

APRIL 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, TBD.

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: TBD

TCFPC GENERAL MEETING

TCFPC Networking Meeting

May 1st

Time and Location, TBD

CONUNDRUM FARMS

Volunteer opportunities & 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

April 5th, 11am to 2pm

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

COWTOWN FARMERS MARKET

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



“Food is not just fuel. Food is about family, food is about community, food is about identity. And we nourish all those things when we eat well.”

MICHAEL POLLAN



Featured Community Garden

SOUTHSIDE COMMUNITY GARDEN

LOCATION:

a network of home gardens throughout the 76104 zip code of Fort Worth

TYPE OF OPERATION:

grass-roots initiative that builds garden boxes at the homes of community members in 76104, which is a zip code with one of the lowest life expectancies in the nation

TYPES OF PRODUCTS GROWN:

Vegetables and herbs

WHERE TO FIND THEM:

southsidefw.org
[@southsidecommunitygardenftw](https://www.facebook.com/southsidecommunitygardenftw)



TO-DO TO GROW FOOD IN APR.!



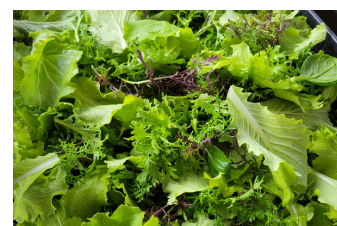
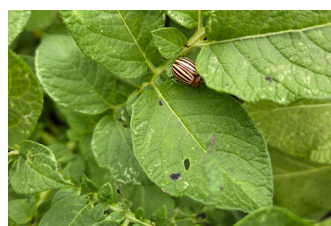
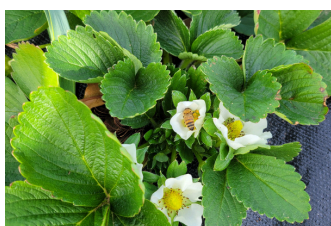
BY BECCA KNUTSON, HOLLOW TRACE MARKET FARM

TIPS AND TASKS FOR GROWING FOOD IN NORTH TEXAS

March certainly brought a lot of different weather this year! We had lots of wind, a few cold nights, almost no rain and some really warm days, too. I hope you were able to make good progress on spring plantings - or maybe you've chosen to wait until the weather looks a little more consistent.

- **Continue to plant summer crops** - As the weather continues to warm and we get more consistently warm nights, our favorite summer crops will do better. Finish planting any tomatoes that you haven't gotten in the ground and work on planting peppers, eggplant, beans, squash, cucumbers, basil, okra and other summer favorites throughout the month.
- **Wrap up your cool weather crop plantings and harvests** - I like to finish planting my last successions of cool crops in the beginning of April. Things like lettuce, fennel, kohlrabi, spinach and radishes don't do well when the weather gets too warm. Plan to have these crops harvested in early May and be prepared to put out some shade for them if we get an early summer.
- **Plan for irrigation and watering** - Continue watering crops and newly planted seeds and seedlings. As the weather warms, increase the amount of water your plants receive. Monitor the forecast for potential rain and cooler nights. Since it's been a dry year so far and we've had lots of wind, I am running my drip irrigation four days a week for about 15 minutes each time.
- **Manage weeds and walkways** - as soon as we get a good spring rain, 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.
- **Pay attention to your potatoes** - Your February-planted potatoes should be popping up and getting some good foliage. Remember to mound or mulch your plants if that's what you prefer to do and watch your crops for signs of potato beetle or overwatering.
- **Check in on your onions** - Onions planted in January are likely ready to harvest for green onions. If your slips got bit by frost like mine did, you're probably also a little behind for the year. Oftentimes by the end of April, onions have grown to a great size and can be harvested for fresh bulb onions. I typically start harvesting mine for storage in the middle of May.

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 drinks lots of water!



IN THE NEWS

- **EPA drives tractor and plants corn at local Texas farm**
<https://texasfarmbureau.org/epa-official-visits-texas-farm-to-celebrate-national-ag-day/>
- **Funding freeze puts some farmers in limbo** <https://dailyyonder.com/slim-margins-climate-disasters-and-trumps-funding-freeze-life-or-death-for-many-us-farms/2025/03/18/>
- **Born with a green thumb expanding from the backyard to a local parking lot**
<https://fortworthreport.org/2025/03/15/made-in-tarrant-nativo-gardens-grows-from-backyard-business-to-plants-in-a-fort-worth-parking-lot/>



@TARRANTCOUNTYFOODPOLICYCOUNCIL

CULTIVATING WELLNESS: FOOD FOR ENERGY

BY NIKO HUNT

Life can be chaotic but prioritizing our health is necessary to continue moving forward. Often, we “forget” or “don’t have time” to take a moment to eat. However, planning ahead and intentionally making the choice to stop for food will benefit not only our bodies but also our minds. Incorporating the right foods daily can aid in preventing disease and help your body when dealing with illnesses. Another advantage is the opportunity to manage our energy which could create new habits such as meal prep and goal setting. Consider putting yourself on a schedule to ensure that you are creating patterns that will not only keep you energized but satisfied as well:

- pay attention to your hunger and try to manage it by eating something every 3 to 5 hours (can help blood sugar remain stable and prevent your energy from crashing)
- eating three meals a day might not be a possibility right away, so try to plan for nutritious snacks between meals (combine a carbohydrate with a protein and/or fat)
- drink plenty of water to regulate your temperature and provide sufficient energy; challenge yourself to drink a reasonable amount of water each day

If you’ve ever received the advice of a doctor, read a health magazine, or done your own research, understanding the importance of eating enough to function and support a healthy lifestyle is not news to you. Focusing on satisfying our hunger and avoiding skipping meals allows the body to have the nourishment and energy it needs to be active, especially while working on the farm or in the garden. Remember, a positive outcome is based on how realistic the plan is for you and your lifestyle!

Sauteed Spinach Quesadillas

Recipe by Aysegul Sanford

Fresh spinach, bold garlic, and creamy cheese make this dish a no-brainer when it comes to quick meal prep! Whether you whip up this spinach and cheese quesadilla for breakfast or a savory snack you’ll adore this recipe.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tbsp unsalted butter, olive oil, or any other vegetable oil
- 5 cups fresh spinach (if using frozen spinach thaw and remove juices before preparing)
- 1 clove fresh garlic
- ½ tsp salt and pepper
- 4 tortillas of your choice
- 2 cups shredded cheese of your choice



PREPARATION

- In a non-stick skillet on medium heat melt 1 tbsp of butter; add spinach, cover with a lid, and let cook for 3-4 minutes. Add in the garlic, salt, and pepper, stir, and set aside on plate or in a bowl.
- Lay 4 flour tortillas on a flat surface, add ½ cup shredded cheese on one half of each tortilla. Divide the cooked spinach amongst the tortillas, mounting it onto the cheese. Fold the other half over the filling.
- Brush each tortilla with melted butter and transfer 2 of them onto the skillet. Cook 1-2 minutes on each side (or until it turns golden brown).
- Slice them into wedges, garnish, 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
grownorthtexas.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

Spring is officially here! I was going home on I-30 from the farm and saw the tiny heads of blue poking out of the grassy medians last week. The wildflowers are just starting to bloom at the farm as well. Our bees are thrilled, and the butterflies are constant reminders of how lucky we are to be stewards of the land so generously entrusted to us.

Our tomatoes and peppers are in the ground and looking well. We will be installing the trellises now that everything is planted. We cut down on the number of transplants from last year so we would have more time for pruning and trellising as the season goes forward. Proper pruning and trellising are important for both the health of the plant and the yields.

We also left more rows between the tomato plants rather than planting them in successive rows. We hope extra spacing and careful pruning will allow for better air flow through our tomatoes.

We're concentrating on a smaller area this year – most crops will be grown in our bio-intensive learning garden. We've also planned out succession planting for the Spring with our salad turnips, salad mixes, lettuce and some other greens that have greater heat tolerance for the coming spring and summer, so we have plenty of each for every market.

As if there's not enough going on...we are proud to be participating with the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance (FARFA) on Lobby Day at the State Capital on April 1st. We are so grateful that FARFA and the Council for Healthy Food Systems work so hard to act on behalf of small farmers across the state. Recent funding freezes by the USDA have created an air of uncertainty for so many of us.

We are so fortunate to be part of a community of so many advocates and farmers here in Fort Worth working to change our local food systems. Thank you all so much for being part of this fantastic community.

Last, but not least... the Taste the C.U.R.E. students at Opal's Farm will be planting this week. They've all worked so hard. I can't wait to see their plots blooming with tons of fresh veggies.

Greg Joel

Farm Manager – Opal's Farm

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





THE THIRD PLATE BY DAN BARBER

A BOOK REVIEW BY BECCA KNUTSON

This month's book review suggestion came from our former working group member, Harrison Gibson! When chatting with him about the other titles I've listened to this year, he had several great suggestions and *The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food* by Dan Barber attracted my attention the most. Within the first 20 minutes of listening, the author mentions both Wendell Berry and Michael Pollan, so I knew I was on the right track.

In *The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food*, Dan Barber investigates the concept of "the third plate." "The first plate" may represent the traditional American meal that is usually high in protein, has large portions and relies heavily on the industrial food system to prepare. "The second plate" looks very similar but may source its ingredients from "organic" or "grass-fed" options or even a few ingredients sourced locally. "The third plate" is a future meal that will focus heavily on foods that are in-season, grown locally, and are grown using sustainable and environmentally friendly methods. Barber invites the reader to imagine that "third plate world" by sharing his experiences spending time with farmers and ranchers who are already producing food in those ways as they discuss the feasibility of making these methods more mainstream.

“ In the rush to industrialize farming, we've lost the understanding, implicit since the beginning of agriculture, that food is a process, a web of relationships, not an individual ingredient or commodity. ”
Dan Barber

Dan Barber is a chef and co-owner of Blue Hill at Stone Barns which is located at the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agricultural in Pocantico Hills, New York. Stone Barns is a non-profit farm that promotes local, sustainable agriculture and community supported agriculture. They have greenhouses, field crops and a variety of different livestock. They also host conferences and educational programming. It looks like a really neat place. If you'd like to learn more about them, check out their website <https://www.stonebarnscenter.org/>. Throughout *The Third Plate*, Barber learns different methods of farming and raising animals from the characters he meets in his journeys and tries to implement those techniques at Stone Barns.

The experience of listening to *The Third Plate* felt a little like an ethereal meander through an idyllic world where all food was grown in sustainable ways that worked with nature instead of against it and provided everyone with delicious and nutritious food. I often felt like I was in a pastoral daydream that confirmed my preference for farming with nature as a balanced ecosystem. It felt a little like the concept of home.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

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](#)





THE THIRD PLATE BY DAN BARBER (CONT.)

The reader (or listener) gets to meet lots of different characters along the way who are doing amazing things in sustainable agriculture. We get to learn about a whole region of farmers who are growing heirloom varieties of grain organically. They switched from conventional methods years ago because they found the benefits to the environment and the product to be motivation enough. One of the farmers even runs a seed and supply store that services that same region to ensure the farmers can keep growing their preferred varieties that are acclimated to their ecosystem. We get to spend a lot of time when a rancher in Spain who raises geese for foie gras (fatty goose liver) in a humane and sustainable way. He is adamant about creating a balanced ecosystem that keeps his animals and the nature surrounding them happy. He doesn't believe in keeping his animals fenced in. He doesn't mind losing goose eggs to some natural predators. He utilizes the natural vegetation from his land in a calculated grazing rotation that produces a high-quality product that his customers are looking for.

One of my favorite anecdotes involved the carrots grown at Stone Barns by Barber's farm manager. The farm manager had been selecting varieties for flavor – as one would when growing for a high-end restaurant. He also uses sustainable and regenerative farming methods so you know his soil was full of activity and nutrients for these crops. The carrot variety he chose to grow was supposed to have a very high sugar content (read: very flavorful). After a harvest, the farmer did a test that calculated the sugar content of the carrot and he had gotten some outrageously high number like 16.9%. The farmer was so excited! I believe he said that 10-12% sugar content was considered excellent. I can imagine those carrots were delicious and a true testament to the benefits of growing food crops in soil that is alive and full of activity. As an experiment, the farmer also did the sugar content test on the carrots the restaurant had ordered from the distributor. The results were lower than I expected...0.0%! I could barely believe it but it just goes to show you that farming methods really do impact the taste and nutrition of the crops produced.



After meeting all these characters and learning about their amazing farms and sustainable methods, Barber still needed to consider the feasibility of this idyllic “third plate.” Is it possible for most of our food to be grown using sustainable, organic or regenerative methods? Is it possible to grow and raise enough food to feed our growing populations in a way that moves away from industrial agriculture, huge feedlot operations and over-fishing our oceans? Can we convince people that nutrition and sustainability are more important than convenience and predictability? Are we willing to relearn skills from the past that might mean doing more cooking and food prep than many of us do today?

As a farmer that likes to think she uses mostly sustainable and regenerative practices that work with nature, I have a hard time imagining a world where my kind of farming is the norm. It doesn't seem like we'd be able to produce enough food, let alone convince people of the benefits to our health and the environment. But, I love the idea and the daydream. Dan Barber, and many others, agree that the future of food will likely be some happy combination of industrial agriculture and regenerative sustainable agriculture. In some ways, we're already moving in that direction as we see the long-term effects of our industrial food system. In other ways, we have a long way to go to make effective change.

I enjoyed listening to this title and need to decide what I'm going to dive into next. If you have suggestions or want to chat about the future of our food system, please reach out to me. I'd love to hear your thoughts and tell you about the things I've learned!