
WEST PASCO URBAN FARM REPORT

NEW PORT RICHEY FARMNET
WEEK OF JANUARY 20, 2025



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WEEKLY UPDATE BY DELL DECHANT

Weather Update

New Port Richey and West Pasco growers are in for another chilly week. It will be colder than normal (every day!), but we are likely to avoid a freeze. Highs will be in the 50s, except for next Sunday (1/26). Lows will be in 40s. There is no freeze in the forecast for New Port Richey, with the lowest temperatures in the low 40s. One forecast gives a low of 39 on Tuesday night into Wednesday pre-dawn morning. Be alert and watch local weather reports - just in case.

This will be a good week for rain - always welcome during our arid winters. Readers will likely have experienced a substantial rain event on Sunday (1/19); and there are good chances for rain mid-week (Tuesday through Thursday). Tuesday night into Wednesday a.m. predawn will be the coldest night as a cold front pushes into the area - with temperatures dropping after the rain associated with the cold front subsides.

This week promises to be wetter than normal, which is good news and good timing since the winter crops are now well established and will welcome natural irrigation. Cloud cover will also be well above normal throughout the week, which is also beneficial - limiting evaporation and enhancing biodynamic activities in the soil.

Join us for Plants and Pints Tuesday, January 21, 2025



This month's Plants and Pints will feature fresh-harvest seasonal produce from the FarmNet garden network. All produce is \$3. We will have collard greens, arugula, and kale. Produce is all freshly harvested on Tuesday and offered in bundles or bags. All FarmNet gardens follow regenerative, sustainable, all-natural growing practices. All produce is non-GMO and grown with no use of chemicals, pesticides, or commercial fertilizers. All produce is 100% local, from gardens within a mile of the site of Plants & Pints (Ordinance One).

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

Growers' Notes: Despite our expecting a good week for rain, we again stress 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. The dry season extends to mid-June if (a big if) we have a normal weather pattern. Until rain is more frequent, hand watering is best and using a watering can the very best. Hand and can 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.

Growers and gardeners are advised to keep planting winter vegetables: collards, kale, arugula, broccoli, cabbages, kohlrabi, brussels sprouts. All are members of the Brassica family and thrive throughout the winter and into the spring. Additional good news, these greens can survive a freeze. 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.

Besides the winter greens, three other excellent transitional vegetables are cucumbers, tomatoes, and peppers. All these transitional crops will produce 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 these great crops survive though the winter, they will produce well in the spring - but don't grow them unless you are comfortable with disappointment.

At our experimental market gardens, we are comfortable with disappointment - which is probably one of the criteria for any sort of serious farming. So, we are rolling the dice on tomatoes. We have dozens of plants in the market gardens and the residential gardens we manage, and all are loaded with ripening green tomatoes; 100s of tomatoes, and one bright red ripe one - only one. If we are spared a freeze, watch for enthusiastic reports on tomato harvests in the next month of so.

Market News FarmNet will have fresh produce at Plants & Pints, at Ordinance One, in downtown New Port Richey, on Tuesday January 21, 5:30 to 7:30. See attached flyer. Of course, CSA shareholders will be picking up their shares at the homestead on Tuesday evening, but others can stop by Ordinance One.

This is a pilot project to explore the viability of an evening Farmer's Market in New Port Richey. Tell your friends and stop by yourself, if you like. This month, the pilot market will feature arugula, collard greens, and kale. Bundles and bags of the fresh produce will be \$3.00.

Dell deChant from FarmNet and Friendship Farms will be on hand to visit about the projects the future of urban agrarianism in New Port Richey and West Pasco.

Plant of the Week: Lacinato Kale

Lacinato is also known as "dinosaur kale," because its dark green leaves are thought to resemble the skin of dinosaurs. It is a favorite for many, and very easy to work with for quick meals or more elaborate dinners. Here is how it is described on the Seed Saver's Exchange website:

Lacinato Kale (aka Dinosaur, Nero di Toscana) is an Italian kale which reportedly dates back to the 18th century. Blue-green strap-like leaves are 3" wide by 10-18" long with a heavily savoyed texture. Excellent flavor that is enhanced by frost. Best eaten when leaves are small and tender.

And more: This variety works for: Steaming, Stir-fries, Baking, Soups, Freezing.

Kale can be prepared just like spinach and steamed, blanched, or braised. It is exceptionally good with garlic and can be added to thick and creamy potato, bean, or sausage soups. Try adding cooked kale to roasted sweet potato dishes or tossing with pomegranate seeds, pine nuts, and pancetta in a citrus-vinegar dressing. (From: <https://shop.seedsavers.org/lacinato-organic-kale?quantity=1>)

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 the CSA, send a message to New Port Richey FarmNet on Facebook.

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, arugula, and mustard greens. Mustard share will be smallish - first of the season. This is the eighth 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/> and request to be added to the mailing list.



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

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