

Community Food News Summer 2020 Newsletter



FAIRFAX
Food Council
healthy • accessible • affordable

Welcome to our new Fairfax Food Council seasonal newsletter! We'll be sharing news of urban gardening, food access, and food literacy activities and resources from around Fairfax County. If you have something you would like to share in the next newsletter, please submit to Melissa Aune at ffcnewsletter@gmail.com by August 15th.

To subscribe or unsubscribe, please email ffcnewsletter@gmail.com.

We encourage you to share this newsletter widely with all who may be interested! If you have any issues accessing the information in this newsletter, please let us know by emailing HDFairfaxFoodCouncil@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Fairfax Food Council Urban Agriculture Upcoming Work Group Meetings:

July 20th, August 17th, September 14th, October 19th, November 16th
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Fairfax Food Council Food Access & Literacy Upcoming Work Group Meetings:

July 29th, August 26th, September 30th, October 28th, November 18th
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Want to attend? Both the Urban Agriculture and Food Access & Literacy Work Group meetings of the Fairfax Food Council are open to the public and anyone interested in getting more engaged in these issues or Work Groups is welcome to attend. Locations for meetings are likely going to be done via video connection – at least through the summer, so please email HDFairfaxFoodCouncil@fairfaxcounty.gov for information about the location and/or how to 'attend' a meeting.

Like us on FACEBOOK!!

The Fairfax Food Council publishes content on FB that connects, educates & informs our community. PLEASE (pretty please) "[Like](#)" us and be a part of our growing community!



Reflections on the Fairfax Food Council

by Diane Charles,
Project Manager, Fairfax Food Council
Fairfax County Health Department

As we all continue to live, pivot and move forward during this pandemic, the Fairfax Food Council has been engaged in supporting our food system in a variety of ways.

When so many amenities in Fairfax County closed in mid-March, including all of Fairfax County's parks, the closures affected community gardens throughout the county because most of them are located inside Fairfax County parks. After much research and discussion, the Food Council's Urban Agriculture Work Group Co-Chairs Cory Suter and Stacey Evers led valuable work and advocacy by drafting clear, direct letters to Park Authority leadership and the County Board of Supervisors – documenting specific ways to safely reopen the community gardens – and how critically important that is during this time, especially with so much food access needs and food supply disruptions. Thanks to this respectful education and advocacy, at the end of April, the Fairfax County Park Authority opened community gardens – while requiring that important safety steps be followed. Additionally, in recent weeks, a letter to the County School Board and Superintendent was sent - urging consideration for options to safely open or allow some care for school gardens. News just emerged that school gardens are open with details still being uncovered. The Food Council was also pleased when the Park Authority announced a plan for the Farmers Markets to safely open throughout May.

In mid-March, the Food Council's Food Access and Literacy Work Group joined efforts with Fairfax County's Neighborhood and Community Services (NCS) – to bring together all those working within and on the front lines of getting food to neighbors who needed food. As the numbers immediately increased substantially of those who needed help with securing food to feed their families, it was critical that all the county players were sharing information. A collaborative Food Access Committee of the Food Council and NCS started weekly meetings that brought an average of 60 people together each week. Sharing information, identifying gaps, and documenting trends and available resources has been the key elements of the weekly meetings. When specific issues that needed more detailed attention arose, smaller groups were formed to address issues such as food supply chain challenges, transportation of food to those quarantined, and coordinating a major countywide food drive to make up for the annual USPS food drive that was cancelled. As the weekly countywide Food Access meetings pivot to every other week in June, the Food Council's Food Access & Literacy Work Group will explore how best they can pick back up on their work, albeit now through a new lens.

The Fairfax Food Council will continue its work to support healthy food access through food system and policy changes by working in partnership with so many members of the community who are equally as invested in the health, improvement and well-being of our residents. All are

welcome to get involved. Work Group meetings are open and we encourage the community's participation.

Community Stories

In this edition of the Community Food News, we are excited to share the extraordinary efforts of community partners as they have worked to increase access to food, promote urban agriculture, and utilize innovative partnerships to address the needs of citizens throughout the county.

Thank you for all you are doing!

Britepaths and Arcadia Partnership

In 2020, Britepaths is collaborating with the Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture through a grant from the Northern Virginia Health Foundation to provide vouchers that doctors write as “prescriptions” to families they see in the Route 1 area of Fairfax County who are food insecure and are directly and indirectly affected by COVID-19. In many cases, someone in the household may have the virus or they may be quarantined because of exposure.

Through this partnership, produce boxes containing a variety of fruits and vegetables will be delivered to families identified as having need. Britepaths is supporting this initiative through funds we budgeted for our traditional Our Daily Veggies voucher program.

We are grateful to our partners in this initiative! [Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture](#), [Northern Virginia Health Foundation](#) (NVHF) and the Fairfax County Health Department (FCHD) [Community Outreach Team](#), which is working in partnership with [Emmanuel Worship Center](#) and [Sequoyah-Opportunity Neighborhood](#), part of Fairfax County's Neighborhood and Community Services.

James Lee Community Garden Serves Local Families

Last year James Lee Community Center was the recipient of ten raised garden beds, part of a volunteer effort provided by HITT Contracting. This community garden collaboration provided an opportunity for James Lee's participants to “adopt a bed,” and learn about gardening in a hands-on setting, producing over 150 lbs. of produce for the local community. Produce grown in their community garden will be even more valuable this summer due to the impact of COVID-19.

FCPS is providing free “Grab and Go” meals to children under the age of 18 in the James Lee parking lot Monday through Friday, and typically serves between 75 and 85 individuals daily. Those numbers haven't changed since FCPS began providing the meals after schools closed in March. James Lee continues to help with additional food for families through community donations, and a weekly Panera Bread donation.

Closings and social distancing have affected so many events and organizations this spring, but networking through agencies and gardeners has led to some beneficial connections. The Potomac School in McLean had numerous seedlings available to give away from a combined kindergarten/upper school project that had been scheduled for Earth Day. The event was cancelled due to schools being closed, and they were looking for places to donate. The Fairfax Master Gardener's were planning to host their annual plant swap at James Lee in April, which also was cancelled due to social distancing concerns. They, too, had numerous plants to donate.

These paths converged with generous donations of seedlings, enough to fill all ten raised beds at James Lee Community Center, additional giveaways to families at the “Grab and Go” meals pick-up, two churches, and seven other county community centers! James Lee staff are diligently tending their garden, providing greens to their local families from their spring planting, and awaiting a generous summer harvest to share with their community.

For more information about this effort, please contact [Caroline Hockenberry](#).



James Lee Community Garden, Falls Church, VA

Great news from MCCP Foundation

Marcia Twomey, Executive Director of the MCCP Foundation was happy to report that their team has been able to distribute over 3,000 World Central Kitchen prepared meals to vulnerable families each week since the last week in March. This work was done as a result of an amazing partnership with World Central Kitchen along with MCCP Foundation, Annandale United Methodist Church Mission Center, Food for Others, Poe Middle School Team, Emily Wild, and Gretchen Purser. In both communities they also have provided additional food to assist families in between distributions. In Culmore they have mobilized the MCCP Mobile Dental Van to do the food distribution each week! An expanded footprint of Jose Andres' World Central Kitchen, *American Eats Now*, is also serving several additional communities throughout Fairfax County. Through connections to other nonprofit community partners, an additional 22,000 hot meals have been provided to the most vulnerable populations in Fairfax County.

MCCP wishes to thank their team of volunteers: from Temple B'nai Shalom in Fairfax Station, including Lynne, Amy, Roni, Terry, Tom, Julie, Frank, and Sue. They would also like to thank Drs. Sue Kohn, Hanita Oh Tan, Carol Fox, Marina and Payden McBee, Polly Panitz, from Capital Area Pediatrics, Edgar Aranda - Yanoc Legal Aid Justice along with his wife and daughter.

[Check it out: Featured Resources](#)



Grow a Row FC encourages, supports residents who want to support food banks

[Grow a Row FC](#) is seeking volunteers to join its community-wide effort to grow fresh produce for [Food for Others](#) and its food pantry partners during this public health and economic crisis.

Participating is easy: Pledge to dedicate a row of your garden or a container to growing food to donate and report to Grow a Row FC the weight or size (example: five carrots) of your donations. No amount is too small. Grow a Row FC has seeds and a limited supply of transplants, soil test kits and compost to give to volunteer growers. Garden mentors are available to give advice and support. Volunteers can either deliver donations to the food bank themselves or take them to a drop-off site in Falls Church city.

Additional volunteer garden mentors and hosts for drop-off sites are also being sought. Sign up to volunteer on the website or by emailing growarowfc@gmail.com. This project is supported by Virginia Cooperative Extension and endorsed by the Fairfax Food Council.

Looking for ideas to keep your little one busy this summer? Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture (@arcadiafood) created a resource sheet with links to virtual field trips, math and STEM focused activities, and of course — ways to get your kids in nature! The best part is: lots of the activities require only a few things that you probably already have hanging around



your home. <https://tinyurl.com/ArcadiaStayAtHomeClub>

Additionally, their Farm Education Staff have started the Arcadia Stay at Home Club (<http://www.arcadiafood.org/StayatHomeClub>). They are putting videos out each Friday with crafts, recipes, and homesteading projects. Check out their Youtube channel for a few fun activities.: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ArcadiaFoodTV/videos>



The Inova Healthy Plate Club now has online nutrition education lessons for kids!

Each lesson features activities for all ages, such as Eat a Rainbow Bingo and a food group scavenger hunt. There are also recipes, worksheets and online videos/games to support each lesson. Visit their [Google drive](#) to get the first three lessons, and follow them on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to get more content and new lessons!



Did you know that SNAP EBT and P-EBT benefits can be used at select farmers market locations?

The Virginia Fresh Match program allows us to match SNAP and P-EBT purchases so that customers can get fresh fruits and vegetables at half the cost! In response to the pandemic the match cap (typically \$20 per visit) has been suspended, making fresh produce more affordable than ever! To learn more about the [Virginia Fresh Match](#) program check out their website or this [great video](#). Customers can use this [interactive map](#) to identify which farmers market locations closest to them accept SNAP and P-EBT.

Please note: due to the pandemic some locations have been temporarily moved or closed. For now, you can [refer them to this list](#), but we recommend that clients double check social media pages or the website beforehand. We are working on creating a new flyer that will show all the markets that are currently open and accepting SNAP this season as markets solidify their opening dates, so stay tuned and let us know if you would like a digital or printed copy to share with the public."

Local Workshops and Events

Fairfax Food Council Seed Saving Workshop

July 21st at 7-8:30 p.m.,

Webinar, Registration details coming soon!

The Fairfax Food Council's Urban Agriculture Working Group will host a seed-saving workshop with Washington Gardener Editor Kathy Jentz. This class covers the challenges and rewards of seed saving, definitions and botanical terms to get you started, the lifespan of common garden seeds, and what conditions are best for storage. Jentz also will address the logistics of planning your garden for the highest seed-saving quality, pollination techniques to promote better seed, population size requirements and how to overcome a home garden's limitations, soil cultivation

to improve seed quality, harvesting and processing techniques, and germination testing.



Questions? Email Stacey Evers at stacey.evers@icloud.com.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		Backyard Transformation: 100 Plants in 100 Acres		Conservation Landscaping and Infiltration Trenches in Burke		Charming Front Yard Garden in Alexandria
	Lessons Learned in Our Native Plant Garden		All Aboard for a Garden Journey		VCAP and Veggies in Clifton	
Our Gardens: Our Refuge - A Labor of Love			Front Yard Edible Landscaping at Suters Glen		Karen's Native Plant and Vegetable Garden	
		Homegrown Habitat for Native Plants and Wildlife		Masterful Gardening from a Gardening Master		

VIRTUAL GARDEN TOUR
JUNE 2020

NVSWCD 2020 Sustainable Garden Tour

6/01/2020 to 6/30/2020,

*The 2020 Sustainable Garden Tour will be held **VIRTUALLY** this year throughout the month of **June**.*

For this year's Sustainable Garden Tour, Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD) is partnering with the [Fairfax Food Council Urban Agriculture Working Group](#) to highlight **front-yard gardens** and **edible landscapes**. You'll also see garden tour favorites like rain gardens, native plant landscaping, rain barrels, backyard wildlife habitat, composting and more. Local residents open their gardens and share their experiences landscaping with natural resources in mind. Hidden treasures and verdant landscapes await you!

Learn more and see the complete tour lineup: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/soil-water-conservation/sustainable-garden-tour>

Opportunities outside Fairfax County

Greening Schoolyards America: Outdoor Spaces as Essential Assets for School Districts' COVID-19 Response

Thursday, June 4, 2020 from 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm,

Webinar

Interested in how Outdoor Spaces can be used as part of your school systems' response to COVID? There is an urgent need to reimagine PreK-12 schools in order to safely reopen. Repurposing outdoor spaces is a cost-effective way to reduce the burden on indoor classrooms while providing fresh air, hands-on learning opportunities, and the health benefits associated with increased access to nature. Green Schoolyards America is offering a free webinar on **Thursday, June 4, 2020 from 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm EST** as an interdisciplinary public forum to discuss how to expand school social distancing capacity using outdoor learning in school grounds and parks. More info [here](#).



Locally Grown: Urban Gardening Resources

Did you know that a wealth of gardening information specific to Fairfax County can be found online at Fairfaxgardening.org?

FairfaxGardening.org is the website of the Fairfax County Master Gardeners Association, Inc. and has information about urban gardening in different sections on the site.

The **Garden Calendar**, under the Calendar tab on the Home Page, is updated monthly to reflect that month's gardening chores. On this calendar, there are areas of information on vegetable gardening, fruits, and flowering annuals and perennials.

The **Events Calendar**, also under the Calendar tab on the Home Page, lists events for the current and following months for area Master Gardener groups, botanical gardens, and Merrifield Garden Center.

Under **the Reference Publications** tab on the Home Page, there are links to different websites about Critters/Bugs/Insects/Diseases, Garden Preparation and Maintenance, Perennials and Annuals, Vegetable/Fruit Gardening and Weeds. These are scientific sources of information, many from Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Under **Library > Archives**, there are articles that the site has published in many subject areas. They are all available for downloading in pdf files.

Resources on **Container Gardening** can be found in the Resources list that covers raised beds and containers for vegetables.



Fava Bean blossoms

Make it Happen: Funding Opportunities

USDA Grants for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

Deadline: July 6, 2020

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has announced the availability of \$3 million for grants through its new Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. The competitive grants will support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production projects through two categories, Planning Projects and Implementation Projects. USDA will accept applications on Grants.gov until 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on July 6, 2020.

“These grant opportunities underscore USDA’s commitment to all segments of agriculture, including swiftly expanding areas of urban agriculture,” Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Bill Northey said. “Such projects have the potential to address important issues such as food access and education and to support innovative ways to increase local food production in urban environments.”

Webinar

A webinar, which will be held on June 3, 2020, from 2 to 4 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, will provide an overview of the grants’ purpose, project types, eligibility and basic requirements for submitting an application. Information on how to [register and participate in the webinar](#), or listen to the recording, will be posted at farmers.gov/urban.

Contact: FPAC.BC.Press@usda.gov

Fruit Tree Planting Foundation

The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit, whose mission is to bring the beauty and bounty of fruit trees to those around the world who need them most. They will be in Washington DC later this year and are reaching out to like-minded organizations in the area who may be interested in participating in their orchard grant program. A donation from FTPF includes the fruit trees themselves, orchard design and consultation, a planting event, an optional workshop with FTPF’s certified arborists, aftercare, and on-going support.

If you’re interested in the program, or know of other non-profits, gardens, or community spaces around the area that could benefit from a donation of fruit trees, please let them know. You can read more about their programs and the application process [here](#) or schedule a call with Lizzy Rainey, Programs Manager, at your convenience using this [link](#).



This information is provided by the Fairfax Food Council.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/food-council/>

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