

FRIENDSHIP FARMS & FARE
FARM REPORT & NEWSLETTER
FEBRUARY 24, 2014 - 21ST FARM & CSA REPORT

REPORT

68 degrees at 2:00 AM, February 22, 2014

Historical Average (2/20): 73 HIGH, 55 LOW—Weather Underground:

<http://www.wunderground.com/>

The historical average continues to creep upward. The current average is now two degrees higher than the average lowest average high, and three degrees higher than the lowest average low. The average will continue to increase through the rest of the winter months, into the spring and summer. It will reach the highest average high in early June (90 degrees) and remain there until early September.

Revision of Report, Missive, and Share List for 2013-2014

We will be temporarily assigning the weekly Farm Report to the archives. The full report will be available there each week until further notice.

From time to time we may have a special report or interlude on the Report Page, and you will find a link to the full Farm Report on that page each week.

Available share items will continue to be posted each week in the usual location on the site.

We will discontinue the Market Report for the time being.

Weather Report: Warm and Wet

Temperatures are bouncing around a bit. A cool front stalled over the area, which left us wet and warm. We were above 80 on Thursday, with 69 for the low. Average is 73 high, 55 low.

Garden Overview

Broccoli is now past peak. There are still plenty of maturing plants, and there should be for weeks to come. Septoria is present in all the larger tomato plants. These will be removed. Some of the younger plants show no signs of the fungus and are producing flowers. Lettuces are doing better than expected. Some arugula is beginning to flower. Spring is sweeping over the state.

Still only two of the grape vines have put out their first leaves.

Loquats Ripening

The loquat fruit continues to ripen, with increasing numbers each week. Squirrels have been enjoying fruit from the old tree in the south grove, so the harvest there will be down. The tree on the north property shows no signs of squirrel visitation.

Loquats are a wonderful (and largely unrecognized) harbinger of spring. Their first fruits appear in the depth of winter, and as the days lengthen and gradually warm, their bounty increases.

Tomatoes

The septoria has gotten the better of all the older plants. We are still harvesting tomatoes, and there are some available for the shares. The younger plants are showing no signs of septoria. We are treating them with the organic fungicide that worked so well earlier in the year. If you happen to read this far in the Report, ask for them, and we'll be sure to add one or two to your share.

Citrus Past Peak

We are now past peak of the Florida Citrus season. We still have some Old Florida (Duncan) Grapefruit on the ancient tree in the South Grove. This wonderful old specimen is probably as old as the trees in Bartlett's Forgotten Grove. It is also just as productive.

If you've never had genuine Florida citrus, try some this week.

Kumquats

Our kumquat harvest is now concluded. We had a very productive first year. We will continue to nourish the kumquat trees and all the citrus with ground and foliar fertilizer once a month.

Broccoli

Our first planting of broccoli is past peak. Last week we harvested 18 heads, which is a one-week record. So far this season, we've harvested close to 50 heads. Requests from shares are running strong, which is great. No one should hesitate to order broccoli right now. We are very pleased with the quality and quantity of our Calabrese 3F Gulf Coast Broccoli. It is one of the specialties of the farm.

As always, we'll include all parts of the plant – stems, leaves, and head. All parts are edible – delicious, really. Chop or slice the stems, juice up in a blender, sauté or stir-fry, add to soups or stews. The stems can be chopped or grated to make cole slaw.

The leaves may be an acquired taste for some, but many folks enjoy them just as they would any other dark leafy vegetable – their taste resembles collards. Give them a try, you might be pleasantly surprised with their flavor.

Some of the broccoli has started to flower, and some heads in the shares will have flowers. You will probably notice no difference in the taste – at most a very faint sweetness.

Over the course of the season we let quite a few heads to flower and seed for the sake of our companion bees.

European (Domestic/Honey) bees are in decline worldwide due to GMOs and neonicotinoids used in commercial agriculture, and found in most commercial foods. We are committed to doing all that we can to enhance their survival, and at this time of the year that means letting a large number of broccoli heads flower since the bees are especially attracted to those specific flowers. Every year, we count 100s of bees in the garden when the broccoli is blooming. We hope this is the case this year – and we did see a single bee at one of our broccoli bouquets.

Cauliflower

We are still waiting on our cauliflower, and there is now reason to consider the possibility that it may not fruit if Spring temperatures run above normal. Like broccoli, its cousin, the cauliflower thrives in cool to cold weather. Cauliflower prefers even cooler temperatures than broccoli.

Arugula

Arugula is this winter's champion vegetable. It has exceeded all expectations. We can offer ample quantities to all shares. We encourage you to try it steamed or in a stir fry. Try it mixed in with other winter greens. Of course, it is great in fresh green salads.

Cucumbers

Cucumbers have left the stage for the season. The Japanese variety we started two weeks ago is beginning to leaf out.

Sweet Potato Leaves

When the warmer weather returns, the old SP vines will quickly regenerate. We have placed our order for SP slips for Spring planting and the Summer growing season. We ordered 200 plants this year (100 Beauregards and 100 Georgia Jets), our most ambitious planting commitment ever.

Cadle's Cove Farm (a 3F Friendship Farm)

Awaiting word on Cadle's Cove Farm products.

Habanero Peppers

The Habaneros are still producing and available for shares. Be advised, **these peppers are very very hot**. They are so hot, that handling them after slicing can burn your fingers – as some of us have learned.

Although no one is requesting this one-of-a-kind peppers, we are going keep them on the list. There is a certain cheerfulness to be found in these healthy little shrubs with their bright orange fruit. If anyone has a relationship with a restaurant whose chefs want to use a local organic searing-hot pepper, we'll be happy to supply for a reasonable contribution.

Grape Vines: Leaf Buds

Still only two of our six grape vines have leaf-buds. We remain attentive.

Eggs: We have increased the cost of the eggs to \$5.00 (\$4.00 per share). Our supplier has now gone to a certified non-GMO scratch for his chickens, which is significantly more expensive than the uncertified scratch. As you know, we work with a humane farmer, practicing compassionate farming methods. Even better, now the eggs will be free of GMOs – at least we can affirm they are being produced by chickens that are consuming non-GMO scratch.

Herbs: We have a large quantity of cilantro, which appears to love the cold. Parsley and oregano are very robust. Consult the share list for available items.

Honey: Sorry to say, we have no honey. Hopefully our friend the beekeeper will have more soon. The loss of half his hives was a serious set back for him and for us – and most of all the bees, whose loss we grieve.

Tampa deliveries will be Wednesday this week, with a possibility of some deliveries on Monday. West Pasco deliveries will be determined on the basis of share request and distance, but no later than Thursday.

Anyone in the New Port Richey area can stop by on Sunday between 2:00 and 3:00 PM. Please call before coming by – 849-1626.

For this week, here is what we have (FCFS, as always):

THE SHARE

February 24, 2014 (21)

*** larger quantity available if desired**

**FCFS = limited supplies, early submissions given preference
Tampa Transmissions on Wednesday**

Vegetables

Arugula*

Broccoli, stem, leaves and head

Collards (small quantity) FCFS

Lettuce – assorted leaf lettuces (sm. bags)

(Ella Kropf, Winter Density, Baquieu, 3 Heart)

Lettuce – Tom Thumb (small bib lettuce, full head) (FCFS)

Peppers – Habanero* – very hot

Fruit –

Grapefruit* – Old Florida (Duncan, White) (From 3F First Farm grove)

Loquats – (first fruits) small share, if desired

Fungus (Mushrooms)

Nuts

Pecans (small quantity, equally distributed) FCFS

Roots

Herbs (* larger quantity available if desired)

Basil – not this cycle

Chives

Cilantro*

Dill – (small quantity)

Mint – Citrus (Orange) Mint (small quantity)

Oregano

Parsley

Purslane – (small quantity)

Rosemary*

Smilax (Cat Briar) (none at present)

Tarragon*

Thyme – (small quantity)

Seasonings

Bay Leaves – fresh leaves

Medicinal

Aloe*

COMPANION FAUNA

Winter report

Bat update: The bats journey forth on their evening hunts on warmer nights, unless there is rain.

Robins: A few local (over-winter) robins were observed in the neighborhood and at the farm this week. There are surely some large over-winter flocks in the area, but none were observed. The southern migration is now over.

We are expecting to see significant numbers very soon. We usually see some flocks by now. The northern migration has begun, and we should see large flocks very soon. Look for them yourself; they will generally be flying north in the higher sky. Here in New Port Richey, most flocks fly in a northeasterly direction.

If we do not see the large flocks by next week, they are either running very late, have taken an new route north, or something happened.

It is likely that our immediate area (New Port Richey) is a moderate southern migratory flyway, and a major northern flyway. Each year the southern flocks of Fall and early Winter are smaller than the northern flocks of late Winter and Spring.

Here is neat animated map on Robin migration patterns:

http://www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/galleries/2012/robin_first_an_spring2012.html

Hopefully robins will continue their migrations. Other migratory creatures are facing daunting challenges. Most notable right now are the Monarch Butterflies. See this ABC story on the plight of the migratory Monarchs due in part to "the displacement of the milkweed the species feeds on by genetically modified crops" -- <http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/monarch-butterflies-drop-migration-disappear-22283257>

Crows: Crows in several flocks and small groups overhead and in the vicinity of First Farm.

Great Horned Owl: No sight or sound of the local owl.

Opossum: Opossum not observed.

Big Brown Bat: The brown bat was not seen this week.

Swifts: No swifts observed. No sounds in the swift lodge. They have likely left us for the season.

Tree Frogs: No frogs this week

Leopard Frogs: The Leopard frog is again active. She has now left the pond on a few occasions, perching on the bank and watching intensely for prey.

Greenhouse Frogs: No greenhouse frogs.

Southern Toad: No toads.

Woodlouse – One observed.

Nocturnal Garden Spider – Several.

Bees: Several at broccoli bouquets, but fewer than usual.

Sweet bees: None

"Asian Tramp Snail." One,

Cats: Mr. Goldie now a regular. Little Kitty (the female) has become an indoor cat – lucky cat!

3F Stories, Events, and Policy Updates

Planting & Harvest Notes

Seeds: Lettuces, and trials of grapefruit seeds from Bartlett's Forgotten Grove.

Garden Starts: Kale – late season

Harvest Notes: assorted herbs, arugula, grapefruit, kumquats, broccoli, various lettuces, tomatoes.

Vermipost: none

Soil Test Results

Results of our annual soil test have been received from the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida. The test measures for phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, and calcium, and includes recommendations for additions of soil amenities to improve crop yield. Amenities are lime, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and magnesium. Soils from the Old North and New South gardens all registered high in phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, and calcium. This is typical for the gardens. No additional amenities were recommended (except for a little nitrogen in the south garden).

Friendship Farms and Fare Pursues Non-GMO and USDA Organic Certification

As a matter of policy, Friendship Farms and Fare opposes the use of GMOs in food. We are exploring Non-GMO certification for our First Farm in New Port Richey, and possibly Tarry Lane Kitchens. We have the application in hand, and will be submitting it in the near future. Of course, we have never used GMO seeds or products containing GMOs, so you can rest assured that even without the certification, everything we share is free of GMOs.

We have also taken the initial steps to secure USDA Organic certification. The cost for USDA assessment (with no guarantee of approval) will be between \$950 and \$1300 depending on how much of the 3F project we desire to have assessed. As with our non-GMO commitment, we are fully committed to organic farming.

First Farm to Initiate Community Garden Project at New South Garden

We are nearing the completion of preparation work for the community garden project. After consultation with local supporters and friends, we'll draw up final plans for commencement of the project.

If you are interested in acquiring a plot in the 3F community garden, please let us know. Fees and support expectation are yet to be determined, but all 3F shares will have the opportunity to participate for reduced rates.

We have installed sample community garden beds. Each is (108 sq feet) 12 x 9 or 18 x 6.

Farm and Fare Tours (Local Urban Gardens and Organic Kitchen)

If you would like to schedule a tour local urban gardens in New Port Richey and/or the 3F Kitchen (Tarry Lane Tasting Station), please let us know, and we can make arrangements. Our tours are experiential, informational, educational, and fun. Donations are greatly appreciated.

Typically, and depending on the season, participants visit several urban farms, learn about organic farming in an urban environment using permaculture philosophies and practices, observe and learn about urban wildlife and helpful plants, enjoy samples of live produce, and share in the preparation of the vegan cuisine. Tours are structured on the basis of participants' interests and background. We can also arrange focused learning sessions at the Gardens and/or the Kitchens.

Please note that an appropriate contribution for the tours and learning sessions will be suggested when tours are scheduled.

There are four categories of tours:

- * Urban Farming, Gardening and Soil development
- * Urban wildlife and helpful plants (note if you desire a bat observation, which requires special scheduling)
- * Vegan, Organic food preparation
- * General (including two or more categories)

Please note that an appropriate contribution for the tours and learning sessions will be suggested when tours are scheduled.

Next Workday – March (?)

Our next work day is tentatively slated for March, with a Saturday date to be determined. If you are interested in joining others for a work day in March, please send you preferred date(s).

We'll be extending the west bed in the South Garden, clearing debris from the old grove in the South Garden and preparing beds there, and most likely doing some Spring seeding and planting.

Loquat Festival

The tentative date for the festival has been changed in April 5, 2014. This may be a bit late, but other events in New Port Richey necessitate the change. We'll keep you posted.

Hopefully, we'll have information on his event very soon.

If you'd like to assist with the event, please let us know.

It is time (and well past time) that this hearty, healthy, delicious, and **abundant** fruit receive full recognition for the contribution it can make to the diet of Floridians – especially urbanites. As far as we can tell there are no Loquat Festivals. With your help, G&G will launch the first one – April 5, 2014. In meantime, add loquats to your CSA Share request.

3F: A Florida Friendly Farm

The 3 F gardens are certified as a "Florida Friendly" environment – a certification we have held for over a decade.

Florida Friendly recognition is given to environments (typically residential yards) that support and enhance natural ecosystems. Certification is given in three categories (bronze, silver, and gold) based on a point system rating various features of the property and practices followed by the property owner. We received a high score but only a silver rating because of some changes in the program of which we were unaware.

Attention is given to features such as water-retention, native and drought tolerant plants, diversity in plant species, responsible irrigation systems, and amenities for native pollinators. Positive practices include minimal use of fertilizers (with organic preferred) and little or no use of poisons, groundcovers rather than turf, composting, and rainwater collection systems.

We encourage all our members and friends to pursue Florida Friendly designation for their properties. It is a wonderful way to learn more about Florida's natural ecology and what you can do to create a healthy environment right where you live. It is also a great way to go green.

Folks who wonder what they can do be more environmentally responsible are encouraged to review the Florida Friendly checklist. If you can change even one thing about your yard or your landscape practices to bring it into agreement with the guidelines, you will have made a difference. Even if you do not apply for the designation, reviewing the criteria will be an enriching educational experience. Putting the guidelines into practice will make a definite difference. Here is the website for the program:

<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu/homeowners/recognitions.htm>

Seed Dealer License Ecology Florida/Friendship Farms & Fare S009451

3 F is now a licensed Seed Dealer. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services issues these licenses, which are required to sell seeds to the public. Through our friendship with Ecology Florida, we applied for the license as a subsidiary of Ecology Florida – a federally sanctioned Not For Profit organization. Want to buy some seeds? To explore the Ecology Florida project, see: <http://www.ecologyflorida.org/>

3F Produce for non-shareholders (if available): As always, non-CSA Members may request produce from the share list for \$5 per item. If requested items remain after shares have been distributed, they may be acquired by non-members. Just reply to this email if you desire anything on the list. We suggest non-shareholders start an account to cover costs of items.

Website Link: Please visit our website < <http://www.ffffsite.org> > for weekly newsletters, share details, recipes, educational texts and videos, special 3F Films, and community growing information. You will also have access to the new agrarian literary journal, *Bloom*.

Other News and Reports

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COMMERICAL PRODUCE REPORT

Our Commercial Produce News Report is currently in repose.
We will resume when time and talent allow.
If anyone would like to volunteer to collect market prices, please let us know.

OTHER PRODUCTS FOR THE CSA FAMILY

Non-Members may order shares for \$10 per week. For this nominal amount, the contributor is entitled to request any items they desire from the weekly Share. Although we will assist with transmissions, it is the responsibility of the contributor to make arrangements for pick up of the share.

Diatomaceous Earth: We now have access to a diatomaceous earth, a real “up-and-comer” in the organic farming community. It is also getting good press in healthy living communities -- even among many “foodies.” If you know about this mineral, and would like to acquire it from your CSA, just let us know.

EGGS. Prices are \$5.00 a dozen (\$4.00 for shares), and \$3.00 a half-dozen (\$2.50 for shares). These prices are competitive with prices for organic eggs at commercial grocers. As required by our policies, our supplier is local, follows organic principles, practices compassionate husbandry, and allows chickens free range. If you would like to be included on the egg list, please start an account (\$20 suggested), and make requests accordingly.

Eggs are from humanely treated chickens, and fed non-GMO feed.

Honey: Honey is in hiatus for now.

Seeds: If you would like organic vegetable seeds for your garden, we will order them for you. Seed packs are \$4.00 each, 2 for \$7.00, and 5 for \$14.00.

Seedlings: We are also happy to start plants for you. Just give us the word on the plants you want us to start, and we'll do the rest. Starter plants in cells are \$1.50 per plant (\$1, for shares), \$5.00 (\$4) for four, \$8.00 (\$7.00) for nine. When available, small plants are \$3.00 (\$2.40) each, and medium plants are \$5.00 (\$4).

Let us know if you want to acquire seeds or starts.

We have cucumbers starts.

Trees: Young Loquat trees are available in small (half-gallon) and medium (gallon) pots - \$5.00 (\$4.00 for shareholders). \$10.00 (\$8.00) for two-gallon pots.

Vermipost and Worms: For folks interested in organic gardening, we have the best all-natural soil amenities you can find: Vermipost and Worms! Vermipost is compost that has been broken down and enriched by Red Worms. We also have the worms themselves. **Vermipost** is available in 32 oz containers for \$2.50 each (\$2.00 for shareholders), with discounts for orders of five or more. Vermipost containers will most likely have some worms in the mix. We recommend mixing the vermipost 1 to 1 with regular soil, and 1 to 3 or 4 with organic soil. Remember, if you use

synthetic chemicals (such as fertilizers or pesticides), the vermipost will be compromised. Pesticides will kill the worms and synthetic fertilizers will kill the worms or drive them away.

Worms are available in 32 oz containers for \$7.50 (\$6 for shareholders). We cannot specify the exact number of worms in a container, but there should be 30-50. By the way, if you are developing an organic garden, always look for the OMRI seal of approval on fertilizers, soils, and insect deterrents.

Seeds: Shareholders are entitled to seeds from our seed bank – three types of okra and our famous Calabrese broccoli. Our seeds are organic and derived from heirloom stock. They are listed with Seed Savers Exchange, and also available at the New Port Richey Library Seed Exchange. Let us know if you are interested – additional packages of seeds for \$4.00 (\$3.20) a packet (of 30). We cannot guarantee germination, but in our tests germination rates are close to 100%.

Florida Central West Coast acclimated Okra Seeds offered by 3F are: Silver Queen, Star of David, Red Burgundy, and Hill Country Red.

Local Markets and Growers' Sites Open to the Public Endorsed by Friendship Farms & Fare

Market Off Main: We encourage members of the TBN G&G CSA to patronize the Market Off Main in New Port Richey, and other local produce markets. They often have organics, usually have local produce, are locally owned, and are now a distributor of Cow Pots. Here is their website: <http://www.marketoffmain.com/>

Tasty Tuesdays: Visit the New Port Richey Library Tuesday (10:00 AM – 1:00 PM) for a good selection of locally grown organic vegetables. [New Port Richey Public Library, 5939 Main St, New Port Richey, FL](#)

Suncoast Co-Op Market: On Saturday mornings, visit the Suncoast Co-Op locally-grown organic produce. See the Market in New Port Richey at the West Pasco Habitat for Humanity: Saturdays Noon- 2pm 4131 Madison Street New Port Richey, FL 34652.

Freedom House Farms: Open to visitors on Saturday afternoons. Featuring freshly harvested produce available for purchase. 5642 Virginia Ave., New Port Richey

First Farm: Receptive to visitors on Sunday afternoons. Featuring seeds, seedlings, Loquat trees, and select produce in season. Call for appointment afternoons or evenings: (727) 849-1626. New Port Richey.

To Return to our website, go to: < <http://www.ffffsite.org> >

**Friendship Farms & Fare
An Urban Farm Community, CSA, and Organic Wholefoods Kitchen**

Friendship Farms & Fare Community

Cadle's Cove Farm

Freedom House Farm

Friendship Farms & Fare: First Farm

Seeds of Love Organic Farm

Tarry Lane Tasting Station

February 24, 2014 – 21st report for the 2013-2014 Garden Year

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