

SPECIAL TO THE JOURNA

Nate Philyaw of Three Oaks Nursery talks to a customer Saturday at the Foothills Heritage Market in Westminster. The event brought more than 500 visitors despite the cold, wet weather.

Farmers sell out at Foothills market

BY MIKAYLA KREUZBERGER
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WESTMINSTER — Gwen McPhail said an estimated 500 to 600 visitors at Saturday's Foothills Heritage Farmers Market gave farmers a run for their money – literally – as several had to leave the market twice to pick more produce from their gardens to meet demand.

"It was great," McPhail said. "The rain held off most of the morning. I couldn't believe the produce vendors were picked clean."

Three Oaks Nursery's Nate Philyaw was one running back and forth from farm to market.

"We sold out of carrots and beets for the entire season – they were gone in the first hour," he said. "I didn't have to bring any produce back to the nursery."

Philyaw said he was surprised beet sales did so well this year compared to last year.

"It depends on the year. This year people seem to crave them. Other years, not so much," he said.

He said if all goes well this season, his sales would allow him to continue to expand the size of his crops, which have already tripled since 2012.

"We're learning about sustainable growing techniques in order to have a constant supply of fresh products," he said.

McPhail said that's exactly what the Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair board members had hoped to accomplish with the Foothills Heritage Market.

"One of the vendors told me he made more money on Saturday than he does in one week," she said. "I hope this encourages farmers to expand their crops. Our goal is to promote small-scale farming in Oconee County."

Philyaw said Three Oaks Nursery would return to market this Saturday with onions, tomatoes, cucumbers and ornamental plants.

"A lot of our crops can't take much more rain – we're hoping for a few days of warm, dry weather," he said.

Cool weather has slowed the growth of warm-season produce, such as tomatoes, squash and cucumber.

The Foothills Heritage Market is open every Saturday from 8 a.m. until noon at 178 Hayfield Road in Westminster, directly across from Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative on Highway 123. In addition to produce vendors, there will be arts and crafts booths and children's activities throughout the day. For information, visit Foothills Heritage Market at www.foothillsheritagemarket.org or on Facebook.

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