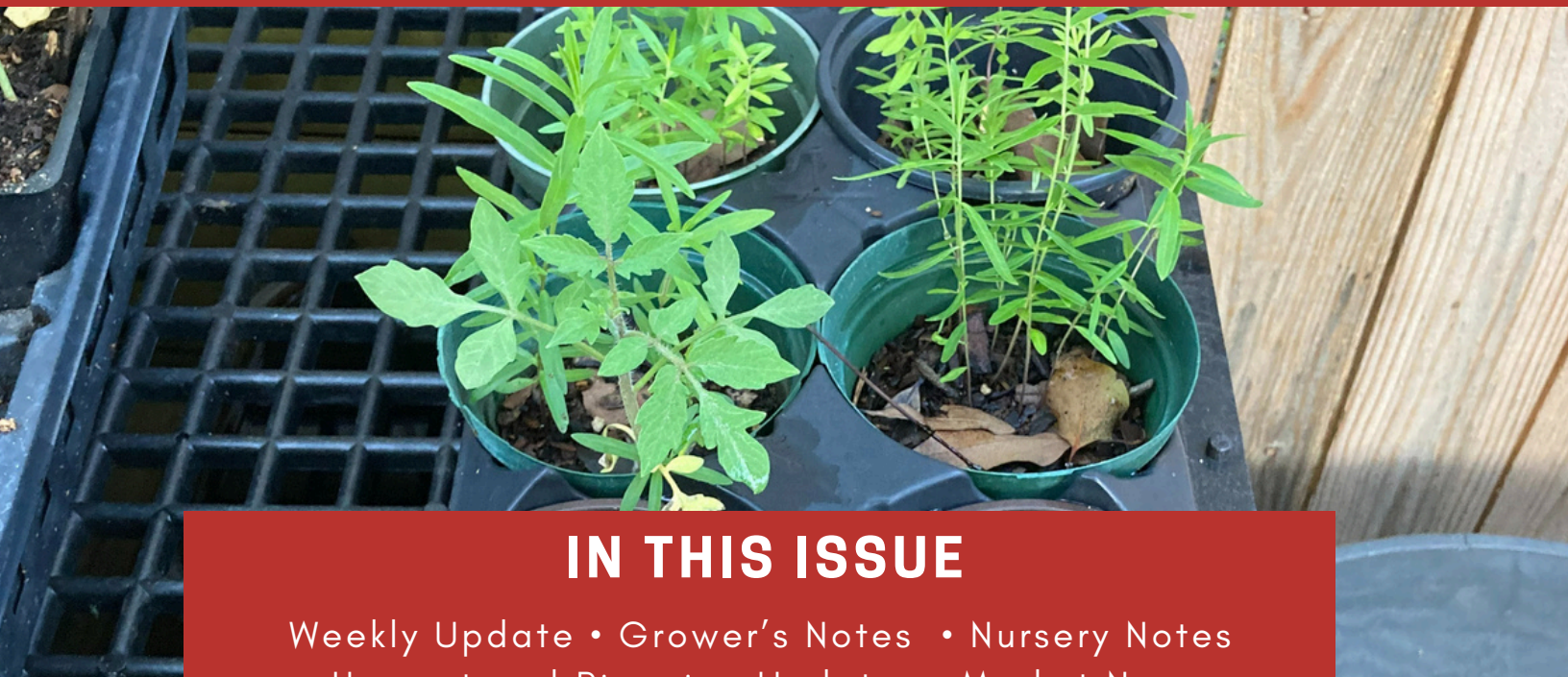


WEST PASCO URBAN FARM REPORT

NEW PORT RICHEY FARMNET
WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 1, 2025

If you desire to see the West Pasco Urban Farm Report continue, please notify the editor,
Dell deChant ddechant@tampabay.rr.com



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www.FarmNetNPR.com

WEEKLY UPDATE BY DELL DECHANT

Weather Update

Temperature will be near normal this week, and rain a bit below normal. We will be in the upper 80s to low 90s for highs, with normal chances of rain early in the week, and diminishing rain chances from midweek on. Average temperature will soon drop to 90 and by the end of the month be at 88. Rainy season is over.

The bulk of our rain this summer has been from tropical waves and fronts moving north and south. This is the case again this week. While tropical waves do occur in the summer (along with tropical storms and hurricanes), we've had more than usual. Fronts are even less common.

The end result is that we are near normal for precipitation this summer, but the rain has been sporadic, with long dry stretches and periods of 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.

CSA offerings are past summer peak. We have all summer offerings for shares, just less than usual. Look for sweet potato leaves, black-eyed peas, okra, and some arugula. Last of the mangos are offered this week.

Our special summer arugula continues to be available. We are happy to see our arugula developing heat tolerance. We will not have a large harvest, but nice sized one.

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This week's offerings also include most herbs and cranberry hibiscus. Herbs for the week are chives, tarragon, oregano, parsley, and basil.

Mango Sovereignty request: As some of you may remember we made a request for folks to share their mango harvests with us. We were unsuccessful project with the project. All are asked to consider assisting next year, when we will try again.

By the Way, Loquats: On another fruit-related note: The loquats are budding and flowering. The Loquat Festival will be in the Spring. If you have Loquat trees you can observe the maturing process, from June through April: from bud to flower, to fruiting to green fruit, and finally ripe (orange and yellow) fruit as early as January, and in abundance by March.

This is a good educational opportunity for children - and grownups, too. From flower to fruit: Nature's original performance art.

Although we were not successful with the Mango Sovereignty Project we have been successful with the Mango Project. Same principle, different fruit.

To review, briefly, here is how the FarmNet Food Sovereignty Program works, with fruit, in this case: FarmNet reaches out to the community with expression of openness to harvest from trees when given permission from property owners. All harvests are distributed within the FarmNet system; for donation at farmers' markets, through our CSAs, as gifts when requested from those with limited resources, and at market rates to retailers and restaurants.

FarmNet is a harvest, share, and distribution resource for seasonal produce (especially fruit), which otherwise would be lost. So, if folks have too many loquats for their own use, just want to share with the community, or know others willing to share, we will pick up and even harvest for distribution within the community. Please let us know if you are interested or know others who might be.

Loquat harvests will begin as early as February and continue through early April.

This is the 41 full week of harvesting and the 48th week of the garden year.

We are in the closing days of the summer harvest season. Harvests are near normal for black-eyed peas, well below normal for okra, and a little below normal for mangos. We've had a light harvest of lima beans, which is a nice addition the summer round. We'll save the lima seeds for next spring. At our demonstration gardens (EMG and Homestead Gardens) we have about 500 sweet potato slips in the ground and about 400 at Grand Gardens.

The first sample sweet potato check will be in mid-September. That is the earliest possible maturely date for our early plantings.

All in the circle are looking for a good harvest of sweet potatoes this year. As some may recall, the last two seasons saw very poor sweet potato harvests - less than 300 pounds. That's okay, but in years past, we've had as much as 1000 pounds and always well over 500 pounds.

This week's image
On the Cover: "Butterfly Weed" (Asclepias tuberosa) Seedlings from FarmNet nursery collective. "Butterfly Weed" (Asclepias tuberosa) is a local milkweed and recommended for planting to support restoration of Monarch Butterflies.

Market News

The next FarmNet Evening Market at Plants and Pints is September 16 (9/16).

Mark your calendar: FarmNet will have fresh local produce at Plants & Pints, at Ordinance One, in downtown New Port Richey, on Tuesday September 16, 5:30 to 7:30.

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 will be starting soon.



Climate and Temperature Notes:

91 degrees will remain the average high until early September, when it drops to 90, and 89 by the second week of September, then 88 by the third week, and finally down to 87 by the end of the month. The long summer run of 90 degrees extends from late May to early September. Watch the thermometer at your home and temperature reports in the media to see if the decline begins this year.

This slight drop in average temperature is first hint of the fall, which begins on the astronomical/solar calendar on September 22. This is known as the autumnal equinox - "After the autumnal equinox, days become shorter than nights as the Sun continues to rise later and nightfall arrives earlier. This ends with the winter solstice, after which days start to grow longer once again."

<https://www.almanac.com/content/first-day-fall-autumnal-equinox#>

The word "equinox" comes from Latin *aequus*, meaning "equal," and *nox*, "night." On the equinox, day and night are roughly equal in length.

Average temperatures, which you see in weather reports on TV, in newspapers, and online, are the produce of ongoing monitoring and historical data compiled by NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information

(<https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/>) in accordance with the World Meteorological Organization.

They are adjusted every 10 years and reflect the average over a 30-year period. Here is good link to this important work:

<https://www.noaa.gov/explainers/understanding-climate-normals>

The latest change in averages was in 2020 and covers the 30-year period from 1991 to 2020. The averages are uniformly higher than they were for the previous period (1981 to 2010). For example, the average high for our June to September hot period was 90 for 1981 to 2010. This average was reached later in June and ended earlier in September than is the case today. Of course, this is a consequence of climate change and is simply another marker of global warming. As some readers are well aware, NOAA, and the NCEI are among the many governmental agencies the current Administration is de-funding, de-staffing, or eliminating.

Shade seedlings: If you plant in September, you may want to shade young plantings and seedlings. If you plant in full sun or little shade, use shade cloth, sun shields, shade grates, umbrellas, and canopies. If exposed to direct sun, many 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 live and grow.

Do not plant trees or shrubs: For the rest of this month, avoid planting trees and shrubs. This a transitional month, but it can still get very hot, especially with the increasing heating, and even more so if they are being planted in a sunny location. 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. September is definitely not a good time to plant.

Historical average for week:

High, 90; Low, mid 70s

Forecast: High, upper 80s (early in the week), low to mid 90s later; Low, upper 70s to low 80s

Rain: Entering the dry season.

Rain possibilities near normal or a bit below later.

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Harvest & Ripening Update



Harvest

Arugula – We have small shares of summer arugula.

Black-eyed Peas – in transition. Some green, some dry. Ask for either green or dry; or both

Hibiscus, Cranberry – excellent addition to salads, can be used to make tea. Tangy, semi-sweet.

Okra - Traditional summer treasure.

Sweet Potato Leaves – 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

Fruit

Mango

Herbs

Basil – lavender

Chives*

Oregano, Italian

Parsley

Purslane – nutritionally dense (high in omega oils)

See <https://www.nutrition-and-you.com/purslane.html>

Rosemary *

Tarragon

Medicinal

Aloe

Other items and Samples

(good-faith donation, suggested amount given – more if you like less if needs be)

Seedlings: (\$3) black-eyed peas, okra, pigeon peas, luffa.

Loquat Saplings: Various sizes (\$10-\$50)

Loquat Trees (3-5 feet tall, with ripe and ripening fruit, will need truck to pick up (\$150-\$250)

Worms – Quart sized container of live red worms in vermicompost medium (\$10)

-Note: these are compost worms, not earth worms, they thrive in decaying organic matter, creating a rich compost, called vermicompost.

Vermicompost – Quart sized container - Worm compost (\$5)

Composted locally-sourced planting soil –

Rich organic soil, enriched with local mulch, compost and vermicompost

Small bucket (2 gallons) \$12 including bucket, \$5 in your bucket

Large bucket (5 gallons) \$20 including bucket, \$10 your bucket

Celebrating our 14th year!

Dates for Summer transmissions

West Pasco pickup Tuesday afternoon to evening 5:00

*** When you order, please indicate pickup time.**

Regenerative Growers' Notes

Time to begin planning the fall garden. Tag the best of summer crops for seed saving, and mark those that are spent or nearly so for culling and composting. This week, the first cullings can begin – composting, mulching, and return spent summer crops to the soil.

If you planted late (okra, black-eyed peas, pigeon peas, and eggplant) keep an eye on your plants. If they are flourishing, there may yet be a harvest. If they are struggling, it may be best to relieve them of the struggle.

As space begins to open in the beds, prepare them for the fall. The full routine goes like this: leave spent plants on the site (cut stems at the base, leave the roots), chop up and otherwise dismember the spent plants as finely as possible, add cullings from other beds, layer manures (green and brown) over the cullings, add compost, then organic soil, and finish with a layer of mulch. Now, that's the full routine. In our experience the first step (chopping up spent plants) and the final step (layering on new mulch) are the very most important; and if you have been following a regenerative model, that may be all you need to do. Of course, the more local organic material that can be added, the better.

Moving into the transitional months of September and October, the best crops are tomatoes, peppers, and (if we can get something close to normal fall temperature declines) cucumbers. Dragon tongue beans are also a good choice; and we are trying lima beans and egg plants. Those latter two crops were once summer crops, but our new-climate summers have been too hot for them. So, we are pushing them into the fall. We will go with more pigeon peas and luffa, too.

Start thinking about starting fall and winter crops. If you are setup to start seeds inside under grow lights and the space is relative cool, try starting winter vegetables in late September. Try brassicas and lettuces. It won't be cool enough to plant outside until November, but good seedlings could be ready by then if started in late September or early October.

"Butterfly Weed" for Monarchs: A FarmNet Community Ecological Project.

FarmNet is offering "Butterfly Weed" (*Asclepias tuberosa*) seeds to all who are willing to join this Ecological Project. As many know, New Port Richey is 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>

New Port Richey FarmNet together with the City's Environmental Committee organizes the City's Monarch Festival every spring. In preparation, this year we are growing "Butterfly Weed" (*Asclepias tuberosa*) in the community, and encouraging everyone in the community to join in. So far our work has been successful – and all seeds have all germinated. "Butterfly Weed" is a native milkweed, which is in short supply and uncommon in the area. We are starting a few seeds every month and monitoring germination rates and maturation process. So far so good! We have young plants from June, July, and August. So far, so good.

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/>



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.

FarmNet and Friendship Farms are registered branches of Ecology Florida, Inc., a not-for-profit organization, with 501(c)(3) designation. Contributions are tax deductible under section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code.

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