

JUNE 2024

WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group

CGUA MEETING NOTES - 5/16/24

The CGUA working group met on May 16th at UNT Health Science Center. Nine people were in attendance.

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

- Greg Joel provided updates from the Grow Southeast group with a focus on the happenings at Opal's Farm.
 - Blue Zones Project is working on a way to purchase excess local produce for their food pantries - akin to TAFB's purchasing program from 2022.
 - The Mindful Market will continue on the first Saturday of the month at Texas Wesleyan. A location change in the future may increase accessibility to the surrounding community.
 - Opal's Farm staff attended the Growing Hope Conference in Fayetteville, AR.
 - Delve Experiences continues to be a good opportunity for Agritourism income for local farms.
 - Blue Zones Project continues to host educational workshops with the different farms and Transform 1012.
 - A local Boy Scout will be installing some biointensive beds at Opal's Farm.
- Becca Knutson reminded the group about the current, local farmers markets and encouraged everyone to visit their favorite one.
 - New markets include: Kennedale, Crowley, Azle and Alvarado. Most have Facebook pages or websites to visit for information.
 - The Farmers Market Nutrition Program and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program began in May at Cowtown Farmers Market and will run through October of this year.
- Mary Jo Greene and Anne Santana gave great insight into their school garden successes as the school year comes to a close.
 - Made Greene's USDA grant is coming to a close. Mary Jo and Anne talked about their experiences and agreed that it was positive, overall. They learned a lot and will apply for more grants in the future. Workshops for teachers that were born out of this grant will continue, even without funding, because they were so beneficial.
 - Made Greene is looking forward to hosting field trips to their section of the Ridglea Giving Garden going forward.
 - They have also applied for a VELA grant and await the results.
 - Future projects will focus on addressing students' mental health.

During the meeting, the group participated in a seed/plant swap. A few people brought items to share and everyone was able to take home what they wanted.

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.

The next CGUA meeting will be on July 11th at 3pm. Location, TBD.

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.

Events & Classes

NEXT CGUA MEETING

July 11th, 3pm

Location: TBD

TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

TCFPC Networking Meeting

Time & Location TBD

CGUA GARDEN TOURS

Ridglea Giving Garden

Sunday, June 2nd

11am-1pm, Open House

3251 Sappington Pl. FW 76116

Diamond Hill Elementary

Saturday, June 15th

8am-10am, Open House

2000 Dewey St. FW 76106

NTX SCHOOL GARDEN NETWORK

Garden workdays are posted!

<https://ntxschoolgardennetwork.org/events>

COMMUNITY LINK MARKETS

Azle Farmers Market

<https://azlefarmersmarket.org>

Lake Worth Farmers Market

<https://lakeworthmarket.com/>

Saginaw Farmers Market

<https://www.saginawmarket.org/>

MINDFUL MARKET

June 1st, 11am to 2pm

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

COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

EVERY Saturday, 8am to NOON

www.cowtownmarket.com



TO-DO TO GROW FOOD IN JUNE!

BY BECCA KNUTSON, HOLLOW TRACE MARKET FARM

TIPS AND TASKS FOR GROWING FOOD IN NORTH TEXAS

I can't believe that June is already here! June brings the summer heat and a frenzy of produce from our farms and gardens. On the farm, June is one of our most exhausting months. Most of our bigger tasks like planting, amending the soil and caring for small seedlings is done and we'll be constantly busy with weeding, fertilizing, harvesting and monitoring crop growth and needs. This certainly is the most exciting time of year when we get to enjoy the produce from crops we've been working on for months now!

Take time to enjoy the fruit of your hard work and continue to keep up with maintenance tasks until the next big round of planting.

- **Harvest summer crops!** - Once June hits, we will see harvests from all of our favorite crops like beans, tomatoes, onions, peppers, eggplant, cucumber, summer squash and okra. Check your crops every few days for items that are ready to eat. Be sure to look up some recipes, storage tips and preservation options for different crops to make the most of your bounty.
- **Continue to plant some summer crops** - The window for planting summer crops extends into June - it's not too late! While late-planted tomatoes may need some shade to thrive, other crops like cucumber, squash, sweet potatoes, peppers, eggplant, beans and southern peas can still be planted. I even find it beneficial to have a later harvest of these items to help fill any gaps the sweltering summer heat causes.

Ensure your new crops have plenty of water to survive their days as young seedlings in the summer heat. You may even utilize some shade cloth over seedlings or newly sprouted seeds until the plants are established.

- **Tend to your tomato, pepper and eggplant seedlings** - Keep an eye on your tomatoes, peppers and eggplant to see if they need to be fertilized and/or staked.
- **Plan for irrigation and watering** - Make sure you have a watering plan in place as we approach the hot summer. Whether you are hand watering or have timed irrigation, consistent watering will help your crops survive the upcoming temperatures.
- **Plan for mulch & shade** - Many summer crops will benefit from straw or leaf mulch in the summer to retain moisture and help insulate the soil against the high temperatures coming in June. Shade cloth can also be used to extend the harvest and protect from sunscald on peppers and tomatoes. I prefer to use a 30% shade cloth.
- **Begin planning for your fall crops** - As you're harvesting your summer crops and enjoying every delicious bite, make note of things you want to do more of next year or varieties you really enjoyed. You can also start planning for your fall garden. Early season brassicas like cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower can be transplanted into the garden as early as August 15th with shade cloth to protect them.

"Tell you what I like the best—
'Long about knee-deep in June,
'Bout the time strawberries melts
On the vine,—some afternoon
Like to jes' git out and rest,
And not work at nothin' else!"

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY



Featured Farm

M&M FARMS

Owners: Raymond
and Laura Miller

Location: Mineral Wells, TX

TYPE OF OPERATION:
Small-scale family farm

GROWING METHODS:
Dry land and limited irrigation
systems using a combination of
modern and time tested
conservation techniques

TYPES OF PRODUCTS
GROWN/RAISED: vegetables,
fruits, and pecans

WHERE TO FIND THEM:
Cowtown Farmers Market
Facebook @M and M Farms



Berry Cake

Recipe adapted from [JessieSheehanBakes.com](https://jessiesheehanbakes.com)

Pick a berry, put on an apron, and bake this cake to bring to your next summer BBQ or get together. We used blueberries, strawberries, and blackberries for this version, but any combination would work great. So hop on down to your local farmers market, grab some berries, and get to baking!



INGREDIENTS

- 2/3 cup mild olive oil or vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar packed
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1 large egg
- 1 yolk
- 2/3 cup buttermilk or whole milk
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup of your favorite berries
- Optional: cream cheese buttercream, whipped cream or vanilla ice cream for serving

PREPARATION

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and grease an 8x8x2-inch pan with non-stick cooking spray or softened butter. Line with parchment paper.
- In a large bowl, whisk together the oil, sugars, and vanilla. Add the whole egg, and then the yolk, whisking after each. Add the buttermilk and whisk a final time.
- Sift the flour, baking powder, and salt onto a sheet of parchment, and using the parchment as a funnel, add the dry ingredients to the wet in three installments, folding with a flexible spatula after each, just to incorporate. Fold in mixed berries. Do not overmix.
- Pour the batter into the pan.
- Transfer the cake to the oven and bake for 35 to 40 minutes, rotating the pan after 20 minutes.
- Bring to room temperature before topping with buttercream, serving along with a dollop of freshly whipped cream, or a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

IN THE NEWS

- A look at how closing a city composting program can affect the community gardens and urban ag <https://civileats.com/2024/05/14/mayor-eric-adams-scrapped-nycs-compost-project-heres-what-will-be-lost/>
- Two local “Take a Plant, Leave a Plant” initiatives bring their growing communities together <https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/dfw-take-a-plant-leave-a-plant-gardening/3536464/>
- Texas Health Resources is sponsoring urban farm tours and inviting the public to tour, learn, and participate <https://fwtx.com/events/locally-grown-farm-experiences-1/>
- A Dallas resident details their experience and rules regarding gardening in their front yard <https://www.dmagazine.com/publications/d-magazine/2024/march/how-to-turn-your-front-yard-into-an-urban-farm-legally/>

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-map.html>

VIRTUAL GARDENING CONTENT

BRIT | Botanic Garden

youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet

Paperpot Co Blog & Podcast

<https://paperpot.co/the-blog/>

Tarrant Area Food Bank

youtube.com/user/TarrantAreaFoodBank

Tarrant County Master Gardeners

youtube.com/c/TarrantCountyMasterGardeners

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

youtube.com/c/txextension





GREG'S TOP CROPS

- Yardlong Beans
(Python & Red Noodle)
- Melons
- Purple Hull Peas
- Pumpkin



FARM RESOURCES

Organizations & Associations:

- Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
farmandranchfreedom.org
- GROW North Texas
grownorthtexas.org
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
nrcs.usda.gov
- Texas Center for Local Food
texaslocalfood.org
- Texas Department of Agriculture
texasagriculture.gov
- Texas Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association
tofga.org
- USDA Farm Service Agency
fsa.usda.gov
- USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture
nifa.usda.gov/

OPAL'S PICKS

Memorial Day traditionally marks the beginning of summer and the temperature certainly was summer-like. I hope you all had a great holiday weekend and took a moment Monday to reflect and honor those who sacrificed everything for us all.

We've had an abundance of rain this spring and the crops are loving it. Our tomatoes came in last week and the vines are loaded. Now if we can just keep up with trellising them.... We tried a different way of trellising tomatoes last year, using cattle panels for each row and companion planting with onions. This is a great method for home gardeners and small farms. However, with 600 tomatoes in the ground it's very time-consuming and labor intensive. It proved to be far less efficient than using the "Florida Weave" method.

We place weed barrier on the hundred-foot rows and attach it with landscape staples. We then burn six-inch holes every two feet using a plywood template and a flame weeder (we got an inexpensive one at Harbor Freight). The weed barrier usually lasts for three or four growing seasons so it's easy to pick up and lay down on the new rows as we rotate our crops each year. We also use the weed barrier in planting some of our squashes as well.

We then place t-posts every four plants and begin weaving the twine (we prefer natural jute twine since it causes less plant damage with the winds that frequent the floodplain) around the plants and tying them to the t-posts. We repeat the weave process as the plants grow, trellising them higher and higher until we reach the top of the t-posts. The tomatoes will hang over the top line but keep them off the ground for great tomato production.

It's important to prune the tomatoes early. Any suckers, particularly at the base of the plant, will inhibit air flow, and may cause lower yields. Tomatoes do much better after pruning. We may only prune three or four times a season because of our high volume of tomatoes. But smaller growing areas can be maintained much more easily. Pruning can be a very relaxing and Zen experience after a hard day!

Summer welcomes the bountiful harvest of purple-hull and black-eyed peas, summer squashes, cucumbers, and melons among other things. We hope you are having a great harvest and enjoying the wet spring. Please stay hydrated and take lots of breaks as the Texas summer gets hotter. Fall planting is just around the corner.

Greg Joel
Farm Manager - Opal's Farm
<https://www.facebook.com/opalsfarm>

