



Sarah Huckabee Sanders  
Governor

# ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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## **Arkansas Department of Agriculture Celebrates Farm to School Month; Announces School Garden Contest Winners**

**LITTLE ROCK, AR** — Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders has proclaimed October as Arkansas Farm to School Month. The Arkansas Department of Agriculture (Department) celebrated the [proclamation](#) today at Jacksonville Lighthouse Charter School and announced the winners of this year's Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest.

The winners are as follows:

- **Champion of School Garden Sustainability:**  
Sheridan Intermediate School (Sheridan), \$1,000 award
- **Best Overall School Garden:**  
Conway High School (Conway), \$1,000 award
- **Best Start-Up School Garden Proposal:**  
Homestead Academy (Royal), \$500 award  
Camden Fairview High School (Camden), \$500 award
- **Best Education-Based School Garden:**  
Shirley Elementary School (Shirley), \$500 award  
Ellen Smith Elementary School (Conway), \$500 award
- **Best Harvest Partnership School Garden:**  
Maumelle High School (Maumelle), \$500 award  
Jacksonville Lighthouse Charter School (Jacksonville), \$500 award
- **Best Community Collaboration School Garden:**  
Ward Central Elementary School (Ward), \$500 award  
Batesville Preschool (Batesville), \$500 award

School gardens are integral to farm to school efforts, providing hands-on learning opportunities focused on agriculture and nutrition. There are currently 354 school gardens across the state. This contest was initiated by the Department and Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas in 2014 to reward existing efforts and incentivize the implementation of school gardens across the state. The Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas generously provide the funding for the contest.

“As a proud partner of the Arkansas Grown School Garden of the Year Contest, the Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas are committed to supporting agricultural education and sustainability initiatives across our state. These programs not only teach students the importance of agriculture in their daily lives but also cultivate a deeper connection to the land and their communities. At Farm Credit, we believe in fostering the next generation of agricultural leaders and stewards of the land, ensuring that agriculture continues to thrive for years to come,” said Greg Cole, President and Chief Executive Officer at AgHeritage Farm Credit Services.

"Farm to school initiatives offer access to fresh food and connects students statewide to agriculture through school gardens, educational programs, and local food procurement," said Jessica Chapman, Farm to School and Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator. "We are thankful for this partnership with the Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas to recognize schools that excel in their farm to school efforts."

The contest was open to public and private K-12 schools, early childhood education facilities, and alternative learning environments. Applicants must have a school garden or plans to start one in the following school year to be considered for the contest. Applications are judged based on the presence of clear goals, effective integration of school gardens into the classroom curriculum, active community involvement, plans for utilizing harvested produce, and long-term maintenance strategies for the gardens.

View photos from the event [here](#).

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**About Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas:** *The Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas are locally-owned and managed financial cooperatives that are part of the national Farm Credit System. They are dedicated to making a significant and positive impact on agriculture, rural communities, and youth in agriculture through their statewide partnership. Three independent associations come together to form Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas – Farm Credit of Western Arkansas, AgHeritage Farm Credit Services, and Farm Credit Mid-America. The Farm Credit System has supported rural America since 1916 and remains committed to its original mission of providing reliable, dependable credit to farmers, ranchers and rural homeowners.*

*The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture, forestry, and natural resources conservation to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while sustaining natural resources and ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. The Arkansas Department of Agriculture offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer. For more information, visit [agriculture.arkansas.gov/](http://agriculture.arkansas.gov/).*

