

MARCH 2025

WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group

CGUA MEETING NOTES - 1/16/25

The CGUA working group last met on January 16th at Timberview Farmstead. Eighteen people were in attendance.

Adam Cohen was our host and provided an overview for the group. Timberview Farmstead is a non-profit educational farm that aims to connect people back to agriculture. They have an expansive property that includes in-ground crops, hydroponics, aquaponics, livestock, a farm store, several meeting spaces as well as greenhouses and hoopouses. They are a fairly new operation that hopes to be a resource for other growers and a food hub for the community.

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

- Manny Herrera provided updates from TAFB's Community Garden Network.
 - The Community Garden Network newsletter has been sent out.
 - Manny will be hosting virtual "Grow & Tell" office hours for network members to ask questions and provide support for each other.
 - The garden calendar is in development.
- Greg Joel provided updates from the Grow Southeast group with a focus on the happenings at Opal's Farm.
 - The Mindful Market continues to operate on a monthly basis.
 - At Opal's:
 - Production continues to be above average in comparison to past years.
 - TCC Horticulture will be growing summer crop transplants again this year.
 - Taste for the CURE begins in January and runs through June. The first cohort has 25 participants.
 - Greg will be attending a discussion in Washington, D.C. regarding the inequitable distribution of USDA funds. He may get to meet President Trump.
 - They will have a produce stand at Archie's Gardenland every Saturday from 1-3pm.
- Becca Knutson reminded the group about the current, local farmers markets and encouraged everyone to visit their favorite one.
 - Watch for information about seasonal closings and what great in-season foods are available through the winter!
- MaryJo Greene and Anne Santana of the North Texas School Garden Network, Diamond Moss of AfroGreen'D, and Daniel Morgan of OutTeach shared news about school gardens:
 - School is back in session and educators are excited to be working with their students again.
 - Mary Jo and Anne have started a school garden podcast called "The School Garden Podcast" which can be found on Spotify.
 - NTX School Garden network has workdays and meetups on their website.
 - AfroGreen'd has workdays coming up on Feb. 14th and Earth Day.
 - Outteach has launched a sustainability initiative.

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.

The next CGUA meeting will be on Thursday, March 27th at 3pm. Location, TBD.

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

Events & Classes

NEXT CGUA MEETING

March 27th, 3pm

Location: TBD

TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

TCFPC Networking Meeting

March 13, 5-7pm

Resource Connection

2300 Circle Drive, FW 76119

CONUNDRUM FARMS

Volunteer opportunities & events

<https://www.conundrumfarms.com>

[m/events](https://www.conundrumfarms.com/m/events)

FORT WORTH BOTANIC GARDEN

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

NTX SCHOOL GARDEN NETWORK

Meetups, workdays & classes!

<https://ntxschoolgardennetwork.org/events>

[org/events](https://ntxschoolgardennetwork.org/events)

TIMBERVIEW FARMSTEAD

Events, classes & tours!

<https://timberviewfarmstead.com>

COMMUNITY LINK MARKETS

Azle Farmers Market

<https://azlefarmersmarket.org>

Saginaw Farmers Market

<https://www.saginawmarket.org/>

MINDFUL MARKET

March 1st, 11am to 2pm

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

COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

EVERY Saturday, 8am to NOON

www.cowtownmarket.com



“The ecological principle in agriculture is to connect the genius of the place, to fit the farming to the farm.”

WENDELL BERRY



Featured Community Garden

FAIRMOUNT COMMUNITY GARDEN

LEADER: Brandon Wilson

LOCATION:

1504-1510 5th Ave, Ft. Worth

TYPE OF OPERATION:

Rental Plot, Neighborhood Garden, Public Pick Plot for Fairmount neighbors

GROWING METHODS:

Raised beds, pollinator beds, fruit trees

TYPES OF PRODUCTS

GROWN:

Variety of fruits and vegetables

WHERE TO FIND THEM:

fairmountcommunitygarden.org
[@fairmountcommunitygarden](https://www.instagram.com/fairmountcommunitygarden)



TO-DO TO GROW FOOD IN MAR.!

BY BECCA KNUTSON, HOLLOW TRACE MARKET FARM

TIPS AND TASKS FOR GROWING FOOD IN NORTH TEXAS

If you're anything like me, you have had just about enough of this winter weather and are ready for spring! Hopefully March will bring some warm, consistent weather so our spring planting tasks are easy to manage. Do you have all your seeds started, beds prepped and garden plan laid out? It's about to get very busy in the garden!

- **Decide when you're planting summer crops!** - Everyone has a different theory on the best time to plant tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, beans, squash, etc. in the spring. March 15th is when I start considering planting based on the weather forecast, my ability to cover in case of cold weather and how big my seedlings are. I try to have all my tomatoes, beans, cucumbers and squash planted by April 1st and my peppers, eggplant and basil in by April 15th. Maybe chat with friends, read a few articles, and decide the best plan for you!
- **Continue to start summer crop seeds indoors** - If you are going to start cucumbers, squash and beans inside, plan to start them 3 weeks before you'd like to plant them in the garden. I typically direct seed these crops but some folks prefer to transplant.
- **"Bump up" your seedlings** - If you have peppers, eggplant and tomatoes that are too big for their seed starting trays but you're not ready to plant yet, try "bumping up" or "up potting" these seedlings into 4-inch pots to allow them to grow more before transplanting outside.
- **Continue to plant quick growing crops** - Lettuce, fennel, kohlrabi, radishes, salad greens, turnips, bok choy and arugula grow well and relatively quickly and are small enough to leave room for your summer crops. Consider doing some companion planting with these crops.
- **Plan for irrigation and watering** - Continue watering crops and newly planted seeds and seedlings. As the weather warms, increase the amount of water your plants receive. Monitor the forecast for potential rain and cooler nights. Be sure to protect your irrigation and water source during freezes.
- **Watch for more crazy winter weather!** - Have frost cloth and mulch ready to protect your plants on cooler nights and if we get an extended freeze. Make a plan to protect your faucets, irrigation lines and automatic timers as well.
- **Plant fruit trees and perennials** - Now is a great time to plant new fruit trees and perennial herbs like rosemary, sage, oregano, thyme and lavender.

I hear we're supposed to get more cold winter weather during the second week of March, but I hope that we're all done with it and we can get on to the more exciting part of the year! Happy growing!



IN THE NEWS

- **The Mexican government officially lifted its ban on (GE) corn imports from the U.S.** <https://texasfarmbureau.org/mexico-revokes-ge-corn-decree-to-comply-with-usmca-ruling/>
- **Addressing the Mental Health of Farmers** <https://foodtank.com/news/2025/02/were-ignoring-a-major-public-health-crisis-farmer-mental-health/>
- **Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo College Ag Day promotes agriculture education** <https://fortworthreport.org/2025/02/18/next-generation-of-agriculture-pros-get-a-peek-at-their-future-during-fort-worth-event/>



CULTIVATING WELLNESS: BUILDING LONG-TERM HEALTHY HABITS

BY NIKO HUNT

Behavior change comes in stages and requires a great deal of commitment and focus. We also know that any desire to change a habit starts with a changed mind. When deciding to reevaluate old habits, it is important to make changes that are sustainable and can be maintained without stress. Creating healthy habits can improve both mental and physical well-being cultivating a deeper connection to ourselves.

Consider these questions before planning to change a habit or create a new one:

- What type of person do I want to be?
- Does this change align with my values?
- What impact will this change have on myself and the people I care about?
- What impact will this have on my life if I am unable to follow through on this change?

Setting goals and removing distractions are some of the best ways to stick to the plan. It is easy to fall back into old habits because it is comfortable and familiar. However, we are more likely to show improvement by trusting the process and relying on support. Reinforce habits that align with your identity and don't get bogged down if you make a mistake. There is always tomorrow!

Sauteed Baby Bok Choy

Recipe by Jeanine Donofrio

This sautéed baby Bok Choy recipe is a quick, easy, and delicious side dish. Serve it with any protein you like and a scoop of quinoa or rice!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound baby Bok Choy, 3 to 4, halved or quartered
- 1 tablespoon tamari or soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon water
- ½ tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon mirin, or ½ teaspoon honey
- ¼ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- Red pepper flakes (optional)
- 2 teaspoons avocado oil, plus more as needed (other oil optional)
- Sesame seeds, for sprinkling



PREPARATION

- In a bowl, stir together the tamari, water, rice vinegar, mirin, sesame oil, garlic, and a pinch of red pepper flakes.
- Over medium-high heat, add the oil to a large skillet.
- Add half the bok choy, sear until browned on each side. Remove and add the remaining bok choy, repeat.
- Add all of the bok choy back to the pan along with the sauce. Toss, then cover and cook 1 to 2 more minutes, or until the bok choy is tender.
- Transfer to a platter, sprinkle with sesame seeds, and serve!

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-map.html>

RECOMMENDED BOOKS, AUDIO AND VIDEO

The School Garden Podcast

By Mary Jo Greene & Anne Santana

Charles Dowding's Skills For Growing

By Charles Dowding

The Market Gardener: A Successful Grower's Handbook for Small-Scale Organic Farming

By Jean-Martin Fortier

Diego Footer

[Farm Small, Farm Smart Podcast](#)

[YouTube Channel](#)

[Books](#)

Growing for Market

Free articles, email subscriptions, podcasts and MORE!

Bootstrap Farmer

Articles, videos, podcasts and MORE!





GREG'S TOP CROPS

Onions - Texas 1015, Texas White, Southern Belle, White Granex

Potatoes - Yukon Gold, Kennebec, Red LaSoda



FARM RESOURCES

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
farmandranchfreedom.org

GROW North Texas
grownorthtexas.org

Natural Resource Conservation Service
nrcs.usda.gov

Texas Center for Local Food
texaslocalfood.org

Texas Department of Agriculture
texasagriculture.gov

Texas Health Resources Community Hope
<https://www.texashealth.org/About-Texas-Health/Community-Hope>

Texas Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association
tofga.org

USDA Farm Service Agency
fsa.usda.gov

USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture
nifa.usda.gov/

OPAL'S PICKS

I hope everyone survived the wild temperature swings of February. Opal's Farm survived the February cold spells with minimal damage. I hope you all did as well, and everyone is ready for the warmer weather in March. The Old Farmer's Almanac says March will be above average temperatures and below normal precipitation and the National Weather Service seems to agree. Both are showing the last frost date as March 17th. I used the Almanac as a planting guide for the last six years and Opal's is usually one of the first vendors to have tomatoes at the farmer's market. It may not be as "scientific" as the meteorologists, but there's a reason they've been around for over 200 years.

The tomato beds were prepared over the winter, so I'll be putting in our tomato plants over the week of March 17th. I'll be direct seeding my green beans and squashes after the 17th as well. I'm planting additional Napa cabbage, beets, carrots, and snap peas a bit late because of the extreme cold but should have a final early Spring crop before it gets too hot.

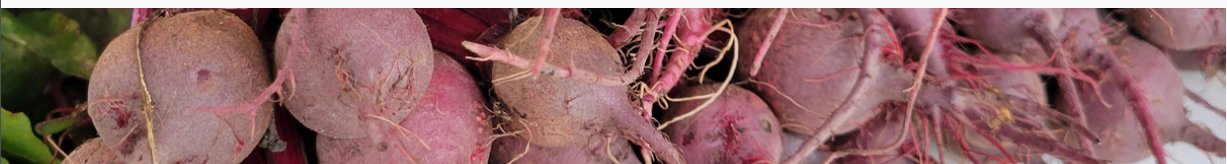
March is the perfect time to finish bed preparation for April planting as well. April is when it gets really busy. Because April is when planting begins in earnest. I'll be finishing up the trellis' for the tomatoes, yard-long beans, and cucumbers. Preparation is essential for a successful Spring.

I want to give an update on "Taste the C.U.R.E." as well. The students have been building their bio-intensive beds in earnest. It's awesome to watch the flurry of activity as the students prepare for Spring planting. Seeing folks excited to become successful growers and the camaraderie that had grown between all the students is exciting and heartwarming. It reminds us why Opal's Farm does what it does every day. Our huge thanks to Dr. Mauricio Erazo-Barradas from Tarleton State's Horticultural program for his classes on soil and plant health. Everyone is excited that March and Spring planting are just around the corner.

Greg Joel

Farm Manager - Opal's Farm

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





THE OMNIVORE'S DILEMMA BY MICHAEL POLLAN

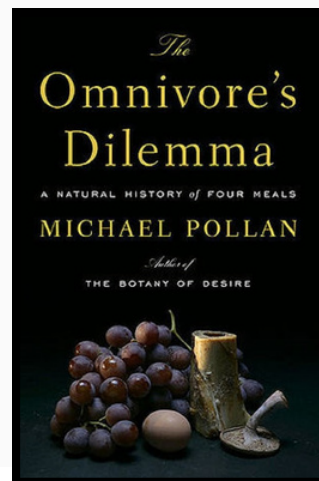
A BOOK REVIEW BY BECCA KNUTSON

Riding the momentum and motivation I had after finishing *The Need to be Whole* by Wendell Berry, I decided to use my monthly Audible credit to purchase a title that many will likely find familiar: *The Omnivore's Dilemma - A Natural History of Four Meals* by Michael Pollan. I actually own a paper copy of this title which I assumed I had picked up while working at McKay's Books in Knoxville, Tennessee. After grabbing the copy off the shelf and flipping through it, I found a bookmark that indicated I got it for a Sustainable Agriculture course I took as an undergrad in Iowa. Isn't it funny how we can mash up memories to create harmlessly false ones that we then believe as fact?

Michael Pollan is an author and journalist who often writes about food, nature and our interactions with them. He has several well-known titles including *In Defense of Food*, *How to Change Your Mind*, *Food Rules* and *The Botany of Desire*. *The Omnivore's Dilemma* takes the reader on a journey that investigates four different ways we can answer the question, "What's for dinner?" As omnivores, we have the privilege (and perhaps detriment) of being able to eat a very wide variety of things. We can choose from many different plants, animals, minerals and fungi to meet our dietary requirements for survival. In today's world, we almost have limitless choices given the efficiency and complexity of our global food system. Michael Pollan takes us through what it takes to create a meal through industrial agriculture, organic agriculture, sustainable/local agriculture, and hunting and gathering methods.

“Every meal at a table recapitulates this evolution from nature to culture, as we pass from satisfying our animal appetites in semisilence to the lofting of conversational balloons. The pleasures of the table begin with eating...but they can end up anywhere human talk cares to go. In the same way that the raw becomes cooked, eating becomes dining.”
Michael Pollan

The description of the journey through the industrial food system is not for the faint of heart. After listening to the first section about corn, feedlots and processing plants, I had a hard time not feeling guilty about some of the foods I eat regularly. Pollan does a particularly deep dive on corn and how it came to be so prominent in our food system. A crop unlikely to thrive without the intervention of humans, it is efficient, productive and we have figured out how to use almost every drop that is harvested. We also get to learn more about industrial sized beef operations and follow Pollan's chosen steer all the way to the slaughterhouse. The meal Pollan chooses to consume and serve his family is fast food from McDonald's. The family eats the meal in a moving vehicle as is very common in today's world. A common and grim story that can be hard to avoid.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

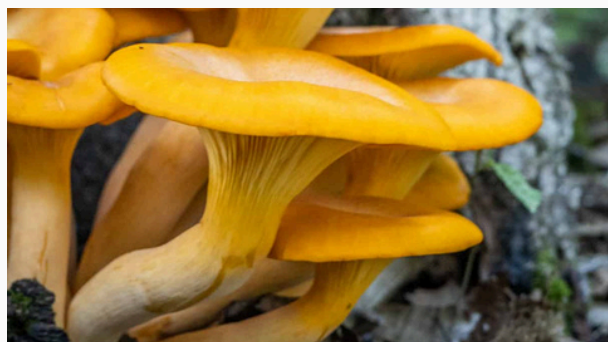
- [AfroGreen'd](#) [Conundrum Farms](#) [Grow North Texas](#)
- [Grow Southeast](#) [NTX School Garden Network](#)
- [Opal's Farm Southside Community Garden](#)
- [Tarrant Area Food Bank Farm & Garden Programs](#)
- [Timberview Farmstead](#)



THE OMNIVORE'S DILEMMA BY MICHAEL POLLAN (CONT.)

The industrial organic journey doesn't provide much more comfort than the conventional industrial agriculture journey. The organic movement started with good intentions for clean, whole foods grown with methods that were kinder to our environment and our bodies. Over time, however, organics had to adapt to become more efficient and produce at an industrial scale to meet the demand. Regulations were put in place that allowed for exceptions that would likely be unacceptable to the founders of the movement and are also very difficult for small-scale producers to adhere to in order to reap the benefits of the label. So, while organic crop production does less harm to the environment and our bodies, it is still guilty of monocropping and using vast amounts of fuel and energy to transport goods and keep huge operations going.

My favorite section of the book was the story about Michael Pollan's time at Polyface Farms and his talks with Joel Salatin. Salatin is a household name in the local/small-scale agriculture world, but I haven't taken the time to read or listen to much of his literature. If you have, he might remind you of your favorite local, hippie farmer who loves his land and is suspicious of the government. Salatin's farm is primarily an egg and meat farm with some space for fruit and vegetables. Polyface Farm is not certified organic or conventional. It is something that is beyond organic. Salatin runs his farm to mimic nature and work with the resources he has available to him. It is a very low-cost and low-input way to farm. He works with the processes of nature and his land to raise healthy and delicious proteins that are safe, and you can feel good about eating. This chapter inspired me and reminded me to look at my farm and identify ways where I've gotten away from working with nature and how I might remedy that. Throughout the journey through the three different agricultural systems, Pollan points out that many of the processes to be more efficient and produce at a large scale also create lots of problems that then need to be fixed. Many of these problems could be remedied by using an ecosystems approach that works with nature and is full of biodiversity to help balance the system.



The last method of creating a meal that Pollan explores is the hunting and gathering approach. Admittedly, this approach is a little unrealistic in today's world. Pollan put in a lot of effort over several months to create a meal that was complicated and unusual, but his experiences were very interesting to hear about. Pollan went mushroom hunting several times for chanterelles and morels. He had the opportunity to hunt for wild pigs. He gathered fruit from public fruit trees. He also harvested vegetables from his garden. He did try to harvest salt from the San Francisco Bay, but it turned out to be tainted and he decided not to use it. Pollan did make exceptions on his menu for items not hunted or gathered like wine that a friend had made, butter for cooking with and salt that was safe to use. Arguably, the most satisfying part of this meal were the experiences he had along the way.

The Omnivore's Dilemma is a fantastic exploration of the food choices we make on a daily basis and helps us answer the question, "What's for dinner?" How can we make choices that are good for our bodies and for the environment? What can we do to support good agriculture and food prepared with care and good intentions?

I'm looking forward to my next agriculture or food-related read. If you have any suggestions or want to talk about books with me, please feel free to reach out!