

MAY 2021

WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture
Working Group

CGUA MEETING NOTES

The Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture working group met on March 18th at 3pm.

Meeting Notes:

- **Southside Community Garden** - Alison Pope and Patrice Jones presented to the group about efforts to build gardens at people's homes in 76104. The gardens will help address a myriad of social and health disparities impacting the community. Donations and volunteers are needed. **Website:** <http://southsidecommunitygarden.com/> **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/southsidecommunitygardenftw>
- **Grow Southeast** - Jesse provided updates on Tabor Farms, Opal's Farm and Mind Your Garden. Volunteers are needed: <https://growsoutheastfw.wixsite.com/texas>
- **School Garden Mapping** - Mary Jo and Marsha provided an update on the project and the challenges facing FWISD gardens.
- **TAFB Community Garden Program** - Susan shared updates about new garden projects, the spring seedling giveaway and the internship opportunity.
- **Origin Stories:** Meeting attendees shared the story of how they each began gardening/farming.

The next CGUA meeting will be on Thursday, May 20th at 3pm. **Meeting ID: 931 9361 5735. Password: 947149.** All are welcome to join! For questions and more information about CGUA, contact our co-chairs, Dave Aftandilian at d.aftandilian@tcu.edu or Charlie Blaylock at shinesfarmstand@gmail.com.

IN THE NEWS

- Slow food DFW gives out garden grants
<https://slowfooddfw.org/slow-food-dfw-awards-growing-grants/>
- A look at how an urban farm turned a food desert in California into a hotspot for community gardens
<https://civileats.com/2021/04/06/civil-eats-tv-planting-with-purpose-at-urban-tilth/>
- Walsh residential development becomes first private-public composting site in city program
<https://fwtx.com/news/walsh-becomes-fort-worth-s-first-public-private-food-compost/>
- Article showcasing the Southside Community Garden program in action
<https://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/article250824779.html>

Events & Classes

NEXT CGUA MEETING

May 20th, 3pm

Meeting ID: 931-9361-5735

Password: 947149

DIG DEEP CONFERENCE

SAVE THE DATE:

July 17th, 2021 at BRIT

<http://tafb.org/events/dig-deep-conference>

TARRANT AREA FOOD BANK

Kitchen Garden Cooking
School, Cucumbers - May
12th, 2pm

Backyard Drip Irrigation -
May 15th, 10am

<http://tafb.org/events>

SAVE TARRANT WATER

Plant Combos &
Companions - May 13th, 6pm
[https://savetarrantwater.com/
/events/](https://savetarrantwater.com/events/)

SATURDAYS 8AM-12PM
**Cowtown Farmers
Market**
3821 SOUTHWEST BLVD

"I know that if
odour were
visible, as colour
is, I'd see the
summer garden
in rainbow
clouds."

ROBERT BRIDGES



MAY TO-DO

Plant warm season lawn
grasses.

Plant color annuals like
lantana, begonia, zinnia,
and verbena.

Plant southern peas,
peppers, squash, okra,
melons and other
summer crops .

Prune roses, vines, and
trees after they have
bloomed.

Feed, water and protect
young plants/seedlings
from pests and the
elements.

Plant any and all of the
herbs.

HARVESTING HOPE: MORE THAN A NAME

By Becca Knutson

If you've been involved in the DFW community gardening world for any significant amount of time then you've met, or at least have heard about, Willie and Nancy Redmon. The Redmons have been leading and organizing Harvesting Hope Community Garden located at First Christian Church of Arlington (910 S. Collins St.) for the last 10 years. I recently had the pleasure of sitting with them in the garden on a beautiful April evening to reminisce and learn more about their story and what the future has in store.

We agreed to meet on a Monday evening. The date wasn't significant, and we did not set a rigorous agenda. I drove to the back of the church as I had many times before and parked outside the white picket fence that surrounds the garden. As I gathered my camera and notepad, I started to look around to see if Willie and Nancy had arrived yet. Not only did I see Willie and Nancy but several other gardeners were arriving as well and were mingling around the garden beds. There was so much activity happening that I almost thought I was intruding on a planned workday!

As I walked into the garden, Willie and Nancy introduced me to each person as we settled in to do the interview. Willie and I started the conversation as Nancy finished checking in with each of the gardeners. Willie explained that he is always amazed at how Nancy can remember each person's name, even if they have only been to the garden once or twice before. She loves to connect with each person and help make them feel welcome in the garden.

As the conversation progressed, I learned more about how Willie and Nancy will be stepping down from their leadership positions at Harvesting Hope. They have purchased some property in Pecan Gap, TX and are working towards building it up as a homestead and agricultural property as they near retirement. While Pecan Gap is not too far from DFW, and the Redmons expressed how they are excited for this new adventure, they will most certainly miss the people in this garden community they have built.

The story of Harvesting Hope, as Willie and Nancy tell it, began in 2008 as they attended a sermon at First Christian Church. The message was about being good stewards of the land the church sits on. The back of the property was not being utilized well and the pastor suggested several options: senior ministry/outreach, sports fields or maybe even a community garden. There was some excitement and interest, but no movement was made on a project.

It wasn't until a couple years later in 2010 that Willie and Nancy were listening to another sermon when Willie felt called to lead the effort to install a community garden. He turned to Nancy and said, "It's me!" Nancy, of course, wasn't quite sure what he was referring to, but he would fill her in later that he felt called to put that property to good use as a community garden. Soon after that Willie received permission from the church to begin the project but was not allocated any initial funds.

It was just a few days later that Katey Rudd (of TAFB) called the church and wanted to talk to Willie Redmon. Katey and Willie had never met before but through a mutual contact, Katey learned that Willie was looking to start a garden. Willie had the land and Katey had funds through a Department of Tarrant County Public Health grant – it was meant to be! **Continued on p.3**





Harvesting Hope (continued)

Soon, Willie and Mike Warren crossed paths. Mike was looking for some volunteer work for his students to do. He didn't want anything easy, either. He wanted hard, meaningful work. Willie was happy to accept the help. Not too long after that, the Redmons received a call from Voly.org because a large volunteer group had a site cancel on them and they needed a new project to help with. This large group of volunteers also came with a large donation for Harvesting Hope. They also happened to be very experienced in building and brick laying which was perfect for installing and filling the cinder block raised beds that still stand at Harvesting Hope today.

As we sat and talked, I heard so many "hand of God" stories from Willie and Nancy that have produced the beautiful community space that exists today. I heard about the random volunteer who showed up on the day that Willie needed to assemble the new greenhouse pieces. The volunteer just happened to work with framing wood for a living. He stayed for three days to help with the project and then was never seen again. I also learned that Willie really didn't want to have bees on the property, but the pieces fell into place as one person donated the hives, another brought the bees, a gardener wanted to take on the responsibility of caring for the bees and a mentor stepped up to train the new beekeeper. Willie just looked up to the sky and said, "Okay, I guess we're getting bees."

Willie and Nancy could write a book with all the garden stories they have, but the common theme in all of their stories is the community the garden brings. Throughout the evening, they would give credit to the contributions of the other gardeners: "Teresa grows most of the plants we need." "Don has gone to town on the compost pile!" "Everybody pitches in." They constantly expressed that Harvesting Hope wouldn't be possible without the gardeners and the volunteers that maintain the beds, feed the chickens, keep the bees and work together to create community.

The Redmons expressed several times that the community they have built at Harvesting Hope is like a family and everyone is welcome. It doesn't matter if you've been to the garden once or if you've been one hundred times. The Harvesting Hope family makes sure that everyone's needs are met even outside of gardening. They are willing to help support and lift up anyone needing help. They also know that the garden provides benefits outside of the food they grow. The garden improves mood, increases social interaction, teaches about the cycles of nature, and teaches patience and hope. "There is always hope," Willie adds, "There is always hope."

There is no doubt that the Harvesting Hope community will continue on after Willie and Nancy step down. Even during my short visit to the garden, I heard discussion about who should take over the newsletter and who will care for the chickens. The Redmons assured me that they aren't leaving anytime soon, but they do need to start working on their new property. During the last ten years, Willie and Nancy haven't had a bed of their own to tend at Harvesting Hope – they were too busy leading, guiding, problem solving and fostering community. "Now we get to do it [gardening] full time, but the people won't be there," Willie said as he gazed out over the garden.

To learn more about Harvesting Hope Community Garden, visit their Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/harvestinghope2011>), go see them in person or look at the photos I took on my visit (<https://photos.app.goo.gl/5gWvAfBMzSMEv2V3A>). You will leave the garden inspired and in awe of one of the most beautiful and successful community gardens and community garden family I have ever had the pleasure of knowing.



Strawberry Balsamic Basil Compote

Recipe by: Hannah Lamar

This is for everyone out there with a sweet tooth. This berry, balsamic, and herb compote is a delightful way to add spring produce into your breakfast or dessert. Enjoy in the morning over yogurt and granola alongside fresh scones, after-dinner atop vanilla ice cream or flourless chocolate cake, or served simply with fresh whipped cream and maybe vanilla pound cake. Enjoy!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups strawberries, thinly sliced
- 2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon fresh basil, sliced into thin ribbons
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Zest of one lemon
- 1 tablespoon water
- Cornstarch slurry: 1 teaspoon cornstarch and 1 teaspoon water, mixed



PREPARATION

- Combine strawberries, balsamic vinegar, honey, basil, vanilla extract, lemon zest, and 1 T water in small saucepan .
- Heat the mixture at a medium-low temperature until bubbling, stirring regularly, for five minutes.
- Lower the burner to low/simmer and add the cornstarch slurry, stir in until combined. Cook until the mixture thickens, another 3-5 minutes.
- Allow mixture to cool slightly, then enjoy!



SEASONAL VEGGIE FUN FACTS - EGGPLANT!

Eggplant grow very well throughout the summer here in North Texas. If you're not a fan of the traditional Italian eggplant, try some of the smaller varieties like Fairy Tale, Barbella or Kermit. Days to harvest will be about 60 to 85 days after transplanting.

- In the UK, eggplant is called *aubergine*. It also goes by several other names across the world.
- Eggplants come in many colors like purple, white, or green and some even have stripes!
- Eggplant is in the same plant family as tomatoes and peppers.
- Eggplants originated in India and still grow wild there today.
- Eggplants contain trace amounts of nicotine. You would have to eat about 20 pounds of eggplant to ingest the equivalent of one cigarette.

For more fun facts about eggplant, visit:
<https://foodprint.org/real-food/eggplants/>

GARDEN RESOURCES

Local Nurseries:

Archie's Gardenland
Calloway's

Free Seeds:

TAFB Community Garden Program;
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-systems.html>

VIRTUAL GARDENING CONTENT

BRIT | Botanic Garden

youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet

Dig Deep Conference 2020

tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/dig-deep-conference-2020

Tarrant Area Food Bank

youtube.com/user/TarrantAreaFoodBank

Tarrant County Master Gardeners

youtube.com/c/TarrantCountyMasterGardeners

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

youtube.com/c/txextension





SHINE'S GARDEN CHATS



CHARLIE'S TOP CROPS

Barbarella Eggplants

California Wonder Bell
Peppers

Jade or Nokya Cucumbers

Purple Hull Peas

Waltham Butternut Squash

Virginia Jumbo Peanuts



May is here, after the latest frost on record. In fact, the frost came after the recommended last date for planting spring tomatoes. We are getting into the time of year when we need to be very conscious of the heat. Seedlings that can be transplanted in May are eggplants, peppers, and sweet potatoes. Seeds to plant in May are Southern peas, summer squashes, winter squashes, melons, and cucumbers.

Eggplants are the most underutilized crop that grows great in our area during the heat. I assume people are used to trying to eat the bitter mushy kind, or deep frying them. Our home use for eggplants is almost entirely for pizza and baba ghanoush, and all varieties are good for those. Peppers are great in the kitchen, as well. I love slow cooking sweet peppers, like Bells or Marconis, in lots of olive oil and mixing with pasta. The doctors are all saying eat more olive oil. My recipe uses a half cup of the good stuff. I love roasting my Southwestern peppers, like Anaheim and Poblano, for dishes, or freezing and storing for winter. The plants need about 4 square feet of space each to let them get to full size.

The Southern peas that are most commonly known are the black-eyed-peas, but there are many varieties. My favorite, by far, is the purple hull pea. It has a color-indicating shell that lets you know when to pick it at its creamiest. If you weren't aware, they're all absolutely amazing fresh, not dried. There are also crowder, ripper, and cream peas that grow great at 100 degrees. If you are really adventurous, there is a relative of Southern peas called yard long beans that make 18-inch-long green beans. They love the heat and need to grow up a trellis. I'm happier spacing them out 8-12 inches between plants because they grow so vigorously. We eat so many green beans that we need to figure out a way to grow them all season.

Summer squash is a very quick crop this time of year. I wrote a paragraph last month about how to protect them from squash bugs as they are growing. Winter squashes are grown now, for storing and eating in winter. The name sometimes throws people off, and includes butternut, pumpkins, acorn squash, sweet meat, and most gourds. The tip for Texas winter squash is that you cannot leave them in the field. If they have formed their hard layer, they need to get out of the sun, or they will bake and not store very well. We err on the side of pulling them early and letting them cure under a bed in the house.

Melons and cucumbers both grow great sprawling over the ground, but they need lots of space. I prefer trellises made with cattle panels (metal fencing found at feed stores typically used for containing animals). Cantaloupes are ripe when they "slip" from the plant and roll down the leaves into the walkways. Then I walk along and pick them up. Even with trellises, I don't put the plants closer than 3 feet to each other. Watermelons are best to stick in a less-travelled area of the garden.

I saved this little secret for last, so just the readers that make it to the end get it: Grow your own peanuts! They are one of the most intriguing plants. I love Virginia Jumbo, and you can buy them at the grocery store, raw and unsalted, and they'll grow. They grow slowly at first and need loose soil, so mulch around them well, and the soil will be ready as soon as they send their shoots down into it to make peanuts. Homegrown peanut butter with local honey on homemade bread is one of humanity's greatest achievements.

Watch yourself in the heat, too, my Friends, and mulch, mulch, mulch!

Charlie Blaylock
Shine's Farmstand

Visit Shine's Farmstand on Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/shinesfarmstand>