

JUNE 2021

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 20th at 3pm.

Meeting Notes:

- **Grow Southeast** - Jesse provided updates on Alethia Temple, Tabor Farms, and Opal's Farm; Jovita's Kitchen has reached out, wanting to join the group; a major challenge is infrastructure costs for Tabor Farms, including irrigation, a shed, and a parking lot; Jesse raised issue of how to communicate with funders that grants are needed not just for education, but for infrastructure to support new urban ag projects like these.
- **School Gardens** - Mary Jo gave an update on the current state of school gardens in Fort Worth, based on her own observations and a survey she is leading for CGUA; we discussed hosting an open conversation about school garden challenges & resources for Dig Deep.
- **TAFB Community Garden Program** - Susan shared news that HeadStart is looking to put in new gardens at their sites, Brewer MS is installing accessible raised beds, Southside Community Garden now has a vacant lot to use, and Pine Tree Community Garden recently installed irrigation.
- **Dig Deep** will be at BRIT this year on July 17th. Let us know what session topics you would like to see. Email Becca at becca.knutson@tafb.org.

The next CGUA meeting will be on Thursday, July 1st at 3pm. **Meeting ID: 947 4419 8004. Password: 916500.** All are welcome to join!

For questions and more information about CGUA, contact our co-chairs, Dave Aftandilian at d.aftandilian@tcu.edu or Charlie Blaylock at shinesfarmstand@gmail.com.

IN THE NEWS

- Local church repurposed to become urban farm and community center
<https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/local/urban-farm-far-east-dallas-repurposed-church-owenwood-farm-neighbor-space/287-bd87b6e4-ec8e-4546-80cf-ce91bf8dfe36>
- DFW airport is beginning large-scale composting program
<https://www.wfaa.com/article/features/originals/going-green-dfw-international-airport-is-turning-passengers-leftover-food-into-fertilizer-compost/287-d7ce4e8c-f126-49b3-8569-c7a3c95442c2>
- A look at how black entrepreneurs have helped grow a gardening boom during the pandemic
<https://khn.org/news/article/seed-money-black-entrepreneurs-hope-pandemic-gardening-boom-will-grow-healthier-eating/view/republish/>
- Community gardens at work, easing food insecurity in south Dallas
<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/2021/04/27/in-dallas-food-deserts-community-gardens-ease-but-dont-end-food-insecurity/>

Events & Classes

NEXT CGUA MEETING

July 1st, 3pm

Meeting ID: 947 4419 8004

Password: 916500

DIG DEEP CONFERENCE

SAVE THE DATE:

July 17th, 2021 at BRIT

<http://tafb.org/events/dig-deep-conference>

TARRANT COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

Edible Landscaping - June 8th

Planning Your Fall Vegetable Garden - June 15th

All About Herbs - June 22nd

<http://tarrantmg.org/>

SAVE TARRANT WATER

Soil Health & Amendments - June 10th, 6pm

Backyard Composting - June 19th, 12:15pm

<https://savetarrantwater.com/events/>

SAT. & WED.

8AM-12PM

Cowtown Farmers Market

3821 SOUTHWEST BLVD





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 bar areas.

DIG DEEP: A CONFERENCE FOR GROWERS

Join Tarrant Area Food Bank and the Tarrant County Food Policy Council for another great gardening conference at BRIT | Fort Worth Botanic Garden on July 17, 2021. Some virtual content will be available for those who are not able to join us on site.

Growers from across North Texas will come together in the spirit of education and passion for what the soil can produce. Dig Deep: A Conference for Growers provides a unique opportunity for growers from different fields to share experiences, knowledge and resources. All conference topics are suitable for beginner- and intermediate-level growers.

Whether your goal is to feed your family, share with our hungry neighbors, or enter the marketplace, this will be the learning opportunity for you. No grower in North Texas will want to miss this!

You'll have the opportunity to explore three unique tracks focused on home, community and market gardening.

- **Home Gardening:** Home and backyard gardening continue gaining popularity in North Texas, especially during our current health crisis. Our long growing seasons are great for producing a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. The knowledge and generosity of community partners make growing food crops an accessible option for many people.
- **Community Gardening:** Community gardens are being built every year across our region. These gardens are working to serve the immediate needs of their communities. Learn how to start one in your own community as well as best practices for operations and planning for expansion.
- **Market Gardening:** Passionate growers and chefs from all over North Texas are making great strides in bringing fresh, local produce to consumers. When farmers and chefs work together to coordinate their efforts, everybody wins. Join in on this conversation with market gardeners, ranchers, local producers and chefs.

Sessions topics in past years have included: how to start a community garden, growing seedlings indoors, how to build healthy soil, school gardening resources, composting, cooking from the garden, selling produce to restaurants, and much more! Stay tuned for updated information.

If you are interested in being a presenter at this year's conference, please fill out our speaker application at www.tafb.org/dig-deep-conference/.



SEASONAL VEGGIE FUN FACTS - MELONS

Melons come in many different shapes, sizes and flavors and are a coveted item from the garden. If you have enough room to grow them, they are quite the rewarding crop. Most varieties are ready to harvest in 70 to 100 days.

- Americans eat more watermelon than any other type of melon.
- Watermelons and cantaloupes are in the same plant family as cucumbers, squash and pumpkins.
- The largest watermelon ever recorded weighed 262 pounds.
- Melons contain many different nutrients including vitamin C, certain B vitamins, and minerals like potassium, iron, phosphorus and manganese.
- Almost all of the parts of the melon plants are used in traditional Chinese medicine.
- The Yurabi King melon is grown in volcanic ash in Japan and harvested by hand. They are prized for their sweetness and can cost up to \$10,000 each!

For more fun facts about melons, visit:

<https://www.finedininglovers.com/article/melons-fun-facts>

Not Your Mother's Potato Salad

Recipe by: **Hannah Lamar Gibson**

In this recipe, we take all of the best parts of potato salad, egg salad, and fresh crunch vegetables and combine them into a fresh and satisfying dish. Versatility is key - each aspect is simple, riff-able, can be done ahead, and the dish is great hot or cold. Make it for dinner for you and your family, bring it to a barbecue or a picnic with friends, and keep it in your back pocket for a future pot luck.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Yukon gold potatoes, chopped into 1-inch cubes
- 2 eggs
- 1 small to medium onion, sliced
- 1/4 cup kale leaves, torn into 1-2 inch pieces
- 1 head broccoli, chopped into florets
- Fresh lemon juice (optional)
- 1/2 cup leafy green herbs, such as cilantro
- Salt and freshly cracked black pepper, to taste



1/4 C DIJON VINAIGRETTE

- 1 T Dijon mustard, 2 T vinegar of choice, 4 T olive oil, salt to taste

PREPARATION

- Bring a pot of salted water to a boil and add the potatoes, whole, to cook for 10-12 minutes. Test at 10 minutes with a fork to remove the potatoes to cool when fork tender. Keep the water boiling on the stove.
- In the boiling water, add in your eggs and cook for 7-9 minutes, depending on your preference for the egg yolk. 7 minutes is plenty for a jammy egg. Once the eggs are cooked, the water can be drained.
- In a cast iron skillet or other heavy-bottomed pot, heat 1/4 inch olive oil until very hot, but not smoking. Add your onions and garlic into the oil and fry for 5-7 minutes, until golden brown. With two minutes remaining, add your torn kale leaves in with the onions and garlic. When all pieces are golden, remove to drain on a paper towel and salt to taste. Leave the cooked onions, garlic, and kale to cool.
- Over medium high heat add your chopped broccoli florets. Season the florets with lemon juice, if using, and salt. Sauté the broccoli until it has lovely charred areas but is still mostly green. When ready, remove to cool.
- While all of the cooked ingredients are cooling, make your vinaigrette. Combine your Dijon mustard, vinegar, olive oil, and salt and whisk until a creamy and smooth dressing forms.
- When they have cooled enough to handle, combine the potatoes and broccoli in a bowl and mix them with the vinaigrette to taste. At this point you can combine the other ingredients in the same bowl or begin to assemble on your serving platter of choice.
- To assemble: On a serving platter, allow the potatoes and broccoli to be the hearty base of the dish. Top with your crispy friend onions, garlic, and kale. Chop your boiled eggs into quarters and add them to the dish. Garnish with roughly chopped or torn leafy green herbs, freshly cracked black pepper, and salt to taste.



GARDEN RESOURCES

Local Nurseries:

Archie's Gardenland
Calloway's

Free Seeds:

TAFB Community Garden Program;
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-systems.html>

VIRTUAL GARDENING CONTENT

BRIT | Botanic Garden

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

Dig Deep Conference 2020

[tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/dig-deep-conference-2020](https://www.tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/dig-deep-conference-2020)

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)



SHINE'S GARDEN CHATS



CHARLIE'S TOP CROPS

Sugar Queen Cantaloupe

Crimson Sweet
Watermelon

Beauregard Sweet
Potatoes

Purple Hull Peas

Virginia Jumbo Peanuts



What a long, strange trip this spring has been. In February, we had the deepest freeze on record. April 21st, we had the latest frost on record. Since the end of March, we have had just shy of 12 inches of rain. It's May 24th and the high is 75F, and our average for this time of year is 85F. This is exactly the reason that I grow a wide variety of crops, not just different varieties of the same crops. The kale has been churning out 50 pounds each week, but the tomatoes are hanging on the vines, green as can be. Cool weather crops are performing better than average, and hot season crops are delayed until it warms up. Between rains, I have been dashing outside to prepare beds and plant sweet potatoes. One is the usual orange variety, but I'm also planting a white variety called O'Henry, for making into home fries. Sweet potatoes work much better for fries than the "Irish" potatoes, which actually originated in Peru.

We know the heat is coming. It does every year. There's really no use complaining about it, unless this is your first year in Texas. Coincidentally, melons of all varieties love a good, moist soil to get started in, then hot and dry to finish ripening the fruits. Choosing your variety should be about managing the space in your garden. Big watermelons take up the most space. Smaller cantaloupes use less space. There are varieties that have been bred for even smaller spaces, but I have never used them. I absolutely love growing cantaloupes up sturdy trellises, like cattle panels on t-posts. A cantaloupe is fully ripe when it "slips" from the vine. On a trellis, the vines cushion the melons as they roll down into the walkway. Then I just walk along and pick them up. Smaller watermelons can be grown this way, too. It's also a great way to cast some evening shade on your gardens to the east of a melon trellis. Conversely, cantaloupes can be grown sprawling on the ground like large watermelons. If you have the space, it's an easy crop to grow. When I'm growing on the ground, I space plants 4 feet apart in every direction. When I grow on a trellis, I space them every 3 feet in the row. The best variety of cantaloupe I have ever grown is the magical Sugar Queen. Sadly, the seed crop failed last year, so there are none available. I'm growing Mainstream this year. It will certainly still taste better than melons from the store. Crimson Sweet is my favorite variety of watermelon, both for flavor and manageability.

For me, a region is defined by the food that originated there, or has been adapted. That means that my family eats primarily Mexican food, with a bit of Southeastern Soul food, or Country cooking. That means that we grow a lot of peppers. We grow about 200 plants of red and yellow California Wonder bell peppers, as our staple pepper and for the market. We also grow a bed of Anaheim, and a bed of Poblano, for roasting, peeling, and freezing. Poblano peppers do not grow as large here as they do in California, or the mountains of Mexico, because of the heat, but they still make great "rajas" that go in everything from quesadillas to beans to eggs. I have several Jalapeno pepper plants. We eat them in everything, and ferment a few gallons to get us through winter. Lacto-fermented jalapenos are spectacularly fresh, crisp, and delicious compared to pickled ones.

It looks like the rain is letting up, so I'm off to play in the mud! If you try any of the smaller variety melons, or just want to say "Hi", email me at shinesfarmstand@gmail.com. Don't forget to plant flowers around your melons and peppers. If you have the opportunity, plant some buckwheat in little clumps. They make beautiful white flowers less than a month after you put the seed in the ground, and they attract predatory insects that protect your garden and you.

I'll talk to you soon,
Charlie Blaylock
Shine's Farmstand

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