

MARCH 2024

# WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group

The CGUA working group met on January 25th at Ridglea Christian Church. Eleven people were in attendance.

During the meeting, we received updates from several different groups:

- Ridglea Christian Church provided an update on the transfer of TAFB's Learning Garden to their control which they have renamed as the Giving Garden, RCC has hired two part-time garden managers to lead volunteers and have funding to run the garden through the rest of this year, to begin with.
- TAFB has officially transferred ownership of the Learning Garden to RCC; they will be able to offer the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) along with WIC FMNP at Cowtown Farmers Market this year; Cowtown FM and TAFB will host Thursday afternoon markets during the summer at the new Ag Hub at 205 N. Vacek St. in Fort Worth.
- Grow SE reported that Tabor Farms had a rough year last year but is hoping for better growth this year; Mind Your Garden Urban Farm continues to thrive and provide Healthy Hours; Opal's Farm is looking forward to growing LOTS of tomatoes this year and was finally able to harvest some honey. Opal's Farm has also been hosting paid tours for homeschoolers and other groups.
- The group brainstormed ideas for this year's garden/farm tours. See page 2 for more info.
- Everyone enjoyed a tour of the Giving Garden after the meeting.

We are always looking for newsletter submissions, both big and small! If you have a poem, pictures, events or articles to share, please send them over to [tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil@gmail.com).

The next CGUA meeting will be on March 21st at 3pm at Ridglea Christian Church, 6720 W. Elizabeth Lane in Fort Worth.

For questions and information about CGUA, contact our co-chairs, Dave Aftandilian at [d.aftandilian@tcu.edu](mailto:d.aftandilian@tcu.edu) or Lauren Hickman at [lauren.hickman@tafb.org](mailto:lauren.hickman@tafb.org).

## IN THE NEWS

- Spring sustainable agriculture funding opportunities from the NSAC <https://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/rfa-roundup-spring-2024-sustainable-agriculture-funding-opportunities/>
- Two recent profiles of different leaders in the urban agriculture and community gardening spheres
  - <https://civileats.com/2024/02/22/from-civil-rights-to-food-justice-jim-embry-reflects-on-a-life-of-creative-resistance/>
  - <https://today.tamu.edu/2024/02/22/growing-a-dream-into-reality/>
- A Corpus Christi Community Garden's fate is unknown in a lease agreement issue <https://www.kristv.com/news/local-news/in-your-neighborhood/corpus-christi/keepers-of-the-garden-hoping-to-extend-lease-agreement-at-tom-graham-park>

## Events & Classes

### NEXT CGUA MEETING

March 21st, 3pm

Location: Ridglea Christian Church

### TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

TCFPC Networking Meeting

Thursday, April 4th

Time & Location TBD

### FW BOTANIC GARDEN

Learning about Rosemary

Mar. 22nd, 6pm-8pm

<https://fwbg.org/calendar-events>

### EDUCATOR OPEN HOUSE

At Conundrum Farms

April 27th, 9am-Noon

See p. 5 for more info OR

[Sign Up Here!](#)

### NTX SCHOOL GARDEN NETWORK

Farm to School Professional

Development

Mar. 2nd, 9am

Garden workdays are posted, too!

<https://ntxschoolgardennetwork.org/events>

### MINDFUL MARKET

Mar. 2nd, 11am to 2pm

<https://coactntx.wixsite.com/funkytown-mindful-ma>

### COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

EVERY Saturday, 8am to NOON

[www.cowtownmarket.com](http://www.cowtownmarket.com)



# TO-DO TO GROW FOOD IN MARCH!

BY BECCA KNUTSON, HOLLOW TRACE MARKET FARM

TIPS AND TASKS FOR GROWING FOOD IN NORTH TEXAS

March is another big planting and planning month for growing food in North Texas! There are a lot of crops that thrive during this time and lots of tasks to complete to prepare for other crops. The temperatures will continue to warm, the days will be longer and we have a little more consistency to our weather; however, we still need to be cautious of late frosts.

- **Finish planting potatoes** - Potatoes are typically planted in February, but if you haven't gotten them in yet, be sure to plant them as soon as possible.
- **Prepare garden beds for summer crops** - If you haven't done so yet, prepare your garden beds for warm weather crops like tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, green beans, squash, melons and cucumbers. When I prepare my beds, I like to do a thorough weeding of the area to get out things like Bermuda grass, spiderwort, nutsedge and Johnson grass that can be a long-term issue if not addressed early. I then assess the soil's needs and add things like greensand, dried molasses, peat moss, compost and slow-release organic fertilizer, accordingly. I then make sure the amendments are well-combined and reshape my beds. Finally, I address any irrigation needs and repairs.
- **Tend to your tomato, pepper and eggplant seedlings** - Your seedlings may be getting big this month in the final weeks before transplanting! Be sure they stay appropriately hydrated and consider watering with a liquid fertilizer once or twice before they go out into the garden.
- **Transplant your tomato seedlings into the garden** - Tomatoes can be planted outside in the garden starting on March 15th. Everyone has different opinions about when to plant tomatoes in Texas. I like to start considering it around March 15th based on soil temperatures (over 65 degrees) and long-range forecasts. I also consider my ability to cover the plants in case of a frost. I aim to have all my tomatoes planted by April 15th at the latest.
- **Consider transplanting peppers and eggplant in the garden** - I will sometimes wait until April 1st to consider planting my peppers and eggplant into the garden, but they prefer a warmer soil than tomatoes. Check the soil temperatures and long-range forecast before planting. Be prepared to cover these in the event of a late frost.
- **Prepare and plant beans, cucumbers and squash** - Beans, cucumbers and squash can be planted towards the end of the month as the weather and soil are warmer. Most often, these larger seeds are planted directly in the garden since they don't do well with transplanting. Keep these seeds moist as they germinate in the garden and be prepared to cover them if we get a late frost.
- **Plant fruit trees and perennial herbs towards the end of the month.**
- **Tend to your compost piles.**
- **Continue to plant quick-growing crops like peas, lettuce, turnips, radishes, spinach and arugula as the weather allows.**
- **Harvest overwintered crops like cabbage, carrots and beets.**
- **Be prepared to cover crops during a hard freeze and have shade cloth ready for an extra-hot stretch.**



"I love, till my heart is red as February and purple as March."

EMILY DICKINSON



## Featured Farm

### SAPLING FARMS

Owner: Selvi Palaniswamy

Location: Sanger, TX

TYPE OF OPERATION:  
Small-scale family farm

GROWING METHODS:  
Organic principles

TYPES OF PRODUCTS  
GROWN/RAISED: Annual vegetables, herbs, Indian greens and gourds, salsa, pickled vegetables, chicken eggs, & honey

WHERE TO FIND THEM:  
Cowtown & Clearfork Farmers Markets, CSA shares available @saplingfarms



# Carrot Muffins

Recipe from Cookie & Kate

Harvest those final carrots or get them before they're gone from your local farmers' market, and whip up these healthy, tasty treats.



## INGREDIENTS

- 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups white or whole wheat flour
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 2 cups peeled and grated carrots\*(from  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound carrots —about 3 large or up to 6 small/medium)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup roughly chopped walnuts
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup raisins (I like golden raisins), tossed in 1 teaspoon flour
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup melted coconut oil or extra-virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup maple syrup or honey
- 2 eggs, preferably at room temperature
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon turbinado sugar (also called raw sugar), for sprinkling on top

## PREPARATION

- Preheat oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit. Grease all 12 cups on your muffin tin with butter or non-stick cooking spray.
- In a large mixing bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, cinnamon, baking soda, salt, ginger and nutmeg. Blend well with a whisk. Add the grated carrots, chopped walnuts and raisins to the other ingredients and stir to combine.
- In a medium mixing bowl, combine the oil and maple syrup and beat together with a whisk. Add the eggs and beat well, then add the yogurt and vanilla and mix well.
- Pour the wet ingredients into the dry and mix with a big spoon, just until combined (a few lumps are ok). Divide the batter evenly between the 12 muffin cups. Sprinkle the tops of the muffins with turbinado sugar. Bake muffins for 13 to 16 minutes, or until the muffins are golden on top and a toothpick inserted into a muffin comes out clean.
- Remove from oven and place the muffin tin on a rack to cool. Enjoy!

## GARDEN RESOURCES

### Local Nurseries:

[Archie's Gardenland](#)  
[Calloway's](#)

### Free Seeds:

[TAFB Community Garden Program:](#)  
[communitygarden@tafb.org](mailto:communitygarden@tafb.org)  
[GROW North Texas](#)

### Bulk Soil/Compost/Mulch:

[Living Earth](#)  
[Silver Creek Materials](#)  
[City of FW Drop-Off Stations](#)

### Garden Curricula:

CGUA-  
<http://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/resources---reports.html>

### Community Food Systems Map:

<http://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/local-food-map.html>

## VIRTUAL GARDENING CONTENT

### BRIT | Botanic Garden

[youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet](https://www.youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet)

### Paperpot Co Blog & Podcast

<https://paperpot.co/the-blog/>

### Tarrant Area Food Bank

[youtube.com/user/TarrantAreaFoodBank](https://www.youtube.com/user/TarrantAreaFoodBank)

### Tarrant County Master Gardeners

[youtube.com/c/TarrantCountyMasterGardeners](https://www.youtube.com/c/TarrantCountyMasterGardeners)

### Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

[youtube.com/c/txextension](https://www.youtube.com/c/txextension)



## GREG'S TOP CROPS

Tomatoes  
Peppers  
Eggplant  
Summer Squash  
Cucumbers  
Leafy & Salad Greens  
Herbs



## FARM RESOURCES

### Organizations & Associations:

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance  
[farmandranchfreedom.org](http://farmandranchfreedom.org)

GROW North Texas  
[grownorthtexas.org](http://grownorthtexas.org)

Natural Resource Conservation Service  
[nrcs.usda.gov](http://nrcs.usda.gov)

Texas Center for Local Food  
[texaslocalfood.org](http://texaslocalfood.org)

Texas Department of Agriculture  
[texasagriculture.gov](http://texasagriculture.gov)

Texas Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association  
[tofga.org](http://tofga.org)

USDA Farm Service Agency  
[fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov)

USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture  
[nifa.usda.gov/](http://nifa.usda.gov/)

## OPAL'S PICKS

Happy “Almost Really” Spring! It’s not quite Spring but it sure feels like it. Eighty plus degrees in February is nice but it’s still winter and Texas weather has its fair share of surprises. The local ten-day forecast may not show any freezing temps, but The Old Farmers Almanac says our last frost date is March 18th and NOAA seems to agree. It’s hard not to plant when the temperatures are so warm but it’s probably wise to wait.

The crops we overwintered are growing strong. Our onions are the only Spring crop planted at Opal’s Farm so far. We decided against planting potatoes this year, but we have extra beets, carrots, and sugar snap peas going in next week. All of these are great early Spring veggies to plant and need to go in prior to March 15th for a good yield, before it gets too hot.

We are finishing up our tomato beds – both for the TCU/SSARE research project and Opal’s Farm. We inherited the test plots from two other urban farms this year making the total research area 360 tomatoes. That’s in addition to the 250 tomatoes Opal’s is planting. However, there are different growing methods for the TCU tomatoes and Opal’s. The TCU beds require a great deal more work than do the others. Opal’s uses a faster, more efficient method for production.

Our tomatoes are grown on 100-foot beds. We prep the beds and lay 2-3” of compost across the beds. Drip irrigation is placed in the beds and overlaid with weed fabric. We have a template made from an 8’x4’ sheet of ½ inch plywood with two 6’ holes drilled on 2’ centers. We lay the template on the weed fabric and burn a hole every 2’ using a flame weeder. Flipping the template over we work our way down the bed. We’re left with fifty holes per row for planting tomatoes. We then spread hay across the top of the fabric for mulch and keeping the soil temperature down. Finally, we are ready to plant. We’ll talk about pruning and trellising the tomatoes next month.

Happy farming and have a great Spring!

Greg Joel

Farm Manager - Opal's Farm

<https://www.facebook.com/opalsfarm>





# EDUCATOR OPEN HOUSE Conundrum Farms

5544 Rocky Creek Park Rd, Crowley, TX 76036  
Saturday, April 27th, 9am to 12 noon



*Sign-Up* ↗

*Hey y'all!*

Join us for this open house *Come & Go* event. Take part in hands-on activities, explore resources, network with other garden educators, as you discover Fort Worth's newest educational venue, *Conundrum Farms*.

**MADE GREENE**  
School Garden Services

[www.madegreene.com](http://www.madegreene.com)

FTW TEX  
**CONUNDRUM**  
FARMS

[www.conundrumfarms.com](http://www.conundrumfarms.com)