

FEBRUARY 2023

# 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 January 26th IN PERSON at the UNT Health Science Center (UNTHSC) and also toured their campus community garden.

### Meeting Recap:

- TAFB is gathering requests for their annual seedling giveaway. Priority will be given to their Community Garden Network partners.
- Lauren is working on creating more resources like a map and webpage for TAFB's Community Garden Network.
- It was noted that the TCFPC Local Food Map needs to be updated to include community gardens again.
- Greg Joel shared the Grow Southeast update from Jesse Herrera:
  - Tabor Farms is working on getting parking and storage at the farm along with repairing irrigation. Their next cohort of Farm Apprentices will begin soon led by Diamond and Jhamal.
  - Black Wall Street needs volunteers to help with just about everything and is looking for a volunteer farm assistant.
  - Amber is moving Opal's to a more biointensive method of growing and they are seeing great results!
  - Mind Your Garden has finished bathrooms and are looking to do more Healthy Hours soon.
  - The next Mindful Market at Texas Wesleyan will be on February 25th.
  - There are plans to get a farmer's market up and running in 76104 - stay tuned for more info!
- What resources are needed for local community gardens?
  - Irrigation guidance and instructions along with a list of experts to reach out to.
  - A list of organizations/people that do educational presentations.
  - Help recruiting and retaining volunteers.
- Mary Jo provided an update on school gardens:
  - Kaboom is still working with FWISD to install 25 playgrounds. Six have been completed so far. Some include funding for gardens/plant elements. Others have received donations to add the garden element.
  - Giving Grove installed an orchard at Western Hills Elementary. Diamond Hill will also be getting an orchard.
  - Mary Jo and Anne have applied for a federal grant to help fund garden educator positions at FWISD.

The next CGUA meeting will be on Thursday, March 23rd from 3:00-4:30pm. Location TBD.

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

## Events & Classes

### NEXT CGUA MEETING

March 23rd, 3:00pm

Location: TBD

### TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

No General Meetings Until

July 2023

### TAFB

Wine in the Warehouse  
(Ag Program Updates)

Wed. Feb. 1st, 5:30-6:30pm

2600 Cullen St. 76107

### SAVE TARRANT WATER

Rainwater Harvesting

Feb. 4th, 12pm-2pm

Spring Gardening Seminar

Feb. 18th, 9am-12pm

Vegetable Gardening (Online)

Feb. 19th, 8am

[https://savetarrantwater.com/  
events/](https://savetarrantwater.com/events/)

### MINDFUL MARKET

February 25th 11am-2pm

[www.coactntx.org/mindful-  
market](http://www.coactntx.org/mindful-market)

### COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

Every Saturday 8am-NOON

[www.cowtownmarket.com](http://www.cowtownmarket.com)

Veterans Park, Grand Pavilion

8901 Clifford St.

White Settlement, TX 76108

# SNAP AND SNOW PEAS: KID-FRIENDLY CROPS

BY SUSAN BARKER

February is a good time to sow peas outdoors in North Texas. Peas prefer cool weather and can handle some mild frosts, but not likely a deep freeze. Peas with an edible pod, like sugar snap peas and snow peas, are some of the best crops to eat with kids. As their name suggests, they are a favorite garden snackable snapped straight from the vine and taste sweet with a delightful crunch.

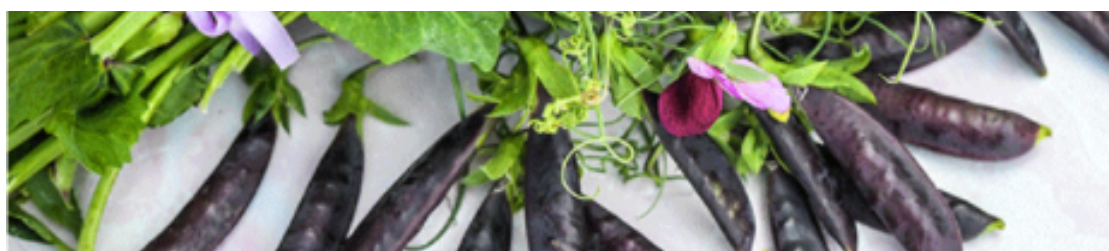
These edible-pod peas are kid-friendly to grow, too. The dried pea is the "seed", which is huge relative to many vegetable seeds, so it's easier for young hands to handle. While it can take up to 30 days for the peas to germinate and emerge from the soil, once they are above the soil they are fun to watch grow as their tendrils curl and reach for support from a fence or trellis to climb up towards the sun. Their tendrils will wrap around what they can reach, pulling themselves up and holding on.

If you don't have room or materials for a trellis, you could grow a compact variety, like "Sugar Bon" from Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds. "Sugar Bon" grows only 1-2 feet tall and produces 3-inch pods. Since it's smaller, it matures earlier than larger varieties, too. For growers with more space, many other crops enjoy the company of peas: carrots, turnips, lettuce, spinach, and radishes.

If you sow peas in early-to-mid-February, you can expect harvestable pods by mid-April in good conditions. In addition to the pods, you can also eat tender leaves and tendrils of the pea plant, which are delectable in salads and can even contribute to a creative spring pesto.

The blossoms are beautiful, too, and some varieties are developed especially for beauty. "Sugar Magnolia Tendril Pea", from Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds, was developed for its gorgeous violet-toned flowers and deep purple edible pods.

For farmers and gardeners looking to maximize production of sugar snap and snow peas, you may want to consider shaking or stirring fresh inoculant onto the peas before you sow them. Inoculant contains specific cultures of beneficial bacteria which help encourage the formation of nitrogen-producing nodules on the plant roots, resulting in larger plants and increased yields. You can often find inoculant for sale from the seed company where you purchase your pea seeds.



## IN THE NEWS

- North Texas farmers weigh in on the cost of egg prices; solutions presented:
  - <https://fortworthreport.org/2023/01/27/solution-to-expensive-eggs-tarrant-county-small-farmers-say-support-them-more/>
- Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance announces 2023 Lobby Days; get involved:
  - <https://farmandranchfreedom.org/2023-lobby-days/>
- AgriLife Extension provides insight into egg prices:
  - <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2023/01/24/egg-prices/>
- Foundation for Agriculture names 2023 'Book of the Year':
  - <https://texasfarmbureau.org/foundation-for-agriculture-names-2023-book-of-the-year/>

Every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle ... a seed waiting to sprout, a bulb opening to the light, a bud straining to unfurl. And the anticipation nurtures our dream.

BARBARA WINKLER



## FEBRUARY TO-DO

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

Plant cold-tolerant vegetables like asparagus, broccoli, carrots, onions, potatoes, and chard.

Plant trees, vines, and shrubs; this is one of the best planting months for them.

Start tomatoes and peppers indoors at the beginning of the month.

Prune trees to remove dead, diseased, and crossing limbs.



# Cabbage and Carrot Slaw

Recipe from

<https://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/recipes/cabbage-and-carrot-slaw>

So many winter crops can be tossed into a slaw! Try adding snow or snap peas chopped on the diagonal to this recipe! Garnish this bright coleslaw with toasted sesame seeds or chopped roasted peanuts. Or, toss it with shredded roasted chicken and serve it as the main course.

## INGREDIENTS

- 1/3 cup white wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/8 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/8 teaspoon dry mustard
- 4 cups finely shredded green or red cabbage, or a combination
- 3 carrots, shredded
- 5 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper



## PREPARATION

- In a large bowl, whisk together vinegar, sugar, garlic, cumin, oregano and mustard just until sugar is dissolved.
- Add cabbage, carrots, green onions, salt and pepper and toss gently to combine.
- Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours before serving.

## SEASONAL PRODUCE FUN FACTS - ONIONS

Onions are planted in North Texas starting around January 15th and can be planted through mid-February. Onions are a kitchen staple in many homes and can be a great addition to any garden or farm.

- Onions belong to the Allium family along with leeks, chives and a whole group of flowering plants.
- Historians believe that onions have been cultivated for over 5,000 years. Evidence of onions have been traced back to ancient Egypt and Greece.
- Onion varieties are categorized by "short day" and "long day". Short day onions do better in North Texas because they need to be grown during our cool weather when the days are shorter. Long day onions are typically grown in the northern part of the country.
- Onions can be planted by seed or set (small bulbs) in October or by slips (small plants) in January.
- Onions will be ready to harvest when the tops start to fall over and the "shoulders" of the onion can be seen above the soil level. This is typically around mid-May. Green onions or cebollitas can be harvested sooner than that, if desired.

Grab some slips from your local feed store to plant or chat with your favorite farmer about shopping for onions in May!

For more fun facts, visit: <http://www.vegetablefacts.net/vegetable-facts/onion-facts/>

## GARDEN RESOURCES

### Local Nurseries:

[Archie's Gardenland](#)  
[Calloway's](#)

### Free Seeds:

[TAFB Community Garden Program](#):  
[communitygarden@tafb.org](mailto: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://youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet)

### Dig Deep Conference 2020

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

### Tarrant Area Food Bank

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

### Tarrant County Master Gardeners

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

### Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

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





## GREG'S TOP CROPS

Red La Soda Potatoes  
Texas 1015 Onions  
Southern Belle Red Onions  
Sugar Snax Carrots  
Red Ace Beets



## FARM RESOURCES

### Organizations & Associations:

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance

[farmandranchfreedom.org](http://farmandranchfreedom.org)

GROW North Texas  
[grownorthtexas.org](http://grownorthtexas.org)

Natural Resource Conservation Service  
[nrcs.usda.gov](http://nrcs.usda.gov)

Texas Center for Local Food  
[texaslocalfood.org](http://texaslocalfood.org)

Texas Department of Agriculture  
[texasagriculture.gov](http://texasagriculture.gov)

Texas Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association  
[tofga.org](http://tofga.org)

USDA Farm Service Agency  
[fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov)

USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture  
[nifa.usda.gov/](http://nifa.usda.gov/)

## OPAL'S PICKS

It's hard to believe that February is upon us! January has been a hectic month and spring is just around the corner. There's so much to do but the list will be completed if Mother Nature allows!

We completed the TCU/SSARE Grant Research beds for our Celebrity tomatoes. The research is starting from the ground up – beds with no soil amendments, beds with compost only, beds with cover crops only, and beds with both compost and cover crops. The only things they all have in common is unworked Texas soil and Texas Special 6-4-1 organic fertilizer (which can be purchased at Silver Creek Materials). This is the only truly organic fertilizer (OMRI certified) we have found in this area and is priced reasonably. I personally used Silver Creek compost and soil products for several years before coming to Opal's Farm. They are an outstanding organization right here in Fort Worth and are committed to providing premium soil mixes and amendments., so buy local! TCU graduate students started soil testing on January 24th. We'll keep you posted on the results – what works and what doesn't – as we work through this research program.

It's the time of year to get potatoes and onions in the ground. We started companion planting onions in our tomato beds. The remainder will be planted in the row system we have been using for the last four years. Likewise, the potatoes will be in the 100-foot row sections, but we are broad forking each of the rows to mitigate our Bermuda grass and Johnson grass areas. As you know, Texas has its fair share of invasive weeds, and these are the worst. The grasses grow three different ways – roots, rhizomes, and seed. Any removal of rhizomes and roots will help mitigate the spread of these highly invasive weeds. Keep in mind that seeds can lie dormant for up to five years in the soil, but January and February are a great time to work on rhizomes and roots before they get out of hand.

Tarrant County College, NW Campus, Horticulture Program is growing our transplants again this year. David Cole and the TCC students and staff have expanded their growing program to include each of the farms in Grow Southeast plus all the tomatoes for the TCU/SSARE project. This is a huge undertaking and a boon to all of us. We are so grateful and look forward to the farm tours David Cole's class will be taking throughout the Spring semester.

Greg Joel  
Farm Manager  
Opal's Farm

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

