

MAY 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 provided an update about new staff, the Market Garden at TAFB West and the Growing Healthy Communities Conference (July 16th).
 - Presentation proposals are now being accepted if anyone would like to apply. <https://tafb.org/growing-healthy-communities-conference/>
- Grow Southeast (<https://www.coactntx.org/grow-se>) updated the group about the Farm Manager Apprenticeship program, Tabor Farms, Mind Your Garden's Healthy Hour, Black Wall Street Farm and Opal's Farm.
- 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 or Lauren Hickman at lauren.hickman@tafb.org.



IN THE NEWS

- A brief look at urban farming across the world and time - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/reginacole/2022/04/18/urban-farmings-international-past-present-and-future/?sh=1a510b97781a>
- "The Dirt on Curbside Composting in Texas" - <https://www.texasmonthly.com/travel/the-dirt-on-curbside-composting-in-texas/>
- North Texas cities ranked among worst for urban gardening according to this poll- <https://www.lawnstarter.com/blog/studies/best-cities-urban-gardening/>
- FW Magazine covers a local urban farm - <https://fwtx.com/culture/a-green-thumbs-up-for-local-farming/>
- Seed sharing via public libraries helps get communities and gardens growing - <https://civileats.com/2022/04/25/public-libraries-are-making-it-easy-to-check-out-seeds-and-plant-a-garden/>

Events & Classes

TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

June 2nd, 4:00pm

NEXT CGUA MEETING

May 19th, 3:00pm

Meeting ID 931 1872 1467

Password: 576530

FWBG | BRIT

Spring Market in the Garden -

May 7th, 10am

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

SAVE TARRANT WATER

Spring Vegetable Gardening -

May 7th, 2pm

Vegetable Gardening -

May 22nd, 6pm

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

TAFB

Growing Healthy Communities Conference

July 16th

<https://tafb.org/growing-healthy-communities-conference/>

COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

Sat. 8am-12pm

Summer Festival

June 25, 8am-12pm

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





MEDITATION ON FLOWERS AND IMPERMANENCE

By Dave Aftandilian

I am getting to the stage of life where people who served as important mentors for me when I was younger have been starting to pass on. But it's also spring, the season of rebirth, which gives me hope for the future—along with a bit of apprehension.

As Zachiah Murray writes in his lovely little book, *Mindfulness in the Garden: Zen Tools for Digging in the Dirt* (Parallax Press, 2012), flowers can help us come to terms with such ambiguous feelings about impermanence. Because they come into the world quickly, and leave just as soon, flowers know something about life and death, and how to flourish as best they can in between. They bring joy to everyone who sees them, and through their brief life and death, help ensure the future of their plants.

In his book, Murray presents a series of four-line poems to help us dig deeper, in a contemplative sense, into various stages of life in our gardens, and in ourselves. Such poems in the Buddhist tradition, with a meditative and instructive purpose, are called *gathas*. One repeats the words of a gatha over and over, breathing in with the first line, and out with the second, to the end of the poem, and then repeating for the duration of the meditation.

Perhaps the most famous gatha is this one composed by Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the founders of socially engaged Buddhism, who passed away earlier this year:

I know I am breathing in;
I know I am breathing out.

I calm my body and mind;
I smile.

I dwell in the present moment;
I know this is a wonderful moment.

Once you have repeated the lines silently to yourself a number of times, breathing in on the first line and out on the second, you might enjoy using an abbreviated form, such as:

in
out

calm
smile

present
wonderful

And try smiling, even just a bit, when you reach that part of the gatha. Doing so can bring a beautiful inner glow that you will carry with you throughout the day, and then share with others.

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SEASONAL PRODUCE FUN FACTS - SWISS CHARD

Swiss Chard is a beautiful biennial crop that really shines during the cooler months of the year. Once leaves are mature, harvest them as needed and come back for more the next week! Chard can be used in place of any cooked greens.

- Swiss chard has the same classification as beets - *Beta vulgaris*.
- Other nicknames include: white beet, strawberry spinach, sea kale beet, leaf beet, Sicilian beet, spinach beet, Chilean beet, Roman kale and silver beet!
- Swiss chard originated in Sicily, not Switzerland. But it was a Swiss botanist that was responsible for determining it's scientific name.
- Chard comes in many colors - yellow, orange, red, pink and white!

Learn more cool facts about Swiss chard at <https://foodprint.org/real-food/chard/>.

"Be like a flower
and turn your
face to the sun."

KAHLIL GILBRAN



MAY TO-DO

Harvest potatoes and onions mid-month.

Plant color annuals like lantana, begonia, zinnia, and verbena.

Plant southern peas, peppers, squash, okra, melons and other summer crops.

Prune roses, vines, and trees after they have bloomed.

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

Plant any and all of the warm season herbs like basil and lemon balm.

Honey Balsamic Strawberries

Recipe by Hannah Gibson

This time of year, freshly picked strawberries right out of the ground are hard to beat. If you have the desire to take those strawberries and elevate them into a beautiful dessert that highlights their natural sweetness, give this quick and simple recipe a whirl.



INGREDIENTS

- 1 pint strawberries (about 2 cups)
- 3 T balsamic vinegar
- 3 T honey
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract or vanilla bean
- Pinch of salt
- 1 pat of butter

PREPARATION

- Thinly slice your strawberries, then set aside in a bowl.
- Whisk together balsamic vinegar, honey, vanilla, and salt.
- Heat butter in a medium sauté pan over medium heat.
- Pour your balsamic mixture over sliced strawberries; toss to coat.
- Add strawberries in their balsamic mixture into the sauté pan. Cook, stirring regularly, until the balsamic mixture has reduced into a glaze.
- Remove pan from heat and allow to cool.
- Serve over ice cream, freshly whipped cream, or Greek yogurt.

MEDITATION ON FLOWERS AND IMPERMANENCE (CONT.)

Recently I combined two of the gathas that Murray composed about flowers into one, mirroring the six-line form Thich Nhat Hanh uses here, and shared them with students in my Nature & the Sacred class at TCU. I do not know what the students thought of the meditation, but I enjoyed it, and have been using it on a regular basis since then. In case you might want to try it in your own garden, or a local park, or anywhere you see a lovely flower, here is the text:

Thank you, dear flower,
for making life so beautiful.

In your pure presence
I see my true self.

May your equanimity ground me
in the face of life's impermanence.

And here is a shorter form that you may want to use after you have repeated the full version long enough to hear it echoing in your mind:

beautiful
flower

pure presence
true self

equanimity
impermanence

Normally I would not use a 25-cent word like “equanimity” in class, but I agree with Murray that it works very well in the context of this gatha. I glossed it for the students as meaning the ability to maintain grace under pressure; to keep calm when the world seems to be spinning out of your control.

Anyway I hope you enjoy this gatha, whether you use it for meditation or just a peaceful reading moment. And if you have other meditative practices that you use in your garden, I would love to hear about them!

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-systems.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)





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

Hey there, garden friends! Farmer-to-be Becca here filling in for Charlie this month. I thought I would stop by and chat with you about some of the things I've been learning from Charlie out at Shine's Farmstand.

As you may know, Charlie is moving to New Mexico later this year and I will be taking over Shine's Farmstand to carry on Charlie's legacy and run the farm as my own business. Since October, I have been coming out to the farm to learn and help with any task that needs to be done. I am also the Market Manager at Cowtown Farmers Market which puts me in the unique position to also get to see other farms in the area and learn from other farmers as well.

For those of you that don't know, Shine's Farmstand is a biointensive microfarm that uses sustainable and organic practices to grow fruits, vegetables, herbs and raises chickens for their eggs. Shine's is not a certified organic farm. Not many small farms in North Texas are certified organic because the process is long and expensive. It would only be beneficial if the farm was able to sell to grocery stores regularly. The market customers seem to be happy enough just knowing that the organic practices are used.

Shine's Farmstand has only about 1/4 acre of cultivated land, but Charlie uses all of that space very wisely and intensively to produce the most he can in a small space while keeping the soil and ecosystem healthy as well. To manage the farm, Charlie uses relatively small equipment. The biggest tool he uses is a tillther which is excellent for preparing new beds for planting. Otherwise, Charlie keeps a small arsenal of shovels, rakes, seeders and hand tools around for the other tasks that arise.

Some other tools that are essential to his operation include irrigation parts like hoses, drip tape, connectors, timers and sprinklers; a variety of plant-covering materials like clear plastic tarps, black plastic, Agribon-19 row cover and shade cloth; and trellises made out of t-posts and cattle panel.

Each workday is started with a farm walk-through to check on plant progress, identify plant nutrition or pest issues, and determine the essential tasks for the day. From there, we can choose tools from his small arsenal to accomplish the day's work. April was a busy month full of planting tomatoes, peppers and eggplant, battling early spring pests like pill bugs and harlequin beetles, and responding to weed pressure from hen bit, nut sedge and spiderwort.

The work and harvests have been plenty. We have been harvesting huge amounts of salad mix, arugula, radishes, turnips, lettuce, Swiss chard and bok choy with snap peas and strawberries making a shy but tasty appearance. In the next month, we will be able to harvest our onions and potatoes along with the first of our tomatoes. As the weather warms and we free up sections of the garden, we will plant more squash, cucumber, okra, beans and melons when the soil temps are higher and the pest pressure is lower.

I am loving the bounty and treasures that spring brings. It was a little tough starting to learn how to farm in the winter when germination is spotty and each week brought a different version of winter weather to thwart our efforts. I am excited to see our hard work produce ample harvests that will be appreciated by market-goers, friends and family.

I think I am still in denial that Charlie is actually leaving. If only we could snatch up the property next to his and farm together - we'd be an unstoppable farming team! And at the same time, I have started to feel comfortable enough to start to dream about what my version of Shine's Farmstand will look like and how I can contribute to a healthy local food system like Charlie does. Until then, I will keep on growing, learning, and living the farm-life dream.

Becca Knutson

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

GROW North Texas
grownorthtexas.org

Texas Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association
tofga.org

Texas Department of Agriculture
texasagriculture.gov

USDA Farm Service Agency
fsa.usda.gov

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