

HOW'S IT GROWING?

Community Gardens & Urban Agriculture
Working Group Newsletter



CGUA Happenings

The next CGUA meeting will be on **Thursday, May 11th from 3:00-4:30pm** at the TAFB Administrative Building, 2525 Cullen St. Fort Worth, TX 76107.

tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/news---events

In March, the group had a passionate discussion about how to best implement the curriculums we are researching for the future youth farms in Fort Worth. We are looking to support the implementation of these youth farms at existing projects first, before attempting to create new ones. Input and assistance is valued from all members of TCFPC and CGUA. Join us for the next meeting!

New on the website—The CGUA newsletters will be archived on the working group's landing page: tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/cgua-working-group. Please feel free to download, print and distribute to anyone who would benefit from the information.

Add your garden! TCFPC's food system's map needs updating. Submit info about community gardens to be added to the map. tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/community-food-systems-north-texas

EVENTS

4/1, 9am
Raised Bed Class
brit.org/events

4/4, 7pm
Dirt and Devotional Alliance UMC on Facebook

4/5, 6-7:30pm
Harvest Series, Cauliflower
tafb.org/events

4/6, 4-5pm
TCFPC General Meeting
TC Public Health

4/15, 10am-11am
Start Planting with Plant Starts
Hope Grows on Facebook

4/29, 10am-1pm
How to Build a Raised Bed
tafb.org/events



Tomato—Fruit or Vegetable? By Dotty Woodson, Ed. D.—Extension Program Specialist

Are tomatoes a fruit or a vegetable? A fruit is defined as an organ of a plant containing seeds. The fruit protects the seeds as the seeds develop and helps with seed dispersal. Each fruit has different names. The tomato fruit is called a berry - a succulent or juicy fruit with many small seeds. As the seeds develop in the fruit, the fruit becomes sweeter. Everyone who has ever eaten a ripe tomato they picked off a tomato plant has been surprised and delighted with the taste. Whatever you want to call tomatoes...NOW is the time to plant!

Plant and grow tomatoes in full sun (6 to 10 hours) in well-drained soil, in a raised bed or in a large container. To prepare the soil, break up any clay soil and remove any rocks in the top 8-10 inches of soil. This will improve drainage. Add 4 inches of compost and 1 inch of expanded shale to the top 6 inches of soil. This will create a slight rise or berm. For a raised bed, add ¼ sand and ¼ compost by volume. For a large container use potting soil or compost mixed with perlite. Use about a 5-gallon container. Used black nursery pots and half barrels are both good. Containers must drain well. Use a ½, ¾ or 1 inch drill bit for additional holes for drainage.

(Continued on p.3)

UNT Health Science Center Community Garden - Update

If you haven't visited the community garden at UNT Health Science center in Fort Worth, you are missing out! They just completed their third successful gardening year. They have donated over 500 pounds in the last three years to the UNTHSC Student Food Pantry as well as Northside Intercommunity Agency. Betsy Friauf, Community Garden Coordinator, has reported that the gardeners have set a goal of 400 pounds of food donated for the year 2017!

The garden has recently added six fruits trees to supplement their already productive vegetable beds. They will also be participating in UNTHSC's Week of Service, Earth Day Fair, FitFest and other education-focused events. UNTHSC will also be hosting TAFB's Dig Deep conference on July 22nd, 2017. It should be another great partnership and valuable event for all those interested in growing food.

For more information, visit the garden's website: <https://www.unthsc.edu/operations/sustainability/community-garden/>.

APRIL TO-DO

- Foliar feed all vegetables and flowers with liquid seaweed or compost tea.
- Plant black-eyed peas, okra, sweet potatoes, squash, melons, cucumbers, corn and yard-long beans—all can handle the early summer heat.
- Keep planting basil!
- Plant caladium, calla, and gladiolus bulbs.
- Replenish your straw and wood mulch.



UNTHSC Community Garden Harvest



DID YOU KNOW?

Soil is ALIVE!

A sign of healthy soil is an abundance of soil life. Good garden soil should contain earthworms, mites, bacteria, fungi and beneficial nematodes. These organisms are essential to plant growth and can be supported by adding organic matter and keeping your soil moist.

Productive plants come from healthy soil. Don't forget to feed your soil with compost, dried molasses and other organic soil amendments this spring!

Tomatoes (cont.)

As for variety, I could spend the remainder of the article writing about the advantages of different varieties but I suggest you go with what you can find locally. 'Celebrity,' 'Early Girl,' 'Carnival,' '4th of July,' 'Rodeo' and 'Carnival' are good medium size tomatoes. All cherry and grape tomatoes are great. Most are hybrids of 'Sweet 100.' In fact some of the cherry tomatoes will produce fruit when the larger varieties of tomatoes stop producing because of the heat.

Space the tomatoes at least 3 to 4 feet apart and surround with a sturdy cage. Most tomatoes will become heavy with fruit very quickly. Three to 4 tomato plants are good for a family of 2 to 3 if you want to eat all the tomatoes fresh. If you want share, can, freeze or dry, plant more. If you need canning, freezing or drying instructions, email me a request, d-woodson@tamu.edu.

Add mulch around the base of tomato plants to keep the soil evenly moist, prevent soil erosion, moderate the soil temperature, and control weeds. Use up to 3 to 4 inches of bark mulch, straw or shredded leaves. Dry, hot soil causes problems for tomatoes because the roots are so close to the soil surface. Mulch prevents water evaporation from the soil so the roots use all the water you or nature applies.

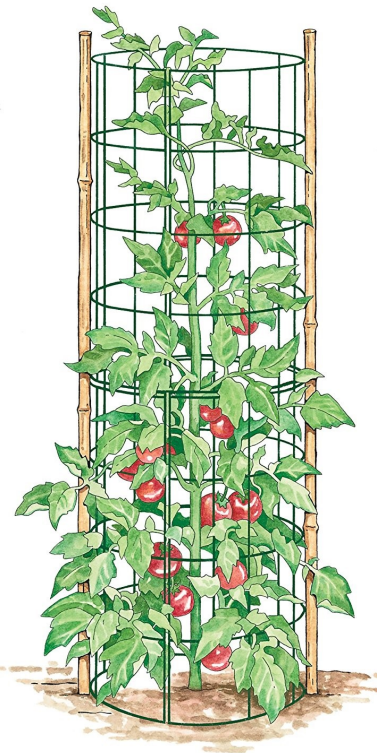
Water the tomato plants slowly and deeply to help grow a strong root system.

Fertilize soil around tomatoes with a high nitrogen or nitrogen-only slow-release fertilizer. For raised beds use the same slow-release fertilizer or water-soluble fertilizer. For a large container, use time-release or water-soluble fertilizer.

Tomatoes are sweeter the longer you leave them on the plant. Pick tomatoes early in the morning. Wash and refrigerate tomatoes as soon as possible.



Left: Sweet 100 variety of cherry tomatoes
Below: One type of tomato cage
Right: Tomato plants mulched with straw



Local Resources

Veggie Transplants & Soil Amendments

- 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
- City of FW Drop-off Stations (mulch)

Garden Curricula:

- CGUA Website

