

DECEMBER 2022

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 September 25th via at 3pm via Zoom to discuss current and ongoing projects.

Meeting Recap:

- Guest speaker Jeff Guidry from Green Oaks School Garden in Arlington provided an overview of their different horticulture programs for developmentally disabled students of all ages and their desire to partner with more local farms, gardens and businesses.
- Mary Jo Greene provided some updates about school gardens in the area.
- Lauren Hickman provided an update on TAFB's Community Garden Program.
- The group discussed the proposed farm tour event series. Potential dates, locations and tour activities were proposed. A request for approval has been drafted and sent to the TCFPC board for support and suggestions.

The next CGUA meeting will be *in person* at Ridglea Christian Church's Fellowship Hall, 6720 W. Elizabeth Lane, Fort Worth, TX 76116. Brittney Meyer of Texas AgriLife will lead a workshop on making holiday gifts from the garden. After the workshop, Lauren Hickman will lead a tour of TAFB's Learning Garden and the Jubilee Garden (both are located on the grounds of Ridglea Christian).

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.

IN THE NEWS

- Urban farms fighting food insecurity and building connections with neighbors
 - <https://civileats.com/2022/11/10/urban-farms-food-access-community-support-fountain-heights-tri-cycle-alma-backyard-urban-agriculture/>
- One hydroponic farmer changes the narrative by investing in his community
 - <https://www.star-telegram.com/news/environment/article268718062.html>
- Stone's Throw Farm was born of a hobby gardener's idea to start a business that could employ people with disabilities
 - <https://fortworthreport.org/2022/11/14/made-in-tarrant-stones-throw-farm-says-save-save-save-to-start-a-business/>
- Community gardens set the stage for city's composting program
 - <https://cityfarmer.info/chicago-announces-compost-pilot-program-that-draws-on-expertise-of-citys-community-gardens/>

Events & Classes

NEXT CGUA MEETING

December 8th, 3:00pm
Ridglea Christian Church
6720 W. Elizabeth Ln. 76116

TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

December 1st, 4:00pm
Meeting ID 839 9008 4183

SAVE TARRANT WATER

Winter Preparedness
Dec. 3rd, 10am

Vegetable Gardening
Dec. 7th, 5:30pm

<https://savetarrantwater.com/events/>

FARM FRESH SUMMIT

December 6th, 8:30am-3:30pm
Registration:
<https://registration.esc11.net/catalog/sessions/30164/55435>

FWBG | BRIT

Dazzling December
Dec. 28th, 6pm

<https://brit.org/calendar-events/>

COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

Every Saturday 8am-NOON
www.cowtownmarket.com

Veterans Park, Grand Pavilion
8901 Clifford St.
White Settlement, TX 76108

HOLIDAY MARKETS
NOV. 19TH & DEC. 17TH



SEEDS

SUSAN BARKER

Cozying up with seed catalogues in the wintertime is common among gardeners who select and order seeds they'll plant the coming spring and summer. This week, as I gleefully grabbed catalogues from my mailbox, I wondered, do farmers do this, too? You know, market farmers; professional farmers; people who grow food for a living. Do they swoon over the beautiful pictures and read the varietal origin stories each winter, too? Where do they get their seeds? So, I went to [Cowtown Farmers Market](#) to find out.

Most market farmers in Tarrant County work year-round. This time of year at Cowtown Farmers Market, you can find a variety of bright, nutritious greens, hearty winter squash, and earthy, rich root crops. I shopped on a cold Saturday and found several friendly farmers (and lots of yummy produce) ready to give me the scoop on seeds.

Every farmer I talked to shops with seed catalogues and orders either online or by phone. A couple of farmers also save some of their own seeds or use family heirloom seeds. Some farmers are more like the gardeners I know in their seed catalogue ecstasy, while others are more practical about it and use catalogues primarily for price comparisons. Farmers mentioned many different seed companies, but there were three that rose to the top for most.

Willhite Seed (www.willhiteseed.com) was named as a reliable seed provider and speedy shipper of varieties sure to succeed in our area. Based in Poolville, Texas, they are a local favorite. Becca Knutson, of Hollow Trace Market Farm, chooses Willhite for many warm season crop seeds because they offer a selection of varieties that grow best here. B & G Garden's Greg Johnson agrees, and Willhite is always his go to for Black Eyed Peas. Willhite was also recommended for their reasonable pricing.

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds (www.rareseeds.com) was a front runner for several farmers who shop there for heirlooms and unique varieties, especially tomatoes, according to Craig Turley of Turley's Fruity and Veggie Farm. Selvi Palaniswamy and her daughter, Devika, of Sapling Farms are inspired by the gorgeous Baker Creek catalogue to grow what they love, circling their favorites before placing their order.

Johnny's Selected Seeds' higher prices don't keep them from being a standard for many local farmers for their reliability, variety, and high quantity options (www.johnnyseeds.com). David Parr of Brushy Creek Farm, also likes Johnny's for their salad mixes - blends of cold-season lettuce seeds.

Expert farmer seed buying tips:

- Look for bulk pricing (some companies even have commercial catalogues)
- Watch for shipping costs
- If you're price comparison shopping, look at pricing by weight, not by packet

If you're a community gardener, inquire about Tarrant Area Food Bank's free seed library by email to communitygarden@tafb.org.

"We know we cannot plant seeds with closed fists. To sow, we must open our hands."

ADOLFO PEREZ
ESQUIVEL



DECEMBER TO-DO

Watch the weather forecast and prepare your frost protection for cold nights.

Finish planting cool season vegetable crops and herbs if the weather stays mild.

Plant bulbs for spring like tulips and hyacinth.

Mulch bare soil and beds.

Cut back spent perennials, leaving 6 inches of stem for critters to use as shelter.

Prepare for seed starting and garden planning.

One Pan Roasted Squash, Apple and Sausage Dinner

Recipe from

<https://www.healthyseasonalrecipes.com/roasted-squash-sausage-and-apple-one-pan-dinner/>

Use your favorite winter squash, greens and local meats to make this easy and satisfying meal that is perfect for weeknights!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
- 1 tablespoon pure maple syrup, dark or amber
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 medium-small butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cut into 1 ½-inch chunks (1 ½ to 2 pounds)
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 3 small, tart apples, cored and cut into 1 ½-inch chunks
- 4 links chicken apple sausages, sliced
- 4 cups finely shredded kale



PREPARATION

- Preheat oven to 425°F. Shake vinegar, maple syrup and mustard in a small jar.
- Meanwhile, toss squash, oil, smoked paprika, salt, nutmeg and pepper in a large bowl to coat. Spread out on a large rimmed baking sheet. Transfer squash to the oven and roast 10 minutes.
- Add apples, sausage and kale and toss to coat. Return to the oven and roast, stirring once or twice until the apples are softened and the squash is tender, about 18 to 22 minutes longer. Remove from the oven.
- Drizzle the vinegar mixture over the roasted mixture and toss to coat. Serve immediately.

SEASONAL PRODUCE FUN FACTS - MUSTARD GREENS

Mustard greens are a beautiful, cold-hardy green that is a Southern favorite and is pretty easy to grow!

- Mustard greens originated in the Himalayan region of India over 5,000 years ago!
- Mustard seeds can be used to grow the leafy green plant or be ground into the yellow condiment that many people love.
- Mustards come in many shapes and sizes. Some are bright green and curly; others are toothy shades of purple.
- Mustards are very cold hardy and some varieties can tolerate our hot summers as well - it's very versatile.
- Mustards can be grown to harvest a baby leafy for fresh salads or a mature plant that you can harvest and cut again.

Pick some up at your local farmers market or consider growing some this winter!

For more fun facts, visit: <https://foodprint.org/real-food/mustard-greens/>

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>

VIRTUAL GARDENING CONTENT

BRIT | Botanic Garden

[youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet](https://www.youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet)

Dig Deep Conference 2020

[tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/dig-deep-conference-2020](https://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/dig-deep-conference-2020)

Tarrant Area Food Bank

[youtube.com/user/TarrantAreaFoodBank](https://www.youtube.com/user/TarrantAreaFoodBank)

Tarrant County Master Gardeners

[youtube.com/c/TarrantCountyMasterGardeners](https://www.youtube.com/c/TarrantCountyMasterGardeners)

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

[youtube.com/c/txextension](https://www.youtube.com/c/txextension)





GREG'S TOP CROPS

Waltham Broccoli
 Siberian Kale
 Sugar Snax Carrots
 Napa Cabbage
 Boldor & Red Ace Beets
 Easter Egg Radishes
 Tokyo Bekana
 Hakurei Turnips



FARM RESOURCES

Organizations & Associations:

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 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 had a wonderful Thanksgiving. We may set aside the fourth Thursday of November as a special day of thanks, but we are grateful everyday for our Opal's Farm family.

November has been an exciting month for the farm. We were at the first Phoenix Festival for the 76104 community on the 12th. The temperatures have been well below normal, but that didn't stop the neighborhood from showing up. A special thanks goes out to BraveR/Together for all the hard work that made for a successful day. Thanks to our fellow farmers (Funkytown Food Project), Grow SE (Mind Your Garden Urban Farm, Black Wall Street, and Miss Jovetta) and CoAct for bringing healthy, fresh, locally grown produce to the Historic Southside. We hope to be bringing a market to the neighborhood soon.

Our new Assistant Farm Manager, Amber Carr, has been hard at work on our new biointensive beds. We've been enjoying (and selling!) the fruits of her labor each week. Amber interned with Charlie Blaylock for the past year and brings that knowledge and energy to Opal's Farm. We hope you come out to Cowtown Farmers Market and enjoy some of the best tasting greens in Fort Worth!

The up and down temperatures and weekly rains since August slowed our Fall planting. First it was too hot and then it was too cold. The rain always exceeded the predicted amounts and the farm's been too wet to plant for many days. We managed to get most crops down – sugar snap peas, beets, spinach, and carrots – but germination is difficult when the temperature fluctuates so much. Ground temperature is important to proper germination. A range of good germination temperatures are available through many sources. We purchase most of our seeds from Johnny's Seeds and temperature data is available there for each variety of vegetables. One of the best investments we have made is a soil thermometer (it's really a cooking thermometer from the dollar store).

We'll be able to continue growing throughout the winter months by using low tunnels made of greenhouse film and frost cloths. We prefer the midweight Agribon-30, which is available through several outlets. Please come visit us at Cowtown Farmers Market. We will also be at the Funkytown Mindful (Holiday) Market at Texas Wesleyan University on December 10th from 11am to 2pm.

Greg Joel
 Farm Manager
 Opal's Farm

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

