

MARCH 2021

WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group



CGUA MEETING NOTES

The Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture working group will meet on March 18th at 3pm. **Meeting ID: 940-7952-1248. Passcode: 840374.** The founders of Southside Community Garden will join us guest speakers to tell us all about their new project in 76104.

2021 CGUA Projects:

- **School Garden Mapping & Support** - the group will continue to update the Local Foods Map with school garden information. We will also work to better support local school garden projects through networking resources.
- **CGUA Advisory Committee** - this committee will be on call to provide guidance and expertise to emerging garden projects through TAFB's Community Garden Network.
- **CGUA Facebook Group** - the Facebook group is LIVE and can be used to connect garden projects with resources, funding and expertise through an open, public forum. The group is open to both those needing and offering resources. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/cguaresources>
- **Supporting Gardens & Farms** - CGUA is always looking for more and better ways to support garden and farm projects in our area. We are open to new project ideas and look forward to hearing from new and existing projects.

For questions and more information about CGUA, contact our co-chairs, Dave Aftandilian at d.aftandilian@tcu.edu or Charlie Blaylock at shinesfarmstand@gmail.com.

IN THE NEWS

- Howard Garret's local column with timely gardening advice
<https://www.dallasnews.com/arts-entertainment/lifestyle/2021/02/22/with-the-snow-gone-its-a-good-time-to-fertilize-your-plants/>
- UT study links school gardens with increased vegetable consumption
<https://news.utexas.edu/2021/02/04/school-gardens-linked-with-kids-eating-more-vegetables/>
- A metaphorical take on gardening now and throughout the pandemic
<https://www.star-telegram.com/news/nation-world/national/article249144160.html>
- A look at food activism and where community gardening fits in the landscape
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/19/t-magazine/food-security-activists.html>
- An article on how the "covid gardening renaissance" has affected the seed economy and marketplace
<https://civileats.com/2021/02/22/the-covid-gardening-renaissance-depends-on-seeds-if-you-can-find-them/>

Events & Classes

NEXT CGUA MEETING

March 18th, 3pm

Meeting ID: 940-7952-1248

Passcode: 840374

TARRANT AREA FOOD BANK

Basic Gardening Skills -

March 24th, 2pm

<http://tafb.org/events>

SAVE TARRANT WATER

Irrigation 101 - March 16th,
6pm

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

BRIT

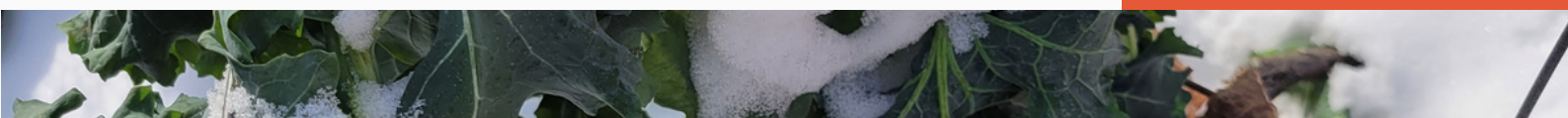
Advanced Class: Vegetable
Gardening in North Texas -
March 6th & 13th, 1pm

Building Your Butterfly
Garden - March 10th, 10am

<http://brit.org/events>

SATURDAYS 8AM-12PM
Cowtown Farmers
Market

3821 SOUTHWEST BLVD





"Our life is
March weather,
savage and
serene in one
hour."

**RALPH WALDO
EMERSON**



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 month
for them.

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

Continue to harvest any
remaining cool season
crops.

VICTOR HUGO'S GARDEN PASSAGE

As our gardens transition from winter to spring and both flowers and weeds arise, it's worth taking a moment amidst all the work to read this beautiful passage about a Parisian garden untouched by man for some time. From Victor Hugo, in *Les Miserables*:

"The garden thus left to itself for more than half a century had become extraordinary and charming. The passers-by of forty years ago halted to gaze at it, without a suspicion of the secrets which it hid in its fresh and verdant depths. More than one dreamer of that epoch often allowed his thoughts and his eyes to penetrate indiscreetly between the bars of that ancient, padlocked gate, twisted, tottering, fastened to two green and moss-covered pillars, and oddly crowned with a pediment of undecipherable arabesque.

There was a stone bench in one corner, one or two mouldy statues, several lattices which had lost their nails with time, were rotting on the wall, and there were no walks nor turf; but there was enough grass everywhere. Gardening had taken its departure, and nature had returned. Weeds abounded, which was a great piece of luck for a poor corner of land. The festival of gilliflowers was something splendid. Nothing in this garden obstructed the sacred effort of things towards life; venerable growth reigned there among them. The trees had bent over towards the nettles, the plant had sprung upward, the branch had inclined, that which crawls on the earth had gone in search of that which expands in the air, that which floats on the wind had bent over towards that which trails in the moss; trunks, boughs, leaves, fibres, clusters, tendrils, shoots, spines, thorns, had mingled, crossed, married, confounded themselves in each other; vegetation in a deep and close embrace, had celebrated and accomplished there, under the well-pleased eye of the Creator, in that enclosure three hundred feet square, the holy mystery of fraternity, symbol of the human fraternity. This garden was no longer a garden, it was a colossal thicket, that is to say, something as impenetrable as a forest, as peopled as a city, quivering like a nest, sombre like a cathedral, fragrant like a bouquet, solitary as a tomb, living as a throng.

...In Floreal this enormous thicket, free behind its gate and within its four walls, entered upon the secret labor of germination, quivered in the rising sun, almost like an animal which drinks in the breaths of cosmic love, and which feels the sap of April rising and boiling in its veins, and shakes to the wind its enormous wonderful green locks, sprinkled on the damp earth, on the defaced statues, on the crumbling steps of the pavilion, and even on the pavement of the deserted street, flowers like stars, dew like pearls, fecundity, beauty, life, joy, perfumes. At midday a thousand white butterflies took refuge there, and it was a divine spectacle to see that living snow whirling about there in flakes amid the shade. There in those gay shadows of verdure, a throng of innocent voices spoke sweetly to the soul, and what the twittering forgot to say the humming completed. In the evening, a dreamy vapor exhaled from the garden and enveloped it; a shroud of mist, a calm and celestial sadness covered it; the intoxicating perfume of the honeysuckles and convolvulus poured out of every part of it, like an exquisite and subtle poison; the last appeals of the woodpeckers and wagtails were audible as they dozed among the branches; one felt the sacred intimacy of the birds and the trees; by day the wings rejoice the leaves, by night the leaves protect the birds.

In winter the thicket was black, dripping, bristling, shivering, and allowed some glimpse of the house. Instead of flowers on the branches and dew in the flowers, the long silvery tracks of the snails were visible on the cold, thick carpet of yellow leaves; but in any fashion, under any aspect, at all seasons, spring, winter, summer, autumn, this tiny enclosure breathed forth melancholy, contemplation, solitude, liberty, the absence of man, the presence of God; and the rusty old gate had the air of saying: "This garden belongs to me."

Herb & Lemon Yogurt Dip

Recipe by: **Hannah Lamar**

This tangy and bright dip is the perfect accompaniment to the late winter/early spring crunchy veggies. It is a versatile dish: dip into it with your radishes, turnips, carrots, or broccoli; slather it on a big veggie sandwich; or fold it into your morning omelet. It is simple, easy to scale up or down, and very forgiving: so feel free to tweak the ingredients for what's available and to your liking!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup tender green herbs (e.g. cilantro, basil) roughly chopped
- 1/2 cup spinach, kale or dark leafy green, roughly chopped
- Zest and juice of one lemon
- 2 cloves of garlic, roughly chopped
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1/2 large avocado (or 1 small avocado)
- Salt and freshly cracked black pepper to taste



Optional additions:

- 1 anchovy filet, for umami flavor
- 1-2 tablespoons chopped jalapeño or other fresh, spicy pepper
- 1/4 cup tangy, soft cheese, such as feta or goat's cheese

PREPARATION

- Mix all ingredients in a food processor and mix until smooth. Taste and adjust for seasoning.
- If you do not have a food processor, you can mix by hand. Chop your tender green herbs, dark leafy greens, and garlic cloves much more finely or grind with a mortar and pestle. Then mix all ingredients in a large bowl and mix until smooth. If you make this by hand, expect the finished product to be slightly less smooth but no less delicious!
- Serve alongside fresh veggies and crackers, add to a sandwich, dollop on top of a taco - be creative and enjoy!

SEASONAL VEGGIE FUN FACTS - BEETS!

Beets grow well during the cooler months here in North Texas. Different cultivars are typically ready to harvest in 55 to 65 days.

- Beets were originally grown in the Mediterranean area around 2000 BC.
- Unlike many other vegetable crops, the whole beet plant is edible - roots, stems and leaves!
- The biggest beet ever grown weighed in at over 156 pounds!
- Some folklore says that if a couple eats from the same beet, they are destined to fall in love!
- Since the 1500s, beet juice has been used as a natural hair dye.
- Beets can be made into wine that taste similar to port!
- Beets are traditionally eaten during Rosh Hashanah. Symbolically, beets get rid of evil for the new year.

For more fun facts about beets, visit:

<https://www.justbeet.it.com/beet-blog-index/the-history-of-beets-10-beet-facts>

GARDEN RESOURCES

Local Nurseries:

Archie's Gardenland
Calloway's

Free Seeds:

TAFB Community Garden Program;
communitygarden@tafb.org
GROW North Texas

Bulk Soil/Compost:

Living Earth
Silver Creek Materials
City of FW Drop-Off Stations

Garden Curricula:

CGUA-
<http://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/garden-2.html>

Community Food Systems Map:

<http://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/local-food-systems.html>

VIRTUAL GARDENING CONTENT

Tarrant Area Food Bank

youtube.com/user/TarrantAreaFoodBank

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

youtube.com/c/txextension

BRIT

youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet

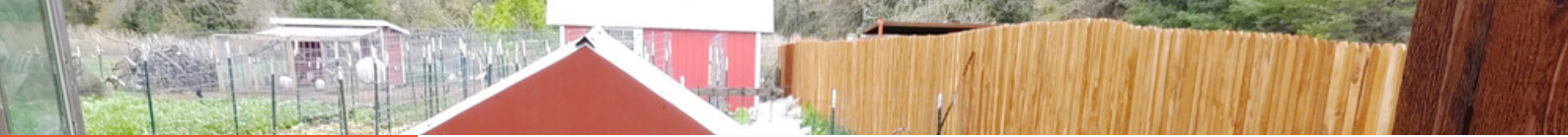
Tarrant County Master Gardeners

youtube.com/c/TarrantCountyMasterGardeners

Dig Deep Conference 2020

tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/dig-deep-conference-2020





SHINE'S GARDEN CHATS

BY CHARLIE BLAYLOCK



As I'm writing this, there's about 6 inches of snow on the ground, we have rolling blackouts, most people are under "boil water" notices, and we haven't been above freezing for a week. I can't heat my greenhouse enough to keep things from dying when it's 1°F outside. I have more dogs than we had degrees Fahrenheit this morning. The summer seedlings, tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants are trying to germinate in a semi-heated shop, and so are not doing well. Not to mention that the lights go off every 45 minutes for the past 3 days, which must be confusing to the plants that are up. Despite all these challenges, I see people opening their homes to others without power, delivering bottled water in four-wheel drive, and electric and water utility workers who are working around the clock to help us get through this. Gardening, like life, doesn't depend on the number of times you get knocked down, but the number of times that you get back up. And there's no better time to replant than right now.

Indoors, you still have some time to start tomato, pepper, and eggplant seedlings, but it should be early in the month so they will have enough growth to transplant by April 15. It's a good time to start pumpkin and winter squash plants indoors, but make sure they are in 4" pots. Anything smaller causes too much root damage during transplanting. I have never been successful starting seedlings for cucumbers, cantaloupes, summer squash, or watermelons. Planting the seeds directly in the ground after April 1 always produces bigger, better plants for me.

March is the month that is the most important to watch the weather when planting. We have those surprise 78°F degree days that make us really want to get to planting, and then a 35°F degree night a couple days later. It's especially important when putting out the summer seedlings. Early in the month is a good time to plant seeds for beets, carrots, radishes, Sugar Snap peas, lettuce, spinach, bok choy, collards, mustard greens, kale, chard, onions and potatoes, if you didn't get them in the ground in February. Early March is a good time to transplant broccoli, Napa cabbage, and cabbage. Seedlings for those are available at local feed stores for about half the price of the big box stores, and are usually better suited to our environment. Local nurseries are also good for local varieties, but tend to be comparable in price to big box stores.

The second half of the month is a good time to start green beans, dry beans, corn, and summer squash. I love the flavor and productivity of Blue Lake Green Beans, and they come in either a bush or pole bean variety. The pole bean variety need a very tall trellis. I really prefer to hold off on seeding cucumbers, winter squash, cantaloupes, watermelon, pumpkins, and okra until April. I feel the same about transplanting tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers. The cool nights and cool soil temperatures keep them from growing vigorously, and they therefore are more subject to insect damage. If you absolutely can't wait, don't mulch them until the middle of April, so that the soil can warm up each day.

Spring is such a beautiful time of year. The new growth, and new beginnings, make me feel like a plant emerging from the darkness. As I emerge from a very rough winter, I'll remember that I will always have flowers, as long as I always plant flowers.

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

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

