

MARCH 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 January 20th via at 3pm via Zoom to discuss current and ongoing projects. Seventeen people were in attendance.

### Meeting Recap:

- TAFB Update - A Growing Healthy Communities Conference 'Save the Date' will be available soon. TAFB also has many seed packets available for distribution to school and community gardens.
- Grow Southeast Update- Tabor Farms has made progress on obtaining electricity and installing irrigation. Mind Your Garden is going to get a commercial kitchen and are still planning their Healthy Hour events. Black Wall Street had some theft but also some great progress by a large group of volunteers.
- David Bulpitt from Tarrant County College Horticulture gave a presentation about their program.
- The group discussed new project ideas.

The next CGUA meeting will be on Thursday, March 24th 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).

## IN THE NEWS

- USDA delineates purpose and announces members of new Urban Agriculture Federal Advisory Committee - <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2022/02/01/usda-announces-inaugural-federal-advisory-committee-urban>
- A group in NYC is seeking to protect community gardens from development in a novel way - <https://civileats.com/2022/02/07/nyc-community-gardeners-might-have-new-protection-in-the-fight-against-development/>
- A community garden in Chicago highlights how it has lasted 10+ years - <https://civileats.com/2022/02/18/the-urban-farms-growing-community-in-vacant-chicago-lots/>
- Two articles on a pressing issue affecting debt relief for farmers of color - <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/21/us/politics/black-farmers-debt-relief.html> - <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2022/02/18/fighting-grow-black-farmers-continue-battle-systemic-discrimination>
- Two articles on local colleges finding success and innovative ways to grow food and reduce food waste - <https://www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/news/article/2022/02/19/small-texas-college-converts-field> - <https://www.uta.edu/news/news-releases/2022/02/18/epa-food-award>

## Events & Classes

### TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

April 7th, 4:00pm

### NEXT CGUA MEETING

March 24th, 3:00pm

Meeting ID: 994 9748 9142

Password: 674468

### FWBG | BRIT

Raised Bed Vegetable Gardening - Mar. 5th, 9am

After Hours in the Garden - Mar. 11th, 6:30pm

Foraging Texas Book Talk & Signing - Mar. 26th, 9am

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

### SAVE TARRANT WATER

Vegetable Gardening - Mar. 1st, 6pm

Edible Landscapes - Mar. 10th, 6pm

Backyard Composting - Mar. 12th, 6pm

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

### Cowtown Farmers Market

3821 SOUTHWEST BLVD  
SATURDAYS  
8AM-12PM



"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade."

**CHARLES DICKENS**



## MARCH TO-DO

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

Prepare your soil for warm weather crops by adding a layer of compost mixed with a slow-release fertilizer

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

Start planting tomato seedlings, corn, cucumbers and beans at the end of the month.

Continue to harvest any remaining cool season crops.

# TASTE COMMUNITY RESTAURANT GARDEN

By Harrison Gibson, TCFPC Board Member and Project Manager at Taste Project

A long time in the works, a new community garden is coming to fruition in Fort Worth alongside a nonprofit dedicated to feeding the hungry in their community. The garden is popping up at Taste Community Restaurant, where volunteers will work the beds and grow produce for the restaurant's seasonal menus. Gardening and growing food on site has long been a goal for the restaurant as it naturally plays a part in the restaurant's mission and operations seeking to reduce food insecurity in the community.

Taste Project operates Taste Community Restaurant - a local, non-profit, pay-what-you-can cafe nestled in the Near Southside neighborhood of Fort Worth. There are no prices on the menu or checks there, so that anyone regardless of means can come and enjoy a nutritious meal served with dignity in mind. Taste Project's mission is "To feed, educate, and serve our community so that people may taste and see the lord is good." That mission will be carried out in a new way with a community garden this spring.

The garden will consist of 12 raised beds surrounding and next to the restaurant's patio. All the beds were built by volunteers with materials purchased with grant funding, and in total they'll provide almost 300 square feet of growing space. The beds were purposefully built to be tall and accessible to gardeners and volunteers of all ages and mobilities. The plan will be to grow herbs and seasonal produce for the restaurant along with flowers for the pollinators. By placing the garden next to the restaurant and dining area, which is already a community gathering spot, Taste will naturally bring gardening to many people who may not have had access to it before. In this way, the garden will help serve the crucial education part of Taste's mission, since guests and volunteers will have the opportunity to learn about food, where it comes from, and how it can be grown in their own backyard, too.

Everyone and anyone is invited to come out to eat at Taste and be a part of the garden, which is underway with its spring planting. Volunteer days are currently scheduled on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 10:30AM-1:30PM, and everyone that volunteers and works up an appetite is also served a meal from the restaurant. To sign up and see what it's all about, visit [www.tasteproject.org](http://www.tasteproject.org). And please, drop by anytime to say hello and see what we're growing and what we're cooking with it!



# Butternut Squash Gratin

Recipe from [tastemade.com](http://tastemade.com)

The butternut squash has been abundant this year at the farmers market. I could eat it every week! This recipe pairs potatoes and butternut squash with some delicious cheeses for a comforting dish that is sure to please!



## INGREDIENTS

- 1-1/2 pounds butternut squash, peeled and sliced 1/4-inch thick
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 3 tablespoons fresh thyme
- 1-1/2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, washed and sliced 1/4-inch thick
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1-1/2 cups grated gruyere cheese
- 1 cup parmesan cheese

## PREPARATION

- Preheat oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit and grease a 9x9 baking dish with butter.
- In a bowl, toss together butternut squash slices with olive oil, salt, pepper and thyme. Set aside.
- In another bowl, toss together Yukon Gold potatoes with olive oil, salt, pepper and thyme. Set aside.
- In a pot, heat milk, cream and butter to a simmer. Set aside.
- Begin layering gratin, starting with a 1/4 cup of cream mixture, followed by a layer of squash, a handful for gruyere and a sprinkling of parmesan. Repeat alternating layers of squash and potatoes, finishing the top with extra cheese and a sprinkling of thyme.
- Cover with foil and bake for 20 minutes. Remove foil and cook for another 20 minutes until golden and bubbly.

## SEASONAL PRODUCE FUNFACTS - PECANS

Pecans can be found growing all around Texas. They are typically harvested in the fall and can last for up to two years in the freezer if stored well.

- In 1919, the pecan was named the state tree of Texas.
- The pecan is the only tree nut that is native to the United States.
- Pecan trees can take up to 10 years to mature and start producing nuts. After that, it could produce for up to 100 years!
- There are over 1,000 varieties of pecans. About 20 are used in commercial production.
- The name "pecan" comes from the Algonquin word that was used to describe "all nuts requiring a stone to crack."
- The United States produces 80% of the world's pecans.
- Pecan wood can also be used to make furniture, flooring and in flavoring fuel for smoked meats.

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

## 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

Freckles and Red Sail Lettuce  
Blue Lake Green Beans (Pole or Bush)  
Joi Choi Bok Choy  
Green Magic Broccoli  
Celebrity Tomatoes  
California Wonder Red and Yellow Bell Peppers  
Barbarella Eggplants



# SHINE'S GARDEN CHATS

Happy March, Garden Friends! We're just getting through a deep freeze, but the end is nigh. The long-term forecast is for a warm, dry spring. We have been blessed for the last 8 years with abundant rainfall, but the signs are pointing towards us returning to our average drier weather. We're likely to have 30 inches of rain each year instead of the 50 inches we have been getting. As we shake off the last of our cold weather, it's a good time to consider planting and irrigating for less rainfall this year.

I experimented with soil blocks this year. I was surprised by how well, and quickly, the seedlings grew. I used a mix of 50% peat moss and the other 50% was an even mix of vermiculite, compost, and sand. I also tried garden soil instead of sand, and it worked just as well. I mixed it in a tray with enough water to get the consistency slightly thicker than cake batter. I then used a soil blocking tool to make 2-inch blocks.

I'm planting out my seedlings for lettuce, broccoli, kale, and chard. I'm planting lettuce and broccoli every 12 inches. In a month, I'll be harvesting out the lettuce and allowing more space for the broccoli to grow to full size since it takes longer to reach maturity. This technique is called interplanting and is a great way to use all of your garden space. There is more evidence that "annual polycultures" improve production, not just from fitting more plants into a smaller area but also from soil health and pest management. I also plant my tomatoes into my onion beds, and I plant snap peas or fava beans down the middle of my pepper beds to allow them to add nitrogen to the soil and activate the soil life in early spring. I'm planting onions among my more widely spaced kale and chard to help deter aphids and flea beetles, which are always a problem. The kale and chard plants have 18 inches between them to give a bit more airflow and prevent a dense canopy that those bugs love so much.

I have started seeding my turnips, radishes, spinach, and Tokyo Bekana, directly into the soil and covering it with Agribon-19. This is a gardening fabric that provides a few degrees of protection from the cold and helps maintain soil moisture while the seeds germinate. I can leave it on the ground, water right through it, and let the plants grow underneath. If we have a surprise 80F day, I'll pull it to the side to keep from cooking the seedlings. The second half of the month will be time to plant almost everything else, including green beans and squash. I prefer to wait to plant squash until late May so that the squash bug population has decreased.

There's still time to start tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants inside, but it's best to do that early in the month. They need to be planted out by April 15th so they can start producing before the 100F days get here. I'm starting more herbs and flowers than usual this year, too. Using the concept of the annual polyculture, I'm interplanting cilantro, basil, and parsley in the centers of my beds and flowers on the end. I don't intend to get too excited about them flowering early, since the little white flowers attract beneficial insects that keep the other insect populations under control. And I'm starting my zinnia, marigolds, and cosmos for the ends of my beds because my life will be sunshine and flowers, as long as I look for sunshine and plant flowers. See you soon!

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/>