
WEST PASCO URBAN FARM REPORT

NEW PORT RICHEY FARMNET
WEEK OF FEBRUARY 10, 2025



IN THIS ISSUE

Weekly Update • Grower's Notes
Harvest and Ripening Updates • Market News

www.FarmNetNPR.com

WEEKLY UPDATE BY DELL DECHANT

Weather Update

The coming week will see warm (well-above normal) temperatures with the best chance for rain on Thursday. If we do get rain, it will be gratefully received. We are deep into the dry season now, so any bit of rain is welcome.

The warming trend that began on the last Saturday in January (1/25) and continued last week will roll on through this week as well - and likely even further. Temperatures will be above normal throughout the week - with highs in the low 80s and lows in the low to mid 60s.

For the record and by the record, those readings are about 10 degrees above normal - marking the second full week of temperatures 10 degrees hotter than historical averages.

Rain, if we get it, will be on Thursday (2/13) around midday, ahead of a weak front. Forecasts are in general agreement of a 50% chance on rain that day. Otherwise, no rain for the week. The front might push the high a bit below 80 for a day or so. Remember, we are in the middle of Florida's dry season, and growers should be ready to irrigate if rains do not occur. Using a watering can conserves water and allows for targeted irrigation. For sustainable growing, hand and watering-can irrigation is recommended. It also adds the best growing amenity to your garden - the gardener's shadow.

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

Growers' Notes: As advised last week, seasonal warming has arrived; and the pleasant 80-degree days are well above normal for this time of the year. This means winter greens will be stressed and start to bolt, producing stems with few leaves, budding clusters, and flowers. In earlier times, bolting usually began in early March. Once we hit the 80s and stay there for a few days, bolting will start on many plants. Flavor and texture will begin to change as well, and more leaf-eating insects will appear.

So, don't be caught unaware; and don't be disappointed. Some may want to harvest winter greens now while they are at peak, then cook and freeze or can them. As for bolting: in our experience, first to bolt are lettuces, bok choy, and arugula. Then come the other winter greens, the brassica family, with collards holding out longer than all others - and, maybe, not bolting at all. More about collards and hot weather in a future report. In the meantime, please consider saving seeds from your crop. Wait for bolting plants to produce seed pods, then harvest the seeds and save for next year.

FarmNet offers classes on seed saving as part of its Agrarian Curriculum.

With the arrival of hotter temperatures and bolting, we are moving out of the winter growing season, and West Pasco Urban Farm Report no longer recommends starting winter vegetables: lettuces, choy, collards, kale, arugula, broccoli, cabbages, brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, mustard greens, and others. Try if you like, but they will likely just take up space, time, and plenty of water - and if you do want to take a run at some late winter greens, FarmNet still has winter seedlings.

We are past the date for possible freezes. While sources do vary on the last freeze date, all put it in the last week of January to the second week of February. Of course, there are exceptions, and there have occasionally been freezes throughout the month of February - but they are rare. Historical records indicate the latest freeze in this area occurring on March 3.

With warming temperatures this week, growers are advised to start seeds for spring planting. Those using regenerative methods, should see tomatoes coming up in last-year's tomato beds. Same with sweet potatoes in the sweet potato beds. Those acclimated crops give us a head start on our spring and summer planting.

WP Urban Farm Report recommends spring growers consider getting started with peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, and beans. All these transitional crops will produce through the rest of the winter and into spring. The tomatoes will stay with you into the summer, and so will some of the beans. Peppers might, too. Don't count on the cumpers much past early spring.

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Thinking of beans, last week's Farm Report highlighted an overlooked high-yield crop, pigeon peas (gandules). If you missed it, scroll back to that report for details on this terrific legume. Other legumes also can be tried in late winter, and it might not be too early to take a run at warm weather beans such as cow peas. Better than cow peas and black-eyed peas for early planting is another overlooked treasure the legume family, Dragon Tongue Beans.

We'll put Dragon Tongue Beans in or feature next week and include information on when and how we grow them in our urban gardens. Until then, here is a good site (from among many) on this great legume:

<https://thefloreshouse.com/dragon-tongue-beans-a-guide-to-growing-cooking-and-storing/>



Dragon tongue beans and the other transitional crops can be started (with some risk) in winter, after the last freeze. Dragon tongue beans, in particular, do a little better for us in the cold than the truly warm-weather legumes (like cow peas and back-eyed peas), but they do like it a bit warmer than traditional winter temperatures. We are starting them now because it looks like we'll be in the 80s for a while, which is a good bit beyond traditional winter temperatures, and just about right for these beans.

Market News

FarmNet will have fresh local produce at Plants & Pints, at Ordinance One, in downtown New Port Richey, on Tuesday February 18, 5:30 to 7:30. We will have collard greens, kales, arugula – and are hoping to have the first tomatoes and first loquats of the season.

CSA & Fresh Harvest Feature: Asian Blue Collards. (Peking Ta Ching Kou Pai Tsai) This week's CSA fresh harvest feature is Asia Blue Collards. If you'd like a bag of fresh-harvest locally-grown blue collards from one of our gardens, let us know. Suggested donation, \$3 (more if you can, less if needs be).

Other CSA produce includes kale, collards, mustard greens, tomatoes, and arugula.

CSA shareholders can pick up their 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.

If you are interested in acquiring a share, contact us at <https://farmnetnpr.com/> We'll give you a day and time to pick them up.

FarmNet also has a booth at Tasty Tuesday and Wright's Famers Market. Ask for Steve at the Market

Harvest & Ripening Update

Tomatoes: If your tomato plants survived the freeze, they have or soon will have ripe tomatoes.

Broccoli: Your broccoli should be producing heads now or soon.

Loquats: Look for loquats ripening. The first ripe ones appeared in the EMG grove last week.

Peaches: Look for flowers on peach trees. Peaches put out flowers and fruit before spring leaves.

Mangos: Look for the first buds on mango trees.

Winter Greens: Reaching peak of season, look for bolting on some plant.

Lettuces: Look for bolting.

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 – the largest collection of local seeds in the area. Seedlings are also available. Right now, we have a good supply of seedlings, including tomatoes, mustard greens, and kohlrabi, cauliflower – and (new this week!) onion sets. This is the last week to get those winter greens in the ground – so, if you want to make a run at a late winter garden, we are here with seedlings for you.

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..

