

# AmpleHarvest.org<sup>(SM)</sup>

*"Sharing your garden bounty with Neighbors in Need"*

*"And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corner of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest; thou shalt leave them for the poor, and the stranger"*  
Leviticus 23:22

**The Problem:** America has 50+ million food insecure people ... people who are either hungry or people who are at real risk of being hungry.

If 50+ million is just another number to you, look at the map at the right. 50+ million is equal to the combined populations of 23 of our 50 states. According to recently released USDA statistics, one out of every four children under six now lives in a food insecure home.



**The Opportunity:** At the same time, 40+ million Americans grow food in home gardens... often growing far more than they can use, preserve or give to friends. The rest is often left to rot in gardens. This food, when thrown away, creates a pound of methane per pound of food – a global warming gas twenty times worse than CO<sup>2</sup>.

Our entire food system farms, factories, stores, restaurants and kitchens waste food; about a pound/person a day 100 billion pounds a year. The illustration on the right represents the food lost by a family of four in a month. This statistic does not include the food lost in backyard gardens around the country.



The net result of the impact of the food insecurity on the one hand and the lost produce on the other, sends our neediest people out in search of the cheapest calories they can get often processed or fast food laden with fats, salts and sugars, which are contributing to many Americans being adequately fed (i.e., not starving) yet malnourished at the same time.

[AmpleHarvest.org](http://AmpleHarvest.org)

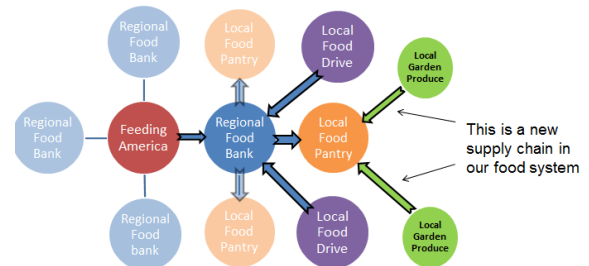
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**The Challenge:** These people often rely on local food pantries to help feed their families. Food and money comes from government and private sources through Feeding America and filters

down to 202 regional food banks and is then distributed on a monthly or bi-monthly basis to America's 33,500+ local food pantries. Even food donated by the dimiity during food drives is typically routed to the food banks and only later, delivered to food pantries. These delivery cycles preclude the delivery of fresh produce forcing the pantries to provide only canned produce. If locally grown produce however, could be delivered directly to the neighborhood food pantry, it would bypass the routing problem and immediately provide a free source of fresh produce to the people who most need it.



**The Solution:** In May 2009, I created the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign a national non-profit registry of food pantries enabling millions of home gardeners to be able to easily find a local food pantry eager to have their excess garden produce. This opened the door for fresh food to displace canned produce, for broadening the variety of food available at the pantries, for introducing fresh

food to children, for keeping produce out of landfills, and for enabling people to diminish hunger, malnutrition and systemic poverty in their own community without spending a dime, by reaching into their backyards instead of their back pockets.

**The Thought Process:** In the building of AmpleHarvest.org, a number of Jewish concepts contributed to the design of the site.

1. People should be helping their neighbors. (Tzedakah)
2. The excess food from our gardens should be set aside for the needy in our community. (Leviticus)
3. The food pantries are encouraged to arrange for the donation of locally grown produce a few hours before the clients come in to prevent the possible humiliation that would result from one neighbor donating food while another was there to receive some. (Maimonides)
4. Excess food should not be thrown into trash dumps as it contributes to the waste-stream and methane (CO<sup>2</sup>) emissions. (Tikkun Olam)

5. Local gardeners eager to donate food usually don't know where to take it to, and local food pantries eager for the food don't know how to reach the growers. AmpleHarvest.org enables 40+ million home gardeners to easily find a local food pantry eager to accept it. (Shidduch)
6. And while not explicitly stated in AmpleHarvest.org, common growing techniques including crop rotation lend themselves towards the idea of letting the land rest periodically and letting any remaining crops be available to the needy. (Shmita)

Not everyone in America has land for growing food, and not everyone has a green thumb. For those with no "land," they can grow herbs in kitchen windows, tomatoes in containers on their decks, roofs, etc. For those without a trace of green in their thumbs, AmpleHarvest.org has an iPhone app (and shortly, an Android app) to enable shoppers to buy store bought items for the pantries buying exactly what the pantries say they most need.

**Making it work:** The AmpleHarvest.org Campaign is a new solution to diminishing hunger and improving the environment in America. We do not grow, make or move food, but we do make it possible for those who do to share their excess with local food pantries across America. Additionally, the design built into the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign takes advantage of "just in time" commercial inventory logic to assure that food pantries won't need additional storage or refrigeration, donors and recipients (who may well be neighbors) won't cross paths and that the food donated will be fresher than the same food available at local suprtmarkets. It is a Google type device for food pantries.

People of any age can help the needy in their community and help AmpleHarvest.org.

1. People should understand that one out of six Americans don't have enough food for their families. It is important for them to know that being hungry, while unfortunate, is nothing to be ashamed of. Indeed, it is likely some of your friends live in food insecure homes.
2. People should understand that growing food is part of their heritage as Jews and that it is a mitzvah to grow food now and when they grow up. It could be a farm, a backyard garden or just herbs in a flower pot. For the youngest of children, simply planting the leftover horseradish root from the Passover Seder table in a flower pot will grow more horseradish for their Seder a year later!
3. People should understand that sharing , especially excess food, is the right thing to do. By way of example, you can tell them that many years ago, EVERYTHING went in the trash... a terrible waste. Now much of that goes into recycling. Similarly, extra food can also be "recycled": food from a restaurant, in take home containers, can be offered to someone on the street; food from the supermarket, in "dented" cans, can go to a local food drive; or food from your backyard garden, can be donated to a local food pantry (for locations visit [AmpleHarvest.org](http://AmpleHarvest.org)). Food should never be wasted, especially when people in the community are hungry.
4. People can tell their friends nationwide (by email, facebook, twitter, texting) about hunger and about AmpleHarvest.org. The more people know about their opportunity to diminish hunger, the less hunger there will be.

5. People can help gardeners in their own community learn about the opportunity to donate from their garden by printing the flyer at [www.AmpleHarvest.org/gardenshop](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org/gardenshop) and asking local gardenshops/nurseries to post it in conspicuous locations.
6. People can help more of the needy in their community get fresh locally grown produce by finding a local food pantry in their neighborhood or one affiliated with a synagogue, church, mosque, JCC, YMCA, etc.). Ask for the pantry manager and give him/her the flyer from [AmpleHarvest.org/pantry](http://AmpleHarvest.org/pantry). Nearly 4,000 food pantries are on AmpleHarvest.org today. Our goal is to have 10,000 in three years.
7. Lastly, people can help diminish hunger in their community by asking their rabbi, educator or other lay leader, to spend a Shabbat talking about it. They can visit [AmpleHarvest.org/jewish](http://AmpleHarvest.org/jewish) to get ideas and print the synagogue flyer at [ampleharvest.org/downloads/AmpleHarvest-shul.pdf](http://ampleharvest.org/downloads/AmpleHarvest-shul.pdf)

**Unlike eliminating a disease which requires you to be a scientist or doctor, anyone can attack hunger.**

**Fighting disease requires you to have a cure. Fighting hunger only requires you to care.**

Resources:

Learn more about AmpleHarvest.org at [www.AmpleHarvest.org/faq](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org/faq)

Learn more about Hunger in America at [www.AmpleHarvest.org/hunger](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org/hunger)

Press/media resources are available at [www.AmpleHarvest.org/media](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org/media)