

APRIL 2022

# WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group

## CGUA MEETING NOTES

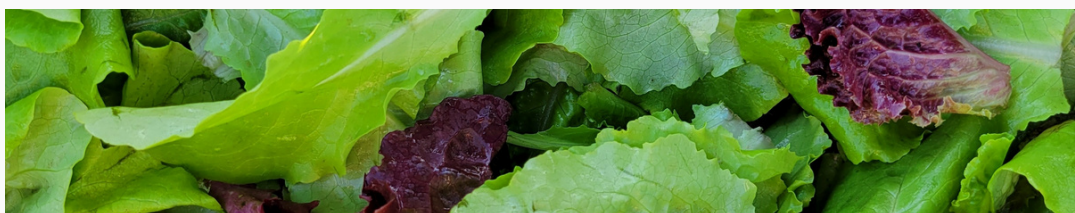
The Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture working group met on March 24th via at 3pm via Zoom to discuss current and ongoing projects. Fifteen people were in attendance.

### Meeting Recap:

- TAFB Update
  - Manny Herrera is the new Gardener on staff who will be helping keep the gardens growing.
  - The new Market Garden at TAFB West is now open and features raised beds and production rows.
  - The Growing Healthy Communities Conference is scheduled for July 16th. Presentation proposals are now being accepted if anyone would like to apply. <https://tafb.org/growing-healthy-communities-conference/>
- Grow Southeast Update (<https://www.coactntx.org/grow-se>)
  - The Farm Manager Apprenticeship Program is progressing well with the two students, Jamal and Diamond.
  - Tabor Farms has electricity.
  - Mind Your Garden has scheduled their first Healthy Hour for March 31st at 5pm. Register: <https://www.coactntx.org/event-details/healthy-hour>
  - Black Wall Street farm has planted some spring crops and is working on fixing some irrigation.
  - Opal's Farm continues to plant and grow crops with the help of dedicated volunteers.
  - Seedlings from TCC were given to all the farm projects.
- Dr. Sandra Stanley from Opening Doors for Women in Need and Como Community Garden & Monarch Garden provided a presentation on how they use their gardens to create unity in their community.
- The group discussed potential new projects and their feasibility.
  - Listing volunteer opportunities on the main TCFPC website.
  - Fundraising to help support local garden and farm projects.
  - Updating and improving City of Fort Worth Urban Agriculture Ordinance.

The next CGUA meeting will be on Thursday, May 19th at 3:00pm via Zoom.

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

### TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

April 7th, 4:00pm

Meeting ID: 839 9008 4183

### NEXT CGUA MEETING

May 19th, 3:00pm

### FWBG | BRIT

Grow Your Own Citrus -  
Apr. 5th, 9am

Spring Plant Sale - Apr. 7th-9th

Growing Food on a Budget -  
Apr. 30th, 9am

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

### SAVE TARRANT WATER

Rainwater Harvesting -  
Apr. 9th, 8am

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

### COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

Spring Festival  
Apr. 23, 8am-12pm

<https://www.cowtownmarket.com/festivals>

### Cowtown Farmers Market

3821 SOUTHWEST BLVD  
SATURDAYS  
8AM-12PM



# UPDATES FROM OPAL'S FARM

By Greg Joel, Farm Manager at Opal's Farm

Last year (2021) was a difficult year for every farmer in North Texas. Opal's Farm was no exception. The weather was our biggest enemy as most North Texans know – the record freeze in February and the fifteen inches of rain that fell in May damaged many of our spring crops. The record average monthly temperatures late into the fall affected the growth of our fall crops as well. Produce yields and sales were down for the year, but there were many opportunities for learning and improving the farm for 2022. Spring planting began in earnest following the last freeze. We're looking forward to an amazing 2022.

Still, last year was a growth year despite the crazy weather. We added another acre to our production area and found some new ways to manage it all. We couldn't have done any of it without the support we receive from our sponsors, mentors, and volunteers. We have regular volunteers who do so much to help with planting, maintenance, and harvesting. The number of volunteer hours grew to just over 3100 hours last year – up seventy percent from 2020!

Covid limited field trips for young people from local schools and community centers for most of the year but eased some last Fall. One of the things we value most are the kids who come out to tour or work on the farm. Kids, especially urban kids, often have no idea where their food comes from. To see them get excited about growing food is the highlight of our day. They hold the key to the future success of urban farming.

Everything is on schedule for Spring of 2022. Tarrant County College has helped us and the other farms in Grow Southeast by growing tomato, pepper, and other transplants for this spring. Our first tomato plants went in on Sunday, March 20th with many more to come. We are so grateful to TCC Northwest Campus Horticultural Program for their tremendous help this year. We are so blessed to have the support of the Fort Worth community, both financially and physically.

On a personal note (Greg Joel, Farm Manager) – I don't want to minimize the work any of our partners and sponsors do for Opal's Farm, but there is one person I must mention by name – Charlie Blaylock with Shine's Farmstand. Charlie has been a mentor and friend since Opal's Farm was just the vision of Ms. Opal Lee. His guidance, advice, and knowledge have been invaluable to creating our working urban farm. Charlie and Laura will be moving to New Mexico later this year and I cannot begin to put into words how much they will be missed. I'm happy to know they're just a phone call away. The work you helped start will blossom into many other urban farms across Tarrant County and elsewhere. Thank you and think of us when you can sleep with the windows open in August.

## IN THE NEWS

- The Star-Telegram's guide to local farmer's markets - <https://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/fort-worth/article259440364.html>
- A look at how urban sprawl is affecting Fort Worth farmers - <https://www.keranews.org/business-economy/2022-03-17/urban-sprawl-makes-farmers-dig-deep-to-stay-in-fort-worth>
- Advocates in San Antonio are fighting for urban farms and updating city ordinance's to encourage their growth - <https://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/Urban-farming-17032160.php>
- NRCS announces grant opportunity to promote resource conservation - [http://www.ntxe-news.com/artman/publish/article\\_128464.shtml](http://www.ntxe-news.com/artman/publish/article_128464.shtml)
- A breakdown of the word "Agritecture" and how agriculture and architecture can help lead the day for promoting healthy, resilient cities - <https://livingarchitecturemonitor.com/articles/on-the-roof-with-urban-agriculture-experts-sp22>

"O, how this spring  
of love resembleth  
The uncertain glory  
of an April day,  
Which now shows all  
the beauty of the  
sun,  
And by and by a  
cloud takes all away!"

**WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARE**



## APRIL TO-DO

Plant tomatoes, eggplant  
and peppers by  
transplant/seedling.

Plant zucchini, squash,  
green beans, cucumber  
and okra from seed.

Plant fruit trees, shrubs  
and vines.

Continue to add compost  
to each garden bed while  
doing your spring planting.

Feed, water and protect  
young plants/seedlings  
from pests and the  
elements.

Harvest and preserve  
residual winter crops.



# Shaved Asparagus Salad

Recipe by Harrison Gibson

For the patient, dedicated gardeners that grow asparagus, early spring is a ripe time to reap the harvest from a planting years ago. For the rest of us, now is a great time to support a local farmer by picking some asparagus up from your local farmers' market. With a few other seasonal vegetables (kale, radishes, and carrots come to mind) and a bit of breading, Parmesan or prosciutto, this simple recipe can come together quick and help compliment a meal or serve as its own entree. We have a similar version on our spring menu at Taste Community Restaurant that inspired me to try this version at home with what I had on hand. Hope you enjoy it.



## INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 pound large or medium asparagus
- Two lemons, freshly squeezed for juice
- ~3 tablespoons virgin olive oil
- Splash of vinegar
- 1 head of lettuce
- 1 cup parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Other spring vegetables from the garden

## PREPARATION

- Discard the tough ends of the asparagus into your compost bin/pile.
- Use a mandolin, vegetable peeler, or sharp knife to slice the asparagus down the stalk length-wise into thin ribbons.
- Mix and whisk together the lemon juice and olive oil, this could be a good opportunity to add in a dash of shrub or try an olive oil with a fruity flavor. Salt and season to taste.
- Add your asparagus to a bowl and mix in part of your dressing. Clean your lettuce and add it to the bowl alongside any additional spring vegetables here. Any additions can be chopped, sliced, or peeled to your liking. Drizzle the rest of the dressing over your arugula and vegetables. Salt and pepper to taste.
- With a vegetable peeler or parmesan grater, shave thin curls of Parmesan cheese onto your salad. Add and mix in breading or prosciutto if desired. Enjoy!

## SEASONAL PRODUCE FUN FACTS - KALE

Kale is a great cool season crop to grow in North Texas. It can be grown in the fall or spring and can survive the winter if protected. You can usually begin harvesting kale after 60 days.

- Kale is in the Brassica family and is related to broccoli, cabbage, mustard greens, cauliflower and collards.
- Kale originated in the eastern Mediterranean where its been cultivated since 2000BC.
- National Kale Day is celebrated the first Wednesday of October.
- Some commonly types of kale grown are: Curly, Red Russian, Siberian, Lacinato (Dinosaur), Ornamental, Chinese and Redbor.
- Kale gets sweeter after a frost. The plant reacts to the cold weather by producing more sugars.

Learn more cool facts about pecans at <http://justfunfacts.com/interesting-facts-about-kale/>.

## 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-systems.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)





## CHARLIE'S TOP CROPS

Celebrity Tomatoes  
 Barbarella Eggplants  
 California Wonder Bell Peppers  
 Blue Lake Green Beans (Pole or Bush)  
 Jade, or Nokya, Cucumbers  
 Purple Hull peas  
 Waltham Butternut Squash



# SHINE'S GARDEN CHATS

It's time, Garden Friends! It's time to plant out those tomato, eggplant, and pepper seedlings! I love this time of year. They are big plants that stay in the garden a long time, so give them plenty of room. Each of my tomato plants gets 4 square feet of room, and need a tall trellis. The small wire cages are pretty useless, except for the smallest tomato plants. Eggplants and peppers need about 18 inches of space in every direction, but don't require trellising. An inch layer of compost around each plant will protect and encourage the soil food web to feed the plants and maintain consistent soil moisture. I like to wait until May to mulch with hay around my seedlings so that they are big enough to handle any nibbles from bugs in the mulch. Sometimes I plant some small, quick-growing, plants around the base, like radishes, or turnips. They help keep away some of the pests that are coming with this beautiful weather, too.

If you are new to gardening, or your garden beds are in their first year, it's a great time to plant beans. There are a LOT of varieties beans and peas to fill a garden. Green beans can be bush plants, or vining plants, and make the fresh green bean. Dry beans can be black, red, pinto, lima, or a multitude of other varieties. Before you skip growing Lima beans, consider that Butter Beans are a large dry variety, if you don't like the fresh green ones. Purple hull peas and black-eyed peas can handle our heat, and can be planted all the way through summer. All the others need to be planted before May, because they won't be productive when the heat comes on. I am growing sugar snap peas this year on trellises in a row between my pepper plants. I use a cattle panel on t-post and the variety I'm growing only gets about 48 inches tall. I don't know of another plant that makes us feel as successful as beans! They germinate well, and take nitrogen from the air and store it in the ground, and stimulate the soil food web.

Summer squash is notoriously difficult to grow here. The squash bugs and multiple soil diseases are a hard fight to win. If you are up to the challenge, I find that growing them under a shade cloth, like Agribon AG-19, until they flower is a great way to protect them from the bugs. The plants do not do well with overhead watering. Drip irrigation is great for healthy plants and water conservation. I have also found that lightly misting the leaves with compost tea does wonders to fight the different blights that affect squashes, but I wait until after I have removed the cover when the plants are blooming.

Cucumbers, pumpkins, winter squashes, cantaloupes, watermelons, and other melons are all vining plants with the same challenges as summer squashes. The varieties cantaloupe-size and smaller grow very well on trellises, which helps save space but also keeps good air flow and fewer places for bugs to hide around the base of the plants. Larger varieties are best to let sprawl all over, but keep them in an out of the way area, because accidentally stepping on a stem will invite disease overnight.

The Harlequin Bugs are here a full month earlier than I have ever seen them, and there's a lot! I normally use Spinosad and compost tea on leaves where I see them, but this year the population is far greater than I have ever seen before. I'm going to use a tablespoon of Castile soap and a tablespoon of Neem in every gallon of water that I spray directly on the bugs. Be very careful if you use Neem since it can kill honeybees. Spinosad and Bacillus Thuringiensis are bacteria that are great to spray on leaves for chewing pests. Pyrethrin is a good organic spray for soft bodied insects like aphids.

It looks like it's going to be another challenging year with much less rain than we have been getting. Good growing, and Good Luck!

Charlie  
 Shine's Farmstand  
 Cowtown Farmers Market  
 Visit Shine's Farmstand on Facebook  
<https://www.facebook.com/shinesfarmstand>

## FARM RESOURCES

### Organizations & Associations:

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance  
[farmandranchfreedom.org](http://farmandranchfreedom.org)

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

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

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

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

USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture  
<https://nifa.usda.gov/>