



Urban Ag Work Group Meeting Notes

Fairfax Food Council

February 26, 2024

10:00 am – 11:00 am

Introductions:

Attendees individually introduced themselves and their urban agriculture backgrounds and interests.

Update on FFC/VFHY Composting Pilot Program

Elisa Solomon, FFC Project Coordinator

Elisa discussed the purpose of this project and the progress that has been made. This pilot program aims to help schools reduce food waste by teaching students how to repurpose trash-bound scraps. At present, the Food Council is in the interview phase of the application process, where schools can discuss their implementation plans more thoroughly.

The Fairfax Food Council received applications from Aldrin ES, Canterbury Woods ES, Wakefield Forest ES, Graham Road ES, and West Potomac HS. Thanks to grant funds from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, the Food Council can afford to include **all five schools** in this program! Each participating school will receive:

- 3 dual-chamber composting tumblers (each tumbler totals 55.5 gallons)
- 25 lidded buckets for food scrap collection
- 5 large leaf bags
- 1 \$75 Home Depot gift card
- Educational resources provided by Compost Crew and FCPS Get 2 Green

Participating schools will use these tools and resources to create hands-on experiences and educate students about food waste, composting, edible gardening, and healthy eating.

Schools may need assistance in assembling their composting tumblers. If you are interested in helping, should that need arise, please email Elisa (elisa.solomon@fairfaxcounty.gov). If you have a preference for which school you would like to volunteer at, please indicate that in your email.

Update on FFC Community Voice Task Force Event for Food Growers, Makers, & Recyclers

Dawn Hyman, FFC Co-Chair

Dawn shared that the purpose of this task force is to engage with food system actors from whom the Fairfax Food Council has not traditionally heard. To bring more people to the table, this task force hosted a networking event for food growers, makers, and recyclers. The event was hosted by What The Chef, a business that graduated from Frontier Kitchen. The event was well attended by 35-40 people/businesses. This event proved to be a great opportunity for attendees to learn about the Fairfax Food Council, connect with other food system actors, and share their successes and challenges as small food businesses. These are the kind of win-win scenarios the Community Voice Task Force is looking for. If you have ideas for which food system actors the task force should target at their next Community Conversations Roadshow event, please reach out to Dawn (dawn.hyman@fairfaxcounty.gov), Diane (diane.charles@fairfaxcounty.gov), or Elisa (elisa.solomon@fairfaxcounty.gov).

Community Farm Interest Form

Cassandra Lawson, FFC Urban Agriculture Co-Chair

Cassandra announced that Arcadia has developed an interest form for their new community garden. If you are interested in becoming a community grower, [click here to complete this form](#). Community gardeners will be provided:

- Raised beds
- Soil
- Seeds
- Seedlings
- Educational resources

Gardening Tips to Implement Now

Group Conversation

- Buy seed potatoes, let them sit out to chit, and plant them in March.
- Start onion seeds, herbs from seed, peas, spinach, and lettuce. Then transplant the seedlings in March.
- Plant peas, and when you harvest them, cut them just above the soil so that the roots can continue providing nitrogen to the other plants in your garden bed. This is why peas make a great cover crop.
- Using a frost cloth is good for lettuce and spinach.
- Now is a good time to prune.
- Start pepper and tomato seeds in late March.
- Peas and spinach can handle a frost around 20 degrees Fahrenheit, so feel free to plant them now.

- Lettuce will likely burn in frosts around 20 degrees Fahrenheit. So, start seedlings, but do not transplant them to outdoor beds yet.
- Plant onions, peas, and buckwheat.
- Buckwheat will die at 20 degrees Fahrenheit, but you can eat the sprouts. Buckwheat makes a good cover crop.
- Purple tree collards last several years and do well in the winter.
- Plant berry bushes now to beat the summer heat and drought.

Member Updates

- **Patricia**— There are garden plots available at Gristmill Park and Hogge Park. [Visit the FCPA site to learn more.](#) Also, the Fairfax County Master Gardener Association will be hosting free vegetable garden plant clinics at many garden plot host parks and nearby locations throughout the season. These clinics are open to the general public and are a great opportunity to get advice from the on-site Master Gardeners. [Click here to view the clinic locations and schedule.](#)
- **Sandra**—Sandra is looking to start a community garden in her neighborhood, and needs to craft a letter asking her landlord for permission to do so. If anyone knows of or has a template for this kind of letter, please contact her (sbbarksdale@gmail.com). Resources that were provided during the meeting are as follows:
 - <https://www.american-apartment-owners-association.org/property-management/going-green/how-to-grow-a-community-and-a-garden/>
 - The master gardeners have a Speakers Bureau, so someone can come out to speak to you and your group on-site.
 - <https://www.american-apartment-owners-association.org/property-management/going-green/how-to-grow-a-community-and-a-garden/>
 - <https://www.communitygarden.org/>
 - <https://www.lawntotablefarms.com/copy-of-services>
 - <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/food-council/sites/food-council/files/Assets/images/redesignUrbAgr/NVSWCD%20gardening%20guide.pdf>
- **Diane**—Juan Pablo’s term as Co-Chair of this work group is nearing an end. Those interested in becoming the next Co-Chair should contact either Juan Pablo (juanpablo@arcadiafood.org), Casandra (casandra@arcadiafood.org), or Elisa (elisa.solomon@fairfaxcounty.gov).

Next Urban Ag Work Group Meeting: March 18, 2024, at 10:00 am