
WEST PASCO URBAN FARM REPORT

NEW PORT RICHEY FARMNET
WEEK OF FEBRUARY 17, 2025



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www.FarmNetNPR.com

WEEKLY UPDATE BY DELL DECHANT

Weather Update

Temperatures this week will be below normal, with rain likely late on Wednesday into Thursday pre-dawn hours. Last week's heat broke records in the region and was very tough on the winter greens. Coupled with the very dry conditions, many plants were stressed. We are deep into the dry season now, so any bit of rain is welcome; and in it looks like we'll have some this week.

You will notice that the heat of the past two weeks will have finally broken by Sunday (2/16)

and rain will likely have moved through the area around midday ahead of a welcome cold front. A reinforcing front will move through the area late in the day on Wednesday, dropping temperatures into the 60s. Temperatures will be at or below normal throughout the week – with highs in 60s and 70s and lows in the 40s and 50s. A welcome reminder that it is still winter.

Remember, even with the rain (if we get it) 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: Although this week's respite from the heat is most welcome, bear in mind that we just experienced a week of record-breaking high temperatures. More of that is coming – and probably much more. As expected, with last week's heat, our winter greens were stressed and started to bolt, starting with the bok choy and Asian Blue Collards. The first broccoli heads are flowering. In earlier times, bolting rarely began as early as late February and typically not before the middle of March. Once we hit the 80s and stay there for a few days, bolting starts 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.

Market News

Tuesday February 18th

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 hopefully the first tomatoes and first loquats of the season. \$3 each.

CSA & Fresh Harvest Feature:

Tomatoes. (East Madison Minis and EM Mediums) This week's CSA fresh harvest feature is tomatoes. If you'd like market basket (about ½ a pound) of locally-grown tomatoes 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, Asian blue collards, 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



Farmnet Photos
courtesy of Dell
deChant.

Photo 1: Tomatoes
on the vine.

Photo 2: Fresh
picked tomatoes.

Photo 3: Flowering
broccoli.



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.

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 plants. Harvest now

Lettuces: Look for bolting. Harvest now.

Plants and Pints
Tuesday, February 18, 2025
5:30 - 7:30 pm

ORDINANCE ONE

5738 Main Street
New Port Richey, Florida



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/>



Plant of the Week: Dragon Tongue Beans

Thinking of beans, the February 3rd WP Uran 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.

Although most growers are not familiar with the Dragon Tongue, once they discover it, they usually become fans. They are a hardy and tough legume and thrive in a variety of growing conditions. Here is what Heather (an SSE grower) reports about growing them in partial shade:

I got these for the novelty, but will now grow them every year for the quality of the beans. I don't have a garden, so they were grown in a large pot in part shade and I STILL got good yields of large, flavorful beans for the whole season, they didn't stop until they froze.

As with other crops we recommend for West Pasco urban growers, one of the commending features of the Dragon is its prolific production, with a single plant producing dozens of pods from spring to fall. Add to that, the ease in saving its seeds – another important consideration for sustainable regenerative growers. So, here is Jae (also a SSE grower), reporting on the lineage of her Dragon Tongues:

My Husband's Grandparents grew and saved this bean exclusively for their entire lives. Their Parents grew and saved it before them. Now we grow & save it. They are delicious fresh, cooked, frozen, canned & dry. It's the most versatile bean I know. Saves beautifully as well. Lovely buttery flavor & the plants are hearty & grow very well even under stress.

The pods of the Dragon Tongue are beautiful, and you immediately understand how they got their name. Cream colored with purple streaks, they are striking in appearance and add splashes of color to garden beds. Best of all, perhaps, they can be enjoyed raw, steamed, sautéed, stir-fried, and in any recipe that calls for beans. Tender, a bit sweet, and crisp when raw, they can be eaten shell and all, right off the bush.

Here is a good site (from among many) on this great legume:

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

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 black-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.

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..

