

HOW'S IT GROWING?

Community Gardens & Urban Agriculture
Working Group Newsletter



CGUA Happenings

The next CGUA meeting will be on **Thursday, July 13th from 3:00-4:30pm**—location to be determined. tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/news---events

The CGUA meeting held on May 11th was attended by 11 people interested in bringing positive change through gardening in Tarrant County. Progress was made on the Youth Farm Curriculum Project and the Community Garden Survey. A new project on mobile market research is in the beginning stages.

WE NEED YOUR INPUT: TCFPC's food system's map needs updating. **Add your garden!**

Submit info about community gardens to be added to the map:

tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/community-food-systems-north-texas

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: We need two volunteers to represent CGUA at Tarrant Area Food Bank's Dig Deep Conference on July 22nd. Free admission to the conference included. Email Dave at d.aftandilian@tcu.edu for more information.



HARVESTING AND STORING OUR PRODUCE

Dotty Woodson, Ed. D.

Harvesting and storing your vegetables and fruit is as important as knowing how to grow them. Every type of produce has a window of opportunity for harvest for the best taste, flavor and appearance. This freshness and great taste are what attracted most of us to growing our own vegetables in the first place.

It is not always the biggest that are the best. Harvesting requires a plan. Know when to harvest, wash and how to store for best quality. Quality goes down quickly if vegetables and fruit are not stored properly. So are you going to eat the fruits and vegetables right away, or do you need to plan to share, can, freeze or dry what cannot be eaten before quality deteriorates?

Some vegetables are quite forgiving and have a long harvest window but others will go from tender and tasty to tough and bitter overnight. Once ripening starts, most require daily visits to the garden to harvest. If vegetables are not harvested at the proper stage of maturity, physiological processes occur that permanently change their taste, appearance and quality. The texture, fiber and consistency of all vegetables are greatly affected by the stage of maturity at harvest, by post-harvest handling and by the time interval between harvesting and serving. *(continued on p.3)*

EVENTS

6/3, 10am-1pm
Garden Ecosystems
tafb.org/events

6/3, 1-4pm
TAFB Garden
Leader Gathering
tafb.org/events

6/17, 10am-1pm
Organic Pest
Control
tafb.org/events

6/17, 11am-12pm
Blue Zones Cooking
Demo
TCC—South

6/22-6/24
Master Composter
Training
Fortworthtexas.gov/compostoutpost

6/24, 7:30-9am
Blue Zones Cooking
Demo
Sundance Square

6/24, 10am-1pm
How to Start a
Community Garden-
Level 2
tafb.org/events

7/22, 8am-3:30pm
Dig Deep
Conference
tafb.org/events



JUNE TO-DO

- Harvest potatoes early in the month.
- Trap slugs with containers of beer.
- Replace bolted lettuce with Malabar spinach.
- Mulch to reduce weeds and retain moisture.
- Continue to plant cantaloupe, corn, cucumbers, okra, peanuts, southern peas, summer squash, sweet potatoes and bush beans.
- Start seeds indoors for fall tomatoes, if planning to replant.



M.L. Phillips Elementary **School Garden**

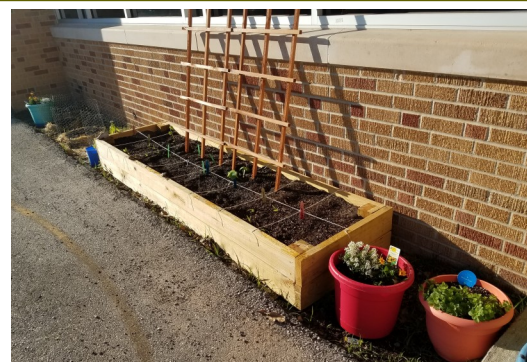
Mary Louise Phillips ES in Fort Worth implemented a school garden in September 2016. They started with several containers and added two raised beds in February 2017. Mary Ellen Brown, librarian, and the after-school garden club tend the garden.

Throughout the 2016-2017 school year, they have grown a variety of produce, including onions, beets, radishes, flowers and potatoes. The radishes were one of their biggest successes—they had radishes that were almost a foot long! Other successes include introducing students to new vegetables they enjoy, getting compliments from other teachers, having students who repeatedly choose to participate in garden club and serving as a catalyst for dialogue about gardening throughout the school.

Mary Ellen explained that some setbacks include lack of space, coordinating harvest times with the school calendar, waiting for funding to get materials and dealing with the learning curve.

Overall, the garden is a beautiful success that will be continued next school year. Mary Ellen plans to continue to plant this summer and hopes to start vegetable seedlings for all of the teachers next year.

For more information on other elementary school gardens in the DFW area, visit www.realschoolgardens.org.



HARVESTING AND STORING OUR PRODUCE

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Some vegetables perish more quickly than others. Sweet corn and English peas are difficult to maintain in an acceptably fresh state for even a very short time, while other vegetables like onions and potatoes last much longer.

Pick early in the morning while the temperature is lowest and moisture content in the vegetables is the highest. Wash all vegetables and fruit before storing. Lower the internal temperature as soon as possible to help slow down over-ripening. If you cannot refrigerate immediately, bring an ice chest and ice store your produce while at your community garden. Do not pick and store the produce unprotected in the sun or a car. The heat and sun will spoil most vegetables quickly. Do not put vegetables or fruit in plastic bags until thoroughly washed.

A late harvest can cause some plants to terminate or stop producing as they complete their reproduction process. Fully-mature vegetables left on the plant also attract disease, insect and rodent problems.

If you plan to share, do it the day you harvest. If you need directions for canning, freezing or drying, email me at d-woodson@tamu.edu and I will gladly email you back instructions. If you would like further instructions about harvesting specific vegetables, also email me for more information.



DID YOU KNOW?

Squash bugs are a major pest in the North Texas summer garden. They look like a long, slender stink bug that lays bronze colored eggs on the leaves of squash plants.

To tell the difference between a squash bug and a stink bug, if you are unsure, the squash bug smells sweet when squished and the stink bug...stinks!



Onions Ready for Harvest & Picking Tomatoes

Local Resources

Veggie Transplants & Soil Amendments

- Archie's Gardenland (Fort Worth)
- Calloway's (Fort Worth, Arlington, Hurst)
- Redenta's (Arlington)

Free Seeds:

- TAFB Community Garden Program
- Contact seed companies

Bulk Soil/Compost:

- Living Earth
- Silver Creek
- City of FW Drop-off Stations (mulch)

Garden Curricula:

- CGUA—
www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/cgua-working-group.html



TARRANT COUNTY
FOOD POLICY COUNCIL