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# WEST PASCO URBAN FARM REPORT

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NEW PORT RICHEY FARMNET  
WEEK OF DECEMBER 30, 2024



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Weekly Urban Farm Update • CSA  
Mark Your Calendar

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

## WEEKLY UPDATE BY DELL DECHANT

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GHistorical average for week: High, low-70s. Low, mid-50s

The Winter Solstice was Saturday, December 21, 2024, and daylight is lengthening – days are getting longer, as the saying goes. Gardeners will notice the change in daylight before others, usually within a week or so. Many others will not notice it for weeks, and some not until spring. Of course, the change is gradual, exceedingly gradual, and the coldest days are yet to come.

Growers are reminded that we are in the dry season, which continues until next June. This fall has been even dryer than normal, and fronts have brought little if any rain. In the dry season (September to June), most rain occurs when cold fronts pass over the area. If the fronts do not bring rain, irrigation is necessary. Remember to start or expand a rain collection system – even putting a heavy-duty trash can under a gutter downspout will work. If you do not receive rain, irrigation is recommended.

We encourage growers and gardeners to plant all winter vegetables: collards, kale, arugula, broccoli, cabbages, even brussels sprouts. All are members of the Brassica family. All will thrive throughout the winter and into the spring. Additional good news, these greens can survive a freeze.

NEW PORT RICHEY



FARMNET

# 10th Annual Collards Festival & Winter Garden Expo

January 4, 2025 • Starting at 11:00am

**New Port Richey Public Library**  
5939 Main Street, New Port Richey

Collards are the champions in this regard, and can survive a hard freeze (to about 10 degrees). The other Brassicas are a bit less hardy, with mid- to upper-20s the safe zone for them.

## Plant of the week - Arugula

Arugula is a favorite for winter gardens, and FarmNet recommends it for urban gardeners in New Port Richey and West Pasco. It has become popular with specialty chefs and has gained a following with the general public - especially those who like spicy-peppery greens. And arugula is all of that - spicy and peppery. Our locally acclimated arugula has been cultivated in our gardens for over a decade, and we have seeds and seedlings available.

You can buy arugula at commercial grocery outlets, with much of it grown far away - as far away as Canada (in industrial food factories). A better source is right here in New Port Richey. Several local growers feature arugula, and you can usually find it at local Farmers' Markets. Look for the FarmNet table markets and you'll find fresh local arugula from winter through the spring. You can also order it directly from the FarmNet CSA - go to the FarmNet site and send us a request:

<https://farmnetnpr.com/contact-us>

In the meantime, pick up seeds and seedlings from FarmNet, which feature organic heirloom seeds from Seed Savers Exchange, and the FarmNet seed bank - the largest collection of local seeds. Seedlings are also available, including tomatoes and collard greens.

Besides the winter greens, right now, three excellent transitional vegetables are cucumbers,

tomatoes, and peppers. We also like Dragon Tongue Beans. All of these transitional crops will produce through the rest of the fall, through winter and into spring. Be advised, however, unlike the winter greens noted above, they do not thrive in very cold temperatures and a freeze will kill them. So, growers beware.

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/>

Like our other locally acclimated seeds and seedlings, FarmNet arugula is high yield and fast growing. It is also a beautiful plant. Also, again, like most of our locally acclimated seeds and seedlings, our arugula will have plenty of seeds at the end of season. When the growing season is over (late spring early summer), you'll find this arugula will produce copious quantities of seeds - more than enough for you and other gardeners. We have been saving seeds from arugula for about 10 years. You can acquire seeds and seedlings from us - if you like. Here is how, Jance, a grower in Indiana describes arugula:

This is a fantastic plant, with an excellent and rapid germination rate. It has withstood the shade of tomato and cucumber plants, and along with a good mulch, the heat of late August and early September. The flavor is reminiscent of sesame seed oil. Putting a little of that on top and sprinkled with sesame seeds makes a very delicious and unique salad. (SSE Website)

We encourage growers and gardeners to plant all winter vegetables. Good choices are collards, kale, arugula, broccoli, cabbage. These are among

best crops for our local food system. They are easy to grow, have high-yield, are nutrient-dense, and are easy to prepare for meals. These are four of the most important considerations for growers committed to a sustainable food system: (1) easy to grow, (2) high yield, (3) nutrient-dense, and (4) easy to prepare. These are also four major features of crops grown based on resilient agrarian ideals.

Other brassicas well-suited to winter growing are turnips, kohlrabi, and cauliflower – although in our experience they rank a bit lower on each of the three-features noted here. If you are interested in trying to grow any of these three (or if you just happen to like them), now is the time to plant!

All are members of the Brassica family. All will thrive throughout the winter and into the spring. Additional good news, these greens can survive a freeze. Collards, remain the champions in this regard, and can survive a hard freeze (to about 10 degrees). The other Brassicas are a bit less hardy, with mid- to upper-20s the safe zone for them.

Besides the winter greens, right now, three excellent transitional vegetables are cucumbers, tomatoes, and peppers. We also like Dragon Tongue Beans. At our working gardens, our tomatoes and beans are flowering. These are all transitional crops and will produce through winter and into spring, when they will really flourish. Be advised, however, unlike the winter greens noted above, they do not thrive in very cold temperatures and a freeze will kill them. So, growers beware. If these great crops survive though the winter, they will produce well in the spring.

Watch for articles coming up on winter growing

and freezes on the FarmNet web site. Go to <https://farmnetnpr.com/> In the meantime, pick up seeds and seedlings from FarmNet, which feature organic heirloom seeds from Seed Savers Exchange, and the FarmNet seed bank – the largest collection of local seeds. Seedlings are also available, including tomatoes and collard greens.

Don't Forget Seeds, Seedlings & Fresh Produce from FarmNet Growers

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/>

You can also join our CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) Program. Shares are available for one year and half-year terms – and special shorter terms of one to three months.

This week's shares for CSA shareholders are collards, kale, and arugula – and our first shares of mustard greens. Mustard share will be smallish – first of the season. This is the sixth full week of harvesting, and shares are getting larger. We are still about a month out from full production. We also have a wide variety of herbs, and a special offering of sweet potatoes, left over from the Round-Up.

To learn more about our CSA, go to <https://farmnetnpr.com/>



**Thanks to all who support Friendship Farms & Fare CSA and its Agrarian Mission.**

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

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

**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.**