

DECEMBER 2020

WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group



CGUA MEETING NOTES - 11/19/20

Virtual CGUA Meeting on November 19th - The Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture working group met last month to touch base on current projects and to brainstorm new ones.

- **Adjoa Brown of The Blue Zone Project** gave a presentation on the ways that BZP helps to keep school gardens well-resourced and connected. There are school gardens needing help right now as school gardens have been left unattended during COVID closures.
- **Charlie Blaylock updated the group about Grow Southeast projects.** Greater Mount Tabor is making great progress and needs volunteers to help move soil and build garden beds.
- **Becca Knutson discussed TAFB community garden efforts.** Several projects are gaining momentum and Becca is continuing to build a list of contacts for the Community Garden Advisory Committee.

Project for 2021:

- The group decided that CGUA needs to be a resource connection for all the great work happening in the community. To start, we will create a Facebook group to help connect projects and resources. We will also ask the Board to help us fundraise for community efforts related to CGUA projects.

Join us for our next meeting via **Zoom on Thursday, January 21st at 3pm.**

For meeting info, questions and more information about CGUA, contact our Chair, Dave Aftandilian at d.aftandilian@tcu.edu.

IN THE NEWS

- UNTHSC wins city's Environmental Excellence Award for its community garden <https://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/fort-worth/article246976607.html>
- Information about an upcoming Agrilife conference for controlled-environment specialty crop production <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/11/17/2020-conference/>
- A look at the Double Up Food Bucks program at the Cowtown Farmers Market https://spectrumlocalnews.com/share/tx/dallas-fort-worth/news/2020/11/14/new-initiative-makes-healthy-food-more-affordable-in-fort-worth?cid=share_clip
- A report exploring how animal agriculture can contribute to a pandemic and exploring local farming solutions <https://www.kxan.com/news/coronavirus/how-animal-agriculture-could-contribute-to-pandemics-and-solutions-to-prevent-it/>

TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

Dec. 3rd, 4PM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88022068894>

TARRANT AREA FOOD BANK

Kitchen Garden Cooking School - Broccoli Dec. 2

Transforming Landscapes with Edible Plants Dec. 17

tarrantareafoodbank.eventbrite.com

Virtual Gardening Content

Tarrant Area Food Bank

youtube.com/user/TarrantAreaFoodBank

Water University

youtube.com/c/WaterUniversity

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

youtube.com/c/txextension

BRIT

youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet

Tarrant County Master Gardeners

youtube.com/c/TarrantCountyMasterGardeners

Dig Deep Conference 2020

tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/dig-deep-conference-2020

SATURDAYS 8AM-12PM

Cowtown Farmers Market

3821 SOUTHWEST BLVD





"At Christmas I
no more desire a
rose Than wish a
snow in May's
new-fangled
mirth; But like of
each thing that
in season grow."

WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE



DECEMBER TO-DO

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

Finish planting cool
season vegetable crops
and herbs if the weather
stays mild.

Plant bulbs for spring
like tulips and hyacinth.

Mulch bare soil and
beds.

Cut back spent
perennials, leaving 6
inches of stem for
critters to use as shelter.

Prepare for seed
starting and garden
planning.

INDOOR GARDEN ACTIVITIES

BY BECCA KNUTSON

As you'll read in *Shine's Garden Chats* later in this newsletter, winter is a great time to plan for the next season of gardening. Since many of us will be staying closer to home this year, browse the ideas listed below for other ways to stay busy with garden task while keeping warm inside.

- **Organize your seed supply** - If you're anything like me, you end up collecting more seeds than you could ever use. Sort through your seeds to look for old seed or seeds you will never grow. Make a list of what you want to grow in spring and order from your favorite company.
- **Draw a garden planting plan** - Spend some extra time this year sketching out your garden and assigning spaces to everything you want to grow. Maybe you're planning to grow enough to preserve, or you want to try several new varieties. Having a planting plan will ensure you have space for everything you want to grow!
- **Organize your pots and trays** - Washing your seed starting trays and larger pots can help reduce the spread of plant diseases and pests. Organizing them will help you prepare for seed starting and inform your shopping list.
- **Propagate indoor plants and perennials** - Make the most of the plants you already have. Take cuttings of thriving indoor plants and root them in soil or water. Use the new plants for gifts or replacements for the inevitable dead houseplant. Some hardwood perennials can be propagated in the winter months. Try rooting peach trees, roses (nothing patented), blackberries, hydrangea or wisteria. For more information, see this article from gardeningknowhow.com.
- **Experiment with kitchen cuttings** - If you've never tried to grow a new plant from kitchen scraps, now is the time! Romaine lettuce, green onion, celery, avocado and pineapple are great ones to start with. All you need is a shallow dish of water and a sunny window sill. Click [here](#) for step by step instructions.

INTRODUCING: SHINE'S GARDEN CHATS

Dear valued newsletter reader: we have a few holiday gifts for you this year - an extra page and a new writer! Charlie Blaylock, of Shine's Farmstand in Azle, is brightening our holidays this year by joining the team and contributing to the newsletter. Each month, you can expect to find a bit of info about what he's planting and harvesting, what is available at the farmer's market, what he's planning for his garden, a few of his favorite crops for the month, and more. As he put it, we can expect a little "soil and soul talk" to go along with it, too.

Charlie is a good many things: a local market gardener, biointensive farmer, food activist, community resource, consultant to the farming community and Grow Southeast Fort Worth, market manager and President of Cowtown Farmers Market, board member of the Tarrant County Food Policy Council. I often find myself calling him a wizard for the quantity and quality he's able to produce on his 1.3 acres, but I imagine he would laugh at that and then explain how he's able to do it in scientific and understandable terms.

I'm a big fan of Charlie's and could wax poetic for some time on his talents and the delicious food he grows, but his writing can do the talking there. You'll find this month's article and a seed starting recipe mix on our new page four. We, the CGUA newsletter team, hope you enjoy the new addition and have happy holidays!



Chocolate and Beet Vegan Cupcakes

Recipe adapted from *The Minimalist Baker*

Beets are a delicious winter root vegetable filled with a natural sweetness and plenty of nutrients, such as folate, potassium, iron and calcium. When mixed with rich chocolate and warm cinnamon, the beets make for a decadent dessert you can feel good about eating. This holiday season, satisfy your sweet tooth and get a hearty helping of nutrition with these delicious vegan treats anyone can enjoy.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium beet (or about 1/2 cup pureed)
- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk or other non-dairy milk
- 1 tsp white vinegar, apple cider vinegar, or lemon juice
- 3/4 cup raw turbinado or granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup avocado, safflower, or olive oil
- 2 tsp pure vanilla extract
- 1 heaping cup whole wheat pastry flour or unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/2 scant cup unsweetened cocoa powder (plus more for topping)
- 1 tsp cinnamon (plus more for topping)
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1 pinch salt
- Chocolate chips to taste

PREPARATION

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 C), remove the stem and most of the root from your beet, and scrub it underwater until clean.
- Wrap beet in foil, drizzle on a bit of olive or avocado oil, wrap tightly, and roast for about 60 minutes or until a knife inserted falls out without resistance. They should be tender. Cool to room temperature.
- Once cooled, either finely grate or puree beets in a small blender (adding orange juice, beet juice, or water to encourage mixing). Measure out 1/2 cup and set aside; reserve the rest for other use, such as beet hummus!
- Grease and line a muffin pan with paper liners.
- Whisk together the almond milk and vinegar/lemon juice in a large bowl, and set aside for a few minutes to curdle. Add the sugar, oil, vanilla extract, and 1/2 cup beets and beat until foamy.
- Add the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt to a sifter and slowly sift it into the wet ingredients while mixing. Beat until no large lumps remain. Stir in chocolate chips, if using.
- Pour batter into liners, filling 3/4 of the way full. Bake 22 to 25 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Transfer to a cooling rack and let cool completely.
- Once cooled, dust with cocoa powder and cinnamon or add your favorite frosting or holiday sprinkles.

Garden Resources

Local Nurseries:

Archie's Gardenland
Calloway's

Free Seeds:

TAFB Community Garden Program;
communitygarden@tafb.org
GROW North Texas

Bulk Soil/Compost:

Living Earth
Silver Creek Materials
City of FW Drop-Off Stations

Garden Curricula:

CGUA-
<http://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/garden-2.html>

Community Food Systems Map:

<http://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/local-food-systems.html>





CHARLIE'S TOP CROPS

- Hakurei Turnips
- Rover & Bacchus
- Radishes
- Tokyo Bekana Lettuce
- Siberian Kale
- Red & Yellow Chard
- Broad Windsor Fava Beans



SHINE'S GARDEN CHATS

BY CHARLIE BLAYLOCK

December on the farm is the most restful time of the year. There aren't many chores between December 15 and January 15, other than harvesting over-wintered crops, and keeping plants and animals alive during our 3, or 4, cold spells. It's also the best time of year for planning next year, sitting with a hot cup of tea and a stack of seed catalogs. I'm going to be saving more seeds next year, so they will be naturalized to our unique environment, which makes my favorite catalog Southern Exposure Seed Exchange's. I still have my Johnny's, Peaceful Valley, and Baker Creek catalogs right beside me, as well. I no longer make a single plan for the entire year. Instead, I find it more useful to have plans for February through June, June through September, and September through December. There are enough of differences between those three seasons that my notes are very different. Plus, it gives me more room to make adjustments. We all have a plan going in, but that first surprise from Mother Nature (or Father Time) can leave us reeling if we don't have the ability to adjust.

But being the restful time of the year doesn't make this the inactive time of the year. During the first 2 weeks of December, I make sure my gardens are either growing winter crops, or are topped with compost and hay so the soil food web can keep working. Our soils don't usually get cold enough for the bacteria to shut down, it just slows them down quite a bit. I prefer to use Agribon-15 to cover crops that are in the ground during winter, instead of plastic. It seems that just keeping the North wind off of the leaves is enough, and it's much easier to work with than low tunnels. Some crops, like turnips, radishes, and baby greens can grow entirely under the cloth since the water permeates it. I start my kale, rainbow chard, and collards in seedling trays during the first week of December so they will be ready to transplant 8 weeks later in February.

We're still harvesting lettuce, salad mix, arugula, turnips, radishes, beets, and carrots that were planted during the fall, and making lots of soups, roasts, and stews. If your local farmer's market is year-round, you can expect to see all that, with kale, chard, spinach, collards, pickles, jams, and other goodies. Now is absolutely the best time of year to make a mess of collards. The cold temps make them incredibly sweet, tender, and flavorful. I like the markets during the winter because they're much slower paced and I can talk to customers about growing, and other farmers about their techniques.

Until next time, enjoy the snuggling, make great plans, and start some seeds!

Visit Shine's Farmstand on Facebook:

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



SEED STARTING MIX RECIPE

INGREDIENTS

- 1 part compost
- 1 part vermiculite
- 2 parts peat moss

INSTRUCTIONS

- Mix together all ingredients and run through a 1/2" screen.
- Start seeds in the seedling tray of your choosing.
- When plants have their first set of true leaves, begin watering with diluted compost tea.