

Garden Committee Report

April 2022

General Comments

Last month's report ended with this comment "Now that this report is done, where'd I put my fishing pole?" Sometimes you go fishing. Sometimes you go catching.

I went fishing.

Weather Report

The weather this month, by and large, has been really nice. Mostly cool in the mornings, warms up nicely during the day. Had a few hot days. Hope that's not a sign of an early summer, or a particularly hot summer. The veggies love it though. People who come out one Saturday, then again two weeks later, raise their eyebrows when they see the growth.

If I had a complaint about the weather, it's been the wind. Don't get me wrong, I like the air movement. I've been trying to paint the trim on the command center for a month now. I've had two mornings where I felt I could paint and not have it dry on the brush before I had a chance to apply it. Yesterday it was blowing so hard the dyno dirt was blowing off the piles. Sheesh! It doesn't help our overhead watering either. The circle water pattern turns into some distorted oblique, and it's not a very wet oblique. Makes hand watering, especially the edges, important.

Projects

Weed Control: Not to bring up a sore subject first but the weeds are a poppin'. Its almost a daily task to keep them under control. It's a big Saturday chore, but lots of hands make light work. Hope the volunteers keep coming, cause if they don't, it's gonna get real bad real quick. I tell 'em that the weed seed bank is getting lower, but as I walk around, I'm not so sure I believe me as much as I'd like to.

Raised Beds: Since the last report, Denton Presbyterian and the Modern Woodsman (think I got that right) came out and built six more raised beds, three each at the south end of Fields 1 and 2. Pat organized the event. Thanks Pat! Result No. 1 – more growing space. Result No. 2 – new record for Shiloh Field, six beds in one day. Nice, real nice.

The GAP guys from Denton Bible Church came shortly thereafter and filled them. They're now ready to plant. Hmmm, maybe green beans... with the Earthway seeder... right after the rain.





Field 2 North In-Ground Beds: Got a start in planting here. Planted 3 beds of yellow squash, skipped 6, then planted 3 beds of zucchini squash, then skipped 6 more again. Why skip six, you ask? Going to wait a few weeks, plant three more each, then wait again before planting the last three each. This way, at least in theory, when three start to decline, we can replace them and still have six more in production. That's 1,800 feet of squash. That's going to be a lot of squash. But after last year, I'm going to add the word – hopefully!

Also got to start building the in-ground beds in the triangle North of the 100' field block.

Got a few more beds to create, and Field 2 will be complete, as per current plans. Install drip and... okra patch, here we come.



Tunnel No. 1: We're transitioning Tunnel No. 1 from spring greens to cucurbits. MiniMe and Manny miniature cukes. Michael wanted to reserve one row for bitter melons. Yuck, bitter melons. The vegetable from h-e-double hockey sticks. But some people love them. Must be like coffee, lots of doctoring for flavor, and lots of practice developing that taste for it.



Tunnel No. 2: This year this tunnel is our tomato tunnel. It's trellised, planted, ready to go. Needs some time, care, fertilizations, then those little red orbs... As I took this picture, I noticed that they've doubled in size since we planted them a couple weeks ago. Grow babies, grow!



Timer Boxes: Progress is being made. Some of the timers are raised. This is a John and Finn project, and I usually have a project or two that raise their ugly heads during the week that demands their attention first. But each Saturday we make a little progress. I had to adjust a few timers during the month. It sure was nice to not have to bend to the ground to do it.

Command Center: The trim is mostly painted with the first coat. Going to need a second. Given the wind, I may not get it done until a high-pressure dome settles over us and stifles this wind. Then I get to fight the heat and the paint just simply baking on the brush. It'll get done, and it's looking good!



Virtual Garden Tour

Had a thought. New section title here.

Onion Planting: People see all the onions – lots of onions. Raises a few eyebrows when we tell them just how many. Some have a good head start on bulbing.



Potatoes: Taters are up, looking good, and blooming. I read, and I'm told, they are setting taters now. Got to hill them too. Got to keep up on the fertilizing and watering. Dean saw some Colorado potato beetles yesterday. Time to start a spray regimen. Trying organic – Neem Oil!



Carrots: The carrots that looked like this last month... now look much more like they're ready to harvest. Not yet though, but close. We've been feeding them some Epsom salt. Been told the magnesium helps plants set sugars. Tasted one a couple weeks afterward to see if it works. It does!



Got more backing them up.



This is last month...



...this is now.

Last month I told you that we'd be planting six more beds of carrots. This month I'm not so happy to tell you that we still have those six beds to plant. Most days it's been too windy to plant them without those very tiny seeds blowing all over the garden. I'll get them in the ground soon – and here's that "hopefully" again.

Tomatoes: Two months ago I told you that our tomato seeds had been planted. Last month I said that we didn't have a very good germination rate in the nursery. That Mr. and Mrs. Mills (plot gardeners) planted a bunch, so did Michael – that "We'll not be short on tomato plants."

Well, that turned out to be prophetic. We're "long" on tomato plants. Tim planted tomatoes in Tunnel No. 2, then approached me with this question "Where are we going to plant all the rest of these tomatoes?" He did an inventory for me and we had:

54 Early Girl – Indeterminate
 90 Better Boy – Indeterminate
 120 Celebrity – Determinate
 161 BHN 602 – Determinate
384 Roma – Determinate
 639 Total

Turns out Michael is planting a lot of those Roma tomatoes in Field 4 where he'd plowed up an area to prepare for some stuff he wanted to plant. A lot will go into the Field 1 field block, more in the Field 2 field block. Got more to figure out where to plant.

Why did I tell you this? Because there's this guy, Johnny Henry, who runs his church garden in Flower Mound, I think. He's a 75 year old-ish gardener who stops in to "check us out" every few weeks when life brings him close enough. Nice guy. He'd come up recently to negotiate some tomatoes from Dennis' Farm Store. Dean reminded me of this. "Ooh, good idea!" said I. Made a phone call. He came up the next day. Gave him some tomatoes, and a bunch of cucumbers. He was all teeth. You could see that smile from a mile away. The glow in the sky faded like the setting sun as he drove back to his garden. That was probably the highlight of the month for me. But I still have to figure out what to do with the couple hundred tomato plants that are left.

Sugar Snap Peas:

Last month...



Now they look like this, and are putting on pods. Tasted one the other day - sweet goodness. They call them sugar snaps for a reason.

Peppers: They are large enough to start transplanting. Michael put a bunch he'd grown out in "his area" in Field 4. Time to get the raised beds they're going in ready to receive them.

Nursery:

Last month...



...this month.

We're getting them out into the field as we can.

Missed Opportunities: Yesterday I made a mental note, and today I went and took some pictures for this report. Several of us came up with this plan for planting greens this spring, and to make sure we had beds available for summer crops when they needed to be planted. The plan got executed. Then one of those someones planted even more beds of “Asian Mustard”.



“Asian Mustard” is a term for a broad range of plants, more of a category than a name of a plant. It’s a good looking veggie. But we didn’t know how it grew, how to tell if it was ready to harvest or not. We knew it was getting close. Then boom! They bolted, almost overnight. Same with some of the planned Mizuna Mustard. As many as five beds of greens were allowed to bolt and not get to hungry people. I gestimate we’re going to feed to the chickens, or the compost pile, well over 1,000 lbs., maybe over 2,000 lbs., of food.



So, what’s the takeaways here? First, work the plan. Second, communicate, listen and understand. Third, variety names are important. Forth, harvest it and get it delivered, hungry people are counting on us. Fifth, this shouldn’t happen here at Shiloh Field - ever.

Show and Tell

Had another thought, another section title when appropriate.

Sometimes, while walking the garden with folks, someone will ask me “What is this?” It’s a (fill in the blank).” “What variety?” “I don’t know.” Had a visit from a local square-foot gardener. He recommended solution: Kinkaid Plant Markers, Savannah, Mo. and Brother P-Touch Labeler. The marker is stainless steel. The white strip is a magnetic strip. The label is on the magnetic strip, which can be easily removed, replaced, and stored on the side of the filing cabinet until next time. Me likes, a lot.



Volunteer Report

January 01 to April 30, 2021		
MONTH	HOURS	# Vol.
JANUARY 2021	1101.25	392
FEBRUARY 2021	682.0	239
MARCH 2021	1359.5	462
APRIL 2021	961.0	340
TOTALS:	4103.75	1433

January 01 to April 23, 2022		
MONTH	HOURS	# Vol.
JANUARY 2022	701.75	254
FEBRUARY 2022	756.75	295
MARCH 2022	1583.75	594
APRIL 2022	1448.50	564
TOTALS:	4490.8	1707

109% 119%

What a difference a month makes. Once the weather started to turn nice, people started coming out in droves on Saturdays. Every Saturday since our last report, wave after wave of people arrive at the garden to soak up some sun, and work at the garden. We're now in positive territory again, when compared to last year.

- March 26th – 91 Volunteers
- April 2nd – 49 Volunteers
- April 9th – 123 Volunteers
- April 16th – 33 Volunteers
- April 23rd – 65 Volunteers

April 9th was a high water mark for Shiloh Field. Dean says that's the most people we've ever had on one day. I'm really glad we had some extra help those days to manage the people. Nancy was there as this was UNT's "The Big Event", and at Shiloh Field it was big, real big. Paul, one of our permateers, happened in, and he got promoted to a management position for the day real quick. **A lot** of work got done that day!

Now don't get me wrong, I appreciate the help. However, 123 people is a lot of people to manage, and even with Nancy and Paul. That wasn't near enough management to manage that crowd of people. Unfortunately, there was a lot of people standing around waiting, to sign in, for instruction of what to do, for tools to become available, to get a drink, to sign out, etc. We're not set up for that many volunteers. I hope we didn't look too disorganized, too unprepared, that we didn't waste people's time, that they had a good time. There were a lot of newbies to Shiloh Field, and I hope they didn't leave with a bad impression. We probably need to limit Signup Genius to 40 people on any given day.

As the Garden Administrator, I think the best number for a Saturday is the April 23rd number – 65. Not too many to manage, get lots done, tools available, not too much standing around. Yep, that's a good number. Forty from Signup, and twenty or so for our walk-up regulars.

Harvest Report

January 01 to April 30, 2021		
MONTH	HARVEST TOTALS	EGGS:
JANUARY 2021	725.0	63
FEBRUARY 2021	513.5	66
MARCH 2021	1426.5	223
APRIL 2021	3644.0	183
TOTALS:	6309.0	535

January 01 to April 23, 2022		
MONTH	HARVEST TOTALS	EGGS:
JANUARY 2022	831.0	*****
FEBRUARY 2022	0.0	*****
MARCH 2022	1231.0	295
APRIL 2022	1450.50	*****
TOTALS:	3512.50	727

56% 136%

Jerry's doing nicely with his chickens. He's got a nice increase over last year, and we aren't including April's numbers yet. Good job Jerry!

There's the harvest number for April, so far. The month isn't over yet, but it isn't going to dramatically change. Especially while we terminate those five beds of greens and feed them to the chickens or the compost piles.

Here's the breakdown by veg. year-to-date.

PRODUCE	YEAR to DATE 2021	YEAR to DATE 2022
Asparagus	9.00	0.00
Beets	318.50	116.00
Bok Choy	6.00	130.50
Broccoli	86.25	0.00
Broccoli, Romanesco	21.50	0.00
Cabbage	251.00	0.00
Cabbage, Asian	553.00	424.50
Cabbage, Napa	0.00	64.00
Carrots	1,678.00	651.00
Cauliflower	59.25	0.00
Chard	110.00	0.00
Collard Greens	451.25	0.00
Leeks	24.00	0.00
Lettuce Butterhead	195.00	124.75
Lettuce Mix	377.00	0.00
Lettuce Romaine	711.00	380.00
Mustard	514.25	0.00
Mustard, Asian	0.00	301.50
Mustard, Florida Broadleaf	0.00	582.25
Mustard, Mizuna	0.00	105.25
Onions, Bunching	231.50	0.00
Onions, 1015	204.00	0.00
Pok Choy	0.00	97.75
Radish, French Breakfast	490.00	535.00
Spinach	8.00	0.00
Turnips, Purple Top	10.50	0.00
Harvest Totals:	6,309.00	3,512.50

So, what do I read between the lines?

Asparagus is on its way out. We'll have to replant if we wish to continue. As I said last month, the cold got to nursery starts this year. We do garden, and it is affected by the weather. Lots didn't germinate well, if at all. Having a nursery is nice, but better climate control in the nursery is a must for it to work as efficiently as it could. By climate control, I mean heat, powered ventilation, and shade cloth. Lastly, actually harvesting what is harvestable would also be nice. We need to work harder at getting weekday volunteers, especially (but not only) for harvest days.

Grant Report

I'd normally allow this to be discussed by other members of the board, but...

Julie sent out an email about this grant coming available from Kubota. Five \$100,000 grants in a national offering (business must be good!). Then they'll post the five winners on their website and invite people to vote for their favorite. The winner of that wins a second \$100,000. I'd watched a portion of the video of last year's winner and thought we had just as much a chance to win as they did, maybe better.

So, when we only got a quarter of what we asked for with regard to the cooler from another grant, Pat looked at me "What do we do now?" "Let's give Kubota a try" said I. Two weeks later, we submitted a grant request for two grow tunnels, no, *greenhouses*, with the balance going to the cooler.

By greenhouses, I mean higher grow tunnels to get the heat away from the plants, and powered. Fully enclosed with plastic and insect netting to keep out wind borne weed seeds and pests. Polycarbonate endwalls and kick boards all around, to keep out rabbits, mice and voles. Automatic programmed roll-up sides, powered ventilation, propane heat. Shade cloth to protect against the hot Texas sun. And potentially four of them, two for tomatoes, one for cukes, and one for peppers/eggplant.

As my dad would say in land development, if you throw enough mud at the wall, eventually some of it sticks. We'll see. If we were to "win" both of them, four greenhouses and a cooler... WOW! I could then brag on God making a 5-10 year plan happen in just three! WOW again!

Visitation Report

Another new category for the reports, when applicable.

Wichita Falls Garden: Had some visitors at the garden beside the volunteers this month. I'd sent out a Garden Committee Report – Short earlier this month. I copy it here to capture it in this report for posterity's sake.

Take a knee, got something to share with ya...

Shiloh Field had some visitors today. There's a group of folks who want to create a community garden in Wichita Falls. In doing their research, they found out about Shiloh Field, saw our website, and contacted Pat about scheduling a visit. They came this morning.

Pat kicked off the meeting about 8:00 am, and I entered the conversation about 8:15. They came, wide eyed, ears open, wanted to hear, see... take it all in. And by all, I mean all. We talked about history, we talked about methods, we talked about why we did this, and how we did that. I showed 'em raised beds, in-ground beds, trellis systems, tunnels, irrigation, the way we do our blackberries, we talked about storage, the nursery, planting methods, weed control, organic vs. not organic, taking care of volunteers, the command center. We discussed the difference between production vs. productivity. Doug the tool guy gave them a run down on almost all our tools. I talked, they asked questions, then I talked some more... till a little after 11:00! I don't know what time he did, but Pat buggered out of

there at some point. Good for him, he's got other things to worry about/do.

I think they had a real good time. They certainly learned a lot. I certainly talked a lot. I think we got them headed down a better path. Gave them something to consider/think about. I think they got some of their priorities straightened out too. I got invited to come up some time. "Will do." said I. "I've got a son up there, and three grandkids." Now I got more reasons to go up there.

Just got off the phone with Elaine. She asked "What's wrong?" "Nothing." "You sound like you're getting sick." "No, just talked a lot." Did I mention that I do mean a lot.

Great time! Thanks Pat, for arranging it.

News is gettin' 'round!

I'll say "News is gettin' 'round!", turns out that isn't the only visit we had this month.

OLLI Visit and Garden Tour: If you all remember, our former board member, Cindy Helm, had committed to host this group out at Shiloh Field. And host (actually hostess) she did! They came out, we gave them a tour, had a great time telling them fantastic stories about how God's hand has favorably placed upon Shiloh Field, what the place was, how it's changed, what God had allowed us to accomplish, showed them a great tool or two. In all, both Cindy and I had a great time. I think the OLLI folks did too, they sure smiled a lot. When all was said and done, as they were walking back to their cars, they were just a yakin' and pointing. Yeah, they had fun.

DISD Environmental Education Program: Denton Parks Department came out for a visit to talk about their program. Result? Need to get all parties together, meaning with DISD also.

Beforehand, I was a little concerned about this meeting. Now I'm even more concerned. In the original email blast about it, it said "...where every third grader in DISD would learn about gardening using a structured curriculum DISD would develop and then come for a field trip to Shiloh." gave me the impression that DISD was going to put together a curriculum, teach the kids, and then come out to Shiloh Garden for a field trip, and any presence from Shiloh Field (me) would be ancillary, at best. However, discussion during the meeting was all about Shiloh and the master gardeners putting together a program, create a demonstration garden, and master gardeners and I would present to all the students that came out from DISD. Given how few master gardeners come to Shiloh Field to volunteer, I'm left wondering how much of this is going to get dumped in my lap.

If the momentum of this program doesn't shift back to DISD, this program is going on my To-Be-Nixed-List. I don't have the capacity, or inclination, to do this.

Strong Community Farm: Deborah is from what we'd all know as the Sanger farm, the one Julie has told us about. She and Matt ultimately came down for another visit to discuss their garden, what tools they might want/need, where I buy stuff, what they should do, how to go about doing it, etc. It was a nice

visit. We talked, then talked some more. They asked questions, sometimes I answered them, sometimes I responded with a question. I think they concluded that they need to hire a full-time... garden manager, if you will.

They asked if I had some extra capacity to come out and volunteer there. I said no, not really. I have plenty to do here.

Then they asked me how many hours I worked at the garden. Told them I'm at the garden five days a week, 7:30ish to 1:00 or later. However, that's not the whole picture. Most days I start at 5:30 am looking at my email, scanning receipts, shopping online, research, etc., and after I leave the garden, I run errands for the garden, type up Garden Committee Reports, more emails, return phone calls and stop at 7:00 pm., sometimes (not infrequently) more like 8:30 pm.

Then they asked me if I knew anyone who could be their garden manager. I responded if I did, I'd have hired them already. Got a good laugh.

Then they offered me a job.

Final Comments

Well, springtime is in full swing. Things are growing fast. Time to direct seed summer crops (already begun). Pretty soon it's full-bore harvest time!

Cheers,

Doug