

HOW'S IT GROWING?

Community Gardens & Urban Agriculture
Working Group Newsletter



TARRANT COUNTY
FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

CGUA Happenings

On January 12th, volunteer members of the CGUA Working Group met at TCU to further discuss the Youth Farm Curriculum and how to move forward on creating a resource guide for community gardeners. The Youth Farm research is progressing nicely with an update from Betsy Friauf about her visit to the South Plains Food Bank in Lubbock. The group will continue to add research on different program models to provide the best advice possible for North Texas youth farms. Please come help!

The next meeting will be on **Thursday, March 9th from 3:00-4:30pm** at the TAFB Administrative Building, 2525 Cullen St. Fort Worth, TX 76107
www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/news---events.html



EVENTS

2/3, 3-4:30pm
TCFPC General Meeting
@Tarrant County Public Health

2/4, 10am-12pm
Intro to Permaculture
brit.org/events

2/4, 1-4pm
TAFB Garden Leader Gathering
tafb.org/events

2/18, 10am-1pm
Planning Your Spring Garden
tafb.org/events

2/22, 6-7:30pm
Harvest Series, Beets
tafb.org/events

2/23, 5:30-7:30pm
Gardeners Happy Hour
facebook.com/FarmingTheSprawl



Asparagus, Onions and Potatoes By Dotty Woodson, Ed. D.—Extension Program Specialist

This time of year is the only time garden centers and feed stores have onion sets, seed potatoes and asparagus crowns available. Plant these vegetables now to enjoy this spring and summer.

Asparagus is a perennial vegetable that once established will grow for 15 to 20 years. Select a sunny location where the soil will drain well. You do not need a huge area or even a special area. These vegetables will grow right along with your other landscape plants.

Asparagus crowns are the roots and crown of an asparagus plant. Depending on how much you enjoy asparagus, plant 2 or 3 crowns per family member. Do not cut asparagus the first season. Allow the crowns to grow many roots to support the plants. The ferns are tall, light and airy. The fern growth determines the spear production for the next year. Asparagus does not require a great deal of water. Control weeds around the plants with mulch and hand pulling. When the ferns freeze in the fall, do not cut the ferns down. The dried ferns protect the crowns during the winter. Remove the ferns around mid-February and watch for the delicious spears.

(Continued on p.2)

Asparagus, Onions and Potatoes (cont.)

Each piece of seed **potato** you plant grows 6 to 20 potatoes or 11 to 30 pounds depending on the potato variety. Cut the seed potatoes into pieces with 2 to 3 eyes. Each eye has the potential to grow into a potato plant. Allow the potato pieces to dry or callus overnight. Plant the potatoes in compost. Harvest the potatoes when the plants start to flower or wait until the plants start to yellow. Harvest the potatoes before the hot weather starts. Potatoes do not like Texas heat. Wash all soil off the potatoes. Allow the potatoes to dry before storing. Store the potatoes in a cool dark place.

If you have limited space, create a vertical potato stack using a 5 gallon bucket, old garbage can, 3 to 5 old tires, or wire fencing formed into a cylinder. For a bucket or garbage can, cut out the bottom of the container and cut or drill some holes along the sides. If using tires, drill about 4 large holes on the bottom side of each tire so the tires will not hold water. (Continued on p.3)

FEBRUARY TO-DO

- Plant potatoes, onion slips, and asparagus crowns by the third week of the month.
- Begin planting seeds for leaf lettuce, collards and other greens. Repeat every two weeks for continuous harvest.
- Start seeds inside for peppers, tomatoes and eggplant.
- Direct seed radish, spinach, carrots, peas, and beets.



STORIES FROM THE GARDEN

Kim McLean and PolyWes Gardens were featured in the Fort Worth Texas magazine in an article about the farming movement that is spreading throughout Fort Worth. Read more about the fantastic work Kim is doing in the article titled Fort Worth Movement Brings Farms to the City at www.fwtx.com.

If you haven't visited the PolyWes Gardens yet, come out to see what they have going on! The first 13 beds are located at 2900 Avenue C near the Texas Wesleyan campus in East Fort Worth. Kim and her team have big plans for the space. Just talking to her about all of her ideas and projects will have you ready to farm every empty inch of our city.

To learn more, visit polywesgardens.org or <https://www.facebook.com/polywes.gardens>.

Asparagus, Onions and Potatoes (cont.)

Onions slips are now available at garden centers and feed stores. Take this opportunity to plant a row of onions in a sunny location in your landscape. Onions do not take a lot of room. Onions will grow well in a row behind your panies or in front of shrubs. The green upright foliage will look good planted in most landscapes.

Onions slips are small onion plants ready to plant. They usually come with 100 plants tied together by variety. Onions grow best in cool weather. Plant now so the onions have plenty of time to grow before hot weather arrives. Hot weather causes onions to flower.

Select a variety by taste, texture and color preference. The Texas sweet onion is called 1015Y. Grano and yellow or white Granex grow in this area. Look for Burgundy if you prefer a red onion. If ordering from a catalog, order short day American varieties. Bunching onions grow well in this area. Evergreen White Bunching and Japanese Bunching are frequently planted varieties of this type. Bunching onions do not bulb and are harvested as needed to use as green onions.

Prepare the soil by turning about 4 inches of compost into the soil. Plant the onion slip deep enough so the onion will stay upright and about 4 to 6 inches apart. Thin out every other onion as the onions grow. Use the thinned onion as a green onion. Keep the garden moist. Fertilize before planting with a good nitrogen fertilizer and side dress with fertilizer about 3 weeks after planting and again as the bulb formation starts.

Harvest onions when two-thirds or more of the tops have fallen over. Do not wait more than 1 or 2 weeks after this occurs. Allow onions to thoroughly dry before storage.

Store onions in a cool dry place. Sweet onions will not store as long as more pungent varieties. Maximum length of storage of sweet onions will run from 2 to 3 months.



Left: Asparagus crown being planted in a deep trench.

Center: Asparagus plant.

Right: Eyes on a potato.



Local Resources

Potatoes, Onion Slips & Asparagus:

- Archie's Gardenland (Fort Worth)
- Calloway's (Fort Worth, Arlington, Hurst)
- Redenta's (Arlington)

Free Seeds:

- TAFB
- Contact Seed Companies

Bulk Soil/Compost:

- Living Earth
- Silver Creek

Garden Curriculum:

- CGUA Website

