

# Garden Committee Report

## February 2023

Its February, it's been cold. It's been rainy. It's been cold and rainy. We had the better part of a week of sleet and snow. I've been asked several times "Did it kill the garden?"

Nope, not a thing. In fact, the garden grew. Let's have a look...

### Projects

It's been a relatively slow month for projects. The weather has put a damper on any big projects, so we've been concentrating on smaller, quicker things.

- We've built an apparatus to set on top of one of our gorilla carts to use the sifter out next to the compost pile. That way we don't have to haul the compost pile into the nursery to sift it and risk spilling dirt onto our gravel floor. We've also painted the sifter apparatus to protect it from the sun and weather.
- We've replaced some warping wood on the dump trailer to make it look and perform better.
- Historically, we've used one of our small trailers as the trash trailer, and its been a real eyesore for years. So we hauled the trash off and cleaned up the area again. Hopefully this time for the last time. It looks much better. Compliments all 'round.
- We had an irrigation break during the weekend during the month, and we're trying to dig it up and fix it. But it's been difficult with all the rain and cold. Maybe someday we'll get a little warmer and drier weather. Turns out the water line pulled out of a coupling. This line is somewhat at a weird angle, and there's some... unorthodox (yeah, that word will work here) routing and joints. We're trying to dig it up and replace it with some more flexible pex pipe. Maybe this week we can get to it.

Nothing to write home about, but just making you aware.

KinseyAg: Got the test results back. Of the NPK major nutrients, we have way too much P and K. Looks like nitrogen only fertilizer for a while, probably a long while. We also have some micronutrients to add. I have Greg working on a plan.

### Virtual Garden Tour

With the cold and the rain, we've not planted much in the outside garden until just recently. The cold nights don't allow much growth in the nursery to get the transplants to size enough to survive outside. Then it's just not much fun to transplant into the mud. Hands get cold real fast. However, that changed on Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Cabbage: We have two plantings of cabbage. The oldest, and most mature, is in the two tunnels. See the photo below (lettuce) to see the cabbage. We have a succession planting (pictured here) as of Saturday.



Broccoli and Cauliflower: We finally got them up enough in the nursery to get them planted in some beds. Hopefully the weather will cooperate. For pic, see representation above.



Snow (Early) Peas: We liked our hoop trellis's so much that we built a third. Last year we had four rows of snow peas, this year it's six. They've been slow sprouting, but now that the weather has warmed a little, they are pushing through and up. They'll be blooming before long.

Romaine: Michael, one of my permateers, tried romaine lettuce with 2" chains and the paperpot transplanter. Right now it looks like he had some pretty good results. Time will tell. IF, and that's a big two letter word, if he got 100% germination (and he didn't), I calculate he planted 4,560 plants Saturday morning. Didn't note how long it took, but rest assured, it took a lot less time and effort than if it had been done by hand.



Spinach: Michael was asked by the kitchen manager of Our Daily Bread if we could/would grow some spinach. So, Michael planted three beds of Giant Noble Spinach. Not much to look at now, but we'll walk this path together and see how it turns out.



Lettuce: We've been harvesting Salanova lettuce heads. These two beds were finished recently, and a few days later, flipped and replanted as we had some succession plantings in the nursery. Nice! That's the way you do it!



Carrots: We've been harvesting carrots this month. We've finished harvesting seven beds of Bolero carrots. I've not been too excited over the Boleros, but we have seed, and we'll finish them out. Then I think we'll do Napoli carrots exclusively. What's wrong with the Bolero? Not much really, the seed is much larger and our seed roller for the Jang doesn't work well with it. It's the recommended roller, but everything just works out much better with the Napoli carrots. Napoli carrots allow more seeds in tighter spacings, which equals more carrots.

The carrots this year, though, are simply outstanding. They're sweet, juicy, tender, just a pleasure to pull one, wash it, and chug it down. Got more to say about them in the Visitation Report.

Radish: Had some problems seeding with the Jang last month. Got the right roller and reseeded. Works much better now. One bed each of two varieties.



Onions: We've been chipping away at the onion planting. Many hands make light work, so they say, so we've been doing it mostly on Saturdays. Mostly toward the latter part of the day so the sun could thaw the soil surface and make it workable. We planted, then planted some more, then "Oh, there's some more onions to plant!" Kind of reminded me of the Rocky Horror Picture Show – "Onions again!" Yes, that dates me, and I probably shouldn't have admitted seeing that flick decades ago. But the sentiment is apropos...

So last month I told you we're headed for 20,000 onions. They're all in. The benefit of the grider, and even consistent plant spacing, is that you can break out a calculator and find out how many onions you've planted. Over 23,000. That's a bunch of onions!



Nursery: We've got a bunch of stuff planted in the nursery. Napa cabbage, a bunch more lettuce, and I don't know what all (didn't inventory against what got planted Saturday, yet). Going to be a bunch more soon, too. Give it a week or two and we'll be transplanting again.

### Volunteer Report

January 01 to February 28, 2022		
MONTH	HOURS	# Vol.
JANUARY 2022	701.75	254
FEBRUARY 2022	756.8	295
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>1458.5</b>	<b>549</b>

January 01 to February 16, 2023		
MONTH	HOURS	# Vol.
JANUARY 2023	799.75	371
FEBRUARY 2023	426.3	183
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>1226.00</b>	<b>554</b>

84%                      101%

The volunteer hours are down a bit, not surprising with the rain and the cold. But the number of volunteers is slightly up, they just don't stay as long, nor is there as much to do, when it's cold and wet. There have been a couple of days this month that we sent the volunteers home as the ground surface was frozen and no sunshine to thaw it out in a reasonable time.



This is Bruce (one of our key permateers) and Greg. Bruce is... no, was, a pilot. His son got him the sign that he proudly displays when he reached his mandatory retirement age. "RETIRED, Don't want to,

Don't need to, Can't make me." We all got a good laugh, mostly at the airline, cause their loss is definitely our gain!

### Harvest and Delivery Report

January 01 to February 28, 2022		
MONTH	HARVEST TOTALS	EGGS
JANUARY 2022	831	206
FEBRUARY 2022	0.0	222
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>831.0</b>	<b>428</b>

January 01 to February 16, 2023		
MONTH	HARVEST TOTALS	EGGS
JANUARY 2023	40.25	247
FEBRUARY 2023	630.5	*****
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>670.75</b>	<b>247</b>

81%

58%

January 01 to February 16, 2023		
PRODUCE	YTD 2022	YTD 2023
Beets	116.00	0.00
Cabbage, Napa	64.00	0.00
Carrots	651.00	209.50
Lettuce, Salanova	0.00	461.25
<b>Harvest Totals:</b>	<b>831.00</b>	<b>670.75</b>

As you can see, we've been harvesting Salanova lettuce heads out of Tunnel No. 1, and carrots out of the raised beds. A full bin of lettuce heads weight about 8 lbs. So, as you can tell, we've been harvesting a lot of lettuce, it just doesn't weigh much. Lots of food, not many pounds. Everything else is simply growing on.

### Visitation Report



Wow, have we had visitors! Lots of groups, too many to tell all, and I couldn't as they didn't get recorded. One group in particular stood out. Not necessarily for the group, but their kids.

The Denton Rotary had a volunteer day. Lots of good work got done by the Rotary. Some Rotarians brought their kids. Kids? Oh yeah, and Dean had a plan. Dean had the parents out in Fields 3 and 4 with trash bags. Lots of trash bags. Then had the kids getting the torn-up ground cloth and destroyed drip tape (mowed with the brush-hog). They all bagged, and Dean toted it up to the barn (for taking to the dumpster). Dean's plan? "Okay kids, you get the trash picked up. And when you're finished, we're harvesting carrots!"





So, to the carrots they went. Harvested two bins, as that's what we could deliver. You can see the two bins in this photo. "Can we have some?" Sure! They ate, and they ate, and... well, you get the picture. They ate three-quarters of what they harvested in minutes. Delivery, not so much, but I consider it a quality investment in the future of gardening.

## It's May in February

Forrest Gump thought life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get. Sometimes, I feel life is like a jigsaw puzzle. Over time, you're dealt pieces to the puzzle, you get to put it all together, but you don't have the lid as a guide as to what the finished product should/would/could look like. The May in February title is a reference to what "May" happen this month, and over the next year or two.

The Field of Dreams are some of those pieces of the puzzle. A real quick review is bringing power, a "real" nursery or propagation house (or "Prop House"), a cooler, greenhouses, shade, rainwater harvesting, 2" water meter and maybe a well.

**Power:** I've made little progress, and I've potentially made lots of progress. Huh? Let me explain. I've made a little progress on the power plans I've reported on in the past. By way of review, DME says our portion of the cost share on the project is \$50,000 plus what we have to do, which is install the power poles, run power up to the two tunnels, and get whatever structures we need power to, wired. I think this initial outlay is going to be in the neighborhood of more than \$60,000. Then we get the privilege of paying a monthly electricity bill.

A short tribute to Nancy. More than once she's mentioned, "Have you thought about solar?" Yeah, I've thought about it, but that's about it. So, she patiently waited on me to potentially come around. Sooooo... during one of these rainy days over the last month, I spent some down time watching some gardening YouTube videos. Something I like to do from time to time. Then one offering of a Curtis Stone video on solar came up. It was 30 seconds long, so I watched it. Upon it's ending, I was sitting there pondering when... another video started. This was a 50-minute video featuring his whole solar setup. He's off-grid on his 30-acre property up in the mountains of western Canada.

Now, let me pause here and say had the 50-minute video came up first, I'd have skipped right over it.

But I watched the video, he was very frank, explained not only what he did, but why he did it. Real interesting, it was. Toward the end he started answering the most frequent questions about his system, and eventually he got to how much it cost. He was quick to say that his system was "way over the top" and "overdone" and "much more than the average system." Okay, okay, how much was it? I get the impression he installed it about a year or two ago, so it was likely before all this recent inflation. But all in, including installation by electricians, was \$135,000 Canadian dollars. That's about \$100,000 USD, or so he claimed. That would power his cabin, his future home, his garage/shop, several greenhouses, and extras. Plus, it was expandable.

I gotta talk to Nancy, I thought. And I did. She was pumped. She's looking into the preliminaries.

Then a few days ago, I saw another Curtis Stone solar video. It was to answer lots of questions he'd received about his solar video. To summarize a long story in a few sentences, here in Texas we wouldn't need near his system cause our winter days are much longer than his. Also, we don't get near as cold.

So, here's where I'm, right now. *IF* we've got to spend \$60K or more to get electricity, and one option has a reoccurring monthly electricity bill, and one doesn't, I'm going for the one that doesn't. Plus, hopefully there's lots of grant monies out there to help finance the solar that wouldn't be there for the grid hookup. Then, there's the bennies of green power at a green farm growing green food... it just goes on and on. If this happens, there won't be any more Gilligan tours, as they'll be four hours long by then.

So, we're taking a hard look at it.

**Greenhouses:** So, a few Saturdays ago, Pat Smith walked up to me and dropped a plastic tote at my feet. When I looked up, he had a big grin. "I finally found the shirts!" Sweet!, said I. "You got a minute, Pat?" Yep. So, I told him about the opportunity we discussed in our last meeting. We've got an opportunity to purchase three greenhouses for \$5,000 each. "You got any angles on funding that, Pat?" "I'll see what I can come up with. I'll put my thinking cap on." Outstanding.

Now remember, there was a potential opportunity to get them donated to us. I called my accountant, business consultant and friend, and ran the thought past him. Would this work? He didn't like it, he didn't think it was going to benefit the owner at all. And he explained the traps with the IRS. Don't want to do anything that could get any of us on their radar. In short, the donation isn't going to happen, so financing the purchase it is.

A couple of Mondays later, I'm talking with the guys at the garden, my permateers, and realized I hadn't told some of them, so I laid out the whole thing for them. Dave asked lots of questions, and was super interested. "I've got a Rotary meeting tomorrow morning, I'm going to approach them about possibly getting involved in financing one of them." Saaa-weetness!

So, the next day I'm running errands, some personal, some for the garden, and about 9:00 am the phone rings. It's Pat. I answer, then find a place to park and talk. "Your ears burning?" Yep. After the meeting, Dave asks to talk with Pat. The ensuing huddle went something like this. "I think we should get involved with financing one of these greenhouses." says Dave. "I agree, but I think we should do two of them." says Pat. Doug says "Really?" Pat says "Really!" Then I tell Pat about this...

**Another Piece of the Puzzle:** So, I'm talking to Dean one Saturday morning. Christina is driving in and she wasn't expected to show up. Good! Then Dean says, you need to talk to her about those greenhouses. GREAT IDEA! Christina's husband Adam got us the end of year grant last December from his workplace. That also came with an invitation "If something comes up in 2023, let me know and we'll see what we can do." Oh, something's come up, all right! Yep, I did. I contacted Adam, made the pitch. He's swung, we've made bat-to-ball contact, I just don't know where the ball is going yet, but it's out there. He's waiting on some financial stuff from us. Got it in the works. Julie and/or Kate have been working on it for two weeks now. Tick, tick, tick...

So, for now, there is a plan and a mechanism, that might get these greenhouses funded.

**Phone Call:** I made a call to my contact at Chambersville Tree Farm. I told him that we were very interested in the greenhouses and asked him if it would be possible that they take them off the market

while I get the funding worked out. “How long?” “Can you give me three weeks until the end of the month?” “Yep.” Good, all set.

**Today:** Today is Thursday, February 16<sup>th</sup>. This was an action-packed day. Three things happened today. I’m going to start with the bad. We’ll move to the good, which just so happens to be in reverse order of how it happened.

**The Bad:** Got a visit from a young man, his name is Tony Hill. Tony works for the Texas Department of Agriculture. He’s a Produce Safety Outreach Specialist. I’m thinking *just great, the government oversight and inspection department has just caught up to Shiloh Field*. I’ve been dreading this for a long time. He’s very gracious, but the interview begins...

- “I’m at what farm?” Shiloh Field Community Garden.
- “Your name is?” Doug Herzog, I’m the Garden Administrator. Oh, you didn’t need my position, sorry.
- “What is your annual revenue?” Zero. “Huh?” Long uncomfortable pregnant pause.
- “And just how do you finance (waves hand at the garden) all this?” Well, we started as a ministry of Denton Bible Church... .. and we give all our produce away to local food pantries and food kitchens. We’re funded by gifts and grants, but absolutely *no sales*.

Oh, then you don’t fall under “*The Rule*”. Now I gotta tell you, I’ve never been so glad to not fall under “*The Rule*” as I was right then.

So, the visit changed to “I’m a liaison between farms such as yours and the Department of Agriculture. My specialty is food safety.” Now what gardener wouldn’t be concerned about a food safety? To not be would be irresponsible, and I’m not that, so “lets talk.” The long and the short of it is he made me aware of some of the online resources they have available. Okay. And I’ve already talked to Dean and Greg about it. They agree, we probably have some things we could do better and bring some value-added safety to the food we deliver. So, some things are going to have to change. Will that be bad? No, probably good actually. But mostly, just different.

**The Good:** I gave a garden tour to two more people from the Community Strong Garden located in Sanger. Two folks from the Master Gardener program came, but the “main guy” had a death in the family the previous night and couldn’t make it. So, we did the tour, I made a couple of friends, but it just wasn’t what it could-have-been/should-have-been. Anywho, that was my fourth tour with the powers-that-be at Community Strong Garden. How many tours is enough? Apparently not four. So, we’ll see.

All right, that was the bad, and the good, so what’s left?

**Then This:** I got invited to the Morning Rotary board meeting this morning (Thursday, February 16<sup>th</sup>). Pat and Dave were going to pitch a greenhouse idea to the board. I was introduced, and it was explained that I was here to answer questions anyone might have. They did a great job. Someone made a motion to fund one greenhouse, it got seconded. Then came the discussion. I got involved in the discussion. There were things I was well versed in that Pat and Dave weren’t, so I filled in some things that were important. I was hoping someone (*come on Pat*) would suggest funding two...

Then a member of the board made a motion to amend the motion. I'm excited, there it comes... "Subject to the potential funding by Medical City, and subject to a pitch to the Noon Rotary, and others, if these other opportunities don't pan out, let's not let this golden opportunity for the garden pass, let's fund all three greenhouses should the other opportunities not pan out." WHAT?!?!? The expression on my face must have been priceless, cause several people chuckled.

Amended motion passed *unanimously!* One way or another, these greenhouses are going to be funded! Outstanding! Now that will make a Garden Administrator's day!

It's 6:09 pm as I type this. Pat has sent an email to the Noon Rotary. He's sent an email to Tarrant Area Food Bank. I see favorable responses from TAFB. Wait, I have another email. A little blue birdie (who shall remain nameless) says "Pat told me he's acquired funding for the other two greenhouses. (Today was) definitely a red letter day!"

I'll say! Actually, I'll say that was an understatement.

**The Lid:** So, let's get back to where this started. A bunch of jigsaw puzzle pieces, with no lid. Sometimes God, in his righteous omniscience, he gives us a glimpse of what he's up to. What the lid looks like. Let me show you what I see on the lid right now.

Power, possibly paid for in large part, by grants, so at a fraction of the cost. Once paid for, no reoccurring bills. Solar. We get much needed power, and aside from maintenance and upkeep, no reoccurring electricity bill.

Tarrant Area Food Bank wants to build a food distribution hub next door to Serve Denton. That's close to the garden.

Greenhouses, the purchase of three 30x96. Installing them as two 30x144. Grow tomatoes. Lots of tomatoes. To the tune of 20,000 to 40,000 thousand pounds of tomatoes, and that's on the low end. More tomatoes than we can give away to our partner agencies. So, let's just say we could give away half of our tomatoes, what would be do with the other half?

What if we could negotiate a grant with TAFB, a partnership if you will, where we give them tomatoes, they grant us money, similar to the Lewisville Grant of last year. We could possibly fund half, or maybe more than half, of the garden with excess tomato production. If we were to get two more greenhouses, one for cucumbers, one for peppers, and could fund the purchase, we could do a grant for those as well. And the best part of all of it is, Tony Hill at the Agriculture Department said that would still keep us out from under "*The Rule.*" Nice!

It's a big two letter word, "if." But what if all that were to happen, and more. I think we're witnessing a fundamental and pivotal change to Shiloh Field.

I see the lid, and it looks like a path toward long term *sustainability.*

To God be the glory!



## **Final Remarks**

Had a rainy day this month. The guys called, "We calling it a rain day?" Nope, show up, we'll be working in the nursery. And work we did. For probably three hours, the three of us. Why bring this up? I did the math afterwards, I figure we planted about 5,000 seeds on a day we couldn't otherwise work in the garden. A lot of those went into the garden this last Saturday. The rest will follow suit shortly. It's an urban farm, gotta make use of every day possible.