



Urban Ag Work Group Meeting Notes

Fairfax Food Council

June 16, 2025

10:00 – 11:00 am

Introductions:

Attendees individually introduced themselves and their urban agriculture backgrounds and interests.

Integrated Pest Management

Amanda Tindall, UAWG Co-Chair

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) ensures gardens have a healthy ecosystem and reduces the need for pesticides. IPM is especially important in urban food production settings like community and rooftop gardens because, unlike farms, which have full ecosystems, urban settings have a fragmentation of the climate. Without the big ecosystem, growers must take measures to attract pollinators, pest predators, and everything else the plants need. Here are the key principles of IPM:

Key Principles of IPM

- **Prevention** – healthy plants & companion planting (e.g., marigolds, alyssum, scallions)
- **Monitoring** – regular site visits, visual inspections, trap placement
- **Identification** – know your pests (aphids, cabbage moths, leaf miners, etc.)
- **Action Thresholds** – don't treat unless pests are present in meaningful numbers
- **Control Methods** – biological, mechanical, and cultural interventions

Prevention is the most powerful and cost-effective defense. A few examples of prevention include biological controls, resistant plant varieties, trap crops, and mesh netting. Introducing biological controls, like ladybugs, helps prevent the need for chemical pesticide use. Growers can also choose resistant varieties of plants, as they have innate resistance to certain pests and diseases. To reduce pest pressure on their main crops, growers can plant a more attractive crop in a different area to lure pests away. This 'trap crop' acts as a decoy, drawing in the pests so they stay contained in one location, making it easier to manage them with targeted pest control. Mesh nettings/coverings can also prevent pests from harming crops.

Companion plants can attract beneficials, repel pests, or do both. For example, Sweet Alyssum attracts parasitic wasps that act as a biological control for unwanted pests. Parasitic wasps lay eggs on the pest, and the larvae eat the pest as they grow and develop. Other examples include:



Companions: Shaping the Mini-Ecosystem

Companion planting is largely about attracting (beneficials) and repelling (pests).

Plant	Use
Marigolds	Root compounds deter harmful nematodes, scent repels whiteflies and aphids
Sweet alyssum	Attracts hoverflies and parasitic wasps (biocontrol for aphids, white flies, horn worms and miners.
Scallions/Alliums	Mask scent of nearby crops, confuse aphids and flea beetles
Radishes	Trap crop for flea beetles—they'll prefer radish over nearby greens
Yarrow	Attract ladybugs, predatory beetles, hoverflies
Lavender	Brassicas (to repel aphids/cabbage moths); Tomatoes (for whiteflies)

[Click here to view Amanda's full presentation.](#)

Group Discussion

After Amanda's presentation, the group shared advice for pest management based on their experiences and asked other urban agriculture-related questions. Some key takeaways of the discussion are as follows:

- Medical tape or foil can be wrapped around squash vines and used as barriers to protect the vines from squash vine borers.
- When asked about managing larger pests like groundhogs, it was suggested that chicken wire be placed around and on top of raised beds.



- To manage Cutworms, it was suggested that Sluggo Plus be used. Its active ingredients include Iron Phosphate and Spinosad
- In response to a question about irrigation, it was advised that growers purchase raised garden drip kits. They can be purchased online, are relatively affordable, and are great for integrated irrigation. Work group members are familiar with these brands: Rain Bird, DIG, and Berry Hill. Oya irrigation systems were also discussed. An Oya irrigation system is a ceramic pottery device used for irrigation purposes. It is buried underground and filled with water up to the neck to irrigate the plants around it. However, the work group members shared that Oya systems are usually more effective in arid climates, unlike in Fairfax County, which is more humid.
- In response to a question about how to use rabbit manure, users were advised to test it in a small area before expanding its use to the entire garden. A major advantage of rabbit manure is that it is not hot manure, so it is far less likely to burn plants when applied.

Garden Tip Announcement

UAWG Co-Chairs

If you have a gardening tip you'd like to share, complete this form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScw8dc3ksEvYdx59YgfO9k8A72fGxFRaIRtasDvMNcAMzxxFQ/viewform?usp=sharing>. Tips will be reviewed and selected to share at the monthly UAWG meeting.

Member Updates

- **Xandra Coleman**—Erika Smith (from DC Mutual Aid Apothecary) and Xandra Coleman (CAFB Food Growing Specialist) will be running an Herb Garden Workshop Series from June to October. Through these workshops, attendees will learn how to plan, care for,

harvest, scale up or scale down according to their unique growing space, and use a variety of medicinal and culinary herbs. The first date is coming up fast on **Saturday, 6/21**, but folks are welcome to sign up for as many or as few of the workshops as make sense for them! Feel free to share widely with anyone who might be interested. They occur once a month on Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings. Click here to [view the flyer](#). Click here to complete the [RSVP Form](#). Questions can be directed to Xandra at xcoleman@capitalareafoodbank.org.

- **Gillian Kimura**—The June 25 Food Access & Literacy Work Group meeting topic is “Growing Culturally Relevant Foods.” Anyone is welcome to tune in. If you want to join this meeting, email Elisa Solomon at elisa.solomon@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Next Urban Ag Work Group Meeting: July 21, 2025, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.