

MAY 2025

WHAT'S GROWING ON?

TCFPC Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Working Group

CGUA MEETING NOTES - 3/27/25

The CGUA working group last met on March 27th at The Barn. Seven people and one black cat named Dandelion were in attendance.

We started with updates about the Tarrant Area Food Bank's garden-related programs from Manny Herrera:

- TAFB will be starting up the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) at Cowtown Farmers Market on May 3; it will run through Sept. 27. They will be giving out both WIC vouchers and senior FMNP vouchers to eligible folks at Cowtown. If you have time on a Saturday, they could use your volunteer help; please contact Manny at manny.herrera@tafb.org.
- TAFB will also be sponsoring an indoor farmers market at their new AgHub at 205 N. Vacek in Fort Worth (across from TAFB Admin building) on Thursdays from 4-6pm in June and July.

Then AJ (Amanda Jackson) and Katey Rudd (welcome back!!) shared a new/old idea to build community and share work among growers in our area. They would like to have a monthly gathering where folks who need volunteer help with their community-focused gardens and farms can host others for work days, and then the next person would host, and so on. Other ideas included a vegetarian and alcohol-free potluck, and how to grow classes from those who know how, to those who want to learn. James Samudio of The Barn (see below) has kindly offered to let the group use the name of a nonprofit he and Elizabeth Anna created called Two Hands. If this sounds like something you might enjoy, reach out to Katey: kateyrudd@texashealth.org.

Greg Joel gave an update on Grow Southeast and Opal's Farm:

- Tabor Farms is back growing and is hosting interns for the spring. If by chance you have any spare tomato or pepper seedlings to donate, they could really use some.
- Opal's Farm is doing well. Bank of America brought out another great group of volunteers. If you are in their system as an approved volunteer site, their employees might be able to nominate you to receive some funding. So if you need volunteers, maybe try reaching out to them.

For the rest of the meeting we learned about and toured a new project called The Barn (<https://thebarn.world/>) that James Samudio is hosting at the site formerly known as Elizabeth Anna's in Fort Worth. (Katey, AJ, and Wolf have been volunteering with them.) Their goal is to help people learn to grow, cook, and preserve healthy produce. They use their own produce and that of other growers to supply a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) that people can pick up onsite. They also teach classes on everything from Korean natural farming to fermenting, and may host a permaculture course in the fall. It was very impressive to see how much they have fit into a small space: a cob oven, ducks, demos of how to inoculate soil in barrels and other containers with bacteria for better yields, fig and other fruit trees, and row crops both inside and outside of a greenhouse. The site and James's leadership are inspiring, and folks stayed long after the meeting was over to learn and chat.

The next CGUA meeting will be on Thursday, May 22nd at 3pm. Location, Rosen Heights Community Garden, 2503 Roosevelt Ave. in Fort Worth.

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

Events & Classes

NEXT CGUA MEETING

May 22nd, 3pm

Location: Rosen Heights
Community Garden

TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

TCFPC Networking Meeting

May 13th, 5-7pm

Timberview Farmstead

CONUNDRUM FARMS

Volunteer opportunities & events

<https://www.conundrumfarms.com>

[m/events](https://www.conundrumfarms.com/m/events)

FORT WORTH BOTANIC GARDEN

<https://fwbg.org/calendar-events/main-event-calendar>

NTX SCHOOL GARDEN NETWORK

Meetups, workdays & classes!

<https://ntxschoolgardennetwork.org/events>

TIMBERVIEW FARMSTEAD

Events, classes & tours!

<https://timberviewfarmstead.com>

COMMUNITY LINK MARKETS

Azle Farmers Market
<https://azlefarmersmarket.org>

Saginaw Farmers Market
<https://www.saginawmarket.org/>

MINDFUL MARKET

May 3rd, 11am to 2pm

<https://coactntx.wixsite.com/funkytown-mindful-ma>

COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

EVERY Saturday, 8am to NOON
www.cowtownmarket.com



"When you pursue great flavor, you also pursue great ecology."

DAN BARBER



Featured Community Garden

GROWING TOGETHER GARDEN & ORCHARD

LEADER: Robert Griffin

LOCATION:

6516 Brentwood Stair Rd., FW

TYPE OF OPERATION:

Neighborhood Garden for demonstration, education, and donation

GROWING METHODS:

Raised Beds, Fruit Trees, Row Gardens, Pollinator Beds, Composting

TYPES OF PRODUCTS GROWN:

Blackberries, apples, peaches, tomatoes, and a wide variety of other fruits and vegetables

WHERE TO FIND THEM:

@Bridgewood Church of Christ



TO-DO TO GROW FOOD IN MAY!



BY BECCA KNUTSON, HOLLOW TRACE MARKET FARM

TIPS AND TASKS FOR GROWING FOOD IN NORTH TEXAS

April brought more crazy weather to this already unpredictable year. I hope your crops survived that last frost and all the storms that have rolled through. If your garden is anything like mine, it's been full of great produce to harvest and summer crops making progress every day.

- **Continue to plant summer crops** - Fill in any empty spaces with summer crops that can tolerate the heat like okra, melons, beans, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, and basil. Since our spring has been pretty cool so far, the warmer weather this month will help these heat-loving crops thrive!
- **Wrap up your cool weather crop harvests** - I finished planting all my last cool season crops in early April and will be making the final harvest on my beets, carrots, lettuces, fennel, kohlrabi, celery and radishes this month.
- **Harvest potatoes, onions and garlic** - May is a big month for harvesting your storage crops! Potatoes, onions and garlic will be ready starting in mid-May and can be cured for storage in dark and dry areas.
- **Manage weeds and walkways** - We've had so much great rain this spring! All sorts of weeds are going to start popping up in the garden beds. Keep your new seedlings free from weeds to give them the best chance for survival.
- **Trellis your tomatoes** - Your tomato plants should be growing well by now and will need a little support. Use your favorite trellis system to keep your tomato plants off the ground. You can also prune off some of the leaves (especially at the bottom of the plant) to help increase air circulation and reduce fungal issues. Hopefully we can begin harvesting tomatoes at the end of this month! However, I wouldn't be surprised if tomatoes come in late this year due to the late frost.
- **Add mulch around summer crops** - Adding mulch around your tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and cucumbers can help retain soil moisture during the hottest months. Straw or leaf mulches are your best bet. Woodchip mulch can be too dense for our tender veggie crops.

I hope your spring and summer crops see a great boost in production this month and get some great growth towards a good harvest later this year. Happy growing - and remember to wear sunscreen and drink lots of water!



IN THE NEWS

- **Thousands of eggs given away in Tarrant County during shortage**
<https://www.cbsnews.com/texas/news/tarrant-county-commissioner-gives-away-thousands-of-eggs/>
- **Restoring soil and reducing erosion**
https://agupdate.com/agriview/news/crop/article_5045ea2a-035b-11fo-8b38-bfddaaeddd6f.html
- **Food based nutritional intervention** <https://foodtank.com/news/2025/04/new-food-is-medicine-network-aims-to-transform-healthcare/>





CULTIVATING WELLNESS: RETRAINING YOUR BRAIN

BY NIKO HUNT

When we are continually multitasking, it is inevitable that our brains become bogged down and overwhelmed. Our brains are wired to do one task at a time which can lead to better outcomes and less stress. Retraining our mind can sharpen our concentration and enhance productivity, energy, work performance, and creativity. Paying attention to the space around us and how it makes us feel can be refreshing to the mind and potentially encourage us to find new surroundings so enjoy. There are many methods to retrain the mind, but meditation can help you focus on the present and manage stress.

Although it can be intimidating if you've never done it before, consider taking 5 minutes to yourself each day to meditate:

- Close your eyes
- Take slow, deep breaths
- Focus on the sensation of breathing and where you feel it most in your body
- Listen to the sound it makes
- Visualize the oxygen coming in and carbon dioxide going out of your body
- If your thoughts wander come back to your breath

Growers can benefit greatly from taking time to refocus and manage stress. Practicing mindfulness can improve concentration, decision-making, creativity, time management, self-awareness, and overall well-being. Utilizing the space where you spend most of your time to meditate can be rewarding. Don't let the farm or garden only be a space for work, let it be your space for calm as well!

Warm Zucchini Bruschetta

Recipe by Chef Julia Whitehorn

INGREDIENTS

- 1 container of your favorite pesto
- 1 bunch kale
- Grape tomatoes, thinly sliced
- 4 zucchinis, cut into thin rounds
- 1 bag of crostinis
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 Tbs balsamic vinegar



PREPARATION

- In a large bowl toss sliced tomatoes with a drizzle of olive oil, 1 tbs balsamic, salt, and pepper. Set aside.
- Bring a large pan to medium high heat with 3-4 Tbs olive oil. Add the zucchini rounds in olive oil and sauté over medium heat with 3-4 Tbsp pesto until softened (10-12 minutes).
- Add chopped kale and cook for another 2 minutes, or until wilted.
- Season with salt and pepper.
- Assemble by spreading a thin layer of pesto to the base of the crostinis.
- Top with warm zucchini-kale mixture and finish with a few slices of marinated tomatoes.
- Serve warm and enjoy!

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-map.html>

RECOMMENDED BOOKS, AUDIO AND VIDEO

[The School Garden Podcast](#)

By Mary Jo Greene & Anne Santana

[Charles Dowding's Skills For Growing](#)

By Charles Dowding

[The Market Gardener: A Successful Grower's Handbook for Small-Scale Organic Farming](#)

By Jean-Martin Fortier

[Diego Footer](#)

[Farm Small, Farm Smart Podcast](#)
[YouTube Channel](#)
[Books](#)

[Growing for Market](#)

Free articles, email subscriptions, podcasts and MORE!

[Bootstrap Farmer](#)

Articles, videos, podcasts and MORE!





GREG'S TOP CROPS

Tomatoes
Peppers
Beans
Cucumbers
Squash
Eggplant



FARM RESOURCES

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance
farmandranchfreedom.org

GROW North Texas
gownorthtexas.org

Natural Resource Conservation Service
nrcs.usda.gov

Texas Center for Local Food
texaslocalfood.org

Texas Department of Agriculture
texasagriculture.gov

Texas Health Resources Community Hope
<https://www.texashealth.org/About-Texas-Health/Community-Hope>

Texas Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association
tofga.org

USDA Farm Service Agency
fsa.usda.gov

USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture
nifa.usda.gov/

OPAL'S PICKS

This is my favorite month of the year at Opal's Farm. It's also my busiest! April brought some much-needed rain to end the month. Hopefully, May brings more of nature's best irrigation. I'm a bit behind schedule this spring due to a knee injury. It's slowed me down, but progress is being made thanks to some great volunteer groups that have come out recently. I'm only working an acre (including our bio-intensive learning area) this spring because of the injury. The rest of the farm will be cover-cropped.

I'm concentrating on our tomatoes and other higher profit margin plants this year. Proper trellising and pruning increases plant health. Healthy plants stand our summer heat better, have increased immunity to diseases, and are more resistant to pest pressure. The tomato plants are already loaded with fruit just waiting to ripen. The eggplants, and peppers are growing like the weeds that cover the farm after the great spring rain.

One of the best things I can do for the tomatoes is to keep consistent watering to help them avoid splitting. Allowing them to get too dry and then get heavy rain leads to a lot of splitting and waste. Consistent irrigation is going to be essential as the weather gets warmer. We've already had above average temperatures all spring and the summer heat is just around the corner.

I have difficulty bending over because of the immobilizer brace on my leg. It makes pruning and weeding almost impossible. Most mobile garden seats are too low and too small for someone my size. They tend to be hard to move due to the small wheels. I found a solution I'd love to pass on if bending over is difficult or too tiring in your farm or garden. I found a rolling cart with an adjustable swivel tractor seat and ten-inch wheels that make it easy to go down a row of vegetables or trellis and prune tomatoes. I found mine at Harbor Freight, but I'm sure they're available elsewhere or online.

I hope everyone is having a productive spring and a bountiful harvest is in sight.

Greg Joel

Farm Manager - Opal's Farm
<https://www.facebook.com/opalsfarm>





10 TOMATOES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD BY WILLIAM ALEXANDER

A BOOK REVIEW BY BECCA KNUTSON

For this month's book review, I thought I would learn a little more about one of the most beloved summer vegetables that should be ripening later this month...tomatoes! I was intrigued by the summary of *10 Tomatoes that Changed the World* by William Alexander and decided to give it a listen. While it wasn't the most compelling book I've read, it was informative, entertaining, and I learned several new facts about tomatoes. It's a relatively quick and lighthearted read if you are looking for a topical summer book.

A little to my dismay, the title of this book was slightly misleading. I was under the impression that I would be learning about ten different varieties of tomatoes that made a particular impact. While the author does mention a few notable varieties, the structure and flow of the book is a little broader. Throughout the book, William Alexander dives deep into ten different aspects of tomatoes and their roles in culinary history. He takes us on a journey from the tomato's origin story to the current tomato climate.

I imagine that many folks, like me, associate tomatoes, most prominently, with Italian food. One might assume, then, that the tomato plant originated in Italy. However, the tomato plant can be traced back to western South America and was a very different plant from what we see today. It took several hundred years for tomatoes to catch on but can now be found in almost every cuisine in the world. In the first of Alexander's ten chapters about tomatoes, we learn about how tomatoes got their name and began to gain popularity around the world.

“I'm a tomato freak, but sometimes you have to get it in ketchup form for people to be able to open to tomatoes.”
Tori Amos

Once tomatoes gained popularity and tomatoes were being grown at a large scale in different parts of the United States, farmers were figuring out different sales outlets for their crops throughout the growing season. As a solution to the bumper crop that would arrive at the peak of the season, tomato canneries began popping up to purchase tomatoes in large quantities to stock grocery store shelves and send to the troops fighting in the Civil War. A couple of the most common products canned using tomatoes were condensed tomato soup and crushed tomatoes.

Canned tomatoes were not only popular in the United States but also in Italy where tomatoes had worked their way into the culture as well. Italy was in search of a better tomato for canning -a tomato that had fewer seeds and gel and more “meat” to produce less waste in the canning process. Through many years of breeding for favorable traits the San Marzano tomato was developed. Some of you may be familiar with this variety as it is a great tomato for home gardens as well and is a delightful plum type tomato that is great for sauces and preserving. You will definitely want to check out the third stop on this history of tomatoes to learn more about the drama of labeling canned tomatoes with the name “San Marzano” on the label. Who knew tomatoes could make everyone so feisty!?

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

[AfroGreen'd](#) [Conundrum Farms](#) [Grow North Texas](#)

[Grow Southeast](#) [NTX School Garden Network](#)

[Opal's Farm Southside Community Garden](#)

[Tarrant Area Food Bank Farm & Garden Programs](#)

[Timberview Farmstead](#)





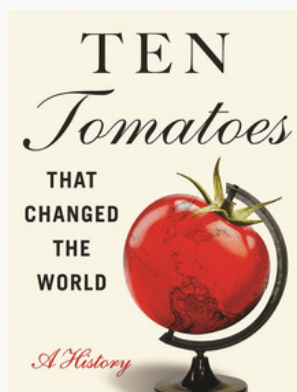
10 TOMATOES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD BY WILLIAM ALEXANDER (CONT.)

The development and prevalence of canned tomatoes helped facilitate the rise in popularity and rapid spread of one of the globe's favorite foods – pizza! Originating in Naples, Italy, pizza is now so common that you can find it in almost every country in the world. From local “ma & pa” shops to worldwide chains like Domino's and Pizza Hut, Alexander dives deep into the history of pizza and some of the controversies along the way. At one point during this section, I had to check to see if the rest of the book was going to be about pizza. It was a lengthy section.

After pizza, we learn all about the development and popularization of ketchup in section five and then the history of spaghetti (or marinara) sauce in section six. Both foods would obviously not exist without tomatoes and are very commonly found in many parts of the world.

Section seven brought us to the part of the tomato story that I was looking forward to – plant breeding! There are over 10,000 varieties of tomatoes in the world. Many were bred to display specific qualities like color, size, shape, sweetness and texture. Alexander went into great detail about the process of plant breeding and how it can take many years to develop new plant varieties through very tedious selection utilizing thousands of plants through several life cycles. While I listened to this chapter, I just kept imagining how terrible I would be at breeding plants. Being precise is not one of my strengths. The night after I listened to this chapter, I did have a stress dream in which people kept storming into my tomato lab demanding the next best variety of tomato, but it just wasn't ready yet. Luckily, that is not my job in real life!

Amongst the thousands of varieties of tomatoes are many that are grown in industrial agriculture to supply our grocery stores with uniform-looking tomatoes that have the ability to travel across the country without being bruised. You may be familiar with these beautiful, tasteless tomatoes that have whole-heartedly earned their reputation of being gross and flavorless. Many of these tomato varieties, like Big Boy, were developed to solve problems that tomatoes encountered along the supply chain and along the way, they lost their flavor.



So along comes the “heirloom tomato” making a comeback in the backyard garden and on the small farm bringing flavor and joy back to the tomato-eating experience. Today, home gardeners are fighting back against the bland, tasteless tomato of the grocery store with heirloom varieties found in seed catalogs or perhaps saved from the previous year. If you want to get an avid gardener worked up about something, just ask about their favorite tomato varieties!

In the final step on the tomato journey, Alexander looks at how tomatoes are being grown on a large scale today. He visits massive commercial operations in Florida and greenhouse operations in Canada showing two vastly different methods of trying to grow the perfect tomato year-round to satisfy the demand for this predominant vegetable.

Tomatoes are my favorite vegetable, if not my favorite food, and have been for most of my life. I am dreaming about my first farm-fresh tomato of the season and look forward to eating as many tomatoes as possible throughout the season. My current favorite variety of tomato is called Martha Washington and it is a beautiful, medium, pink slicer that carries the flavor of an heirloom.

I enjoyed learning more about tomatoes in *10 Tomatoes that Changed the World* by William Alexander. I was happy to learn more about the origin of the name of the tomato and different monikers it had along the way and I found the chapters about ketchup to be particularly interesting. And while I don't think I will try to get into tomato breeding anytime soon, I do enjoy growing new varieties of tomatoes and will continue to do so for as long as I can.