

APRIL 2024

# WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group

The CGUA working group met on March 21st at Ridglea Christian Church. Eleven people were in attendance.

During the meeting, we received updates from several different groups:

- Multiple garden-related jobs were mentioned during the meeting. See the section on p. 3 for a full list.
- Lauren provided an update on TAFB's Garden Network, reporting that profiles are being updated, gardens are being visited, the website is up to date and they are updating their garden curriculum to be a series. WIC FMNP and SFMNP will begin in May at Cowtown Farmers Market.
- Many farmers markets are opening during March and April as the weather warms and produce is more abundant. Visit your favorite local market often!
- Anne reminded everyone of their event at Conundrum Farms on April 27th and she mentioned enjoying garden time with students during recess since the students can't do garden class during STAR testing.
- Jesse reported that all Grow SE farms are doing well. TCC provided many transplants again this year for the farms and that there are volunteer opportunities at each location this spring. Grow SE has received a couple of grants. One grant is for policy work on the urban ag ordinance and the other is for the management and improvement of the Mindful Market.
- Lauren and Becca will take lead on the garden/farm tours beginning in April. All are welcome to help if interested! Stay tuned for updates.
- Everyone enjoyed a tour of the Giving Garden after the meeting.

Throughout the meeting, Dave led the group in three contemplative practices which provided everyone a chance to meditate and welcome spring into our lives.

We are always looking for newsletter submissions, both big and small! If you have a poem, pictures, events or articles to share, please send them over to [tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil@gmail.com).

The next CGUA meeting will be on May 16th at 3pm. Location TBD.

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 applications are open for urban agriculture grants and innovative production <https://urbanagnews.com/uncategorized/applications-for-usda-urban-agriculture-and-innovative-production-grants-due-april-9/>
- Agrilife offers tips on no-dig gardening <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2024/03/19/foundational-tips-for-no-dig-gardening/>
- Timberview farm celebrates it's opening <https://www.kristv.com/news/local-news/in-your-neighborhood/corpus-christi/keepers-of-the-garden-hoping-to-extend-lease-agreement-at-tom-graham-park>
- Studies find community gardens may reduce crime in surrounding areas
  - <https://baynews9.com/fl/tampa/news/2024/03/24/manatee-community-gardens-crime-rates>
  - <https://journals.ashs.org/horttech/view/journals/horttech/19/2/article-p291.xml>

## Events & Classes

### NEXT CGUA MEETING

May 16th, 3pm

Location: TBD

### TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

TCFPC Networking Meeting

Thursday, May 2nd

Time & Location TBD

### FW BOTANIC GARDEN

Goats in the Garden

April 5th-15th

Ladybug Love

April 11th, 6pm

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

### EDUCATOR OPEN HOUSE

At Conundrum Farms

April 27th, 9am-Noon

[Sign Up Here!](#)

### NTX SCHOOL GARDEN NETWORK

NTX School Garden Network

Meetup

April 13th, 9am

Garden workdays are posted, too!

<https://ntxschoolgardennetwork.org/events>

### MINDFUL MARKET

April 6th, 11am to 2pm

<https://coactntx.wixsite.com/funkytown-mindful-ma>

### COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

EVERY Saturday, 8am to NOON

[www.cowtownmarket.com](http://www.cowtownmarket.com)





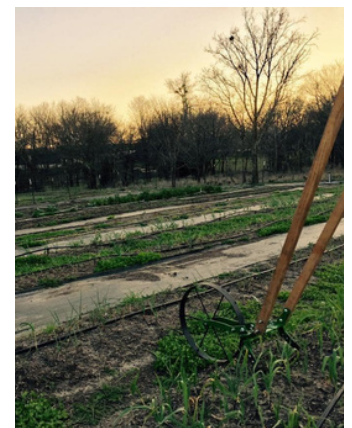
# TO-DO TO GROW FOOD IN APRIL!

BY BECCA KNUTSON, HOLLOW TRACE MARKET FARM

TIPS AND TASKS FOR GROWING FOOD IN NORTH TEXAS

April continues to be a busy planting month in North Texas. Crops planted now will provide harvests throughout the summer. We should be past most of the cool weather until fall, but be on the lookout for a sneaky cold night or two.

- **Finish planting potatoes** - Potatoes are typically planted in February, but if you haven't gotten them in yet, be sure to plant them as soon as possible.
- **Prepare garden beds for summer crops** - If you haven't done so yet, prepare your garden beds for warm weather crops like tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, green beans, squash, melons and cucumbers. When I prepare my beds, I like to do a thorough weeding of the area to get out things like Bermuda grass, spiderwort, nutsedge and Johnson grass that can be a long-term issue if not addressed early. I then assess the soil's needs and add things like greensand, dried molasses, peat moss, compost and slow-release organic fertilizer, accordingly. I then make sure the amendments are well-combined and reshape my beds. Finally, I address any irrigation needs and repairs.
- **Tend to your tomato, pepper and eggplant seedlings** - Your seedlings may be getting big this month in the final weeks before transplanting! Be sure they stay appropriately hydrated and consider watering with a liquid fertilizer once or twice before they go out into the garden.
- **Transplant your tomato seedlings into the garden** - Tomatoes can be planted outside in the garden starting on March 15th. Everyone has different opinions about when to plant tomatoes in Texas. I like to start considering it around March 15th based on soil temperatures (over 65 degrees) and long-range forecasts. I also consider my ability to cover the plants in case of a frost. I aim to have all my tomatoes planted by April 15th at the latest.
- **Transplant peppers and eggplant in the garden** - Eggplant and peppers thrive in warmer soil and can be transplanted from seedlings into the garden this month.
- **Plant green bean, cucumber, melon, okra and squash seeds directly in the garden** - Crops with larger seeds like to be planted directly into the garden. These crops CAN be started inside in soil blocks to ensure germination and then transplanted into the garden, but this is a more advanced gardening skill that may take some practice.
- **Plan for and install any trellises your crops may need as they mature.**
- **Plant fruit trees and perennial herbs before the weather warms too much.**
- **Tend to your compost piles.**
- **Plan for your final rounds of cool season crops like lettuce, radishes, turnips, arugula, salad greens and bok choy.**
- **Be prepared to cover crops during a hard freeze and have shade cloth ready for an extra-hot stretch** - Hopefully the last frost will have passed already, but always be ready for a surprise drop in temperature.



“The earth laughs  
in flowers.”

**RALPH WALDO  
EMERSON**



## Featured Farm **STONE'S THROW FARM CO.**

**Owner:** Jack and Trish Stone

**Location:** Fort Worth, TX

**TYPE OF OPERATION:**  
Small-scale family farm

**GROWING METHODS:**  
Sustainable practices

**TYPES OF PRODUCTS  
GROWN/RAISED:** Fruit, herbs,  
vegetables, pickles, & jams

**WHERE TO FIND THEM:**  
Stone's Throw Texas Grocery &  
Clearfork Farmers Market,  
delivery available  
@stonesthrowfarmco







# Strawberry Arugula Salad

Recipe from **The Pioneer Woman**

This salad has it all. It's quick, it's easy to make (only three steps!), it's healthy, it's in season, and it's delicious. What more could you want? Maybe you can produce the arugula, strawberries, and mint from your own garden. Extra points for any apiarists who have their own honey. Either way, all these goods are ripe and ready at your local farmers market. I got my arugula and strawberries from Hollow Trace, and they were both A+.



## INGREDIENTS

- 1 c. roughly chopped pecans
- 2 tbsp. rice vinegar
- 2 tsp. honey
- 1 tsp. dijon mustard
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- Black pepper, to taste
- 1/4 c. olive oil
- 1 small shallot, thinly sliced
- 1 lb. strawberries, hulled and quartered
- 5-oz. baby arugula
- 1/2 c. crumbled feta cheese
- 1/2 c. fresh mint leaves, torn

## PREPARATION

- Preheat the oven to 350°. Spread the pecans on a baking sheet and toast in the oven until they darken a shade or two and smell nutty, 5 to 6 minutes. Let cool completely.
- For the dressing: whisk together the vinegar, honey, mustard, salt, and a few grinds of pepper in a large salad bowl. Whisk in the olive oil until smooth. Add the shallot and strawberries and toss to coat with the dressing.
- Add the arugula, feta, mint, and pecans and toss to coat everything with the dressing. Season with salt and pepper.



## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

- **Market Assistant** - Cowtown Farmers Market ([See Facebook for Job Listing](#))
- **Americorps Members** - TAFB (email [Lauren.Hickman@tafb.org](mailto:Lauren.Hickman@tafb.org))
- **Youth Leadership Program** - Funkytown Food Project ([Apply Online](#))

## 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-map.html>

## VIRTUAL GARDENING CONTENT

**BRIT | Botanic Garden**  
[youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet](https://www.youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet)

**Paperpot Co Blog & Podcast**  
<https://paperpot.co/the-blog/>

**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)







## GREG'S TOP CROPS

Tomatoes

Peppers

Eggplant

Summer Squash

Cucumbers



## OPAL'S PICKS

We've been so busy at Opal's Farm I almost forgot to write Opal's Picks for this month! I'm sure you all understand. Spring has arrived and every farmer and gardener I know is running on full throttle to take advantage of the warmer weather and the Spring rains.

We planted around 600 tomatoes and peppers on March 18th. We got a tad nervous when the thermometer dipped to the high thirties last week, but frost was not to be.

Most of the new tomatoes are the Celebrity variety for our TCU/SARE project. We are growing for the third and final year of our grant. We gathered some good data last year and expanded the size of our growing area this Spring. We hope to have the results of the study available for everyone at the end of this year to help establish best practices for urban farms in North Texas.

Celebrity tomatoes are the workhorse here in Texas. I highly recommend the variety for new farmers and gardeners. They stand up well and require somewhat less maintenance than heirloom or other varieties. They are a little more forgiving, making them the perfect variety for first-time growers.

We chose to go with a mix of Celebrities, Early Girl (which are usually the quickest to harvest), Cherokee Purples, and Sun Golds. The Cherokee Purples are an established winner among our market customers and my personal favorite. They're perfect for enjoying tomato sandwiches all Spring! You really must stay on top of them, though, as they also tend to lose a large portion of the harvest due to splitting and damage to their thin skins.

We also chose to plant Sun Golds, which is my favorite cherry-sized tomato. They are prolific producers and must be harvested daily. If you're growing them at home, you may not want to plant more than two of them. We chose not to grow them in the past because they're so labor intensive, but we've been able to bring on some additional staff this year so I can enjoy a tomato break during those long Spring days.

I hope you're getting those gardens ready. This looks to be an awesome Spring with plenty of precipitation to hold off the dry summer months. Happy growing!

Greg Joel

Farm Manager - Opal's Farm

<https://www.facebook.com/opalsfarm>

## FARM RESOURCES

### Organizations & Associations:

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance

[farmandranchfreedom.org](http://farmandranchfreedom.org)

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

Natural Resource Conservation Service  
[nrcs.usda.gov](http://nrcs.usda.gov)

Texas Center for Local Food  
[texaslocalfood.org](http://texaslocalfood.org)

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

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

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

USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture  
[nifa.usda.gov/](http://nifa.usda.gov/)

