

AUGUST 2025

WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group

CGUA MEETING NOTES - 7/31/25

The CGUA Working Group last met on July 31 at The Garden at the Ridge, Walnut Ridge Baptist Church in Mansfield. Eight people were in attendance.

Jesse shared the following Grow Southeast update by email:

- Overall: Working on Fort Worth Urban Agriculture policy reform project. Currently engaging with city staff to unpack the permitting process and create consistent interpretation. Researching policies in other cities, and building connections with other Texas partners.
- Tabor Farms: Production beds have been redeveloped and planted with cover crops. Planning for a late fall harvest. Looking for volunteers to assist during the week. Coordinating an irrigation repair day soon.
- Opal's Farm: In production, with great results this summer (see Opal's Picks column on p.4). Greg is looking for additional volunteers to assist at the farm.
- Mind Your Garden: Looking for partnership opportunities including gardening workshops, cooking demos, and events. Looking for volunteers to help at the farm.

Anne updated the group about some local school garden news. Teachers return next week so the group is working to assist them with their gardens. Recent changes at FWISD have been challenging, such as moving most of the staff who assisted schools with family engagement last year (including in the gardens) to other schools. But an opportunity may arise to partner with the Early Childhood Department, so fingers crossed for that.

Ilyse shared about Grow North Texas's Giving Grove program. They plan to install 15 to 20 orchards this year in the DFW region, free of charge to the host sites (beyond the labor and water they need to provide). They could use a couple more sites in Tarrant County, so if you know of a school or church or other worthy institution that might be interested, please reach out to Ilyse (ilyse@grownorthtexas.org).

Dave reminded the group about our grant from North Texas Healthy Communities to tour and learn from leaders in local community and school gardens. A good-sized group enjoyed a visit to Grace Temple Seventh Day Adventist Church's Food Pantry Garden on July 13. Our host was Vivian Johnson, who also attended this CGUA meeting and described the history and mission of the garden. The church provides space for local African immigrants to grow produce, including a variety of eggplants known as African eggs, and also drives them from their apartment complex to the garden once a week. Volunteers grow produce in other plots that is donated to seniors through the church's food pantry. They grow their own transplants from seeds for the garden.

We ended the meeting with a tour of The Garden at the Ridge led by its founder, Marilyn Sproul. Walnut Ridge Baptist Church has been very supportive of the garden, providing space and water, and trying to fill other needs that arise. Her husband built the garden beds, and volunteers help her tend to them, including through hand watering. Most of the produce they grow is donated to people who need it through the Mansfield Mission food pantry. We got to see some amazingly happy (for the searing late July temps) herbs and flowers, as well as share in the abundance of long beans happily producing through the heat.

The next CGUA meeting will be on Thursday, September 25 at 3pm, place TBA.

The next garden tour (and work day!) will be at WJ Turner Elementary School Garden, Saturday, September 27, 9-11am. Watch your email for details to come from Anne.

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

September 25th, 3pm

Location: TBD

TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

TCFPC Networking Meeting

September 4th, 5-7pm

Location TBD

DALLAS INNERCITY GROWERS SUMMIT

October 27

<https://digsummit.org>

FORT WORTH BOTANIC GARDEN

<https://fwbhg.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

August 2nd, 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



“The natural order of things is immutable. Seed, flower, fruit, decline, death, decay. Seed. Each stage has its own drama and its own particular beauty.”
KRISTEN KIMBALL



Featured Community Garden

GARDEN AT THE RIDGE

LEADER: Marilyn Sproul

LOCATION:

Walnut Ridge Baptist Church
1201 TX360
Mansfield, TX 76063

TYPE OF OPERATION:

Donation Garden,
Teaching Garden

GROWING METHODS:

Raised Beds, Outdoor Classroom,
Pollinator Beds, Composting

TYPES OF PRODUCTS GROWN:

Variety of vegetables and fruits

WHERE TO FIND THEM:

gardenattheridge.org



TO-DO TO GROW FOOD IN AUG.!



BY BECCA KNUTSON, HOLLOW TRACE MARKET FARM

TIPS AND TASKS FOR GROWING FOOD IN NORTH TEXAS

Well y'all, I thought June was crazy, but I forgot about July. July was mild and productive this year. I had some of my biggest harvests and best sales weeks in July this year. Now that August is here, we can expect some higher temps, but I guess we'll have to wait and see!

- **Continue to plant summer crops** - If you have some space, there is a little bit more time to attempt a crop of cucumbers, long beans, green beans, Southern peas, pumpkins and winter squash. Be mindful of the space you need for fall crops and your "days to harvest" estimates to avoid frost damage before getting a harvest.
- **Enjoy your summer harvests!** - Enjoy some canning, dehydrating or freezing of your summer harvests. Spend some time inside chopping and mixing while it's too hot to be outside all day.
- **Begin starting seeds for fall crops** - Continue (or begin) starting seeds inside for your fall crops. It's still too warm to direct sow most fall crops outside, but there are several things you can start inside. Try starting cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, collards, chard, mustards, celery and fall herbs inside to be transplanted out in 6 to 8 weeks.
- **Transplant fall crops** - Brassicas and leafy greens can be planted out starting in the middle of the month. Plant out large, healthy seedlings and use mulch to keep the soil cool and moist. Shade cloth is recommended for all early plantings of fall crops.
- **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.
- **Start pulling your summer crops** - If you have a small space like me, you may need to start pulling tomatoes, cucumbers, and beans as they tire for the year. Getting a head start on removing spent crops can allow for some early fall plantings.
- **Rest and relax!** If you're like me, you need this reminder. August is a great time to take a break and enjoy some other activities.

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

- The Lonestar state's most important crops <https://www.agriculture.com/what-s-happening-with-texas-crops-11777958>
- Synthetic bait designed to attract adult screwworm flies <https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/texas-news/texas-deploys-aggressive-effort-to-stop-screwworm-crisis/3890810/>
- Transforming Food and Agriculture through a systems approach <https://foodtank.com/news/2025/07/fao-report-calls-for-system-wide-action-on-food-and-agriculture/>



@TARRANTCOUNTYFOODPOLICYCOUNCIL

CULTIVATING WELLNESS: HOW SETTING BOUNDARIES CAN HELP YOU LIVE BETTER

BY NIKO HUNT

Sometimes when we hear the word “boundaries” it can have a negative connotation; however, recognizing feelings, beliefs, and needs can contribute to the well-being of growers. Determining your boundaries requires a blending of self-awareness, expertise, and approach. Think about how you can best respect yourself, your land, and others by taking inventory of who you are and with what you are comfortable!

There are several types of boundaries; consider the ones that mean the most to you and the outcomes you hope to experience.

Types of boundaries:

- Emotional
- Physical
- Financial
- Time

Outcomes:

- What are your values?
- What are some of your emotional triggers?
- How do you spend your time?
- What are your financial priorities?

If you’ve never thought about these questions there’s an opportunity to start now, especially with the uncertainty of today’s environment. Write down your thoughts and be honest with yourself about what you want and need. Keep in mind it is important to have support when setting boundaries and navigating challenges. By prioritizing limits growers can create more sustainable workspaces, advance their mental/physical health, and shape stronger personal/community relationships.

Lavender Lemonade

Sip on this refreshing lavender lemonade all summer long! Made with lavender, freshly squeezed lemon juice, honey, and sweetener, this recipe has a delightful floral flavor that’s not too overpowering. Make this fun drink and stay cool!

INGREDIENTS

- 6 cups of water
- ½ cup sugar or sweetener of your choice
- ¼ cup honey
- 3 tbsp fresh lavender
- 2 freshly squeezed lemon juice

PREPARATION

- Boil 2 cups of water and sugar (sweetener) until dissolved. Remove from heat. Stir in honey and lavender; steep for 2 hours.
- Strain mixture into a large pitcher, saving the lavender pieces.
- Add 4 cups of water, squeezed lemon juice, and lavender.
- Mix well, add lemon slices for garnish, serve over ice, and 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](#)

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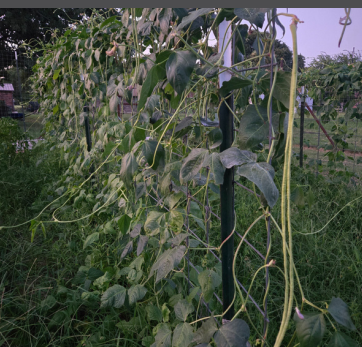
[Bootstrap Farmer](#)

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
gownorthtexas.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

Most of you know my friend and mentor, Charlie Blaylock, who wrote this column for many years prior to moving to the mountains of New Mexico. We would meet regularly to grab a bite to eat, discuss farming things and share life stuff.

One August day before he moved, I told him I was thinking about retiring. “Why do I do this stuff?” I wasn’t sure if I wanted to deal with the Texas summers anymore. He laughed and said that every farmer in Texas says that in August. I should slow down, take care of myself, and hang in there to see what happens when the nights get a bit cooler. Sure enough, when the nights dropped below eighty degrees and the new seed germinated well, I was filled with energy to get the rest of the Fall crops in.

I often tell our volunteers that I had to wait until I was sixty years old before I figured out what I wanted to do when I grew up. I love farming and being part of this community of growers and food system advocates. I think we all do and that’s why growing, whether in a backyard, community garden, or an urban farm, changing our local food system, and equitable access to healthy food for everyone is so important to us. All our efforts to work for change, healthier living, and for our community can become a little overwhelming in the triple-digit heat.

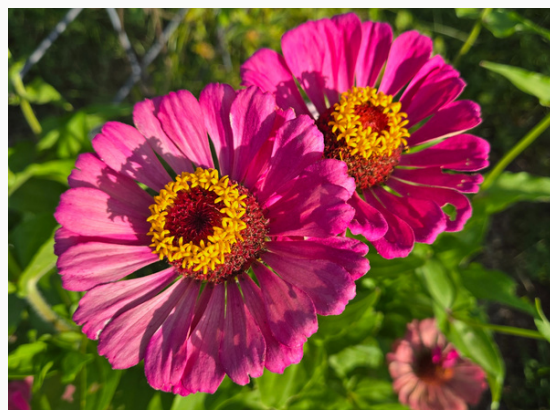
I thought I’d pass on Charlie’s advice and encourage everyone to slow down and take some time for yourselves. I’m still preparing beds for Fall, weeding, irrigating and all the other maintenance work the farm requires, but I’m also taking far more “A/C breaks” in the truck than usual. I don’t stress over what needs to be done but focus on what I’ve accomplished that day. I’ve been amazed by how much more work gets done when I don’t worry about tomorrow.

So, my friends, August is here. The farm will survive, and Fall will bring its bountiful harvest. My friend Jim used to tell me to remember Rule 69, “Life’s way too serious to be taken so seriously.” Work a little, play a little, and find the air conditioning every now and then. Just remember, September’s coming....

Greg Joel

Farm Manager – Opal's Farm

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



THE SERVICEBERRY: ABUNDANCE AND RECIPROCITY IN THE NATURAL WORLD BY ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

A BOOK REVIEW BY BECCA KNUTSON

This month's listen comes from two separate recommendations from Susan Barker and Dave Aftandilian. Both thought I would enjoy *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Kimmerer is an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi nation of Oklahoma, a Ph.D. botanist, and a mother, so she has a unique point of view to share with her readers. The book is delightful and thought-provoking along with being relatively short. Most of the books I've listened to this year have been at least 9 hours long and *The Serviceberry* clocked in at just under 2 hours. At first, I was disappointed to see that it would be such a quick listen, but I soon came to appreciate its brevity as my brain has been tired and sluggish during this busy month.

In *The Serviceberry*, Kimmerer discusses the concept of a "gift economy", how it compares to capitalism and ways the two structures can exist together. Dave and Susan both provided me with their thoughts on the book since I had a hard time summarizing it.

From Dave, "I think her main point is that we need to align our economics with the gift economy that nature nurtures and flourishes within. From a Native American worldview the most important word is in her subtitle: *reciprocity*. Reciprocity teaches us that we need to give back something meaningful and equivalent to what we take from nature. If we redesign our economies this way, they can be sustainable over generations (which the current one is definitely not)."

From Susan, "*The Serviceberry* resonated with me as I thought of the abundance of our garden in fall when so many perennials want to be divided and shared with neighbors, multiplying enough to fill several gardens over. Or the magic of volunteer cherry tomatoes growing in the compost pile. Remember how shocked volunteers would be sometimes at the Kitchen Garden or Learning Garden when the harvest would pile up? They hadn't realized there was so much food tucked in there among the leaves and weeds. That's what got me about *The Serviceberry* - what it feels like to see the world and see abundance instead of scarcity. It's the difference between joy and fear, and it simply may have a lot to do with how we choose our attitudes and perceptions."

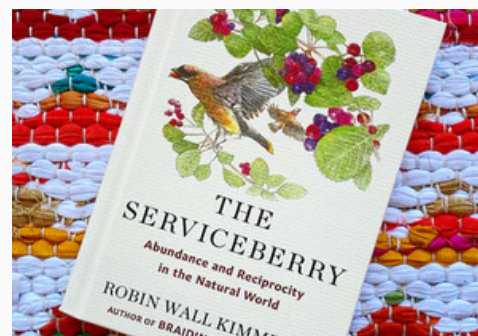
Thank you to Dave and Susan for sharing their comments on this uplifting and quick read! I'll be back next month with another book to review.



“
When an economic
system actively destroys
what we love, isn't it time
for a different system?

Robin Wall Kimmerer

”



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](#)





GRACE TEMPLE FOOD PANTRY GARDEN TOUR

JULY 13TH, 2025

We had a great group of folks who turned out to tour the Grace Temple Food Pantry Garden on July 13th. Thank you to Lauren Hickman for providing some details about the garden to go with the fabulous pictures!

- Vivian talked about original plan of having immediate neighbors garden in the space. They found that time constraints don't allow that for the families immediately around the church.
- There is an apartment complex by another of the church's properties where a large group of women expressed interest, so the church picks them up to garden – each woman has a plot.
- There is a community section for the women growing food for their families and a food pantry section for donations.
- The beds are VegoGarden raised beds. Vivian demonstrated assembly of one of the new self-watering beds that they use around the perimeter of the garden.
- The other beds are on irrigation and use square foot garden grid drip lines in the beds.
- Two new tables with umbrellas provide shade for the gardeners.
- The garden includes plants for pollinators.
- The garden is fenced for safety and upkeep.

