape Harvest — Public Invited to Pick Grapes on Sept. 6

Grab your hats, sunscreen, and your favorite pruners, it's grape harvest time again at the Rutherford County Extension Vineyard! The annual Grape Harvest event will be held on Saturday, September 6th from 8:00 a.m. to Noon at the Rutherford County Extension Office, located at 315 John R. Rice Blvd., Murfreesboro, TN 37129. This beloved event, hosted by UT/TSU Rutherford County Extension and the Master Gardeners of Rutherford County, invites the public to come out and

take part in a local agricultural tradition that is as sweet as the fruit on the vine. Admission is free, and grapes will be given out on a first-come, first-served basis, with bags provided per family unit. Please note that no juicing will be offered this year, a change from previous harvests, but the grapes themselves are more than worth the visit.



Justin Stefanski,
Extension Agent II

The vineyard at the Extension Office may come as a surprise to some, but it has a rich history and purpose. Planted in 2005 through a partnership with Middle Tennessee State University, the vineyard has served as a living classroom for research, hands-on learning, and community outreach. It is maintained year-round by the dedicated Master Gardeners of Rutherford County, who volunteer their time and expertise to ensure a healthy, productive crop each season. The vineyard features Norton grapes, a native American variety (*Vitis aestivalis*) with deep roots in the southeastern United States. Though lesser-known than popular table varieties like Concord, Norton grapes are uniquely suited to the climate, soil, and growing conditions of Middle Tennessee. They produce a small, dark purple grape with a robust, complex flavor. Often used in winemaking due to their high tannin content and rich taste, Norton grapes also shine in jellies, jams, and syrups. They do contain small seeds, which provide a slightly gritty texture but are not enough to dissuade folks from eating them right off the vine.

On the day of the event, parking will be available at the Community Center building adjacent to the Extension Office. Volunteers and Master Gardeners will be on hand to direct traffic, hand out harvest bags, and provide information about the vineyard and the other demonstration gardens located on the property. Attendees should dress for the outdoors, closed-toe shoes, sunscreen, and hats are recommended.

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While this is a fun family-friendly event, the we would like to remind participants to be respectful of the plants and to pick grapes carefully and to take only what is allotted for each family. Throughout the morning, the Master Gardeners will also be available to answer all of your gardening related questions and provide information about how you can become a certified Master Gardener.

This annual tradition offers not just a bounty of grapes, but a window into the possibilities of sustainable, local agriculture. Mark your calendars, bring your friends, and don't miss your chance to be part of the harvest!

For more information, call the Rutherford County Extension Office at (615) 898-7710 or our website at <https://rutherford.tennessee.edu/>

See you at the vineyard!



(Ripening Norton grape cluster at the Rutherford County Extension Vineyard, photo J. Stefanski)



(Overhead of the Rutherford County Extension Vineyard located at Lane Agripark on John Rice Blvd., photo J. Stefanski)