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# WEST PASCO URBAN FARM REPORT

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NEW PORT RICHEY FARMNET  
WEEK OF MARCH 3, 2025



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[www.FarmNetNPR.com](http://www.FarmNetNPR.com)

## WEEKLY UPDATE BY DELL DECHANT

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### Weather Update

Temperatures this week will be near normal, with rain on Wednesday (3/5) late day. The near normal temperatures are beneficial for the gardens and will prolong the life and production cycle of cool weather crops. The rain forecast on Wednesday will be appreciated because otherwise we will have dry conditions. We are deep into the dry season now, so any bit of rain is welcome.

The mild weather will last all week, with the above normal highs on Tuesday and Wednesday (3/4 and 5), followed by cooler temperatures through the weekend.

The expected rain is welcome, but growers need to remember that we are in the middle of Florida's dry season, and irrigation is necessary on days without rain. Also of note is that not only is rain rare in the winter and spring, but evaporation is higher, especially on sunny days. Average rainfall in the region for each of the first five months of the year is about 2.5 inches. That is also the average for October and December. Only November, our driest month, has less average rainfall – about 1.5 inches.

Keeping up with irrigation is imperative. Using a watering can conserves water and allows for targeted irrigation. For sustainable growing, hand and watering-can irrigation is recommended. It also allows gardeners to observe and interact with each bed, each row, and every plant.

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

**Growers' Notes:** Gardeners are probably observing bolting and flowering of winter crops. That is a result of the many days with temperatures in the upper 80s for many days last month. Once plants receive the seasonal signal that winter is ending, they begin their transition, preparing for death and welcoming the next generation of their family. Once that process begins, it cannot be stopped- even if cold weather returns.

The bolting and flowering is welcome, even if early this year. This means the plants are healthy and following their natural life cycle. Bees and other pollinators thrill at the seasonal vegetable flowers. So do we. Flowering broccoli and mustard are favorites, with arugula not far behind.

The Regenerative Gardener celebrates the flowering of seasonal crops at the end of their lives; it is one last gift they offer to us and our world. The regenerative grower allows plants to experience their full life cycle, and rather than ripping the still living plants out of the earth, the grower steps back and lets the plants live long after they have shared all they can with their human caretakers. What comes next is all too often missed in today's industrially-modeled farm and garden culture, which takes the life of vegetable plants as soon as their value to humans ends - and all too soon at that. What is next is the rest of the plant's life story: flowering, seeding, and returning to the earth. The story tells of feeding bees, birds, and butterflies, then the earth itself, and finally the next generation of its family - long after it has offered all that it can to its human companions. We watch that story unfold in the regenerative garden with appreciation and with love.

Gardeners may want to harvest winter greens now while they are at peak, but do try to allow some to live out a full life as outlined above. 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. So far, there has been no bolt-and-flowering on collards and kale.

West Pasco Urban Farm Report recommends no further planting or and seeding of winter vegetables - lettuces, choy, collards, kale, arugula, broccoli, cabbages, brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, mustard greens, and others. Winter is still with us, but March 3 is the last possible date for a freeze. Growers are advised to start seeds for spring planting, and to consider culling the winter crops. Too early for some, to be sure, but certainly time to start.

At our nursery, market garden, and teaching garden, we have started Dragon Tongue Beans and Pigeon Peas, cucumbers, eggplant, and peppers. In our experience, these are reliable transition crops. Certainly, add tomatoes to that list. We are not starting any now, because we already have an abundance of tomatoes, having avoided a hard freeze. Our tomato harvest so far is over 20 pounds. We also have an abundance of tomato seedlings in the nursery - available to the community for donations. Remember, these seedlings are acclimated to the region and especially West Pasco. They will also produce reliable seeds for regeneration. Readers can acquire our tomatoes thorough our CSA or at Wright's Natural Market in New Port Richey.

As you cull your crops, consider donating the cullings. Please do not consign them to the garbage bag or can. They are food and packed with nutrition for all of us - all animals (humans and other animals), birds and insects, and the earth itself. Yes. That's right, remember the earth, the soil of our gardens enjoys vegetables just as much as we do, as much as the rabbits, the deer, and the cardinals.

If you do not have animal friends with whom to share your cullings, share with the soil of your garden - before or after composting. Future issues of the Farm Report will give tips on culling. For now, consider donating culled crops to community groups that feed the less fortunate, share with friends and neighbors (human and others). compost. FarmNet advocates no waste gardening.

Of the various crops noted above, best bet right now (early March) are peppers, cucumbers, and tomatoes. These three will produce through the rest of the winter and into spring. The tomatoes will stay with us until the summer. Peppers might, too. Don't count on the cumpers much past early spring.

Those using regenerative methods, should see tomatoes coming up in last-year's tomato beds. Same with sweet potatoes in the sweet potato beds. Two other great spring crops are Dragon Tongue Beans and Pigeon Peas. See featured stories on both these high-yield legumes in recent issues of the Farm Report

## Plants and Pints

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

5:30 - 7:30 pm



5738 Main Street  
New Port Richey, Florida



## 5-3-1 Share & Support Event

Hosted by New Port Richey FarmNet

March 15, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 pm.

5426 Main Street, New Port Richey

Gateway plaza near Coastline Salt Room, at corner of  
Main Street & River Road

Event featuring select used and unwanted items in  
good condition at special donation amounts.

For the first hour of the event (10:00 a.m. to 11:00  
a.m.), all items are \$5.00, each.

In the second hour (11:00 to 12:00 noon) any  
remaining items are offered for \$3.00, each.

In the third hour (12:00 to 1:00 p.m.), remaining  
items are offered for \$1.00, each.

Items include books, clothing, household items, lawn  
and garden accessories, seedlings, seeds, and other  
miscellaneous items.

First come, first share.

All donations go to the community-building work of  
New Port Richey FarmNet.



## Harvest & Ripening Update

**Tomatoes:** If you took a chance and  
planted in the fall, you will or soon will  
have ripe tomatoes

**Broccoli:** Your broccoli should be  
producing heads now or soon. It is likely  
bolting.

**Loquats:** Look for loquats ripening. We've  
harvested 10 lbs so far. Still early.

**Peaches:** Look for flowers on peach trees,  
and first fruitings. Peaches follow loquats  
by about a month

**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.

## Market News

**Mark your calendar:** FarmNet will have fresh local produce  
at Plants & Pints, at Ordinance One, in downtown New Port  
Richey, on Tuesday March 18, 5:30 to 7:30. March will feature  
tomatoes, loquats, collard greens, kale, and arugula. All items,  
\$3 (more if you can, less if needs be).

\*The second FarmNet Evening Market at Plants and Pints  
(February 18) was very successful; and we will do it again in  
March (3/18).

### CSA & Fresh Harvest Feature:

Loquats. This week's CSA fresh harvest feature is loquats. If  
you'd like a market basket (about ½ a pound) of locally-grown  
loquats from one of our groves, let us know. Suggested  
donation, \$3 (more if you can, less if needs be).

Other CSA produce includes tomatoes, 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. Suggested  
donations: \$10 one item, \$20 any four, \$30 five or more.

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  
Farmers Market. Ask for Steve at the Market

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: Loquats

If you pay attention in travels around West Pasco, you should start seeing ripening loquat fruit appearing now or very soon -- especially in the City of New Port Richey.

Loquats are beautiful evergreen trees with dark leaves and small yellow-to-orange fruit. Those trees are the most prolific fruit trees in the area - rivaled only by mangos. They outpace the struggling citrus crop by multiple bushels and baskets. If you look for them, you'll start seeing them everywhere right now and for the next couple of months. This is harvesting season for this wonderful spring-time Florida fruit - and New Port Richey celebrates the harvest with America's only Loquat Festival. This year's celebration will be April 12, with special events in the week leading up to the festival.

Here are some fast facts about Loquat trees and fruit shared with West Pasco Urban Farm Report by The Florida Loquat Festival, from its March, 2019 Festival Program:

Loquats are not Kumquats. They are not a type of citrus. They thrive in Florida.

Loquats are members of the rose family, Rosaceae, which includes apples, peaches, pears, and plums.

They do very well in urban environments where other trees struggle and fail.

They are tough, hardy, but very well-adjusted trees. They are rarities in nurseries.

They can withstand freezing temperatures as well as extreme heat, and are prolific fruit producers.

They are a fast-growing evergreen, often used as an ornamental, which can reach 30 feet in height.

Loquats can be grown from seed. There are relatively few commercial growers.

Sources report trees grown from seed take six to eight years to fruit, although shorter periods are reported.

FarmNet reports fruit in two to three years with our unique East Madison variety.

Grafted trees take less time to bear first fruit, perhaps in one year.

Loquats flower in the late summer and produce fruit from late winter through early spring.

Experienced growers report that loquats flourish without fertilizers.

Bees are very fond of loquat flowers, so planting them benefits these imperiled pollinators.

Trees survive temperatures as low as 10 degrees. Flowers and fruit are damaged by temperatures 27 degrees or lower.

Loquat fruit ranges in taste from tart to very sweet.

Flavors range from resemblances to apples to plums, to entirely unique flavors. Fruit forms first as small green bulbs after flowers drop.

Fruit remains green and grows larger during the fall and begins to reach maturity in late winter. Ripe fruit is orange, although hues are variable (from yellowish to brownish to bright orange).

*11th Anniversary*

*Florida*

**Loquat Festival**

**Saturday, April 12**

**10 am - 2 pm**

**Sims Park**

**New Port Richey, Florida**

**Featuring Loquat products, vendors and more.**

**Learn about loquats during our various event programs.**

**Thank you to our partners, who make this event possible.**

**City of New Port Richey, New Port Richey Rotary Club,**

**Creative Institute of Dental Arts, Cotee River Brewing**

**Company, West Pasco Historical Society, The White Heron**

**Tea & Gifts**

### 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.

