

JUNE 2023

# 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 May 22nd IN PERSON at the Tarrant Area Food Bank.

### Meeting Recap:

This meeting was not as well attended as recent meetings and the conversation was more casual, but several typical topics were covered:

- Hyiat El-Jundi provided a presentation about the history and work of F.A.R.M.
  - See the featured article on page two of this newsletter for a detailed recap of F.A.R.M. and their work.
- Lauren Hickman provided a TAFB Garden & Farm Program Update:
  - The new Sharepoint site is live for TAFB Community Garden Partners. It contains lots of resources for community gardens including links to grant funding, printable handouts on gardening topics and a calendar to share events and opportunities.
  - The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program is off to a great start at Cowtown Farmers Market with record amount of vouchers being redeemed by participants. Farmers are enjoying the increase in produce sales.
- Jesse Herrera had a few updates from Grow Southeast:
  - Opal's Farm is producing in record amounts and are looking for new sales outlets beyond Cowtown Farmers Market, the farm stand and neighborhood sales/donations. They have attended a few Sunday markets in the area.
  - Tabor Farms has a new parking lot and entrance to make it easier to access.
  - Jesse is searching for funding for a Market Manager for the Mindful Market.
- Farmers Market Updates
  - A discussion was had about how to help increase produce sales at some of the newer markets and if that's what customers actually want. Cowtown Farmers Market is established as a produce market, but other, newer markets might spend years convincing customers to buy produce rather than cookies and jarred goods.

The next CGUA meeting will be on Thursday, July 6th from 3:00-4:30pm. Location TBD.

For questions and information about CGUA, contact our co-chairs, Dave Aftandilian at [d.aftandilian@tcu.edu](mailto:d.aftandilian@tcu.edu) or Lauren Hickman at [lauren.hickman@tafb.org](mailto:lauren.hickman@tafb.org).

## SEASONAL PRODUCE FUN FACTS - Tomatoes

What are tomatoes? Are they a fruit? Are they a vegetable? Read on to learn about this summer staple.

- Tomatoes originally came from Peru, where their Aztec name translated to "plump thing with a navel," but the scientific name for the tomato is *Lycopersicon lycopersicum*, which means, "wolf peach."
- According to the USDA, Americans eat 22-24 pounds of tomatoes per person, per year and roughly half of that comes in the form of ketchup and tomato sauce.
- Botanically, a tomato is a fruit because it develops from a flower and contains seeds. However, the U.S. Supreme court ruled in 1893 that it should be considered a vegetable due to its culinary uses. And, on the side of nutritionists, it is also considered a vegetable as well. So, long story short, it is a fruit that is considered a vegetable.
- Tomatoes are rich in lycopene, an antioxidant that is good for the heart and effective against certain cancers. Tomatoes are also packed with vitamins A and C, calcium and potassium.

## Events & Classes

### NEXT CGUA MEETING

July 6th, 3:00pm

Location: TBD

### TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

No General Meetings Until  
October 2023

### HOPE FARM GARDEN WORKDAY

June 20th, 8am-11am

Contact Gina Alexander  
[g.alexander@tcu.edu](mailto:g.alexander@tcu.edu)

### SAVE TARRANT WATER

DIY Insect Houses

June 20th, 6-7pm

Summer Sprinkler Workshop

June 24th, 10am -1pm

[https://savetarrantwater.com/  
events/](https://savetarrantwater.com/events/)

### MINDFUL MARKET

June 24th 11am-2pm

[www.coactntx.org/mindful-  
market](http://www.coactntx.org/mindful-market)

### COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

Every Saturday 8am-NOON

Wednesdays Starting June 14  
8am to NOON

[www.cowtownmarket.com](http://www.cowtownmarket.com)

Veterans Park, Grand Pavilion  
8901 Clifford St.

White Settlement, TX 76108

Summer Festival - June 24th



# FARMERS ASSISTING RETURNING MILITARY - HEALING THE LAND AND THE COMMUNITY

BY HYIAT EL-JUNDI AND SUSAN BARKER

After leaving the military, combat veterans are at a disproportionately high risk of losing their lives. For returning combat veterans seeking peace, purpose, and opportunity, Farmers Assisting Returning Military (F.A.R.M.) has an answer.

F.A.R.M. co-founders James Jeffers and Steve Smith along with three of their fellow service members established F.A.R.M. in response to their own experience transitioning to civilian life, when 16 of their unit's service members lost their lives after leaving the military. James and Steve noticed the therapeutic benefits of farming during their time operating their edible landscaping and composting business, Eat the Yard, in Oak Cliff, and they wanted to find a way to integrate returning soldiers into civilian life through agriculture. They established F.A.R.M. to serve returning veterans through therapeutic agricultural training and rehabilitation, or "dirt" therapy, using internships, peer support, and an active veteran resource network.

F.A.R.M. recently laid down new roots in Tarrant County at Conundrum Farms sharing space with the Funky Town Food Project and the Great Plains Restoration Council. In addition to growing food - more than 2,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables last year collectively - they hope to provide education, peer-to-peer support, and community at the six-acre site in Crowley.

F.A.R.M. and its members lend their agricultural expertise so that other projects at Conundrum Farms flourish as well. Funkytown Food Project will welcome this year's paid high school interns in June, providing lessons on community service, courage, and hope alongside labor on the farm. Through their Restoration Not Incarceration program, the Great Plains Restoration Council hosts youth recently released from juvenile justice facilities to restore the native prairie adjacent to Conundrum Farm and to experience their own "dirt" therapy.

Hyiat El-Jundi, F.A.R.M.'s executive director, plans to hold back from full production this year to let the soil rest, and is planning for expanded production next year. F.A.R.M. believes in food as medicine as a way for veterans to continue their service to their communities by taking back control of our food system while feeding and healing their respective communities.

F.A.R.M.'s programming includes of the North Texas Farm Success program, which provides new and beginning farmers with tools, knowledge, and resources to start or improve their farm operation resulting in profitable farms at whatever scale they desire. F.A.R.M. also provides conservation training and education with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). They will relaunch their veterans-only internship in 2024 providing training on small-scale intensive regenerative farming while incorporating holistic management support in the form of trauma sensitive yoga and mindful meditation.

For more information about F.A.R.M., visit <https://www.farmingveterans.org/>

"In June, as many as a dozen species may burst their buds on a single day. No man can heed all of these anniversaries; no man can ignore all of them."

**ALDO LEOPOLD**



## JUNE TO-DO

Plant warm season lawn grasses. Fertilize lawns and planting areas.

Plant color annuals like lantana, begonia, zinnia, and marigold.

Plant southern peas, okra, squash, pumpkins, Malabar spinach and other warm season food crops .

Prune flowers and vines after they have bloomed.

Water planting areas deeply, but infrequently during dry periods.

Turn the compost pile and mulch bare areas.

Can and preserve any excess harvest.

# Herb Potato Salad

Recipe from Hannah Lamar Gibson

This herby potato salad can utilize your garden's or favorite local farmer's potatoes and herbs. The dish can serve as a cool, refreshing side to many entrees, and it could make a great dish to bring to your next summer BBQ. Enjoy!



## INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs potato of your choice (red, Yukon gold, fingerling, etc.)
- 6 T sour cream or Greek yogurt
- 1 1/2 tsp whole grain or Dijon mustard
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- About 1/2 C tender green herbs, finely chopped (dill, chives, cilantro, etc)
- Salt, pepper

For topping:

- 1 clove garlic, finely sliced
- About 1 tsp of sesame seeds
- 1 pinch of red pepper flakes or coarse ground pepper
- 2-3 T olive oil
- Pinch of salt

## PREPARATION

- Boil a pot of salted water, cook potatoes until fork tender (10-30 minutes depending on the size). Allow to cool.
- Meanwhile, in a sauté pan heat 2-3 T olive oil with sliced garlic, sesame seeds, red pepper flakes, salt and sauté until garlic starts to turn golden, stirring regularly to prevent burning. When done, pour oil and contents in a small bowl and allow to cool.
- In a small bowl, mix sour cream, lemon juice, mustard, tender green herbs, and salt and pepper to taste.
- When potatoes are cool, roughly chop into bite-size pieces and place in a large bowl. Add sour cream mixture and stir to coat potatoes. Top with garlic crisp mixture.

## IN THE NEWS

- Area nonprofits working together to benefit community  
<https://fortworthreport.org/2023/05/18/how-teenagers-veterans-and-farmers-are-finding-purpose-at-this-tarrant-county-farm/>
- USDA seeking nominations for Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovation <https://texasfarmbureau.org/nominations-open-for-usda-urban-ag-innovation-committee/>
- Farmworkers' community garden in California faces eviction  
<https://civileats.com/2023/05/18/this-community-garden-helps-farmworkers-feed-themselves-now-its-facing-eviction/>
- Nonprofits in San Antonio help to develop local community gardens  
<https://communityimpact.com/san-antonio/north-san-antonio/nonprofit/2023/04/17/partnership-sets-out-to-transform-4-san-antonio-community-gardens/>

## GARDEN RESOURCES

### Local Nurseries:

[Archie's Gardenland](#)  
[Calloway's](#)

### Free Seeds:

[TAFB Community Garden Program:](#)  
[communitygarden@tafb.org](mailto: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>

## VIRTUAL GARDENING CONTENT

### BRIT | Botanic Garden

[youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet](https://www.youtube.com/user/BRITplanttoplanet)

### Paperpot Co Blog & Podcast

<https://paperpot.co/the-blog/>

### 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)



## GREG'S TOP CROPS

Tomatoes: Celebrity, Early Girl, Berkeley Tie-Dye & Cherokee Purple

Peppers: Jalapeno, Poblano, California Wonder, Shishito



## FARM RESOURCES

### Organizations & Associations:

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance  
[farmandranchfreedom.org](http://farmandranchfreedom.org)

GROW North Texas  
[grownorthtexas.org](http://grownorthtexas.org)

Natural Resource Conservation Service  
[nrcs.usda.gov](http://nrcs.usda.gov)

Texas Center for Local Food  
[texaslocalfood.org](http://texaslocalfood.org)

Texas Department of Agriculture  
[texasagriculture.gov](http://texasagriculture.gov)

Texas Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association  
[tofga.org](http://tofga.org)

USDA Farm Service Agency  
[fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov)

USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture  
[nifa.usda.gov/](http://nifa.usda.gov/)

## OPAL'S PICKS

Tomato season has arrived at Opal's in full force. We planted four varieties this year – Early Girl, Celebrity, Cherokee Purple, and Berkeley Tie-Dye – and all are producing extremely well. Proper tomato care is essential to healthy, high yielding crops. Pruning, trellising, and constant watering can make the difference between an “okay” season and an amazing one.

The Tarrant County College NW campus Horticulture program raised all our transplants once again this year. We are so thankful to David Cole and the Food Crops class for the head start and special care given to each of the farms in Grow Southeast.

Our work doesn't end once the tomatoes are in the ground. It's important that the tomatoes are trellised so that nothing touches the ground and pruned for good air flow around the base of the plant. This increases the number of tomatoes the plant can produce and helps fight disease. We use cow panels and T-posts for our trellises, but stakes and a “Florida Weave” can be used as well.

One often sees splitting on the tomato skins if watering is inconsistent. This can be avoided if the soil moisture is maintained. The soil should never be allowed to dry out completely between waterings. The tomatoes will be less subject to splitting even when rain is interspersed with long, hot dry spells. All tomatoes go dormant during the heat of July and August, but production can often be extended through the use of shade cloth and continual pruning and trellising.

On a sad note, Amber Carr, our Assistant Farm Manager, will be leaving us by the end of summer. We would like to thank her for the excellent work she has done in shifting from tractor farming to a more biointensive effort. The yields have gone up accordingly and her knowledge and passion will be missed.

We will be hiring a new Assistant Manager so please let us know of any interested applicants!

Greg Joel

Farm Manager - Opal's Farm

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

