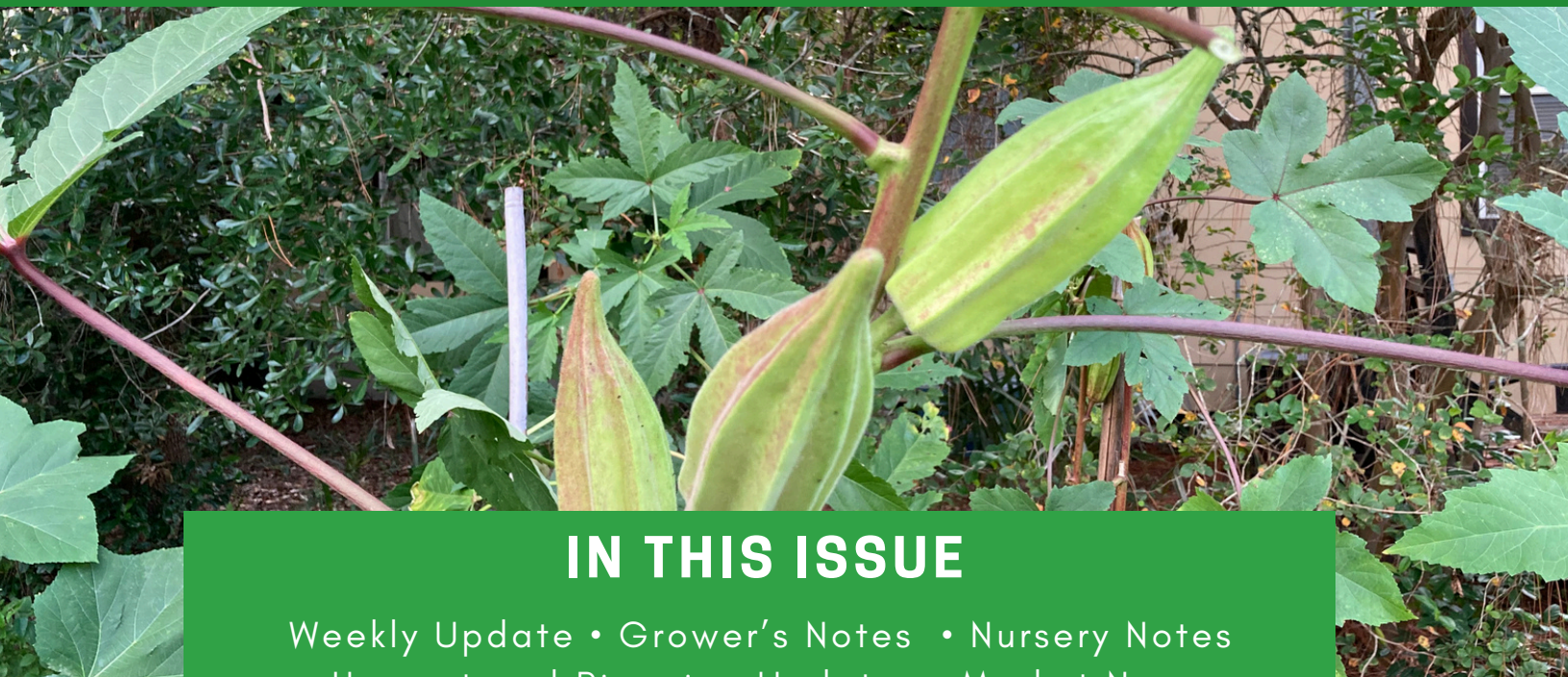


# WEST PASCO URBAN FARM REPORT

NEW PORT RICHEY FARMNET  
WEEK OF AUGUST 11, 2025

Weekly Farm Report back in action. After a brief hiatus, West Pasco Urban Farm Report is again publishing. We apologize for any inconvenience caused by the missing reports.



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Harvest and Ripening Updates • Market News

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

## WEEKLY UPDATE BY DELL DECHANT

### Weather Update

Above normal heat this week, and rain will be near normal. We will be in the low to mid-90s for highs, with 50% chance of rain. Although normal for the summer, the 50% rain forecast might be a bit ambitious.

As you read this report, most in West Pasco will have experienced a rather wet weekend, from Thursday through Sunday. We had close to three inches in the gauges at our demonstration garden sites. Some periods were very heavy. This type of rain is typical of tropical systems, which is just what we had this past weekend - a weak tropical wave.

The bulk of our rain this summer has been from tropical waves and fronts moving north and south. While tropical waves do occur in the summer (along with tropical storms and hurricanes), we've had more than usual. We've had more than usual fronts, too, and fronts are even less common. The end result is that we are near normal for precipitation this summer, but the pattern has been very different - with the rain occurring sporadically, and long dry stretches punctuated by intense downpours. This type of weather is very different from normal summer cycles. Without those fronts and tropical systems this would be another dry "rainy" season. So, we are thankful for that rain we have received - even if it has been unusual.

If it does not rain, temperatures will be in the low to mid-90s. Average for this time of the year is 91 for the high. 76 for the low. So far this summer we have been generally well above the both the normal high and normal low.

**Continued from Page 1.....**

The sporadic rain and especially the abnormally long stretches of cloudless days has resulted not only in above normal heating, but multiple days of above normal heating. Such heating is harmful to ecosystems, agriculture, and life in general.

The coming week promises temperatures a bit above normal.

**Historical average for week:**

**High, 91; Low, mid 70s**

**Forecast: Above normal heat, higher if no rain.**

**High, low to mid 90s; Low, upper 70s to low 80s.**

**Rain: After tropical rain inundation last week or this time of the year, chances this week are near normal (around 50%)**

Summer plantings can still be considered - but proceed with caution. Due to the climate change our summer temperatures (90s) are extending into October, so you might take a chance and keep planting summer favorites for a least the first two weeks of August. We will probably push our okra bit. If you are planting summer crops now, watch for rain. If we don't receive rain, plantings need irrigation. Often a good rain will cover irrigation for a day and maybe two days - especially if there is significant cloud cover.

If you do irrigate, use a watering can if possible. This method conserves water and allows for targeted irrigation. For regenerative growing, hand watering and watering-can irrigation is recommended. It is the most responsible and conservative approach during a drought - or anytime for that matter.

Hand watering and watering-can irrigation ensures only plants the gardener sees receive irrigation, and only those the gardener recognize as actually needing irrigation. Automatic systems do not allow for such focused and conservative water use - even drip systems are often less thrifty. Watering-can irrigation also allows gardeners to observe and interact with each bed, each row, and every plant.

## **Regenerative Agroecological Feature: Use of Brassica to inhibit nematodes**

As noted in this week's West Pasco Farm Report, nematodes are a common companion of okra. They feast on the roots and will eventually lead to an early demise of the plants. They also enjoy tomato roots, leading to the same outcome for the tomatoes.

A good antidote to nematodes is brassica plantings and brassica mulch. There are numerous articles on the use of brassica to inhibit nematodes; plus, the brassica family features some of the world's most delicious and versatile vegetables - collards, kale, broccoli, cabbage, and arugula to name just a few. We have used the brassica approach for years with good success. The one catch is that in Florida brassicas are cool weather crops and okra is summer crop. So, the regenerative approach is to plant brassicas in the fall in the beds where okra will be planted in the summer. At the end of the winter season, when spring planting is being planned, chop up the brassica leaves and stems (which would be the regenerative approach anyway) leave the roots in the soil, and mulch or compost the site before planting summer okra.

Here are some good articles. We'll start with this one, which is a favorite, and just reading the abstract will explain why. Here it is: "The effects of Brassica green manures on plant parasitic and free-living nematodes used in combination with reduced rates of synthetic nematicides."

[Add a little bit of body text](#)

Here is another:

"Brassicacea-based management strategies as an alternative to combat nematode pests: A synopsis

[Add a little bit of body text](#)

And one more:

"Brassica cover crops can reduce nematode pests"  
<https://projects.au.dk/coreorganiccofund/news-and-events/show/artikel/brassica-cover-crops-can-reduce-nematode-pests>

### **This week's image**

**On the Cover: Hill Country Red Okra, East Madison Growers Grove. Heirloom variety from the Texas Hill County. One of the larger varieties. Grown locally in the FarmNet gardens for over a decade. Seeds, Seedlings, and fruit available. No food-miles, fresh harvested, no commercial-synthetic fertilizer or pesticides, no exploited workers.**

Mark your calendars and join local food enthusiasts for The Okra Occasion New Port Richey Public Library August 23, 11:00 to 1:00

To enter a dish in the annual Okra tasting contest (and win ribbons and prizes), contact Amanda Zborek at Tasty Tuesday or via email: [ajozborek@gmail.com](mailto:ajozborek@gmail.com)

### **Market News**

The next FarmNet Evening Market at Plants and Pints is August 19 (8/19).

Mark your calendar: FarmNet will have fresh local produce at Plants & Pints, at Ordinance One, in downtown New Port Richey, on Tuesday July 15, 5:30 to 7:30. July will feature summer offerings: sweet potato leaves (try them if you have not before), blackeyed peas, and okra.

In the meantime, CSA shareholders can pick up shares at the homestead every Tuesday evening. If you are interested in acquiring a share contact us through the FarmNet website <https://farmnetnpr.com/> Weekly shares and single items are also available.

FarmNet also has a table at Tasty Tuesday. Look for Amanda Zborek Wright's Famers' Market is closed until the fall.

# Harvest & Ripening Update

## Harvest



**Black-eyed Peas:** Check your rows and towers now. Pods should be abundant on most plants. Many will be drying out, so plan to harvest for future use as dry beans or for planting next year. Black-eyed Peas will produce into September, maybe longer due to changing climate. Big Reds are the last to produce pods. They should be podding now. Start saving best pods for seeds for next year.

**Eggplant:** If you are trying eggplant, check for fruit. Our hotter summers are impacting eggplant production, but this summer we have some fruit for the first time in years. You might have some, too. Plants may be struggling now.

**Lima Beans:** If you planted lima beans in late spring they may have pods. Check for flowers, then for pods. It is likely getting late for limas.

**Mangos:** Look for fruits. They should be nearing peak ripening. FarmNet encourages all regenerative growers to have at least one mango in their agroecological system. **If you have mangos to share, let us know; we have established a harvest, share, and distribution network for seasonal fruit, which otherwise would be lost.** We do this with loquats every year, and we've gotten pretty good at it. We want to do the same with mangos!

**Okra:** Harvest now. Don't let them get too long. Harvest pods when they are 3-4 inches. If they get much longer, they may be woody.

This is the time in the okra cycle when nematode impact will become obvious. Look for leaf drop and failed fruit. Now, note: if you are using seeds or seedlings from FarmNet nursery, the pods may stay tender longer. We've had some Silver Queen and Red Burgundy stay tender up to 10 inches; and most stay tender up to 8 inches. To be sure, however, 3-4 inches is best (safest).

Start saving best pods for seeds for next year.

Okra will produce into September, maybe longer due to changing climate.

**Pigeon Peas:** These reliable legumes are flowering and producing pods now and will until fall, and even beyond. Start more now.

**Sweet Potato Leaves:** Yes. Harvest your sweet potato leaves for an excellent summer green vegetable.

If you have not tried sweet potato leaves, give them a try, and as a colleague always says: Try them, and join the rest of the world.

Nutritional Profile: <https://www.nutritionadvance.com/sweet-potato-leaves-nutrition/>

Comparison of SP Leaves with Collard Greens <https://foodstruct.com/compare/collard-vs-sweet-potato-leaves>

Recipes <https://www.natureword.com/5-sweet-potato-leaves-recipe-ideas-and-uses/>

We use SP leaves in any recipe where we would use collard greens – soups, sauces, omelets, stir-fry, boiled in water or vegetable stock with a little ghee.

## Starts

**All summer crops can still be started, but with advisory that it is somewhat risky. We will likely have summer temperatures through October. In our network, we will continue summer planting through the end of August.**

**Beans** Try lima beans: If you have not before. They will likely succeed where other beans do not. They will like it just a bit cooler than our new summer temperatures but give them a try.

**Black-eyed Peas:** There is still time for black-eyed peas, but time is running short. Blackeyes are also called Cow Peas, Southern Peas, Crowder Peas, and several other names. These versatile legumes can be planted through August and produce until October.

**Eggplant:** Start now. May not do well in the summer heat (now to September) but has traditionally been able to produce throughout the summer and into fall. We are getting harvests this summer for the first time in years.

Might start now to have them well established when we get a little cooler weather in October.

**Okra:** Keep planting. Same suggestion as for black-eyed peas: There is still time for okra, but time is running short. This summer favorite can be planted through August and produce until October. Start or open sow. Okra starts best in cells. Keep planting okra through August – especially, if you are using seeds from FarmNet Seed Bank.

**Peppers:** (Hot) Start hot peppers now. We have done well with Habaneros in past summers.

**Pigeon Peas:** Start more now. Keep planting until September.

**Sweet Potato Slips:** End of planting season. We usually call it day on sweet potatoes at the end of July. Typical cycle brings harvest in 3 or 4 months (90 to 120) days. Those planted in July will be ready no earlier than October. Many growers reported very light harvests for the past two years (2023 and 2024). We are planting heavily at our major gardens – nearly 1000 slips. Remember the shortest maturation period for any sweet potato is 90 days, and some take 120 days.



## Regenerative Growers' Notes

Time to wrap up summer plantings. Keep at it if not finished, There is still time, but it is getting late. Best choices for planting now are okra, black-eyed peas, and pigeon peas -- possibly eggplant. You can open sow these reliable hot weather crops, or start in cells.

Hot peppers are worth a try. We've had success with habanero peppers in the summer. You can try peppers and tomatoes (and some report fruit through the summer), but do not get your hopes up. The plants may survive and even flower, especially those from our localized nursery, but few (if any) will set if temperature gets above 90 for daily high or above 80 for the low.

In our nursery we have okra, pigeon peas, and black-eyed pea seedlings. We also have luffa seedlings. Orders for seeds and seedlings are accepted now. All are available to the community for donations. Remember, these seedlings are acclimated to the region and especially West Pasco. They will also produce reliable seeds for regeneration.

Our agroecological experiment with "Butterfly Weed" (*Asclepias tuberosa*) has had its first (small) success. We are starting the second trial now.

The seeds germinated in natural (90+ degree heat) conditions. Butterfly Weed a native milkweed, which is in short supply and uncommon in the area. This is not a food crop for humans and should not be eaten. It is a food crop for Monarch butterflies and other pollinators. We will be starting a few seeds every month and monitoring germination rates and maturation process.

We are offering the seeds to any who are willing to join the experiment. Donations are most welcome. As many know, New Port Richey is a recognized Monarch City, USA, and we are promoting the propagation and installation of native milkweed to support restoration of this imperiled creature. See this short clip on our commitment to the Monarchs: New Port Richey celebrating its role in protecting Monarch butterflies <https://www.abccactionnews.com/news/local-news/new-port-richey-celebrating-its-role-in-protecting-monarch-butterflies>

If you desire seeds and seedlings (including the milkweed seeds for our experiment), contact us through the FarmNet web site, and join our mailing list for the Seed & Seedling Project. Go to <https://farmnetnpr.com/>

**Shade seedlings:** For new plantings, seedlings, and sweet potato slips, if you plant in full sun or little shade, use shade cloth, sun shields, shade grates, umbrellas, and canopies. If exposed to direct sun, most will not survive. Remember, in direct sunlight, ground temperatures typically run 10 degrees (or more) hotter than the air temperature – and the ground is where those precious seeds and seedling are trying to grow.

**Do not plant trees or shrubs:** We are running this message regularly though the summer.

This is not the time of year to plant trees and shrubs. In fact, it is probably the worst time to plant them, especially if they are being planted in a sunny location. The next period to even consider planting trees and shrubs is the rainy season (mid-June to mid-August, and maybe into September), but that also is not an ideal planting time, and do not plant unless it is certain that we will actually have a rainy season. Remember we did not have a rainy season in the summer of 2023. Best bet for planting trees and shrubs is January. The next best months, those on both sides of January (December and February). After that, next best, are the next pair out from January (November and March). October and April are worth considering but they are not ideal. It is definitely not a good time to plant now.

### Nursery Notes

If you desire seeds and seedlings, contact us through FarmNet web site, and join our mailing list for the Seed & Seedling Project. Go to <https://farmnetnpr.com/>

If you are looking for seeds and seedlings for local growing, FarmNet is the place to go. FarmNet features organic heirloom seeds from Seed Savers Exchange, and the FarmNet seed bank. FarmNet's seed bank has the largest collection of local seeds in Pasco County, with over 30 different seeds with local genealogies dating back at least 10 years to as long as 25 years

Seedlings are also available. Right now, we have a good supply of seedlings, featuring, black-eyed peas, lima beans, pigeon peas, and okra.

Featured this week: Okra – Red Burgundy, Star of David, Silver Queen, Hill Country Red  
Black eyed peas – Knuckle Pod

We have other varieties- check on those of interest to you:  
Black eyed peas: Fast Lady, Big Red, Hercules, Zipper Cream, Luffa

If you desire seeds and seedlings, contact us through FarmNet web site, and join our mailing list for the Seed & Seedling Project. Go to <https://farmnetnpr.com/>



### Thanks to all who support New Port Richey FarmNet and its agrarian mission.

If you know anyone who would like information on acquiring a share in the CSA, send a message to New Port Richey FarmNet on Facebook.

<https://farmnetnpr.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NPRFARMNET/about>

Cost of annual shares are very modest compared with other CSAs.

If you would like to acquire local organic produce, seeds, and seedlings, send a message to New Port Richey FarmNet on Facebook and ask to be added to our mailing list.

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