

JANUARY 2025

WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group

CGUA MEETING NOTES - 11/14/24

The CGUA working group last met on November 14th at Tarrant Area Food Bank. Eleven people were in attendance.

Talia McAllister, CEO of Econautics, gave a presentation on the non-profit's proposed projects at the old Woodhaven Golf Course in East Fort Worth. The proposal is for a "living laboratory" on the back nine of the course and will include an environmental field lab, an educational corridor and an urban farm with a community market. For more information, visit: <https://econautics.org/>.

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

- Lauren Hickman provided updates from TAFB's Community Garden Network.
 - The FY24 Impact Report for the Farm & Gardens Programs is now available. Not all partner gardens have reported data as requested.
 - Penelope (Americorps Member) completed the "Harvest Card" project that will help provide visual instructions for harvesting vegetables.
 - TAFB Community Garden Network partners will have an opportunity to apply to be part of the CGUA garden tours in the spring.
 - Gardens can update their network profile online now [HERE](#).
- Joey Hughes 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. Texas Health Community Hope is running a buy back program for produce at each market.
 - At Opal's:
 - The 5k run on November 9th was a success!
 - Opal's is currently selling at their farm stand, Cowtown Farmers Market and wholesale to the Mindful Market.
- Becca Knutson reminded the group about the current, local farmers markets and encouraged everyone to visit their favorite one.
 - Watch for information about holiday markets, seasonal closings and what great in-season foods are available through the winter!
- MaryJo Greene shared news about school gardens.
 - It seems the trend in the area right now is to rehabilitate existing gardens rather than start a bunch of new ones.
 - Mary Jo & Anne wrote a Pathways curriculum for gardening in schools!
 - Mary Jo won the Texas Children in Nature Champion award!

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, January 16th at 3pm. Location, Timberview Farmstead at 4274 Timberview Dr, Fort Worth, TX 76140.

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

January 16th, 3pm

Location: Timberview Farmstead

TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

TCFPC Networking Meeting

Details TBD

CONUNDRUM FARMS

Volunteer opportunities & events are posted!

<https://www.conundrumfarms.com/events>

FORT WORTH BOTANIC GARDEN

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

NTX SCHOOL GARDEN NETWORK

Garden workdays are posted!

<https://ntxschoolgardennetwork.org/events>

COMMUNITY LINK MARKETS

Azle Farmers Market
<https://azlefarmersmarket.org>

Saginaw Farmers Market
<https://www.saginawmarket.org/>

MINDFUL MARKET

January 4th, 11am to 2pm

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

COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

EVERY Saturday, 8am to NOON
www.cowtownmarket.com



“In my world, the closer I can get to the dirt and mud, the more alive I become.”

TOM BROWN, JR.



Featured Community Garden

RIDGLEA GIVING GARDEN

Leaders: Carolyn Sedinger and Janet Lanza

Location: 3251 Sappington Place, Fort Worth

TYPE OF OPERATION:
Managed garden with community volunteers. Harvest is donated to WestAid and LVT Rise Community Center

GROWING METHODS:
Production garden using regenerative practices

TYPES OF PRODUCTS GROWN/RAISED:
Variety of fruit and vegetable crops

WHERE TO FIND THEM:
@ridgleagivinggarden
givinggarden@ridgleachristian.org
To volunteer visit:
bit.ly/RidgleaGivingGarden

TO-DO TO GROW FOOD IN JAN.!

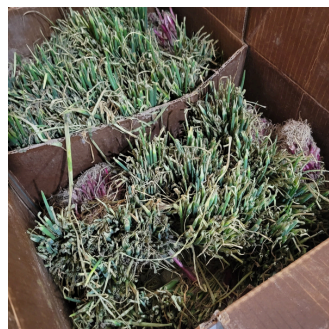
BY BECCA KNUTSON, HOLLOW TRACE MARKET FARM

TIPS AND TASKS FOR GROWING FOOD IN NORTH TEXAS

I love the excitement and energy that comes with the beginning of the new year. By now, I have most of my crops planned for the year and need to start doing some seed starting and planting! It seems like January would be too early to start getting the garden ready, but in Texas, we have a very short window to rest and recover. The main crop I'm thinking about in January is onions...and it's a big crop on my small farm! Do you have your garden plans ready for the year?

- **Get those onion slips planted!** - It's time to plant onions in North Texas! Onion slips look like small green onions and can be bought at local nurseries and feed stores as well as a few places online. Be sure to plant short-day or intermediate-day onion varieties like 1015Y Texas Super Sweet, Red Bermuda, and White Granex. Get your onions planted by the end of the month. Onions can tolerate the winter weather but you may want to protect newly planted slips during an extended freeze.
- **Start summer crop seeds indoors** - In January, you can begin to start seeds inside for transplanting once the weather warms in March. Peppers, eggplant and tomatoes are commonly started inside in January. Tomatoes often grow more quickly than the others, so I will probably wait until February to start those. A general rule of thumb is to start seeds inside 6-8 weeks from when you want to transplant them outside. However, crops like squash, cucumbers and beans only need a few weeks to grow inside; don't start these crops inside until later, if at all. Typically these crops are better direct seeded.
- **Set some goals for the year** - There's still time to think about setting some garden goals for 2025! Maybe you want to try a new crop or improve on your dedication to weeding regularly. Maybe you want to start a garden journal or keep your garden records more organized. Any goal, big or small, helps provide direction and guidance for a successful year!
- **Plant quick growing crops** - Lettuce, fennel, kohlrabi, radishes, salad greens and arugula grow well and relatively quickly even during this time of year. If you'd like to keep a few other things growing in January, these crops are great choices.
- **Plan for irrigation and watering** - Continue watering crops and newly planted seeds and seedlings. As the weather cools, decrease 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 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.
- **Organize & plan for next year** - Take some time to reflect on this year's garden. What went well? What would you change for next year? You may also want to do a seed and tool inventory and map out you planting plan for spring.

I hope you are as excited as I am to get onions planted this month and continue to prepare for summer - it'll be here before you know it! Happy planning and growing!



CULTIVATING WELLNESS: PLANNING FOR SLEEP

BY NIKO HUNT

Getting an adequate amount of sleep each night is essential to not only our physical health, but also our mental well-being. Often times we find ourselves “too busy” to get a full night's rest and our bodies ultimately pay for it later. Planning for Sleep allows for us to take control and ensure we are showing up as our best selves.

Steps to Better Sleep:

- Exercise for 30 minutes – moderate physical activity can improve sleep quality and help you asleep faster
- Get darker curtains – a dark room can help you fall and stay asleep; our brains need darkness to produce melatonin which makes us sleepy
- Power down screens at bedtime – establish a bedtime routine to stop screen time at least 30 minutes before sleep; put your phone across the room if possible

Growers are at high risk for sleep deprivation, especially during the busy seasons, which can lead to other health issues. Planning for sleep ensures that you are equipped to fulfill the duties of your day effectively and improves your overall wellbeing. One recommendation is to establish a bedtime routine and commit to it; challenge yourself to get 7-8 hours if you can. Sleep Well!

Winter Citrus Smoothie

Recipe by Tieghan Gerard

Brighten your mornings with these colorful and healthy drinks to lift your spirits and mix-up your breakfast routine!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup frozen mango chunks
- Juice of 1 lemon
- ½ tsp ground turmeric
- ¼ tsp ground cayenne pepper
- ¾ cups orange juice
- 2 tsp fresh grated ginger
- 1 raw red beet
- 1 cup frozen raspberries
- 1 grapefruit
- ½ cup pomegranate juice
- Honey to taste



PREPARATION

- In a blender, combine the mango, lemon juice, turmeric, cayenne, ginger, and orange juice. Blend until completely smooth, adding more honey if needed to sweeten. Pour into a tall glass.
- Rinse the blender out. Combine the beets, raspberries, orange, and pomegranate juice. Blend until smooth and creamy. Pour over the mango mixture and stir gently to swirl. Enjoy!

IN THE NEWS

- **Opportunity for growers to learn from their peers** <https://foodtank.com/news/2024/12/cornell-urban-agriculture-courses-turn-research-into-action-for-cities/>
- **Congress passes farm bill extension** <https://texasfarmbureau.org/congress-passes-farm-bill-extension-economic-aid-for-farmers/>
- **Luck starts with black eyed peas** <https://www.star-telegram.com/entertainment/restaurants/eats-beat/article297676288.html>

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

[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](#)

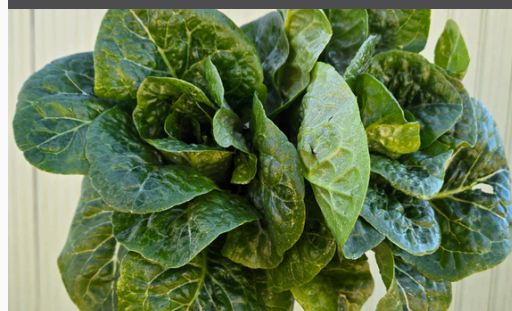
[Books](#)

[Growing for Market](#)

Free articles, email subscriptions, podcasts and MORE!

[Bootstrap Farmer](#)

Articles, videos, podcasts and MORE!





GREG'S TOP CROPS

- Onions
- Radishes
- Beets
- Salad Mix
- Mustard Greens
- Turnips



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

Texas Department of Agriculture
texasagriculture.gov

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

Happy 2025 to all our fellow farmers and gardeners! It feels strange to be putting that five at the end of 2024. This past year went by so quickly (hint: they go by quicker as you get older) and we are so grateful for our old friends and new ones that we made in 2024. Thank you for being a part of our Opal's Farm community. Wintertime, especially the ending of the old year and the beginning of the new one, is a time for reflection on where we've been and looking forward to the journey ahead. One of the things I've learned over the last six years the farm has been operating is just how important community is. It's become even more so as Opal's has grown.

We have been so blessed in 2024. We have lots of wonderful veggies in the ground – collards, kale mustard greens, beets, salad turnips, and the list goes on – and we're on track for a record year with our production. Believe it or not, we still haven't had a real freeze (although the ten-day outlook isn't looking so great) and I was harvesting tomatoes on December 30th.

The farm stand was new in 2024. We're open from 8 AM to Noon every Saturday. While Cowtown is our retail market, the farm stand is less expensive for the marginalized neighborhoods we serve. We also accept SNAP/EBT benefits in the hope that fresh healthy produce begins to impact our neighbors with better health and good nutrition. We also serve other neighborhoods through the Grow SE food hub and the Funkytown Mindful Market on the first Saturday of the month.

We completed the third and final year of our participation in the TCU/SSARE grant and had a great tomato season. We were also able to host two farmer-to-farmer learning programs on tomatoes and bio-intensive farming for other North Texas growers in partnership with Grow North Texas.

We also ventured into agri-tourism hosting field trips and tours through Delve Experiences. Joey Hughes, our Assistant Manager, developed a curriculum that meets TEKS requirements, and we've had numerous home school groups at the farm. The activities and learning experiences are fun for us as well as the families that visit. It's pretty awesome to watch kids tell you they don't like vegetables then try things on the farm and want to take them home.

We've had such a great year and we're looking forward to 2025. Taste the C.U.R.E. starts on January 25th. We limited our first cohort to twenty-five people thinking we'd be lucky to get ten folks. We were definitely wrong! We've had eighty-three applicants as of January 1st. The interest in urban farming and gardening is growing by leaps and bounds.

From all of us at Opal's Farm – May you have beautiful gardens, bountiful harvests, and a blessed New Year.

Greg Joel
Farm Manager - Opal's Farm
<https://www.facebook.com/opalsfarm>

