
WEST PASCO URBAN FARM REPORT

NEW PORT RICHEY FARMNET
WEEK OF FEBRUARY 3, 2025



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www.FarmNetNPR.com

WEEKLY UPDATE BY DELL DECHANT

Weather Update

Weather this week continues the warming trend begun last week. Temperatures will be above normal and there is little chance of rain. As you read this report, you may be recovering from the coldest morning of the season - pre-dawn Saturday morning (1/25). Most growers in WP Urban Farm Report region experienced a freeze on Saturday. Even coastal and urbanized New Port Richey had a nip, with damage to some of cold-sensitive plants - peppers and tomatoes. The warming trend that

began last Saturday (1/25) continued for the rest of the week and will continue into the coming week. Temperatures will be above normal throughout the week - with highs in near or above 80 and lows in the 60.

No substantial rain is forecast, so be ready to irrigate. We again remind all that this is the dry season in Florida (especially this part of Florida), and growers should be ready to irrigate if rains do not occur - which is the case this week. Hand watering conserves water and allows for targeted irrigation. For sustainable growing, hand and 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 Sustained warming is on the way, and this week gives a hint of what's to come. We are coming up on the date for the last possible freeze. Sources vary on the last freeze date, but 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.

It is time to start thinking about spring plantings. With warming temperatures this week and the approach of the last possible date for a freeze, growers may want to take a chance on starting spring planting.

This is the last week when WP Urban Farm Report will recommend winter vegetables: collards, kale, arugula, broccoli, cabbages, brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, and others. It is probably too late for mustard greens. Mustard and the other Brassica family members noted here thrive throughout the winter and into the spring. Additional good news, these greens can survive a freeze. What they don't like is heat – and the heat is coming, with a taste of it this week.

For those willing to take the risk, transitional (spring) crops can be planted now. Three excellent transitional vegetables are cucumbers, tomatoes, and peppers. Beans, and cow peas can be tried as well, along with an overlooked treasure, pigeon peas (gandules) – our plant of the week.

If you are looking for seeds and seedlings for winter growing, order or pick up from FarmNet, which feature organic heirloom seeds from Seed Savers Exchange, and the FarmNet seed bank – the largest collection of local seeds. Right now, we have a good supply of seedlings, including tomatoes, mustard greens, and kohlrabi.

Plant of the Week: Gandules

Pigeon peas are easy to grow and very productive. As one source reports “Pigeon peas are one of the most important food legume crops which grow in the tropical and subtropical climates. It is a drought tolerant and warm weather crop.” They are very popular in the Caribbean and the primary ingredient in arroz con gandules (“rice and pigeon peas”) celebrated as Puerto Rico’s national dish. Here is a link to a recipe for arroz con gandules.

<https://thenovicechefblog.com/arroz-con-gandules-puerto-rican-rice-with-pigeon-peas/>

My students from island cultures in the Caribbean were always delighted (and surprised) to learn that we grew them in our local gardens; and it was my good fortune to enjoy arroz con gandules prepared by folks who really knew how to make it.

Gandules thrive in our area, from late winter to late fall. They are hardy shrubs and can grow to over six feet in height. Note: they are shrubs and can be planted together to form a hedge or wind break. These are not small plants but can be trimmed and shaped with little resistance. Although those we are growing can take a light frost, they do not like the cold and a freeze will kill the stems and branches – but sometimes not the roots. The recent nip we had did not damage our gandules, and (by comparison) it damaged some of our tomatoes and peppers.

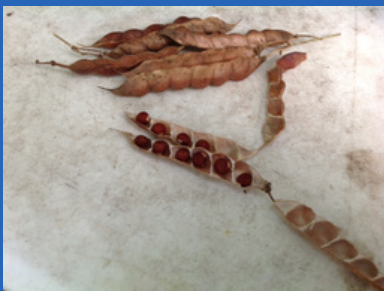
Gandules are generous producers and very forgiving of the clumsy gardener. They are tolerant of their human companions, having been living with us since the dawn of the agriculture, with cultivation dating back over 4,000 years



The “peas” (actually a type of bean) are nutritionally dense and like other beans, high in protein. Pods are best harvested when they have dried on plant, but if you harvest when the pods are still tender and plump, you’ll find some of the tastiest legumes you’ve ever had. When harvesting dry, treat them like any other dry bean. Here is a good site on health benefits.

<https://www.healthbenefitstimes.com/pigeon-pea/>

Gandules and other transitional crops will produce through winter and into spring. Be advised, however, unlike winter greens, they do not thrive in very cold temperatures and a hard freeze will kill them. Absent a hard freeze, gandules can live for years. Three years is the longest any of ours have lived – finally done in by a freeze some years ago.



Harvest & Ripening Update

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

Broccoli: Your broccoli should be producing heads in the next week or so

Loquats: Look for loquats ripening. The first ripe ones appeared in our grove this week

Peaches: Look for flowers on your peach trees. Peaches will put forth flowers before their spring leaves

Mangos: Look for the first buds on mango trees.

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.

In the meantime, 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.

Fresh Harvest Feature: Kale This week’s fresh harvest feature is kale. If you’d like a bag of fresh-harvest locally grown organic kale from one of our gardens, let us know. Suggested donation, \$3 (more if you can, less if needs be). 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



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..

Friendship



Farms & Fare