



FAIRFAX Food Council

healthy • accessible • affordable

COMMUNITY FOOD NEWS

The latest news and updates from the Fairfax Food Council

IMPORTANT DATES

URBAN AG MEETINGS

January 11 | 10:00 – 11:30 am
February 8 | 10:00 – 11:30 am
March 15 | 10:00 – 11:30 am

FOOD ACCESS & LITERACY MEETINGS

January 27 | 10:30 – 11:30 am
February 24 | 10:30 – 11:30 am
March 31 | 10:30 – 11:30 am

FFC STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

January 21 | 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Want to attend? Both the Urban Agriculture and Food Access & Literacy Work Group meetings are open to the public and anyone interested in getting more engaged is welcome to attend.

Please email HD@FairfaxFoodCouncil@fairfaxcounty.gov for information about the location and/or how to 'attend' a meeting.

The FFC: Looking to 2021

by Diane Charles, Project Manager, Fairfax Food Council

The Fairfax Food Council has a vision of a vibrant food system where healthy, accessible and affordable food is valued as a basic human right. Facilitating community partnerships and efforts to promote healthy eating drives our ongoing mission. We are grateful for the coalition of citizens, nonprofits, faith partners, county agencies and businesses that are engaged through the Food Council's two Work Groups: Urban Agriculture and the Food Access & Literacy.

As we focus on 2021, we look forward to continuing the partnerships, as well as the individuals who participate in the meetings and workings of each of these Work Groups. We also welcome and encourage others in the community who may want to explore getting engaged - to join our monthly meetings of either group. The upcoming 2021 meeting dates and times can be found in this newsletter and on the home page of the Fairfax Food Council website.

The Food Council's work today is centered within the context of the ongoing pandemic. We know that food insecurity has doubled in Fairfax County and its impact will be felt throughout the county for many years. Many Food Council members are actively involved in directly providing food to those who need assistance, while other Food Council members are supporting other aspects of the food system - to continue ensuring healthy food access for all.

Continued next page

The FFC: Looking to 2021, continued

The Food Access & Literacy Work Group enters 2021 supporting numerous initiatives, such as: a healthy food messaging campaign aimed at Fairfax youth; planning ways to grow and sustain food rescue in the schools; Arcadia’s Route 1 work to understand how food access in that part of the county fared during the pandemic from a ‘lived experience’ perspective; and increased SNAP usage at farmers markets.

The Urban Agriculture Work Group has its own set of initiatives it is focused on as 2021 gets underway, such as: plans for a new series of urban agriculture workshops for 2021 aimed at educating and supporting individual and community gardeners – with a goal to safely incorporate hands-on elements in tandem with online learning; delivering services and support to identified school gardens who are transitioning their existing gardens to production gardens to grow produce for their families or local pantries; and planning how to identify and increase the number of community gardens in the county, to name a few.

If any, all or some of these issues or the Work Groups themselves are of interest, please join any monthly meeting. Also – please feel free to reach out to Diane Charles, diane.charles@fairfaxcounty.gov, Project Manager for the Fairfax Food Council, for additional information.

FOOD COUNCIL HAPPENINGS



October is URBAN AGRICULTURE MONTH!
 JOIN US FOR EVENTS ALL MONTH
 highlighting the significant role urban agriculture plays in our regional food system and learn about our local urban agriculture response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
REGISTER: <https://arlington.ext.vt.edu/programs/urbanag.html>

Here is a sneak peek of some of the events :

- **TOWN HALL:** Future of urban agriculture
- **The Pandemic Pivot:** Businesses adapting to keep afloat.
- **In the Dirt:** How urban gardeners responded to the needs of food pantries
- **From the Ground Up:** Starting community gardens
- **Urban Home Gardening Series:** Best practices and real-life experiences of Arlington gardeners in 2020
- **Kids in the Kitchen:** Cooking at home with kids
- **Easy Home Preserving During COVID-19:** Tips and tricks for making the most of your produce.
- Take a tour of a local garden!
- **AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!**

SPONSORED BY

Virginia Cooperative Extension, Fairfax Food Council, Fairfax County Master Gardeners, Falls Church Garden Club, MGNY, FOUA, Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia.

First regional Urban Ag Month spotlights enormous variety of efforts, lessons learned

by Stacy Evers and Cory Suter, Co-Chairs, FFC Urban Agriculture Group

How have local farmers pivoted their businesses during the pandemic? How is the DMV rescuing food? What policies are needed to encourage commercial urban ag in Northern Virginia? And, maybe most importantly, what can we do with all the butternut squash we grew this year?

Community experts answered these questions and many more during **Urban Ag Month**, a month-long, online showcase of workshops, garden tours, and presentations organized by VCE (Arlington/Alexandria and Fairfax), Arlington Friends of Urban

Agriculture and the Fairfax Food Council’s Urban Agriculture Work Group. The partnership also included Fairfax Master Gardeners, Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, Master Food Volunteers, and the Falls Church Garden Club.

Continued next page

First regional Urban Ag Month, continued

The regional collaboration was the first of its kind for Urban Ag Month, which VCE Arlington/Alexandria traditionally has celebrated with a local conference. This year, organizers included Fairfax County, Fairfax City and Falls Church City because so much of the work involved is regional and because the need to be online made the events accessible to a larger audience.

Among the highlights:

- David Guas, owner of Bayou Bakery in Arlington, explained how he started Chefs Feeding Families after he had to lay off 14 employees in the spring. Guas was able to pay eight full-time employees throughout the shutdown, but was concerned about how his workers were going to get enough food on their tables. Partnering with Real Food for Kids, they bought 100 pounds of red beans and rice and started churning out 500 meals a day. Eventually other businesses joined in, including Silver Diner, South Block and Pizzeria Paradiso.
- Elected officials from Arlington, Fairfax, Fairfax City and Falls Church City shared the urban ag successes in their communities, including Arlington's quick creation this spring of four productive Victory Gardens at schools. Fairfax County's Providence District Supervisor Dalia Palchik praised the Food Council for creating an online map of community gardens and, noting the two-year waitlist for county-run community gardens, said she'd like to see the number of community-accessible gardens expanded so more people can participate. In Falls Church, City Council member Ross Litkenhous praised George Mason High School for its hydroponics and aquaponics programs and the city's composting programs.

The October showcase also shined a light on a lack of policies that, if adopted, could stimulate local food production. As commercial hydroponics farmer Ryan Pierce, owner of Fresh Impact Farms in Arlington, put it, "Food is a community effort...We have a huge food equity problem." But he believes this equity issue can't be fully addressed until local farmers can make a decent living – or a living at all.

Policy changes that participants advocated for include:

- Tax credit programs, such as a credit that would incentivize private property owners to put more of their land into production. Litkenhous highlighted a Maryland tax credit program that would create revitalization or enterprise zones that stimulate development in downtrodden areas. "The mechanics for this already exist," he said. "It's not that heavy of a lift."
- The removal of property taxes for the first 1-3 years of an urban ag business to give the business time to get on its feet and start earning a profit.
- A sales tax exemption for locally grown food.
- Regulations that foster alternatives to conventional agriculture, including those that would encourage commercial property owners to lease office space to urban ag start-ups in hydroponics, aquaponics and aquaculture or to rooftop garden operations.
- Increased job training that makes agriculture a viable career. Participants noted that this could be done at the high school level or in an adult education program. Both Palchik and Litkenhous emphasized their belief that education is the greatest catalyst for increased local food production, noting that increased education about what it takes to grow food leads to better policies and, eventually, better outcomes.

RESOURCES

FCPS Meal Distribution

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Office of Food and Nutrition Services is continuing to offer healthy meals at locations throughout Fairfax County. The same meals will be available at no separate charge to all participants at each site. Information on where families can find no cost meals can be found on the [FCPS website](#).

Food Resources

[A map of Food Resources](#) is also available on the Fairfax Food Council website. This map was designed to help Fairfax County individuals and families find the nearest food resources to their location. The food resources map was developed by Neighborhood and Community Services. For more information about programs and services, including food resources in Fairfax County, please see [Fairfax County's Neighborhood and Community Services site](#).



In Need of Gardening Tools?

Check out the Fairfax Food Council Tool Lending Library: fairfaxcounty.gov/food-council/urban-agriculture

EVENTS

Kickstart Health Summit 2021

On January 14th, Giant Food will be hosting Kickstart, a free, online Healthy Living Summit led by our in-house expert team of Nutritionists and Pharmacists. This half day will cover topics that focus on ways to kick start 2021 to Live Well, Eat Well, Do Well and Stay Well. With over 35 sessions to choose from, there is something for everyone no matter their age or health goals.

- Stay Well: Sessions that focus on ways to maintain a healthy life. Topics like brain health, preventing chronic disease through diet, flu prevention, pharmacy FAQs, and more.
- Eat Well: Sessions for foodies that focus on the latest trends and ways to enrich the whole family's eating experience. Topics include mood boosting foods, spices, meal planning, habit building, and a virtual store tour.

KICKSTART
HEALTH SUMMIT 2021
PRESENTED BY Giant

Join us for a FREE half-day virtual seminar about your health and wellness.

THURSDAY
JAN 14
12:30 - 5:30PM

Support a local Feeding America food bank with an optional donation when you register.

FEEDING AMERICA

SPACE IS LIMITED. REGISTER TODAY!

- Do Well: Sessions that focus on sustainability and food access. Topics include zero food waste cooking, plant-based eating, food accessibility, tools for sustainable shopping, and more.
- Live Well: Sessions that focus on healthy living activities that improve day to day life. Topics include mindfulness, sleep, smoking cessation, diet trends, fitness, pet health, and DIY spa treatments for home.

Save the date! [Registration opens the week of December 7!](#)

Locally Grown: Urban Gardening Resources

Fairfax County Master Gardeners (FCMGA) - Plant Clinics...continuing online!

While typically used to seeing Master Gardener volunteers offering in-person advice at local farmer's markets, plant clinics have temporarily moved online. Experienced gardeners from Fairfax County Master Gardeners and Green Spring Master Gardeners are hosting online, video plant clinics three times each week. Anyone with lawn or garden questions is welcome to join the virtual plant clinics. Each clinic begins with a short presentation on a gardening topic by one of the Master Gardeners. The rest of each session will address guests' specific questions.

Registration can be found [online](#) and allows guests to ask their questions in advance. While Master Gardeners will address pre-submitted questions first, they then will open the floor for additional questions. No specific question? No problem! Registered guests are welcome just to listen in. Photos are encouraged! Guests looking for a plant identification or with questions about a pest, disease, or damage are asked to submit good quality photos when they register. If you have any questions please contact Adria Bordas at abordas@vt.edu.

Green Spring Gardens Talks and Workshops

We have included a selection of Green Spring Gardens talks and workshops below. Many additional programs can be found [online](#).

Field Trip for All: Green and Growing Gardens

December 14, 11:00 am

(Kindergarten) Learn about plants, explore seasonal changes and investigate living and nonliving things in the soil. Use the senses to explore the gardens at [Green Spring Gardens](#). Dig in the dirt and plant some seeds to take home, too (SOL: Science K.4, K.6, K.7, K.9). The program runs from 11 a.m. to noon. The cost is \$6 per person. [Register Online](#).

Winter Lecture Series: 8 Essential Tips for a Deer-Resistant Garden

January 31, 1:30 pm

(Adults) Deer can turn a vibrant garden into a sea of chomped stems and damaged trees. Designer Karen Chapman offers 8 key solutions that go beyond pungent chemicals and unattractive fencing. This program will be offered virtually with an emailed link. Cost is \$10. [Register Online](#).

COMMUNITY STORIES

Support Deep Roots Farm

Deep Roots Farm is a woman owned and operated farm in Upper Marlboro, MD. They are planning expansion for the future of the farm! They plan to incorporate turkeys and ducks for Thanksgiving, hogs and cows into their CSA, and an orchard growing berries, figs, apples, plums, and peaches. Currently, they are raising money for a pole barn washing station as one of the first structures for the farm. For more information, visit their website: <https://deeprootsfarm.us>.

Their gofundme page is: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/Deep-Roots-Farm-wash-pack-station>

Inova Healthy Plate Club: Cooking Up Something New



In response to COVID-19, the Inova Healthy Plate Club (IHPC) has been cooking up something new! This fall, they have worked with community partners, public schools, and children of Inova Team Members to bring IHPC to kitchens across Northern Virginia. Nearly 50 students participated in their new, 4-week virtual program, where they received all ingredients to make the recipes along with IHPC. On Election Day, a pilot cook-a-long program, “Cooking with Veggies,” instructed students through making kale chips and cauliflower nuggets from start to finish. One 7th grader wrote, “I had such a great time!!! It was so fun and my family loved the Cauliflower Nuggets!”

If your school or organization works with students from lower income areas, and would like to reserve a spot on the winter 2021 schedule, please contact Kate.Garsson@inova.org.



MCCP and Culmore!

The MCCP Foundation continues to support and coordinate monthly meals at the Woodrow Wilson Library along with bags provided by Kaiser Permanente with masks, sanitizers, and other relevant tools for staying healthy. Thanks to Capital Area Food Bank, Food for Others and Giant Food who provide families with nutritious and culturally competent food. A very special thanks to the loyal volunteers who regularly support this important food distribution.

FRESHFARM Thanksgiving Food Drive a Big Success!

Every year FRESHFARM hosts a Thanksgiving food drive featuring FRESH ingredients from local farmers! FRESHFARM raises funds from customers to purchase Thanksgiving ingredients from our farmers which go to food banks to distribute or turn into meals. This year FRESHFARM raised over \$12,000 (our goal was \$10,000) for participating food pantries including Food for Others and Abiding Presence in Fairfax County! If you would still like to contribute or learn more [click here](#). Happy Thanksgiving!





Arcadia Route 1 Food Relief 2020

Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture's Outreach and Education Program came to a sudden halt as schools and Community Centers shut down due to the pandemic. They quickly understood that children and families around Richmond Highway would struggle to access food, especially fresh fruits and vegetables. Arcadia was able to shift their time and efforts to find different ways to offer fresh produce that could be safely and consistently delivered to families in this area.

Arcadia partnered with Neighborhood and Community Services at Gum Springs Community Center to distribute over 19,000 pounds of fresh produce for 27 weeks. Two thousand pounds of the produce was grown at Arcadia Farms. Fairfax County Health Department's Community Outreach Team connected them to community members who provided the manpower and distributed 500 shares of fresh food to families who were quarantined at home because of testing positive for COVID-19.

Food distribution expanded to include Stoney Brook Community and Rising Hope United Methodist Mission Church. Arcadia is also donating weekly shares of their CSA program to Bryant High School families.

Once schools were back in session, Arcadia assumed responsibility for two school gardens, turning them into food production (rather than educational) gardens. Working with volunteers and the school's outdoor educators, they've been growing food at Stratford Landing Elementary School and Hollin Meadows Elementary School. Since August, a total of 564 pounds of food from both schools was harvested and delivered to different food relief sites. Arcadia and Stratford Landing Elementary School also developed a "Share the Harvest" produce donation hub along the Route 1 corridor allowing gardeners in nearby neighborhoods to drop off excess produce at the school.

Arcadia's mission is to continue to expand urban agriculture in schools and community centers along Richmond Highway and help improve nutrition, food access and environmental stewardship.

Arcadia Bookworm Club for Elementary - Aged Kids

Happy New Year! Families with a 2021 goal to increase reading can consider joining [Farmer Ivy for a kids-only book club](#). Each month, Arcadians in grades 3 through 6 will read a pre-selected book that focuses on nature, the environment, or agriculture, and then gather together every week to discuss what they like and learn! To start off 2021, they are reading **The Thing About Luck** by Cynthia Kadohata.

Bookworms will meet virtually over Zoom on Tuesdays from 4:00-4:40 PM. January's meetings will start Tuesday, January 5th. Registration includes access to that month's Zoom meetings and online media.

Fees: \$10 for one month of weekly book club meetings. [Click HERE to sign up!](#)

Maximum: 12 Bookworms per month. If slots are filled, sign-ups are welcome for the following month.

SCHOOL GARDEN CORNER EVENTS

School Garden Support Organization (SGSO) Webinars

Winter Programming During COVID-19

December 16, 11:00am (PST)

As temperatures get colder and many school gardens are put to bed for the winter months, additional adjustments will likely be needed to continue providing garden- and food-based learning opportunities to students. In this Virtual Gathering we will share creative ideas for tackling winter programming during Covid-19 whether you're engaged in remote, hybrid, or in-person learning. [Register Online](#).

Designing Garden Education to Support English Language Learners

January 13, 11:00am (PST)

More information, coming soon. [Check back online](#).

MAKE IT HAPPEN: FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

KidsGardening.org Youth Garden Grant

Applications are being accepted from schools planning a new garden or expanding an existing garden. Selected schools will receive a small cash prize along with gardening tools and supplies. The deadline to apply is December 18, 2020. [Learn more and apply for the Youth Garden Grant](#).

FY2021 USDA Farm to School Grant Request for Applications (RFA) Now Available

The fiscal year (FY) 2021 Farm to School Grant Program RFA is now available through [grants.gov](#). Visit the [Grant Applicant Resources page](#) to access resources, including links to webinars that provide specific assistance on applying for a Farm to School Grant.



This information is provided by the Fairfax Food Council.

fairfaxcounty.gov/food-council

10777 Main Street

Fairfax, VA 22030



[@FairfaxFoodCouncil](#)

If you have something you would like to share in the next newsletter, please submit to ffcnewsletter@gmail.com by February 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.