

May 2017

# HOW'S IT GROWING?

Community Gardens & Urban Agriculture  
Working Group Newsletter



## CGUA Happenings

The next CGUA meeting will be on **Thursday, May 11th from 3:00-4:30pm** at the TAFB Administrative Building, 2525 Cullen St. Fort Worth, TX 76107.  
[tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/news---events](http://tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/news---events)

**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](http://tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/community-food-systems-north-texas)

**New on the website**—The CGUA newsletters will be archived on the working group's landing page: [tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/cgua-working-group](http://tarrantcountyfoodpolicycouncil.org/cgua-working-group). Please feel free to download, print and distribute to anyone who would benefit from the information.

## EVENTS

**5/6, 9am**

**Building an Herb Spiral**  
[brit.org/events](http://brit.org/events)

**5/11, 3-4:30pm**

**CGUA Meeting**  
**TAFB @ 2525 Cullen**

**5/13, 10am-1pm**

**Good & Bad Bugs**  
[tafb.org/events](http://tafb.org/events)

**5/20, 9am-3pm**

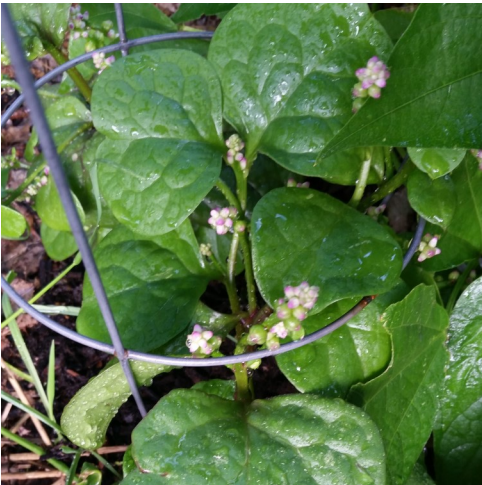
**Herb Festival**  
[fwbg.org/events](http://fwbg.org/events)

**5/27-5/29**

**Snakes of Tarrant County**  
**Mark Pyle on Facebook**

**6/1, 4-5pm**

**TCFPC General Meeting**  
**TC Public Health**



## HEAT-TOLERANT CROPS

**Becca Knutson, TAFB Community Garden Coordinator**

In North Texas, we are fortunate to be able to grow fruits and vegetables year-round. While many other parts of the country are often limited by cold, snowy winters, we can grow Brassicas (cruciferous veggies like broccoli or cabbage) and root vegetables without much trouble at all. The main hurdle to a year-long garden is the relentless heat of July, August and September. When the mercury hits 100°+, it becomes difficult to tend to a heat and bug-stressed garden without risking dehydration and sunburn. While some gardeners choose to use shade cloth or other inventive ways of cooling tomatoes and bell peppers, others have chosen to embrace those crops that don't need to be babied through the heat.

I once had the pleasure of hearing Howard Garrett present at a luncheon in Grand Prairie. When asked, "What do you do to your tomato plants to keep them producing throughout the summer?" he replied with something like, "Nothing. I grow plants that naturally do well in the heat." Each summer at the TAFB Learning Garden, we have experimented with different crops and varieties that continue to produce well as the temperatures rise. When growing on a quarter-acre, we do not have the time or manpower to attempt to force tomatoes to produce when they really just want to take a break. *(Continued on p.2)*

## Heat-Tolerant Crops (cont.)

Malabar spinach (picture on p.1) is one of our favorite summer crops. This vining masterpiece has round or teardrop shaped leaves and beautiful pink and dark plum “berries” that will drop and reseed for next year’s crop. Harvest continuously and provide a trellis to keep the vines from taking over your whole garden. While I have never seen Malabar spinach seeds locally, they are available online or you can find seedlings at local nurseries. Two or three seedlings go a long way in a small garden.

Okra is a southern favorite that produces well in the heat. Daily harvest is needed to keep the fruit from becoming woody; however, there are varieties that tend to stay tender longer. Royal Burgundy seed can be found locally or online. Okra does well when sowed directly.

Other crops to consider are some classics and some variations of our favorite veggies. We have had luck with Oriental Wonder yard-long beans, Armenian cucumber (picture on p.1), different varieties of hot peppers, black-eyed peas and sweet potatoes. I would also love to hear what other crops have served you well during the hot summer months.

Make gardening easier this summer and plant crops that are meant for the heat. Happy Gardening!

## MAY TO-DO

- Harvest spring crops daily to keep them producing for as long as possible.
- Continue to plant heat-tolerant tomatoes, such as ‘Sweet 100’, ‘Tycoon’ and ‘Celebrity’.
- Plant eggplant, peppers, cucumbers, squash, okra, beans, sweet potatoes, melons and southern peas this month.
- Continue to plant daisies, asters, coreopsis, marigolds and sunflowers to attract and feed beneficial insects.
- Check and repair your irrigation system—the hot summer is coming!



**Green/Burgundy Okra & Yard Long Beans**



## WORDS OF WISDOM

Excerpt from “Prayers and Sayings of the Mad Farmer”  
by Wendell Berry

IX

Sowing the seed,  
my hand is one with the earth.

Wanting the seed to grow,  
my mind is one with the light.

Hoeing the crop,  
my hands are one with the rain.

Having cared for the plants,  
my mind is one with the air.

Hungry and trusting,  
my mind is one with the earth.

Eating the fruit,  
my body is one with the earth.



**TARRANT COUNTY**  
FOOD POLICY COUNCIL



# EXPERIMENTING WITH HUGELKULTUR BEDS

Austin Caraway

*Austin Caraway, of Farming the Sprawl, explains the process of building a Hugelkultur-style raised garden bed. For more information, you can visit [www.farmingthesprawl.com](http://www.farmingthesprawl.com).*

We've decided to go old world here in the suburbs and incorporated Hugelkultur beds into our little emerging food oasis. Hugel beds, while varying vastly in techniques and styles, are traditionally mounds or hills that have fallen or cut wood as their base and are covered with soil. As the wood decays, it absorbs and holds moisture for the plant life above while feeding it. Many models include manure mixed in with the wood for an extra nutrient kick.

To find the materials, I drove all around the neighborhood and a bit "out in the country." I gathered all kinds of fallen wood. Thanks to a new friend, we were able to collect a trailer-full of mixed dung (camel, llama, donkey, and cow). I stacked up the wood, covered it and filled in the empty spaces with a mélange of the poo and wood mulch from the City municipal tree services, and then topped that with some garden soil mix from Living Earth. I didn't have access to a big pile of dirt, so I had to buy a cubic yard. I seeded them with lettuces, kale, red clover, rape, various flowers, pumpkins, and melons. Just a couple months later, they are flourishing!

Some proponents boast that they can go season after season without fertilizing or watering their beds. I can't wait to see what these beds do in the future!

## Local Resources

### Veggie Transplants & Soil Amendments

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

### Free Seeds:

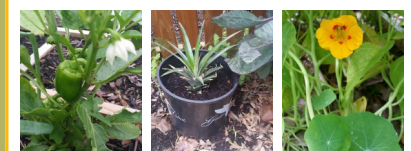
- TAFB
- Contact Seed Companies

### Bulk Soil/Compost:

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

### Garden Curricula:

- CGUA Website (see p.1)



### Hugelkultur:

Layer together logs, branches, manure, compost and soil to create a raised bed that will hold water longer than average!