

NOVEMBER 2019

WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group



CGUA Happenings

The next CGUA meeting will be held on Thursday, Nov. 14th from 3:00-4:30pm at Tarrant Area Food Bank (2525 Cullen St.) in the Rodriguez Room, 2nd floor. Dr. Gina Alexander from TCU will present on her work with nursing students and school gardens. Join us!

To learn more about our group or to volunteer to help with our projects, email our chair Dave Aftandilian at d.aftandilian@tcu.edu.



Why is Composting SO Important?

BY BECCA KNUTSON

As you continue to read through this newsletter, you will find that almost all of the content is focused on composting - but WHY? If you do any kind of gardening, you know how valuable compost can be as a soil amendment. Compost improves soil quality and texture, it adds nutrients to the soil that help our plants grow better, and it feeds the soil microorganisms that create a healthy soil ecosystem.

Looking at the larger picture, composting has a positive impact on the environment as a whole, it benefits businesses that participate, and can save municipalities money. These immediate and long-term benefits are just a few of the reasons CGUA has chosen to work more with composting this year.

Composting is often referred to as "organic recycling." This term explains composting in the framework of traditional recycling. Instead of turning plastic bottles into new products, composting turns previously living things into a valuable product for our garden. Thinking of composting as organic recycling also helps to remind us that we are also keeping organic waste products out of the landfill.

Modern-day landfills are very high-tech and expensive to build. It is important that we use landfills wisely before we run out of space to put our waste. To learn more about landfills, look for opportunities to tour a local landfill or visit <https://www.epa.gov/landfills/municipal-solid-waste-landfills>.

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EVENTS

11/2, 10AM-12PM

Understanding Healthy Soils Workshop

TARRANTAREAFOOD
BANK.EVENTBRITE.COM

11/2, 1-3PM

Starting Your Spring Transplants

BRIT.ORG

11/6, 6-7:30pM

Kitchen Garden Cooking School Demo - Spinach

TARRANTAREAFOOD
BANK.EVENTBRITE.COM

11/10, 11AM-4PM

Lola's Local Farmers Market

LOLA'S TRAILER PARK

11/14, 6-8PM

Herb Your Enthusiasm: Herb Gardening

FORTWORTHTEXAS.GOV/
CALENDAR/CLASSES

11/16 1-3PM

Microgreens

WWW.TARRANTMG.ORG

SATURDAYS 8AM-12PM

Cowtown Farmers Market
3821 SOUTHWEST BLVD.



"When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower."

ALEXANDER DEN HEIJER



November To-Do

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

Plant cool-season and perennial herbs in the beginning of the month.

Cut back perennial herbs and flowers as they dry out.

Continue to direct-seed spinach, lettuce, peas, arugula, radishes, carrots, turnips, beets and rutabaga in any open spaces.

Continue to cover bare areas with mulch to conserve water and prepare crops for cooler weather.

Collect leaves from your neighbors for your compost pile.

Plant strawberries early in the month.

City of Fort Worth Composting Initiatives

INTERVIEW WITH BRITTANY ROSENBERG, MATERIALS MANAGEMENT PLANNER - CITY OF FORT WORTH

Q: How many people have signed up to participate in the residential composting program?

A: As of 10/25/19, 743 residents have subscribed. More than 500 subscribers actively text a report every time they drop off materials. This helps us track logistics.

Q: How many pounds of food have been diverted from the landfill?

A: More than 37,000 pounds! That's 18.6 tons!

Q: What is the contamination rate of items that don't belong in the compost?

A: 0.07% - that's amazing!

Q: What is the cost to participate in the program?

A: There is a \$20.00 annual fee which is donated to Keep Fort Worth Beautiful to further their programs.

Q: Is there still time to sign up for the program?

A: Yes! Just visit <http://fortworthtexas.gov/solidwaste/compost/> for all of the details and instructions.

Q: What successes have you seen so far?

A: The response to the program has been overwhelmingly positive and has literally overwhelmed our system...twice; the City of Dallas has looked at our program as a model to start their own municipal composting program; data gathered will be important for the future of waste in the region.

Q: Are there composting options for businesses in the area?

A: Depending on what waste your business produces, we can help match you to a hauler, community garden or local to build a greener Fort Worth with a stronger community. We are also planning some workshops for 2020 in partnership with TAFB, Blue Zones, and the EPA.

For more information, email mmp@fortworthtexas.gov.



Importance of Composting (continued)

According to the EPA, about 18% of the items being thrown into our landfills could be composted in a backyard pile instead. About 61% of materials could be commercially composted (paper 27%, food 15%, yard trimmings 13%, wood 6%). In a world where traditional recycling is becoming less profitable, composting is a great option for reducing landfill use.

CGUA has been working with businesses and the City of Fort Worth to divert some waste from the landfill this year. For a business to participate, it takes a simple partnership with a garden and minor procedure change for employees to discard organic waste in a separate bin. In return, the business gets positive press, saves on waste disposal costs, and creates awareness around a pressing issue. One coffee shop we collect from diverts an average of 90 gallons of waste from the landfill in a month. It doesn't seem like a lot, but not only is that waste not trash it is helping to grow fresh produce for those in need in our community. If you are a business interested in collecting compostable materials, see the interview with Brittany above.



COMPOST TEA

By Becca Knutson

Once you've mastered the art of composting and you have a few handfuls to spare, consider using some of it to make a batch of compost tea.

Following the recipe below, you will see that compost tea is made much like brewing a cup of your favorite herbal tea; however, no heat is involved. Instead, oxygen is introduced to allow the microorganisms in the soil to flourish. If oxygen is not present in the compost tea, the microorganisms will be lost and the tea will lose its intended benefits.

Compost tea adds beneficial organisms to your soil. These microorganisms reproduce quickly once they are applied in the garden and work to make soil nutrients more available to your plants. As the microorganisms build the soil food web, they also improve soil texture and retain more water. It is impossible to have a healthy soil without these organisms!

Compost tea can be applied to the leaves of your crops with a spray bottle or larger pump sprayer. You can also use the tea as a soil drench and apply it with a watering can. Either way, with a simple set up and a few scoops of compost, you will be on your way to healthier plants in no time!



Compost Tea Recipe

Recipe from: TAFB Community Garden Program

Materials:

- Compost tea brewer
- Paint straining bag
- 2-3 handfuls of finished compost
- Water
- Electricity
- Spray bottles

Directions:

- Gather all of your materials and assemble in a place with electricity.
- Add the finished compost to the paint straining bag.
- Twist the bag closed and clip the bag to the edge of the brewing bucket.
- Fill the bucket 3/4 full with water.
- Plug in the pump and make sure it is working properly.
- Let your compost tea brew for 24 hours.
- To use, fill spray bottles with compost tea and spray directly on the foliage of your crops.
- Use the compost tea within 48 hours of brewing.
- Caution: This tea is not meant for human consumption!

For instructions on how to build the compost tea brewer pictured here, email Becca Knutson at becca.knutson@tafb.org. For more details about compost tea, visit: <https://bit.ly/2WjZGyS>.

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.tarrantcountyfoodpolicy council.org/garden-2.html>

Community Food Systems Map:

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

