

FEBRUARY 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:

- Lauren provided an update from TAFB - A Dig Deep 'Save the Date' will be available soon. TAFB also has many seed packets available for distribution to school and community gardens.
- Jesse provided an update from Grow Southeast- Tabor Farms has made progress on obtaining electricity and they now have irrigation laid on the beds. Mind Your Garden is going to get a commercial kitchen and they 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:
  - They offer an Associates of Applied Sciences degree which usually takes about 4 semesters.
  - They have four greenhouses, a planting prep and propagation room, as well as outdoor planting beds.
  - They do an annual spring plant sale. It is scheduled for April 8th, 2022.
- The group discussed new project ideas:
  - Funding small grants for community garden/urban ag projects.
  - Influencing policy changes around water usage, urban agriculture and zoning practices.
  - Increasing food waste diversion through urban ag.
  - Doing a study/proposal on effective use of vacant land in Fort Worth.
  - Volunteering to be on the Fellowship of the Arts garden project committee.

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).

## A GARDENER AT WORK - DAVE AFTANDILIAN

For our February newsletter, we're pleased to feature an interview with Dave Aftandilian, Associate Professor of Anthropology at TCU & CGUA Co-Chair.

**When/how did you first become interested in gardening and agriculture? What were some early influences in your appreciation for gardening?**

My grandmother (mom's mom) inspired my love for gardening. I still remember a dead stick (to my eyes) we bought at the nursery for \$1 that she planted with love, and nourished with abundant coffee grounds. It grew into a beautiful deep red rose bush just outside one of her kitchen windows.

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## Events & Classes

### TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

February 3rd, 4:00pm

Meeting ID: 836 8393 2101

<http://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/news---events.html>

### NEXT CGUA MEETING

March 24th, 3:00pm

### FWBG | BRIT

Community Conversation & STEM Skills - Feb. 8th, 5:30pm

Soil Building & Health - Feb. 19th, 9am

Botany School: Spring Semester - Feb. 24th, 6pm

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

### SAVE TARRANT WATER

Backyard Composting - Feb. 1st, 6pm

Common Ground Gardening Seminar - Feb. 12th, 9:30am

Success with Seeds - Feb. 20th, 6pm

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

### Cowtown Farmers Market

3821 SOUTHWEST BLVD  
SATURDAYS  
8AM-12PM



"Planting a garden and sharing what you grow is an act of faith, hope, and resistance that everyone should try at least once in their lives."

**DAVE AFTANDILIAN**



## 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.

Then my church youth group took a field trip to Immokalee, Florida, where much of the US's commercial tomato crop was grown at the time. We visited one of the shacks where the farmworkers lived, so run-down and pest-infested that rats would come at night and gnaw off the toes of their children (I wish I were making that up). That was my first introduction to the tremendous injustices of our industrial agricultural system, and it haunts me still.

**When/how did you start incorporating these subjects into your teaching?**

As a graduate student at the University of Chicago, I lucked into a fellowship from their Human Rights program to develop and teach an undergraduate course. I created one called "Environmental Justice, Human Rights & Agriculture"; after teaching it several times at TCU I changed the name to "Food Justice" (borrowing a term others created). Then and now, I feel the most important part of the course involves the students working with community partners to develop and implement solutions to the problems we discuss in class.

**What has influenced your understanding of gardening and agriculture recently?**

I will give two answers to this. First, the Black Lives Matter movement has made me take several steps back and consider whether a middle-aged white man has any business teaching about Food Justice. I have not yet discerned a satisfactory answer to this question for myself, but the pandemic-induced ban on service-learning courses like mine has bought me some time to reflect.

Second, I have begun to explore my own spiritual experience of gardening at a deeper level. This has coincided with my increasing involvement with TCU's program in Compassionate Awareness and Living Mindfully (CALM; deep bows to my Philosophy colleague Dr. Blake Hestir for coming up with that perfect acronym!).

**If you could only impart one principle about gardening or agriculture to your students, what would that take away be?**

Planting a garden and sharing what you grow is an act of faith, hope, and resistance that everyone should try at least once in their lives.

**What is your favorite thing about your gardening or agriculture, either in your work or at home?**

I love how gardening gets me outdoors and immersed in the world. As Malik Yakini of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network shared with me, gardening also teaches a welcome humility that humanity would do well to relearn. Even as I rage at the squirrels who dig up my new plants, and the yellow, red, and gray flying bugs that suck the vitality from my basil bushes, I cannot help but smile when I see bees happily visiting our lavender and chive flowers. Gardening teaches me that life can be a struggle, but it can also be wonderful, if we open ourselves to that possibility.

**What brought you to join the Tarrant County Food Policy Council and the CGUA Working Group?**

When Katey Rudd first started an advisory committee for TAFB's Community Garden Program, she invited me to join (she had taken my Food Justice class at TCU and we had kept in touch since). Later I and my TCU Nutritional Sciences colleague Lyn Dart (who recently retired) partnered with TAFB, NICA, and the Tarrant County Public Health Department to found the Tarrant County Food Policy Council (TCFPC). Our goal was that of any food policy council: to bring together representatives from all aspects of the local food system to work together to make healthy food accessible to everyone, no matter where they lived in the county or how much money they had. When Katey's garden advisory committee disbanded, we worked together to reform as a new working group of the TCFPC.

**What would you recommend to readers who would like to learn more about gardening, community gardens, or urban agriculture?**

So many books.... For a somewhat dated but still nicely comprehensive and very readable introduction to the problems with the US food system, and a clear-eyed evaluation of potential fixes, including community gardens, I recommend Mark Winne's *Closing the Food Gap* (Beacon, 2008). For those interested in Native American worldviews about plants and farming, you can check out Robin Wall Kimmerer's lyrical book of essays, *Braiding Sweetgrass* (Milkweed, 2015), and Enrique Salmón's *Eating the Landscape* (Arizona, 2012); then you can watch the excellent documentary film *Gather* (2020; see <https://gather.film> or watch on Netflix). For great firsthand accounts of food justice (and injustice) from farmers of color, Natasha Bowens's *The Color of Food* is a good place to start (New Society, 2015). And for an entrée into the ethics and spirituality of agriculture, you could try Liberty Hyde Bailey's *The Holy Earth* (1915; Dover reprint 2009), or any of Wendell Berry's books of essays and poetry, such as *The Mad Farmer Poems* (Counterpoint, 2014) or *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (1977; reprinted 2015 by Counterpoint).

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What do you hope to accomplish in your garden this year? And what do you hope to accomplish with the TCFPC and CGUA working group?

Both Lauren and I would love to see CGUA in a position to help fund worthy local projects intended to help increase access to healthy food for low-income communities. Our vision would be to draw on crowdfunding and/or grantfunding to fill a small pot of money to which Tarrant County residents could apply for small grants to support projects consistent with our mission.

As for my garden, I just hope to be able to plant more this spring than last. Someday I would like to find a way to succeed in growing radishes—my favorite lunch vegetable—in our garden, but that may be too much to ask....

## SEASONAL VEGGIE FUN FACTS - KOHLRABI

Kohlrabi grows well during the cooler months in North Texas. There are several varieties available. It comes in white, green and purple. Most are ready to harvest in about 55 days.

- Kohlrabi gets its unique name from the German words for cabbage (*kohl*) and turnip (*rabi*).
- The kohlrabi plant originated in northeastern Europe where it is commonly eaten, yet hardly known at all in other regions.
- The largest kohlrabi recorded was grown in Alaska in 2006 and weighed in at 96 pounds!
- The taste of kohlrabi is similar to broccoli stems or cabbage but is slightly sweeter!
- You can find kohlrabi at Cowtown Farmers Market during the cooler months of the year.

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

## Chicory Salad

Recipe by Hannah Lamar Gibson

Chicories are Italian winter lettuces that are a good option for growing some color in your winter garden. Some familiar varieties are endive, escarole, and radicchio, but my favorite are the pink and purple-speckled Treviso chicories. They are tender, slightly bitter, and simply gorgeous. Couple your chicory with wintry citrus in this delightful winter salad.



### INGREDIENTS

- Head of chicory lettuce, any variety
- 1 orange, mandarin, or other citrus fruit of choice, segmented or supremed and cut into bite-sized pieces
- 3 tbs. parsley, roughly torn
- 3 tbs. blue cheese, crumbled
- 3 tbs. pepitas, walnuts, or pecans
- 1 tbs. good olive oil
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- Flaky sea salt

### PREPARATION

- Arrange leaves of the chicory lettuce on a plate or platter.
- Top chicory with parsley, citrus segments, blue cheese, and seeds and/or nuts to taste.
- Drizzle olive oil and lemon juice over the salad, season with flaky sea salt.
- Enjoy!

## 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 Romaine and Ruby Red Lettuces  
Hakurei Turnips  
Alpine Daikon Radishes  
Green Magic Broccoli  
Tomatoes: Texas Superstar  
Early Girl, Celebrity, Black Krim, Purple Cherokee, and Better Boy



# SHINE'S GARDEN CHATS

Happy February! It's that beautiful time of the year when we get to plant onions and potatoes! I go to my local feed store and buy onion "slips." These have a green stalk attached to a little onion. It's not really the right time of year to plant the dried bulb "sets" in bags. My favorite onion is the Texas 1015, so named because its seeding date is October 15th. It's the Texas version of the Vidalia. They are a sweet yellow onion and are the best that we can grow here, in my opinion. Last year, I discovered the Southern Belle variety of red onions. I was blown away by how sweet they were. By far the sweetest red onion I have ever tasted, some even rivaling the sweetness of the 1015.

I tested several varieties of potatoes last year, Red Norland, White Kennebec, Yukon Gold, and my favorite Red La Soda. Red La Soda is the most productive by far, but productivity is not the only reason we grow our own vegetables. I get about 100 pounds of Red La Soda from a 100 square foot bed. The other 3 varieties averaged about 65 pounds per bed. But, the flavor and texture of the Yukon gold is so amazing that half of my planting this year is going to be that variety. I love them so much, I'm willing to be less productive. We all make that choice when we choose less productive heirloom varieties because the flavor is usually better.

My tomato seedlings have just started to germinate. Both of you who read my garden chats know that tomatoes are absolutely my favorite crop to grow and eat. Don't worry if you haven't started yours yet: you still have until the 15th of February to get them started. They'll be a bit small when you put them out by April 1st, but with good soil, you'll probably get tomatoes before the heat sets in. On the topic of balancing productivity with flavor, I always grow my tried-and-true producers while making space for my more flavorful, or experimental, varieties. One year I grew some great heirloom tomatoes. The following year, I only planted those heirlooms. We had a much hotter and earlier summer than usual. As you guessed, I had very few tomatoes that year. Diversity is the key to all biological systems. I'm growing Early Doll, Celebrity, and Better Boy as my productivity varieties and Black Krim and Pink Berkely Tie-Dye as my flavorful varieties. I have also been successful with Purple Cherokee, though they seem to crack more. I have grown Brandywine varieties, and they are spectacularly flavored, but I only got a few tomatoes per plant, instead of the 20 pounds that I am used to getting.

Indoors, you still have some time to start peppers and eggplant seedlings, but it should be early in the month so that they will have enough growth to transplant by April 15. I'm growing my usual red and yellow California Wonder Bell Peppers, but I'm also trying Carmen, Escamillo, Jimmy Nardellos, and red and yellow Sweet Italian peppers. And don't forget to start some flowers to go in your gardens. I highly recommend marigolds and zinnia because they are the easiest. If you have a manly garden, tell everyone they are for attracting beneficial insects, and plant them anyways. They do beneficial things for the soil and ecosystem that we don't quite understand yet.

It's time to start directly seeding the cool weather crops, too. Turnips, radishes, spinach, bok choy, beets, carrots, Tokyo Bekana, and arugula are all great crops to directly seed this time of the year. They benefit from a covering with frost fabric. The best part of that fabric is that you can water right through it and don't have to remove it until the daytime temperature gets above 85F, unlike plastic that has to be constantly vented and moved.

Grow on, My Friends!  
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/>