

JULY 2025

WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture
Working Group

CGUA MEETING NOTES - 5/22/25

The CGUA working group last met on May 22nd at Rosen Heights Community Garden. Twelve people were in attendance.

We started with updates about the Tarrant Area Food Bank's garden-related programs from Manny Herrera:

- TAFB started up the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) at Cowtown Farmers Market on May 3; it will run through Sept. 27. They will be giving out both WIC vouchers and senior FMNP vouchers to eligible folks at Cowtown. If you have time on a Saturday, they could use your volunteer help; please contact Manny at manny.herrera@tafb.org.
- Manny and the garden team are working on completing site visits to their garden partners. They currently have about 55 garden partners.
- Manny also reminded us that if your community garden needs volunteers, their volunteer website is available for use.

Jesse Herrera sent an update about Grow Southeast and Greg Joel gave an update on Opal's Farm:

- Tabor Farms is working on rebuilding and hopes to have produce by fall.
- All the Grow Southeast farms need volunteers.
- Opal's Farm is doing well and will have tomatoes to bring to the farmers market very soon!
- The first Taste for the C.U.R.E. urban farming class graduated in June. They are down to about 12 students from 25 and plan to charge a small fee to encourage commitment for the next cohort.

Becca Knutson reminded us to shop at our favorite local farmers markets (Cowtown, Azle, Saginaw, Benbrook, Clearfork, Crowley, Burleson and more!) and that summer produce is now available!

- Wednesday markets at Cowtown Farmers Market started on June 25th.
- SNAP and Double Up are available at many markets and farmstands in the county.
- FMNP & SFMNP are available at Cowtown Farmers Market and the Thursday TAFB Markets.

Anne Santana and Joey Hughes provided an update about school gardens in the area.

- School is out for the year! Many gardens will be "sleeping" for the summer while others continue to have workdays. The end of the school year was filled with last minute chores and tearful goodbyes.

Following the meeting, AJ provided a tour of the Rosen Heights Community Garden as a part of the Growing Good Food grant provided by Texas Health Resources. Their garden focuses on herbs, pollinator plants and creating a welcoming community gathering space.

The next CGUA meeting will be on Thursday, July 31st at 3pm. Walnut Ridge Baptist Church in Mansfield.

The next garden tour will be at Grace Community Garden on July 13th from 1-3pm. See page two for more info about the garden and watch your email for details from Dave.

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 31st, 3pm

Location: Walnut Ridge Baptist Church, Mansfield

TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

TCFPC Networking Meeting

September 4th, 5-7pm

Location TBD

FORT WORTH BOTANIC GARDEN

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

NTX SCHOOL GARDEN NETWORK

Meetups, workdays & classes!

<https://ntxschoolgardennetwork.org/events>

TIMBERVIEW FARMSTEAD

Events, classes & tours!

<https://timberviewfarmstead.com>

COMMUNITY LINK MARKETS

Azle Farmers Market

<https://azlefarmersmarket.org>

Saginaw Farmers Market

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

MINDFUL MARKET

July 5th, 11am to 2pm

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

COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

EVERY Saturday, 8am to NOON
Wednesdays, Mid-June to Mid-August 8am-NOON

www.cowtownmarket.com

TAFB AG HUB MARKETS

Thursdays in July, 4-6pm

<https://tafb.org/farmers-market/>



“There are people who can afford to eat healthfully and there are people who cannot. I’d say that represents a fundamental brokenness of our system and our food supply. It doesn’t have to be like that.”

MICHAEL RUHLMAN



Featured Community Garden

GRACE COMMUNITY GARDEN

LEADERS: Vivian Johnson and Benita Parker

LOCATION:

Grace Temple SDA
4200 E Berry St., Fort Worth

TYPE OF OPERATION:

Neighborhood Garden, Donation Garden, Plot Allotments

GROWING METHODS:

Raised Beds

TYPES OF PRODUCTS GROWN:

Variety of Vegetables and pollinator crops

WHERE TO FIND THEM:

grace-community-garden.webflow.io



TO-DO TO GROW FOOD IN JULY!



BY BECCA KNUTSON, HOLLOW TRACE MARKET FARM

TIPS AND TASKS FOR GROWING FOOD IN NORTH TEXAS

June was a crazy month at the farm, staying busy with harvests, weed management and caring for summer crops. The heat is finally setting in and it's time to start slowing down in July.

- **Continue to plant summer crops** - If you've got any open space in the garden, you can get second successions of some summer crops like okra, long beans, sweet potatoes, melons, corn, cucumbers, squash and southern peas. This is also a perfect time to plant pumpkins and winter squash. Be mindful of "days to harvest" as we near the end of the month.
- **Enjoy your summer harvests!** - Get out there and enjoy your fresh tomatoes, peppers, squash, herbs, eggplant, beans, okra and cucumbers! Do some canning or preserving and share with your friends and neighbors!
- **Begin starting seeds for fall crops** - Some fall crops require 8-12 weeks of indoor growth to be ready for transplanting in the fall. This month, I will be starting strawberries, leeks, bunching onions, big leafy greens, celery and brassicas from seed inside. Some of these crops will be ready to plant in late August while others will be planted in October.
- **Manage weeds and walkways** - Keep your garden tidy to allow for the best harvests and easiest cleanup in the fall. If you can get weeds out as the heat sets in, they will have trouble growing back in our hot, dry summer.
- **Trellis your tomatoes** - Continue to tie up and trim your tomatoes throughout the season to increase harvest and keep your plants clean.
- **Add mulch around summer crops** - Adding mulch around your tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and cucumbers can help retain soil moisture during the hottest months. Straw or leaf mulches are your best bet. Woodchip mulch can be too dense for our tender veggie crops.
- **Rest and relax!** It's hot out there and there aren't a ton of big tasks to do. Make sure to take a break, avoid working in the middle of the day and do some planning for fall and winter crops.

Happy gardening everyone! Stay safe and hydrated out there while you work in your gardens. Be sure to enjoy the fruits of your labor!



IN THE NEWS

- **Watermelon profit concerns** <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2025/06/17/watermelon-prices-not-so-sweet-for-texas-growers/>
- **Permits and Water Safety** <https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/abbott-signs-law-permitting-use-of-fracking-wastewater/287-89df9861-29c7-4faa-b658-d651f94013ae>
- **Fort Worth Leaders join National Farm Life** <https://fortworthreport.org/2025/06/10/national-farm-life-appoints-three-fort-worth-area-leaders-to-board-of-directors/>



CULTIVATING WELLNESS: CREATING A GAME PLAN FOR YOUR BUDGET

BY NIKO HUNT

Most people don't realize it, but your financial stability can have a tremendous impact on your health and wellbeing. Preparing for the financial future can also improve your physical, mental, and emotional health. With prices rising and resources becoming scarce it is important for growers to plan accordingly to avoid barriers and plan for unexpected costs. Prioritizing your goals and objectives and creating a realistic budget can help you make cost effective decisions. Try these actionable practices to help you stay on track and allocate expenses to support your wellness!

- Utilize your resources including land, labor, equipment, and capital
- Track expenses by categorizing costs
- Calculate cost of production associated with growth
- Develop a budget of projected expenses and income
- Prioritize investments and focus on purchasing necessary equipment
- Take advantage of technology options to help you stay organized

Taking charge of your finances can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be! Start by writing down your ideas and go from there. Think about long-term and short-term goals, challenges, and outcomes. Collaborate with other growers and maximize your resources to reduce stress and empower you to create stability. Planning how you spend your dollars is self-care and it can help you save money; your pockets will thank you!

Peach Burrata Caprese

This Peach Burrata Caprese makes for a delightful summer salad! Grilling enhances the natural sweetness of the peaches and is a game changer combined with creamy burrata, drizzled in olive oil and balsamic glaze!

INGREDIENTS

- 3 large fresh peaches, halved and pitted
- 2 (4 ounce) balls burrata cheese
- fresh basil leaves
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic glaze, or more to taste
- cracked black pepper to taste

PREPARATION

- Heat a pan on the stove and place peaches inside just long enough for peaches to get grill marks and begin to caramelize on the surface, about 3 minutes.
- In a bowl or serving platter, place 2 balls of burrata cheese in the center and cut or tear open so cheese can ooze out naturally.
- Assemble peaches and the basil around burrata. Drizzle with olive oil and balsamic glaze; grind a small amount of black pepper on top.
- Enjoy!



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>

RECOMMENDED BOOKS, AUDIO AND VIDEO

[The School Garden Podcast](#)

By Mary Jo Greene & Anne Santana

[Charles Dowding's Skills For Growing](#)

By Charles Dowding

[The Market Gardener: A Successful Grower's Handbook for Small-Scale Organic Farming](#)

By Jean-Martin Fortier

[Diego Footer Farm Small, Farm Smart Podcast YouTube Channel Books](#)

[Growing for Market](#)

Free articles, email subscriptions, podcasts and MORE!

[Bootstrap Farmer](#)

Articles, videos, podcasts and MORE!





GREG'S TOP CROPS

Sweet Potatoes
Winter Squash
Long Beans
Okra
Melons
Southern Peas



FARM RESOURCES

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 Health Resources
Community Hope
<https://www.texashealth.org/About-Texas-Health/Community-Hope>

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

June was such a great month for Opal's Farm. The milder June temperatures and good rain throughout the month made the crops pop. The Trinity River basin is covered in green and sprinkled with the remaining Spring wildflowers. Unfortunately, July is here, and the drier, hotter weather puts more stress on the plants.

The crops will require regular irrigation this month. We use a soil moisture monitor to make sure that the beds are getting adequate water. A thirty-to-forty percent moisture reading is ideal but the reality here in Texas is more like twenty to twenty-five percent. We use a soil thermometer that I've had for years but they are available through Johnny's Select Seeds and other retailers.

I also spray our plants, particularly our tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants, with a fermented compost tea that is made for us by Carpool Compost. It's not yet commercially available, but compost teas like Garret Juice © are available at your local feed store or garden center. The main difference between the compost tea we use and others is the fermenting and the dilution rate. I spray weekly throughout the summer. Even when the tomatoes go dormant during the summer heat, the plant stays healthier for a great Fall crop. Healthier plants also resist disease and pest pressure better through the long summer days.

We start new hours for Opal's Farm Stand in July due to staffing shortages. We will be open on Saturday afternoons from 1:00 to 3:00PM at the "Doc" Sessions Community Center parking lot on the corner of 4th Street and Sylvania. We accept SNAP/Lone Star Cards and hope to have Double-Up Bucks available later in July. We'll still be at Cowtown Farmers Market on Saturday morning from 8:00am until noon.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers this month. It's been a blessing to have so many extra hands as I'm still slowed by a knee injury. They really came through for Opal's Farm.

Finally, our "Taste the C.U.R.E." students finished the program and "graduated" on June 28th at the Tarleton State University Fort Worth campus. We have been honored and privileged to be a part of their farming journey. Their plots are beautiful and bountiful. We hope that they take what they've learned and share it with their neighbors and that more urban farms start here in Fort Worth and the surrounding community.

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





THE DIRTY LIFE: A MEMOIR OF FARMING, FOOD AND LOVE BY KRISTIN KIMBALL

A BOOK REVIEW BY BECCA KNUTSON

June is a hot and busy month on the farm. Like most farmers and gardeners, I am dealing with the heat, the weeds, the bugs and the bountiful harvest of delicious summer veggies. For my audiobook selection this month, I was looking for someone to commiserate with about my experience with and to spend some of my time. I found *The Dirty Life: A Memoir of Farming, Food and Love* by Kristin Kimball to listen to and fill that desire. Kristin tells the story of how she gave up her life as a freelance writer in New York City to start a farm with her soon-to-be husband in upstate New York. Together, they build Essex Farm which provides a “whole diet CSA” for their community. The farm, their farming methods and their success are all fascinating and impressive but are not the focus of the story. We learn about Kristin’s growth as a person, the challenges she faces and her journey from “city girl” to “farmer.”

The book resonated with me in many ways since I have also recently taken on the job title of “farmer” and the joys and struggles that come with it. I think many farmers and gardeners who read this newsletter will find comfort and connection in her story as well. The book takes the reader through Kristin’s journey from concept to completion and even gives a glimpse into the future. She provides stories of success and failure along with deep insights and words of wisdom. Instead of providing an outline and summary of Kristin’s story, I thought I would share some of my favorite quotes from the book and how they connect to the life of a farmer.

“ And every moment was filled with urgent work, and the list of things to do, at the end of the day, was longer than it had been that dawn. ”

Kristin Kimball

As many of you know, a few years ago I was offered an incredible opportunity to take over Charlie Blaylock’s farm and run it as my own. I left my job at the food bank and moved out to Azle with Drew and the herd of pets. It has been a challenging and wonderful journey so far and I have no regrets, but it has brought about some interesting changes and realizations. Kimball writes, “...farming takes root in you and crowds out other endeavors, makes them seem paltry. Your acres become a world.” Running a farm feels a bit like an obsession – I think about it more than anything else and most things are less important. It’s very easy to say “no” to invitations for fun because of the obligation to the land and the living things I’ve claimed responsibility for.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

[AfroGreen’d](#) [Conundrum Farms](#) [Grow North Texas](#)

[Grow Southeast](#) [NTX School Garden Network](#)

[Opal’s Farm](#) [Southside Community Garden](#)

[Tarrant Area Food Bank Farm & Garden Programs](#)

[Timberview Farmstead](#)



THE DIRTY LIFE: A MEMOIR ON FARMING, FOOD AND LOVE (CONT.)

While it sounds dark, Kristin says it well, “A farm is a manipulative creature. There is no such thing as finished. Work comes in a stream and has no end. There are only the things that must be done now and things that can be done later. The threat the farm has got on you, the one that keeps you running from can until can't, is this: do it now, or some living thing will wilt or suffer or die. It's blackmail, really.” I imagine that many small business owners feel the same way throughout the day as they work on the long list of tasks to do while other tasks keep adding themselves to the list. I've been frustrated with the number of people who don't understand the commitment and dedication required by farming. I also understand the frustration people must have with me for my unwillingness to push aside my responsibilities for a moment of fun or a quick trip. While farming is overwhelming and the responsibilities are never-ending, I resonated with Kristin when she said, “I was in love with the work, too, despite its overabundance.”

Something else farming and gardening can teach us is about life cycles – life and death, success and failure. Luckily in farming, these cycles can play out many times throughout a year, so we get a lot of practice experiencing them, dealing with them and then moving on to the next thing. I love how beautifully Kristin views these cycles, “Sitting at the table, watching the cards being dealt, I heard a man say that the difference between an amateur and a pro is that the pro doesn't have an emotional reaction to losing anymore. It's just the other side of winning. I guess I'm a farmer now, because I'm used to loss like this, to death of all kinds, and to rot. It's just the other side of life. It is your first big horse and all he meant to you, and it is also his bones and skin breaking down in the compost pile, almost ready to be spread on the fields.” Next time the darker side of any cycle gets me down, I'm going to try to remind myself that it's just the other side of light.

Similarly, Kristin has some wise words to share about success and satisfaction when it comes to plans we have and things we're passionate about: “Satisfaction comes from trying hard things and then going on to the next hard thing, regardless of the outcome. What mattered was whether or not you were moving in a direction you thought was right.” Not everything is going to be profitable or last forever. We may not end up reaching all our goals or doing everything as well as we planned, but we can reframe how we measure success and satisfaction, which is very helpful when it comes to growing food because there are often forces beyond our control that determine the outcomes.

In the epilogue, Kirstin recalls a meeting in which a colleague expressed his desire to retire and run a little farm. Kristin and I had similar thoughts about this idyllic daydream “...in my experience, tranquil and simple are two things farming is not. Nor is it lucrative, stable, safe or easy. Sometimes the work is enough to make you weep.” What that man wanted was a nice, small, tidy garden.

Farming is hard, y'all. Farming is hard, lonely, frustrating and never-ending. Your friends and family might not understand why you work so hard. They might resent you for missing time with them. You will be covered in dirt constantly; your house will be a mess and you're never going to make a lot of money. At the same time, you get the fantastic opportunity to grow delicious food for your community to enjoy, you spend your days soaking up the sun, you will gain strength and determination you didn't know you had, you will experience glorious wins and feel indescribable freedom. I am grateful to find Kristin's book during one of the hardest parts of the year to know that I share similar experiences with another person in this world. So, I will leave you with a quote of my own that I once said to a friend, “this [farming] will either be the best thing I've done or the thing that will break me.” It's very likely both.

