



Urban Ag Work Group Meeting Notes

Fairfax Food Council

July 15, 2024

10:00 am – 11:00 am

Introductions:

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

Co-Chair Transition Announcement

UAWG Co-Chairs

The Fairfax Food Council relies on volunteer leaders in all aspects of its work. Serving as the Co-Chair of the Food Council's Urban Agriculture Work Group for the last two years, Juan Pablo Echeverria is an excellent example. As Juan Pablo steps away from this particular leadership role with the Food Council, it's easy to reflect on the impact he has had in this role. In his "day job", Juan Pablo serves as the Outreach and Education Manager at the Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture. A good portion of his Arcadia work is sharing his knowledge with others, especially students. In his leadership role as chair of the Urban Ag Work Group, he generously continued his sharing of gardening guidance and tips with everyone. He took the lead on developing gardening workshops for the Urban Ag Work Group, including offering them in Spanish and invoking new approaches to attract new and younger gardeners. During his co-chair tenure, Juan Pablo's passion for composting was a huge support to the Food Council's grant that is piloting composting projects at several schools. The Fairfax Food Council is grateful for Juan Pablo's leadership over the last two years and looks forward to his continued sharing of his urban agriculture gifts with others.

The Urban Ag. Work Group welcomes its new Co-Chair, Amanda Tindall, the Founder and Lead Grower at Lawn to Table, LLC. At Lawn to Table, Amanda collaborates with homeowners to build and maintain vegetable gardens, coaches residents on growing their own food, and provides consulting and recommendations to maximize garden usage with organic practices throughout Northern Virginia. Prior to establishing Lawn to Table, Amanda studied sustainable and regenerative farming at Whiffletree Farm in Warrenton, VA, a farm specializing in pasture-raised meats and eggs. Additionally, Amanda serves as a manager at Compass Rose and Maydān in Washington, DC, continuing her involvement in the local food scene. The intersection of food

service, food production, and sustainability is where her passion lies, having developed a love for highlighting local producers during her time at the Marshall, VA-based restaurant Field & Main. Amanda is a budding sommelier, and outside her professional life, is an avid runner and outdoor enthusiast. She is passionate about food education, service and sustainability, integrated approaches to health and mental health, and developing local communities, and is honored and excited to work with those in the urban agriculture working group to tackle these issues.

Composting 101

Ivy Nargiz, Compost Crew

Ivy presented the basics of composting. She discussed what composting is, the benefits of composting, how to get started, how to troubleshoot, and what services Compost Crew provides. [Her presentation is attached here.](#)

After her presentation, work group members asked questions and Ivy provided additional information:

- It's best to use reusable wares first before BPI or compostable certifiable wares/materials. If you do use compostable materials, make sure they are certifiably compostable. If they are certified as compostable, they can be included in open-air compost piles, as backyard piles and tumblers do not usually reach high enough temperatures to break these materials down completely.
- If you want to compost meat or dairy products, it is best to do so at the commercial scale because these products require high heat to kill off pathogens. Specifically, these products require a temperature of 155 degrees Fahrenheit for 72 consecutive hours (three days in a row). Achieving and maintaining this temperature is not easy to do in backyard piles.
- Twigs are great for keeping airflow in tumblers and piles, but they also take longer to break down. So, if you want finer soil as the final product, use fewer twigs and a sifter at the end of the compost process. Otherwise, expect a more mulchy material to be your final product (which is perfectly fine!).



Consistency of Mulch
VS
Consistency of Soil

July Gardening Tips

Juan Pablo, FFC UAWG Co-Chair

Juan Pablo shared these gardening tips with the group:

- Weeds are a big problem this time of year, despite the lack of rain.
- Tomatoes do incredibly well in our Northern VA climate and are a great plant for beginner-level gardeners. Tomatoes can be planted in pots or gardens. Notably, tomatoes are sensitive to a lack of water, irregular watering, and watering the plants directly (since water on the plant itself can sometimes prompt fungal growth). Therefore, just before transplanting the tomatoes into the ground, Arcadia installed PVC pipes to more quickly and directly get water to the tomato's roots. They water their tomatoes every 2-3 days.
- Honey alyssum and tomato plants are great companion plants. Honey alyssum attracts parasitic wasps, which kill hornworms, a caterpillar type that likes eating tomatoes. Plus, honey alyssum self-seeds, so it comes back on its own.
- Marigolds and lettuce leaf basil are great companion plants. Marigolds deter pests, attract pollinators, and make good edible garnishes.

Member Updates

- **Chris Garris**—Britepaths is seeking volunteers to help neighbors use SNAP at the Wakefield Farmers Market located at Audrey Moore Rec Center on Wednesday afternoons from 1:30 pm to 6:30 pm this season. Volunteers must be 18 or older, be able to commit to 5 hours of work every other week, and have reliable transportation to the market. Proficiency in Spanish is encouraged for volunteers, but not required. To apply please visit, britepaths.org/wakefield

The Urban Agriculture Work Group will not meet in August 2024.

Next Urban Ag Work Group Meeting: September 16, 2024, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.