
WEST PASCO URBAN FARM REPORT

NEW PORT RICHEY FARMNET
WEEK OF JANUARY 6, 2025



IN THIS ISSUE

Weekly Urban Farm Update • Plant of the Week
CSA • Transitional Possibilities

www.FarmNetNPR.com

WEEKLY UPDATE BY DELL DECHANT

Weather Update

In the coming week, temperatures will be near normal only on Monday, which will also be the one day with a good chance for rain. The rest of the week will be below normal for highs and lows. There is a chance of freeze on the pre-dawn mornings of Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Lows will be in the upper 30s each morning. If you have cold-sensitive plants (e.g., tomatoes and peppers), watch local weather reports, and check thermometers from midnight to dawn.

The closer you are to the coast and the more urbanized your location, the less likely you are to get a freeze – but the forecast of “upper 30s” should give everyone pause, especially folks with a lot of peppers and tomatoes – like those of us at EMG Gardens and the East Madison Residential Gardens.

The one good chance for rain is Monday (January 6) (around 70%). Otherwise, the very dry conditions of the coming week will require irrigation daily, except, Tuesday if we get rain on Monday. 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.



Thank you to all who attended this year's Collard Festival and Winter Greens Expo, and to the New Port Richey Public Library for hosting this year's event.

Stay tuned for upcoming events.



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

Growers' Notes 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 the four-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.

Plant of the week - Asian Blue Collards (Peking Ta Ching Kou Pai Tsai)

A terrific winter green that thrives in this area is Peking Ta Ching Kou Pai Tsai. Our local name for this brassica is Asian Blue Collards. It is high yield and fast growing. It is also a beautiful plant. More good news about Asian Blue Collards, is seed production. This is one collard green that can reliably be expected to produce seeds. We have been saving seeds from this great winter green for about 10 years. We have also enjoyed abundant harvests, which is good thing for our friends and CSA members, because you cannot find Peking Ta Ching Kou Pai Tsai at nurseries or commercial lawn & garden outposts - even if you could pronounce it. More good news: You can acquire seeds and seedlings from us - if you like.

Here is how, Jance, a grower in Indiana describes them:

This plant will always have a place in my garden, particularly my fall garden. I direct sowed the seeds at the end of August, in the shade of tomato and cucumber plants, along with arugula and mizuna I ordered from this site. The plants have performed superbly. They are now about a foot tall, after harvesting the large leaves twice already for salads. Late August and September heat did not affect them, and they appear even more vigorous after our first light frost on 10/05/20. They seem to be impervious to our fall garden pests as well. The arugula that it was companion planted with has been eaten up by flea beetles, and my other brassicas have been hounded by cabbage white butterflies, cabbage loopers, and grasshoppers, yet these plants have not been touched. I'm not sure if they produce a metabolite that insects dislike, but I can always count on this plant providing beautiful and delicious leaves.

Transitional Possibilities

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 through 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, 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.



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.