

HOW'S IT GROWING?

**Community Gardens & Urban Agriculture
Working Group Newsletter**



CGUA HAPPENINGS

The next CGUA meeting will be on **Thursday, March 22nd from 3:00-4:30pm** at Tarrant Area Food Bank (2525 Cullen St. Fort Worth, TX 76107) in the Rodriguez Meeting Room-2nd Floor.

The group is collecting garden stories to share in this newsletter and on social media to promote the benefits of gardening. See p. 3 for more information.

For more information on how to be involved in the CGUA working group, please contact our chair Dave Aftandilian at d.aftandilian@tcu.edu.

EVENTS

3/3, 10am-12pm
Urban Gardening
brit.org

3/3, 1-3pm
Water Harvesting
brit.org

3/10, 11am
How to Grow the Best Tomatoes
marshallgrain.com

3/10, 10am-1pm
Intensive Companion Planting
TAFB Eventbrite.com

3/10, 1:30-4:30pm
The Dirt on Backyard Composting
TAFB Eventbrite.com

3/24, 10am-1pm
How to Start & Lead a Community Garden
TAFB Eventbrite.com

3/24, 10am
Worm Composting Workshop
Fortworthtexas.gov/Compostoutpost

3/24, 1pm
Backyard Chickens
marshallgrain.com



J. MARTIN JACQUET'S GARDEN CLUB

MERETTA SAVANNAH

Texas weather can be unpredictable and the members of J. Martin Jacquet Middle School's Garden Club are getting to experience this from a new perspective. They grew fall crops last semester and got to taste the fruits of their cold weather labor. The freeze and fluctuation in the weather had only allowed the heartiest of spinach and purple lettuce to survive. In order to give their spring seedlings a fighting chance in our ever-changing weather, the Garden Club constructed a greenhouse next to their plots. Later they observed the temperature changes from outside to inside the greenhouse. They not only discussed why it trapped heat and climate change, but also started to design and plan where to put the seedlings as they grow. Students have decided which crops they want to start and even started some plants from kitchen scraps. The goal is for them to grow enough vegetables for them to create their own recipes with and to gain a better understanding of where their food comes from.

UNCONVENTIONAL COMPOSTING METHODS

Becca Knutson—TAFB Community Garden Coordinator

March is a very busy time in the garden. Gardeners are cleaning out their raised beds, tending to their seedlings and adding rich compost to all of their growing spaces. Compost is recommended, by many sources, to be one of the simplest and most effective amendments to add to enrich the soil in your vegetable garden. If you have a large garden or a community garden, buying compost every season may become expensive. One solution is to make your own compost by building a traditional compost pile. However, not everyone has the room or permission to build their own pile. Luckily, there are other options for adding nutrients to your garden beds.

Trench composting is one method that gardeners use that can be very effective and low-maintenance. Trench composting involves digging a 12-inch deep trench in the growing area, filling it with food scraps and covering it up with soil. This method is very handy for composting large amounts of food scraps and will greatly reduce the risk of critters finding your compostable goods. For more information about trench composting, visit: <https://www.rodalorganiclifecom/garden/how-to-use-food-scrapsin-the-garden-without-a-compost-bin>.

Another burying method involves cutting the bottom off of a large, plastic trash can, digging a hole for the trash can and using the trash can in the ground to dispose of kitchen scraps. Make sure your trash can has a snug-fitting lid to prevent wildlife from accessing your scraps. The worms and other organisms in the soil will find your food scraps and break them down. When picking a spot for your composting bin, look for areas with plants nearby so they benefit from the nutrients leaching from the bin. This same method can be done on a smaller scale using plastic coffee tubs buried directly in the garden bed. While the above method does not produce any finished compost, other, similar methods do. For more information, visit: <http://www.seattletilth.org/learn/resources-1/compost/HomemadeFoodDigester.pdf>.

To learn more about composting, see p. 1 of this newsletter for the various composting classes being held this month at different organizations across town.



DID YOU KNOW?

Vegetable gardening has always been a hobby and beloved pastime of many people around the world. Unfortunately, most gardeners are so busy tending their own gardens that they hardly get a chance to “compare notes” with other people gardening in the same region.

Luckily, we live in a world where information is constantly at our fingertips and we can instantly connect with others through the internet. The North Texas Vegetable Gardeners Facebook page has proven to be a valuable tool to those who are gardening in the DFW area. Members ask questions, seek advice, show off their gardens and talk about what they plan to do next.

If you are looking for a way to get more gardening tips and connect with others who share your love of plants, join the North Texas Vegetable Gardeners group at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NorthTexasVegetableGardeners/?fref=nf>.

RESOURCES

Local Nurseries:

- Archie’s Gardenland
- Calloway’s
- Redenta’s

Free Seeds:

- TAFB Community Garden Program
- Contact seed companies

Bulk Soil/Compost:

- Living Earth
- Silver Creek
- City of FW Drop-off Stations

Garden Curricula:

- CGUA-
www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/cgua-working-group.html

Texas AgriLife Extension:

- www.agrilifeextension.tamu.edu

Community Food Systems Map:

- <http://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/community-food-systems-north-texas.html>

MARCH TO-DO

- Feed the soil by adding compost before planting and around existing crops.
- Get any cool-season crops in the ground as soon as possible. Soon, it will be too warm for them.
- In mid- to late March, plant corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and squash.
- Be prepared to cover warm-season crops during a late freeze.
- Feed young plants with an organic liquid fertilizer.



Kale-Apple Salad with Honey Dressing

Prep Time: 20 minutes
Servings: 10
Serving Size: 1 cup

Ingredients

5 cups chopped kale
2 small apples, diced
1/4 cup dried cranberries
1/4 cup chopped pecans
1/4 cup feta cheese
Dressing:
4 tablespoons honey
4 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper



Preparation

Scrub and rinse kale and apples. Pat all produce dry. Cut any large veins out of the kale leaves and chop leaves into bite-sized pieces.

Chop the apple into bite-sized pieces.

Add the kale, apple, cranberries, pecans and feta cheese to a large mixing bowl.

In a small bowl, whisk together the honey, oil, vinegar, salt and pepper.

Pour the dressing mixture over the salad mixture.

Toss well to coat.

Substitutions

- Use a sweet, crisp pear instead of or in addition to the apple.
 - Add shredded chicken to make a hearty, filling salad.
 - Walnuts may be used instead of pecans.
 - Canola oil may be used instead of olive oil.



GARDEN STORIES

Do you have a 100-200 word garden story to share? Has gardening impacted your life in a meaningful way? Send us your garden stories and experiences along with a couple pictures and we will share them in our newsletter and on social media.

All stories and pictures can be sent to our chair, Dave Aftandilian at d.aftandilian@tcu.edu.