

APRIL 2023

# 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 March 23rd IN PERSON at the Water Works building and also toured the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden at the Resource Connection.

### Meeting Recap:

- Tejas Rane from Tarrant Area Food Bank gave a presentation on two different agricultural projects happening at TAFB:
  - Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program
    - TAFB has \$5.1 million from the USDA to purchase local food at market price from socially disadvantaged producers
    - Will be working with local small farmers to purchase excess produce at the farmers market and directly from the farms.
  - Ag Hub
    - New facility on Vacek St. (by the other TAFB buildings) that used to be an Audi dealership.
    - Will be a produce hub, warehouse space, and community space for youth and families and will have a community garden.
- Lauren Hickman provided a TAFB Garden & Farm Program Update:
  - A new Sharepoint site will be live soon for TAFB's Community Garden Partners.
    - It will have gardening resources, handouts, a calendar of events, training modules and more!
  - The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program will begin again soon and planning is under way. WIC participants will be able to pick up and spend their vouchers at Cowtown Farmers Market this year.
- Greg Joel had a few updates from Grow Southeast:
  - Most of the farms have planted their seedlings grown by TCC Horticulture students.
  - Tabor Farms has figured out their irrigation issues and is beginning to see growth again. They have also received some shipping containers that will be used for storage.
  - Opal's Farm is getting help for Blue Zones Project to be able to accept SNAP/EBT at their new farm stand on Sylvania.
- New Projects: CGUA Speakers List
  - A shared Google Doc will be created so interested CGUA members can add known speaker resources to a list to be added to the TCFPC website.

The next CGUA meeting will be on Thursday, May 18th from 3:00-4:30pm. Location TBD.

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

## Events & Classes

### NEXT CGUA MEETING

May 18th, 3:00pm

Location: TBD

### TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

No General Meetings Until

July 2023

### TARRANT COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

Fruit Grafting Workshop

April 14th, 9am-4pm

<https://tarrantmg.org/>

### SAVE TARRANT WATER

Gardening for Pollinators

April 15th, 8am (Online)

Rainwater Harvesting

April 22nd, 11am-1pm

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

### MINDFUL MARKET

April 22nd 11am-2pm

[www.coactntx.org/mindful-market](http://www.coactntx.org/mindful-market)

### COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

Every Saturday 8am-NOON

[www.cowtownmarket.com](http://www.cowtownmarket.com)

Veterans Park, Grand Pavilion

8901 Clifford St.

White Settlement, TX 76108

SPRING FESTIVAL

April 22nd, 8am-12pm



## WHY SHOP LOCAL?

BY SUSAN BARKER

Over the last few years, we've witnessed some frailty in our national food systems, with empty shelves at supermarkets and now higher food prices due to inflation. On the other hand, during the pandemic we saw a huge uptick in local food movements from increases in homesteading and home gardening to SNAP dollars spent at farmer's markets.

There are social, environmental, and economic impacts of shopping locally for food. Did you know that people who shop at farmers markets have an average of 15 to 20 social interactions per visit? At the farmers market you get to meet the people who grow your food, and you can learn about where and how it's grown, so you have more control over your food choices and the types of businesses you support.

Instead of buying produce harvested before it's ripe and having it transported the average 1,500 miles the typical American vegetable travels to get to you, when you buy locally, you get produce harvested at its peak, sometimes within 150 miles of the market. That means tastier, more nutritious food at a fraction of the environmental cost.

Shopping locally also means that your money is more likely to stay local, supporting other local businesses and employing your community members. If you want to build a more resilient local food system, buying locally grown food is a great place to start.

Live in Tarrant County and think there's not a farmers market near you? Think again!

### **Arlington Foodies Farmers Market – Pantego | Third Saturdays | 5-8pm**

Bicentennial Park, 3206 Smith Barry Rd, Arlington, TX 76013

### **Benbrook Artisans and Farmers Market | First Sundays | 10am – 3pm**

Dutch Branch Park, 1899 Winscott Road Benbrook, TX 76126

### **Burleson Farmers Market | Saturdays | 8 am – 1pm**

141 W Renfro St, Burleson, TX 76028

### **Clearfork Farmers Market | Saturdays | 8am-12pm**

The Trailhead, 4801 Edwards Ranch Road, Fort Worth, TX 76109

### **Cowtown Farmers Market | Saturdays | 8am – 12pm**

Veterans Park Grand Pavilion, 8901 Clifford St, White Settlement, TX 76108

### **Funkytown Mindful Market | Fourth Saturdays | 11am – 2pm**

Texas Wesleyan University, 1201 Wesleyan Street, Fort Worth, Texas 76105

### **Lake Worth Farmers Market | First and third Saturdays | 8am – 12pm**

Mary Lou Reddick Public Library, 7005 Charbonneau Rd, Lake Worth, TX 76135

### **Lola's Farmers Market | Second Sundays | 11am – 4pm**

2000 W Berry St, Fort Worth, TX 76110

### **Saginaw Farmers Market | Second and fourth Saturdays | 8am – 12pm**

725 S. Knowles Drive, Saginaw, TX 76179

## IN THE NEWS

- Pay-what-you-can farmstands help feed communities equitably around the country <https://civileats.com/2023/03/01/pay-what-you-can-farm-stands-feed-communities-against-tough-odds/>
- North Texan publication listing instruction and local resources for soil testing <https://www.crosstimbersgazette.com/2023/03/23/gardening-soil-testing/>
- Dallas City Council adopts plan to increase food security via new urban ag policies <https://candysdirt.com/2023/03/08/in-bid-to-end-food-deserts-dallas-approves-urban-agriculture-plan-to-bring-fresh-produce-to-underserved-areas/>
- An evaluation of the "no-dig" gardening method proposed for backyard gardeners <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/15/realestate/no-dig-gardening-vegetables.html>

"O, how this spring of  
love resembleth  
The uncertain glory of  
an April day,  
Which now shows all  
the beauty of the sun,  
And by and by a cloud  
takes all away!

**WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARE**



## APRIL TO-DO

Plant tomatoes, eggplant  
and peppers by  
transplant/seedling.

Plant zucchini, squash,  
green beans, cucumber  
and okra from seed.

Plant fruit trees, shrubs  
and vines.

Continue to add compost  
to each garden bed while  
doing your spring planting.

Feed, water and protect  
young plants/seedlings  
from pests and the  
elements.

Harvest and preserve  
residual winter crops.



# Carrot Breakfast Muffins

Recipe from Hannah Lamar Gibson

We are still reaping the benefits from a big carrot garden harvest this spring, so here is a tasty, healthy recipe for breakfast on the go or a nutritious sweet treat.



## INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 C olive or other vegetable oil
- 1 C brown sugar or honey
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 C yogurt
- 2 large carrots, grated
- 2 1/2 C flour
- 1 T baking powder
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp salt

## PREPARATION

- Preheat oven to 425 F.
- Prepare a muffin tin, buttering or oiling each tin and lining with a cupcake liner (optional, if not using liners make sure you grease the tin well).
- In a large bowl, whisk together sugar and olive oil until combined.
- Whisk eggs into mixture one at a time.
- Whisk yogurt and vanilla into mixture.
- Add grated carrots and fold into wet ingredients.
- Optional: sprinkle a small amount of granulated sugar on top of the muffin batter. This will result in a crunchy muffin top.
- Add flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt to wet ingredients. Stir to mix in, do not overmix.
- Distribute batter evenly between 12 count muffin tin.
- Bake at 425 degrees for 5 minutes, then decrease heat to 375 degrees and bake for 10-15 minutes. The muffins are done when the cake springs back when you press on the top lightly with your finger.

## SEASONAL PRODUCE FUN FACTS - STRAWBERRIES

Strawberries are a spring favorite for many people and are typically one of the first fruits to ripen in the spring. North Texas strawberries will start to produce in April and continue for about 8-10 weeks depending on the variety.

- Strawberries can be grown as a perennial plant in a garden setting, but are often planted as annual crops on larger farms.
- The best time to plant strawberries is in October to ensure a strong, healthy plant for a spring harvest.
- Strawberry varieties come in three different types: short-day, long-day and day-neutral. Short-day varieties are the best option for North Texas.
- Plant your strawberries in a sunny spot with well-drained soil. Soggy soil can lead to fungal diseases or rotting fruit.
- To keep bugs from eating your berries, mulch your plants with straw or plant into weed fabric.
- Covering your plants with shade cloth while in peak production can prevent sun scald and damage from birds.

Try growing your own strawberries at home or shop your favorite farmers market for some fresh, local strawberries!

For more facts about strawberries, visit: <https://blog.aghires.com/25-strawberry-fun-facts/>

## GARDEN RESOURCES

### Local Nurseries:

[Archie's Gardenland](#)  
[Calloway's](#)

### Free Seeds:

[TAFB Community Garden Program:](#)  
[communitygarden@tafb.org](mailto: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>

## VIRTUAL GARDENING CONTENT

### BRIT | Botanic Garden

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

### Paperpot Co Blog & Podcast

<https://paperpot.co/the-blog/>

### 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)





## GREG'S TOP CROPS

Tomatoes: Celebrity, Early Girl, Berkley Tie Dye & Cherokee Purple

Peppers: Jalapeno, Poblano, California Wonder, Shishito



## OPAL'S PICKS

This article is a little hurried this month. We're right in the middle of Spring planting and it's REALLY busy. Thank goodness for Daylight Savings Time! Our tomatoes went in last week and almost all are trellised and ready to bring wonderful, fresh flavor to your Springtime tables. We're growing four varieties of tomatoes this year – two heirloom cultivars (Berkley Tie Dye and Cherokee Purple) as well as two Texas workhorse varieties (Celebrity and Early Girl).

Our peppers are in and on their way! We have both sweet (California Wonder) and hot (Poblano and Jalapeno). If you're planting both sweet and hot peppers you'll want to be sure and plant them as far apart as possible to avoid cross-pollination. The only sweet peppers I like to find a hot one in is Shishitos. Shishito peppers are aptly named – Japanese for “surprise” – because one in five has some heat to it.

We would really like to thank the Tarrant County College – NW Campus Horticulture program and David Cole for growing our tomato and pepper “starts” for this season as well as the tomatoes for the TCU/SSARE research project! One of the disadvantages to being on a floodplain is the inability to have greenhouses or other permanent structures. We appreciate David and his students for being willing to partner with us! The TCC NW Campus will be having their annual Spring Plant Sale in May so please come out and get some deals on some great plants (flowers, shrubs, and food crops). Sales support TCC students in going to a national horticulture competition each summer.

I'd also like to thank our Assistant Farm Manager, Amber Carr, for growing trays of new transplants at her home for the farm so we could bring you fresh Swiss chard, tomatillos, eggplants, and assorted greens!

We hope your gardens are getting ready to bring a cornucopia of Spring to your tables. Remember that fresh produce is always available at Cowtown Farmers Market as well as all of the farmers markets that Fort Worth has to offer. Happy planting!

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

## FARM RESOURCES

### Organizations & Associations:

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance  
[farmandranchfreedom.org](http://farmandranchfreedom.org)

GROW North Texas  
[grownorthtexas.org](http://grownorthtexas.org)

Natural Resource Conservation Service  
[nrcs.usda.gov](http://nrcs.usda.gov)

Texas Center for Local Food  
[texaslocalfood.org](http://texaslocalfood.org)

Texas Department of Agriculture  
[texasagriculture.gov](http://texasagriculture.gov)

Texas Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association  
[tofga.org](http://tofga.org)

USDA Farm Service Agency  
[fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov)

USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture  
[nifa.usda.gov/](http://nifa.usda.gov/)

