

SEPTEMBER 2020

WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group



CGUA NEWS

Virtual CGUA Meeting on September 17th at 3pm - The Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture working group will begin meeting again this month! Join us via Zoom to catch up on our ongoing projects. Bring a friend, your new project ideas, and a willingness to lend a hand.
Zoom Meeting ID: 920 8053 7496; Password: CGUA

CGUA Ongoing Projects

- Learn more about our projects during our September meeting!
- **Support Community Growing Projects** - Tarrant County is full of exciting new and established growing operations that we support in many ways.
 - **School Garden Mapping Project** - Put school gardens on the map so community members can donate and volunteer.
 - **Facilitate Community Partnerships** - Help connect local growing operations to compostable materials while reducing food waste as well!

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



IN THE NEWS

- A local write-up on hemp farms and the progress in their development in Texas <https://www.fwweekly.com/2020/08/12/seeing-green/>
- A new farmers market opens up in Saginaw <https://fortworth.culturemap.com/news/restaurants-bars/07-02-20-saginaw-farmers-market/>
- Hurricane Hanna causes severe damage to southern Texas crops and agriculture <https://agrifliferoday.tamu.edu/2020/08/11/hurricane-hanna-delivers-blow-to-south-texas/>
- Hurricane Forecast: "One of the most active seasons on record" <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/06/climate/hurricanes-noaa-prediction.html>
- USDA announces urban agriculture grant recipients <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCSEPRD1638214>

Virtual Events

CGUA WORKING GROUP

Virtual Meeting
Sept. 17th, 3PM
Email Dave for the Zoom Link!

TARRANT AREA FOOD BANK

Kitchen Garden Cooking School - Kale September 2
Backyard Composting September 18
tarrantareafoodbank.eventbrite.com

WATER UNIVERSITY

Plant Combos & Companions Sept. 1
DIY Rain Barrel September 8 & 17
Container Gardening September 25
wateruniversity.tamu.edu/events

BRIT

Super Soil Biology - Parts 1 and 2
September 5 & 12
brit.org/events

Texas Fruit Conference

September 21 & 22
agrifliferogister.tamu.edu/fruit

SAT. & WED. 8AM-12PM

Cowtown Farmers Market

3821 SOUTHWEST BLVD.





"Count the garden by the flower, never by the leaves that fall. Count your life with smiles and not the tears that roll."

ANONYMOUS



Michael Higgins, NRCS

SEPTEMBER TO-DO

- Begin removing spent plants to prepare for fall plantings.
- Add a layer of compost to cleared areas to refresh the soil nutrients.
- Plant broccoli, cauliflower, kale and cabbage transplants starting mid-month.
- Direct-seed spinach, lettuce, peas, arugula, radishes, carrots, turnip and beets at the end of the month.
- Consider planting perennial herbs and fruit trees.

INTERVIEW: MICHAEL HIGGINS, NRCS

BY BECCA KNUTSON

Michael Higgins is a Urban Soil Conservationist for Zone 5 with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA). He has recently taken a position at their Arlington office. I met Michael during Dig Deep: A Conference for Growers. He and a few of his colleagues from around the state were curious about what gardeners and farmers were doing to address food access and insecurity. I chatted with Michael recently to learn more about what NRCS has to offer growers in our area.

B: Michael, can you tell me more about NRCS?

M: NRCS's mission is to deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world. Our vision is a world of clean and abundant water, healthy soils, resilient landscapes, and thriving agricultural communities through voluntary conservation. In North Texas, our focus is minimizing the impacts of food deserts and food insecurity through outreach, technical assistance, and financial assistance.

B: That aligns very well with many different projects happening in our area right now. What types of growers are you able to assist?

M: We are willing to work with anyone who wants to grow food to impact food insecurity. We can work with non-profit and for-profit operations, CSA's, urban farms, and community gardens.

B: That's awesome! What kinds of technical assistance do you offer?

M: NRCS have on staff engineers, agronomists, soil conservationists and soil scientists that can meet with growers to build a conservation plan. The staff specialize in working with small scale, organic growers. They provide free engineering services such as micro-irrigation and water harvesting system designs. We also have technical expertise on topics such as crop rotation, cover crops, mulching, tillage, high tunnels, pest management and soil health (just to name a few).

B: Are there any grants available?

M: We have two main financial assistance programs. The Texas Urban & Rural Conservation Project is for limited resource, beginning farmers/growers. This grant can fund high tunnels, vegetable gardens, water harvesting systems, and pollinator habitats. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is for growers who have irrigated at least 3 years on their leased or owned land. It involves addressing resources concerns through many different conservation practices. It all starts with a voluntary, customer-driven conservation plan.

B: It sounds like NRCS has some great resources to tap into. Where can people go for more information?

M: I welcome phone calls and emails. You can reach me at (817)524-4665 or michael.higgins@usda.gov.

Stay tuned for more information from Michael and the NRCS! We plan to schedule a series of workshops with Michael so others can learn more about the resources and information available to growers in our area.



Change of Seasons Salad

Recipe by: Hannah Lamar

As summer draws to a close and fall begins, enjoy the produce of both seasons with this arugula salad and pesto vinaigrette.

INGREDIENTS

- 6 cups arugula
- 2 cups butternut squash, diced
- 8 figs, quartered
- 1/2 cup roasted pecans, walnuts, or other nut
- 1/4 cup crumbled blue cheese, gouda, or smoked cheddar
- Fresh herbs or microgreens of your choosing
- 1/4 cup of pesto, homemade (see our past April newsletter for recipe!)
- 2 tablespoons of a light vinegar or lemon juice
- Olive oil, salt, pepper, to taste



PREPARATION

- Preheat oven to 375°F
- Coat butternut squash with olive oil and season with salt.
- Roast butternut squash for 20 minutes, or until thoroughly cooked through, and let cool. (Can be done ahead of time)
- Prepare and assemble your figs, nuts, cheese, and fresh herbs or microgreens while your squash roasts.
- Prepare your vinaigrette by combining your pesto and vinegar or lemon juice in a bowl. Whisk together.
- When the squash is cool, combine all of your ingredients with the arugula and toss.
- Taste and season with salt or pepper as needed.
- Enjoy your Summery Fall salad!

DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER TO VOTE!

With Fall approaching, so are the 2020 presidential elections and the deadline to register to vote! If you aren't currently registered, you have until October 5th to do so. You can register online, here:

<https://www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/index.html>

While the world of local community gardening and urban agriculture may seem a tad removed from the realm of national elections, it is as subject to its whim as everything else. So, regardless of political affiliations or preferred candidates, it's important for every farmer and gardener to be informed and exercise their right and responsibility to vote.

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>

