

JANUARY 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 November 18th at 3pm to discuss current and ongoing projects. Ten people were in attendance.

The next CGUA meeting will be on Thursday, January 20th at 3:00pm via Zoom. All are welcome to join in the discussion and provide input on what projects CGUA should work on in 2022.

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

- SNAP Benefits are Usable at Texas Farmers Markets
<https://dallas.culturemap.com/news/restaurants-bars/11-24-21-snap-benefits-farmers-markets/>
- Convention Center in New York establishes Urban Farm on Rooftop
<https://civileats.com/2021/12/08/a-farm-grows-atop-a-convention-center-in-nyc/>
- A look at Urban Agriculture and it's Necessity Around the World, Including Dallas
<https://livingarchitecturemonitor.com/articles/smart-agriculture-smarter-cities-w21>
- Dallas County Delivers Grants to Community Gardens in Zip Codes Facing High Rates of Chronic Diseases
<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/2021/12/21/how-dallas-county-is-seeding-a-solution-to-fight-obesity-diabetes-in-vulnerable-zip-codes/>
- Risk of Failure for Community Gardens Highlighted by Plans Gone Awry in Georgia
<https://www.gpb.org/news/2021/12/01/500k-for-12-planters-shows-failure-risk-of-community-gardens>

A GARDENER AT WORK - LAUREN HICKMAN



Lauren Hickman may already be a familiar face to many local gardeners and readers of this newsletter, but we are proud to introduce her as a new TCFPC board member and co-chair of the CGUA working group. Lauren is the Community Garden Program Coordinator at Tarrant Area Food Bank where she coordinates operations of TAFB gardens and supports the work of gardens through the TAFB Community Garden Network. Lauren is passionate about using gardens as a tool for education, food access, and health. She currently participates in the TCFPC CGUA and

Food Recovery Working Groups. Lauren holds a degree in horticulture, certificate in nutrition education, and is a Certified Community Health Worker, Texas Master Gardener and Master Composter! Jump to the next page to get to know our new board member and CGUA co-chair in a Q&A.

Events & Classes

TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

February 23rd, 4:00pm

NEXT CGUA MEETING

January 20th, 3:00pm

Zoom Meeting ID:

977 3969 8576

Password: 976486

FWBG | BRIT

Starting Your Garden from Seed - Jan. 15, 9:00am

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

SAVE TARRANT WATER

Spring Vegetable Gardening - January 15th, 2:00pm

Irrigation 101 - January 18th, 6:00pm

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

Cowtown Farmers Market

3821 SOUTHWEST BLVD

SATURDAYS

8AM-12PM



"One afternoon in early January, the weather showed a lack of character. There was no frost nor wind: the trees in the garden did not stir."

BRIAN ALDISS



JANUARY TO-DO

Watch the weather forecast and prepare your frost protection for cold nights.

Plant onion transplants (slips) whenever the soil is workable.

Start tomatoes and peppers indoors towards the end of the month.

Plant asparagus root crowns as soon as they are available at the nursery.

Add quick-growing winter crops like lettuce and radishes to empty spaces when the weather is mild.

A GARDENER AT WORK - LAUREN HICKMAN

Q: How did you get started gardening?

A: Some of my earliest memories are of pinching the tips of coleus plants with my mom to make them fuller and dead-heading my grandmother's plants to encourage new flowers. In middle school I started my own rose garden as a hobby and knew gardening would be a major part of my path in life. I started a children's garden as a senior in high school, loved it, and headed to Texas A&M to study socio-horticulture.

Q: What is your favorite thing about your gardens, either at work or home?

A: My favorite thing about our garden is its incredible capacity for transformation! In the garden, a lousy day can become wonderful, an uncertain child can become confident, plant waste can become compost, a seed can become a tomato – it never ceases to amaze me. I also love how much the garden teaches me about life; it's a constant source of metaphors and life lessons.

Q: What brought you to join the Tarrant County Food Policy Council and CGUA working group?

A: My first connection with TCFPC came about through a composting partnership between TAFB and CSFTW. Micheline and Becca graciously invited me to present about the partnership. Becca also brought me into the CGUA working group; she's so good at connecting people!

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

A: Well, of course, I would highly recommend volunteering at one of our TAFB gardens! www.tafb.org/volunteer Check out the fabulous volunteer opportunities for urban ag as well! There's nothing better than hands-on experience when it comes to gardening. For more local urban ag opportunities, see:

<https://growsoutheastfw.wixsite.com/texas/get-involved>

<https://www.unityunlimited.org/opals-farm.html>

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

A: My hopes for our gardens this year is a long list! A couple of small but exciting goals for our garden include thinning and sharing the thorny blackberries – yikes! – and putting together an organic pest control team. My hope for CGUA is to help us develop tangible resources for the incredible community gardens and urban farms in our area.

Q: Is there anything else you would you like to share with the readers?

A: I wish you few worries and many roses in this new year!



SEASONAL VEGGIE FUN FACTS - LETTUCE

Lettuce grows well during the cooler months in North Texas. There are hundreds of varieties of lettuce. Most are ready to harvest between 5 and 8 weeks after germination.

- Lettuce is in the Asteraceae family and is related to zinnias, chrysanthemum and sunflowers.
- There are four main types of lettuce: celtuce/asparagus lettuce, head lettuce, leaf lettuce and cos/romaine lettuce.
- Because lettuce is 95% water, it must be eaten fresh. It cannot be frozen, dried, pickled or canned.
- Lettuce is the second-most commonly consumed vegetable in the United States. Potatoes are the first!
- The average American eats almost 30 pounds of lettuce in a year!
- Calling lettuce "rabbit food" dates back to the 1930s!
- Lettuce should not be stored next to apples, bananas or other ethylene emitting fruits as it will become overripe more quickly.

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

Miso Glazed Turnips

Recipe adapted from Claire Saffitz in Bon Appetit magazine

Turnips are a tried and true winter root vegetable that have a wide range of uses. They can add a slightly sweet flavor to a pan of roasted vegetables, provide a bright crunch to a slaw when sliced thinly and kept raw, and they can also be transformed with the addition of complex flavored pantry ingredients. This recipe combines the sweet earthiness of turnips with the rich, funky, umami of miso paste in a unique and exciting veggie side dish.

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 pound turnips, peeled and chopped into ~1 inch wedges
- 1 Tbsp miso paste
- 1 Tbsp butter, unsalted
- 1 tsp maple syrup or honey
- Juice of one lemon or lime
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Sesame seeds, red chili flakes, fresh green herbs (optional)



PREPARATION

- Combine prepared turnips, miso, butter, and maple (or honey) in a medium-sized sauté pan. Add water into the pan until the turnips are just covered.
- Bring the pan to a boil over medium-high heat. Once boiling, allow the mixture to cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid is almost entirely cooked off (approximately 15-20 minutes).
- Once the liquid has cooked off, add in your citrus juice, salt, and pepper to taste and continue to cook until the exterior of the turnips are golden brown, indicating caramelization.
- The turnips should have a caramelized, slightly crispy exterior and a very tender interior. Top with sesame seeds, red chili flakes, and fresh green herbs or with other preferred garnishes.

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

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 New Year, Garden Friends! It's that time of year to pore through the beautiful pictures in seed catalogs and plan out all the amazing things that you're going to grow, without that pesky reality getting in the way. While I do let my imagination run wild with all the things I want to grow, I always remember that the soil and climate are better decision makers than I am. I always grow a variety that I know can handle our environment alongside the new varieties that I want to try out.

We are currently still succession planting turnips, radishes, spinach, and salad mix every 2 weeks. This warm winter has been really easy to grow in. I'm sure we'll have a deep freeze in late January, or early February, but I keep growing until the weather knocks me back. We're harvesting the best carrots of the year, turnips, daikon radishes, Easter egg radishes, winter greens, salad mix, bok choy, and arugula. There are all kinds of winter crops at the farmers market like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, lettuces, and some early onions have started showing up.

I keep my seedling shelf pretty full from January through April. I have a 4-foot-wide wire rack with 6 shelves. Each shelf has 2 fluorescent tube shop lights (4 bulbs) and 2 heating mats sitting on cardboard cut to fit the shelf. I use a timer so the lights are on 12 hours each day and use a temperature controller to keep the seedlings from getting over 80F during those surprise warm days. On January 1, I start lettuce, spring kale, chard, broccoli, and cabbage. The lettuce gets transplanted February 1, and the others get planted February 15. On January 23, I start my favorite crop of all, tomatoes! As seedlings get big enough, I move them out into my greenhouse. If you are only growing a few trays of seedlings, try building a cold frame with an old window. They work great and are much cheaper and easy to manage.

I make my own seedling mix because I use about a cubic yard each year. That would cost about \$400 if I bought it already made. Farms are all run on very tight margins, so every dollar counts. I'm always experimenting with my mix, but currently I mix peat moss, vermiculite (medium grain, if you have the choice), and compost in equal portions. A 5-gallon bucket of each mixed in a wheelbarrow makes a batch that fills about 16 trays for me. I usually add a cup of organic poultry manure fertilizer to the whole batch when I mix it up. I have some seedlings growing in a batch of mix that is peat moss, vermiculite, and yard sand, and the seedlings look really healthy. I have a sandy patch of the yard I can dig from, so I will be experimenting with that in the future. When my seedlings have a few good leaves, I fertilize with a tea made from a tablespoon of worm castings mixed into a gallon of water. Fish emulsion is good, too, but worm castings are the best.

A new housing development pushed all the local deer onto my farm, so we had to install a pretty expensive 8-foot fence. This year, instead of experimenting with a bunch of varieties of tomatoes, I'm going to try to produce as much as I can of my favorites that I know produce well in this area. I have tried lots of things to get the earliest tomatoes, but the best I have found is the right variety. Early Girl tomatoes have amazing flavor and produce a full 3 weeks earlier than the others. Celebrity tomatoes are my favorite for production. Since we can't eat a lot of salsa to keep that fresh tomato flavor all year, we rely on Celebrity for the biggest contribution. I love Black Krim and Cherokee Purple for their flavors. Black Krim is a little smaller. I had too many Cherokee Purple tomatoes that were over a pound. That's too much commitment for me. And last, but not least, I love the classic flavor, size, and meatiness of Better Boy tomatoes.

That's pretty much everything that's growing on around here.

Until next time,

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

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/>