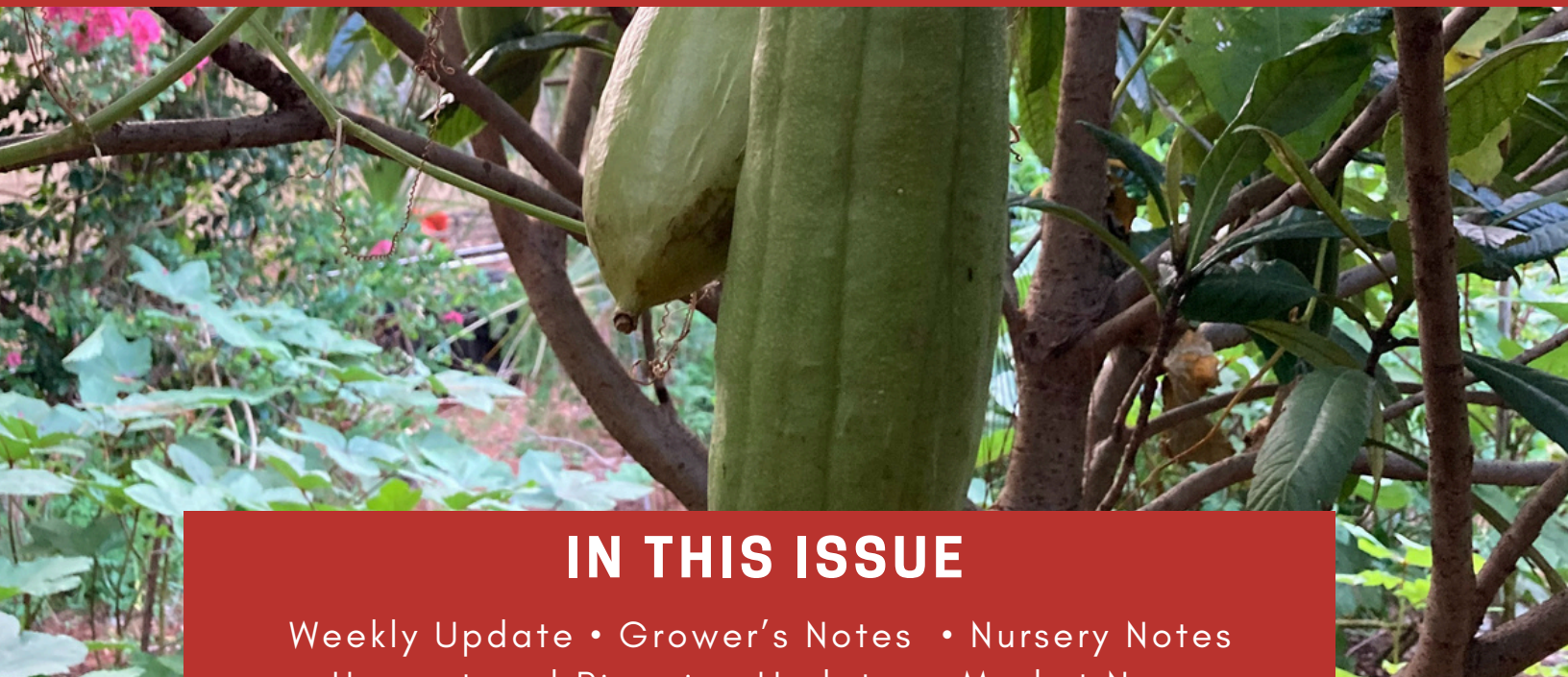


WEST PASCO URBAN FARM REPORT

NEW PORT RICHEY FARMNET
WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 8, 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 above normal, with high probability from Monday through Thursday. We will be in the upper 80s to low 90s for highs and upper 70s for lows. Average temperature will soon drop to 89 and by the end of the month be at 88. Rainy season is over. Any rain we receive is welcome. From here on out (until next June) rain will be a consequence of fronts and (until November) tropical systems.

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 fronts and tropical waves do occur in the summer (along with tropical storms and hurricanes), we've had more than usual.

The result is near normal 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.

Join us for the Milkweed-for-Monarchs Ecological Program as the close of the Grand Gardens' Seasonal Meeting, September 13, 11:00 am to 1:00 pm

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Climate and Temperature Notes: The average high is now 89 and will drop to down to 87 by the end of the month. The long summer run of 90 degrees is over. It extends from late May to early September. Watch the thermometer at your home and temperature reports in the media to see if daily highs are dropping into the 80s 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.

For information on how average temperatures are determined, see the last two issues of West Pasco Urban Farm Report, at this website.

Historical average for week:
High, 89; Low, mid 70s

Forecast: High, upper 80s to mid 90s; Low, upper 70s
Rain: Entering the dry season. Rain possibilities are a bit above later.

Seasonal Harvest Festival. The next FarmNet seasonal Food Festival is the Sweet Potato Roundup in November.

Join our CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) Program

If you are interested in acquiring a CSA share, contact us at <https://farmnetnpr.com/>. We'll give you a day and time to pick them up. Costs of annual shares are very modest compared with other CSAs.

Weekly, monthly, and quarterly shares are also available. Suggested donations:
Weekly \$10 one item, \$20 any four, \$30 five or more.

Monthly (full share, 4 weeks): \$70
Quarterly (full share): \$180
Half Year (5 months) \$250
Annual Share \$400

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

Our project is supported through donations. This report and all other FarmNet programs and publications are funded through goodwill contributions shared by supporters and those who find benefit in regenerative, sustainable community-based initiatives such as these. Contributions are tax-deductible and most welcome.

Send check or money order to:

FarmNet
PO Box 596
New Port Richey
Florida 34656-0596

FarmNet has a table at Tasty Tuesday. Look for Amanda Zborek, who can share further details and information on the mission and vision of New Port Richey FarmNet mission, including our programs, events, and service opportunities.

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 in October. FarmNet will be there.



Harvest & Ripening Update



Harvest

Summer season is over. Last summer harvests continuing. Summer crops will begin to decline and perish. Culling and composting can begin after last harvest.

Blackeyed Peas: Check your rows and towers now. Pods should be diminishing on most plants. Many will be drying out, so plan to harvest for future use as dry beans or for planting next year.

****Big Reds** are the last to produce pods. They should be nearing the end of their cycle. Start saving best pods for seeds for next year.

Eggplant: If you are trying eggplant, check for fruit. The heat took a toll on our eggplants this year.

Lima Beans: If you planted lima beans, check for pods, likely dry by now. Limas will be nearing the end of their cycle.

Mangos: Look for last fruits. Season is closed for most groves and individual trees. Our groves are fully harvested.

Okra: Harvest now and monitor for health and strength. 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 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

Sweet Potatoes: Time for first harvests for some. Check your planting dates. The earliest the spuds are ready is 90 days (3 months) from planting. If you planted in May, they may be ready now. If in June, check toward the end of the month.

Starts

Summer plantings should cease. Although we will likely have summer temperatures through October, there will not be enough time for the plants to mature. If you have summer plants already established, monitor them for flowers and fruit.

Continued on next page...

Transitional Crops

For September and October, transitional crops are recommended. Try these reliable late summer early fall crops

Arugula– an excellent choice, especially if using FarmNet seeds. Will take a freeze

Cucumbers – a reliable choice, if heat breaks a bit. Will fail in a freeze

Dragon Tongue Beans – a good bean for late summer into fall. May take a light frost.

Luffa – excellent as a nutritious addition to many recipes, raw, or juiced – or dry out as a sponge. Freezes are fatal. Can take lows in the 50s and maybe as low as 40.

Pigeon Peas – good choice for fall and going forward, will survive for a year or more if no freezes

Peppers – Bell peppers are recommended. Freeze will kill

Tomatoes – We recommend smaller varieties: cherry and plum sized. Freeze will kill.

Winter crops can be started inside in climatized cool space, with grow lights. Watch for recommendations for late-fall and winter starts later this month. We are starting collards, kale, broccoli. Wait for November to start or transplant winter seeds and seedlings.

Vegetable of the Week: Luffa

Yes. It is not just a sponge. Luffa is a vegetable in the squash family. When the fruit is spent and dry, the skin is removed, and the dry fibrous skeleton becomes the well-known sponge sold in Tarpon Springs gift shoppes and soap aisles of drug and grocery stores everywhere. We are encouraging local growers to consider growing and distributing this nutrient-dense vegetable. It is an excellent spring to fall (all summer long) crop; and can survive a mild winter. It does not like cold and cannot survive a freeze.

Typically, dry luffa sponges sold commercially are imported. Right: the Global Industrial Commodity Crop System at work again! See this good article from North Carolina State University Extension Office

<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/commercial-luffa-sponge-gourd-production> The article reports: “Presently, luffa sponges are imported from many countries including China, El Salvador, Korea, Taiwan, Guatemala, Columbia, and Venezuela.”

Sponges should be the least and last of the luffa’s uses; but the sponge product is the commercial commodity, which can be hooked into the global Industrial Agriculture System and mainlined around the world for corporate profits and retail sales. This in an interesting and novel

variation on commodification of agricultural products and cash crops, and worth an extended analysis and assessment – which will be offered in an upcoming Farm Report, Farm Net blog, or one of our sibling publications. Watch for “The Lure and Logic of Local Luffa.”

In the meantime, we observe and celebrate luffa as a food product, and a good one at that. It can be an excellent addition to the local foods system and FarmNet Gardens is experimenting with luffa in our crop rotation. This is the second full season we have grown luffa. It is a high-yield crop with nutritionally-dense fruit. Last year, we harvested nearly 50 gourds from only two plantings. We have been harvesting and working with the gourds in salads and as additions to soups and sauces. Here are some recipes for what in Asia is called Silk Melon: <https://simplyfamilyrecipes.com/luffa-recipes/>

As for the nutritional value of luffas (aka, silk melon and ridge gourd), here is what Nutrition Fact tells us about luffa’s health benefits: “They are rich in calcium, magnesium and zinc; low in calories and contain 94% moisture. They provide essential nutrients (vitamin A, C, B6 and folate). They are also rich in antioxidants and an excellent source of dietary fiber and carbohydrates.” For full article, see: <https://www.nutritionfact.in/nutrition-facts/7-health-benefits-of-ridge-gourd-and-its-nutritional-values>

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. Cullings can begin – composting, mulching, and return spent summer crops to the soil.

For a detailed summary of how to cull and prepare your summer garden for the transition into fall, see the last two issues of West Pasco Urban Farm Report, at this website.

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.

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. 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/>

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

"Butterfly Weed" for Monarchs: A FarmNet Community Agroecological Project. New Port Richey FarmNet together with the City's Environmental Committee organizes the City's Monarch Festival every spring. In preparation, this year Farm Net nurseries and gardens are growing "Butterfly Weed" (*Asclepias tuberosa*), and encouraging everyone in the community to join in.

FarmNet is offering "Butterfly Weed" seeds to all who are willing to join this Agroecological 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>

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/>

This week's image

On the Cover: Luffa Gourd Luffa gourds thriving in a FarmNet Garden. Those in the image are too big to be eaten (too fibrous), but will make great sponges.

For details on plantings seedlings, trees, and shrubs see the last two issues of West Pasco Urban Farm Report, at this website.



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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