



HARVEST DONATION RESOURCE GUIDE

A practical how-to for fighting hunger in your community

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Background: Food Pantries

What is a food pantry?

Food pantries are organizations that distribute nutritious food to those in need, especially low-income populations. Food pantries work with US Department of Agriculture food assistance programs to help these individuals receive the food they need.

How are food pantries different from food banks?

Food banks actually help provide food to food pantries. In general, food banks receive food items from regional or national donations. Then, those donations are administered to food pantries.

Where are food pantries located?

Since each community is different and has different needs, food pantries can be found in a variety of locations such as schools.

Who uses food pantries?

Many of those that use food pantries are food insecure and/or struggle with hunger.



What types of donations do food pantries usually need?

Food pantries typically need non-perishable food donations. This includes items such as peanut butter, pasta, rice, and cans of soup, fruit, vegetables, fish, and beans. Donations of these items are helpful for food pantries, because they do not spoil quickly and can be kept in the pantry for long periods of time.

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Produce Donations

Why should you donate produce to food pantries?

Food pantries are often in need of fresh fruits and vegetables. This is because produce goes bad quickly, so these items must be given to clients as soon as possible. Therefore, the stock of fruits and vegetables has a quick turnover and needs to be replaced frequently.



Additionally, those who consistently use food pantries have been found to have lower intakes of folate, vitamin C, calcium, magnesium, and zinc. This is tied to inadequate access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Thus, it is important that food pantries receive produce donations. Providing produce donations will help combat the lack of access to fruit and vegetables and the nutritional consequences that result.

How to Donate

What should I grow?

The vegetables in the chart below are items that food pantries typically prefer to receive for several reasons. First, most food pantry patrons are familiar with these vegetables. Also, in terms of preparation, these vegetables can be used in a variety of recipes, and it takes minimal effort to prepare them for consumption. Lastly, these vegetables are great for gardeners to grow, because their cultivation and harvest are simple!

Vegetable	Maturity Time	Harvesting	Storage
Tomatoes	70 to 90 days	Pick from vine when the tomato is firm to the touch Tomatoes get darker as they ripen, and should be picked when their color is fully developed	Store on counter with limited sunlight Only refrigerate if you are unable to use the tomatoes prior to them spoiling
Zucchini	55 to 60 days	Bigger is <u>not</u> better when harvesting zucchini, because they become tough and woody Ideally, harvest zucchini when they are 6-9 inches in length	Keep zucchini refrigerated Store in a plastic bag for 4-5 days
Winter Squash	90 to 120 days	Harvest when squash is firm & glossy The bottom of the rind should be cream or orange in color, and the rest of the rind should be deep in color	Store squash separate from one another to prevent the spread of rotting Store at 55-60°F (storing at below 50°F can reduce storage life)

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Cucumbers	50 to 70 days	Harvest when firm, and a consistent shade of green. Size is dependent on variety, but harvest often to ensure productivity in plant	Store in the refrigerator for a maximum of 3 days- use a loose or perforated plastic bag to keep cucumbers moist
Carrots	60 to 80 days	Carrots are ready to be harvested when they are a minimum of ½ inch in diameter	Discard tops shortly after harvest. Store at 32°F in a plastic bag.
Basil	5 to 10 days	Cut off with scissors or a knife to harvest, but avoid the main stem. Handle with care to avoid bruised leaves	Do not store at a temperature below 50°F. Bag in serving size portions (such as in sandwich bags) for distribution
Kale	~60 days	Cut off outer leaves to harvest- avoid main stem & top rosette leaves	Kale can be kept in a plastic bag in the coldest section of your refrigerator for between 3-5 days

Harvesting

If vegetables aren't harvested correctly, the vegetables will have altered taste, appearance, and quality. Treatment and handling before and after harvest, the time between harvest and consumption, and stage of development when harvested can affect the texture, fiber, and consistency of vegetables. For example, harvesting vegetables too late can lead to poor quality and taste, because the sugars found in the vegetables may begin to convert into starches.

Harvesting Do's & Don'ts

DO	DON'T
Harvest your produce in the morning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This prevents your vegetables from being warmed by the sun and overheating - This is important, because increasing the temperature of the vegetables leads to declines in quality 	Break, nick, or bruise vegetables when harvesting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The less you handle the vegetables, the longer they last!
Pick a few vegetables before harvesting all of your produce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This allows you to ensure your produce is ready to harvest 	Harvest produce with signs of rotting, bugs, or holes for donation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will not keep well - Has the potential to transfer diseases to the rest of the harvested vegetables - This can be used for composting instead of donation

Harvesting Safety

To keep vegetables safe for food pantry patrons, take the following precautions.

- If you are sick, have a cough, are sneezing, or have a fever: do NOT harvest any of your produce for donation.
 - Either wait until you have recovered or ask a healthy individual to harvest the produce for you.
- Wash your hands with soap and water, and don't forget to wear gloves!
 - To provide extra protection for food pantry patrons, wear gardening gloves when harvesting your produce.
 - If you do not have gardening gloves, clean winter gloves or dish washing gloves are adequate substitutes.

Chilling and washing can also help keep your produce safe. If harvesting more than 12 hours before you plan to make a delivery, see chilling storage tips below. Additionally, not all produce should be washed after harvest, see the guide below.

Washing/Chilling After Harvest

If harvesting more than 12 hours before you plan to make a delivery, see chilling storage tips below.

- Wash and refrigerate: All greens, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, cabbage, leeks, root vegetables, beans, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, squash.
- Brush but don't chill: Tubers, potatoes, sweet potatoes (store in dark, dry place)
- Don't wash, do refrigerate: Peas, corn, okra
- Don't wash or refrigerate: Tomatoes, garlic, onions

Transporting Your Harvest to the Food Pantry

Contact the pantry ahead of time and ask them about the following before harvesting:

- Whether they accept produce donations
- If they are in need of what you grow in your garden
- The days/hours that they accept donations before harvesting
- How much of any particular item they are willing to accept (some pantries may not want several bags of the same item)

Then when your produce is ready to be harvested, pick your vegetables. If possible, take the produce directly to the food pantry right after harvesting. The fresher, the better!

Ask your local pantry how they would like the produce bundled. Typically, packaging harvested produce in supermarket bags is adequate. Do not mix varieties of produce—keep each type of vegetable in its own bag. These bags can then be placed in a clean bin or cardboard box when delivered for donation.

Keep us in the loop!

Send us an email at info@gardenworksproject.org and let us know if you donated! We would love to hear from you, and to hear about your garden's success this year!

Food pantries and partners in areas we serve

Addison Township Food Pantry
50 E Oak St, Addison, IL 60101
630-530-8161

Village Baptist Church
515 S. Frontenac St.
Aurora, IL 60504
630-851-4120

Bensenville/Wood Dale Pantry
192 S. Center Street
Bensenville, IL 60106
630-766-9382

Bloomington Township
123 N. Rosedale Road
Bloomington, IL 60108
630-529-9993

Humanitarian Service Project
465 Randy Road
Carol Stream, IL 60188
630-221-8340

Interfaith Food Pantry
345 S. President
Carol Stream, IL 60188
630-665-6426

Neighborhood Food Pantries
580 N. Kuhn Road
Carol Stream, IL 60188
630-665-5188

FISH Pantry
4340 Prince Street
Downers Grove, IL 60515
630-964-7776

Elmhurst Yorkfield Food Pantry
1099 S. York Road
Elmhurst, IL 60126
630-782-1066

Neighborhood Food Pantries
1480 Bloomingdale Road
Glendale Heights, IL 60139
630-315-4012

Glen Ellyn Food Pantry
493 Forest Avenue
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137
630-469-8668

Lisle Township Food Pantry
4711 Indiana Avenue
Lisle, IL 60532
630-968-2087

Lombard/Villa Park Food Pantry
155 S. Main Street
Lombard, IL 60148
630-627-2508

York Township
1502 S. Meyers Road
Lombard, IL 60148
630-620-2400

Calvary Church Food Pantry
9S200 Route 59
Naperville, IL 60540
630-851-7000

Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry
1871 High Grove Lane
Naperville, IL 60540
630-355-3663

St. Thomas the Apostle Church
1500 Brookdale Road
Naperville, IL 60563
630-355-8980

Immanuel Presbyterian Church
29W260 Batavia Road
Warrenville, IL 60555
630-393-4000

Neighborhood Food Pantries
30W350 Army Trail Road
Wayne, IL 60184
630-289-2510

Real Life Church
525 N. Neltnor Blvd.
West Chicago, IL 60185
630-562-3073

Wayne Township
27W031 North Avenue
West Chicago, IL 60185
630-231-7173 ext. 199

Holy Trinity Church
111 S. Cass Avenue
Westmont, IL 60559
630-968-1366

Milton Township
1492 N. Main Street
Wheaton, IL 60187
630-653-1616

West Suburban Comm. Pantry
6809 Hobson Valley Dr. #118
Woodridge, IL 60517
630-512-9921

People' Resource Center
201 South Naperville Road
Wheaton, IL 60187
630-682-5402

People's Resource Center
104 Chestnut Avenue
Westmont, IL 60559
630-908-5375

We Go Together Pantry
238 E Hazel Street
West Chicago, IL 60185
630-293-6060

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