

Master Gardeners vs Hunger in America



If you are like many other Master Gardeners, it can feel like forever while you wait for your garden to start giving you tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, squash, etc. - and then when they do come, they come with a vengeance.

You harvest your crop, eating some fresh from the garden, cooking some, canning some, and then giving more to your friends and neighbors. Then you harvest some more. Overwhelmed, you start to leave some of the harvestable crops in your garden where they wither and rot.

Meanwhile, over 49 million Americans (one out of every six Americans) are hungry and rely on local food pantries to help sustain their families. And the recession is pushing more families closer to hunger every day.

It does not have to be this way.

Most food pantries are small operations located in community buildings such as houses of worship, YMCAs, etc. They are often hard to find - most do not have a web site or yellow page listing. They make a best effort to help feed hungry families in the community, but all too often, not enough is on hand to meet the growing need.

Nearly all of the food available from a pantry is processed - canned fruit and vegetables, boxed cereal and pasta, packaged meat and cheese, etc. Fresh produce is rarely, if ever, available. As Master Gardeners, here are two ways you can help to diminish hunger in America.

AmpleHarvest.org^(SM)

"Sharing your garden bounty with Neighbors in Need"

Encourage your Gardeners to Donate their Excess Produce to a Local Pantry

If they harvest more produce than they need, the AmpleHarvest.org^(SM) campaign can help them diminish hunger in America by helping them find a nearby food pantry eager for their bounty.

The AmpleHarvest.org campaign is a grass roots effort. Everyone involved has donated their time and talent. There are no fees when a pantry registers on the web site, nor when a gardener uses it to find a nearby pantry.

Just because an apple has a slight blemish, the "red" peppers remained green, you are overwhelmed with tomatoes or you got tired of peas does not mean they should be left in the garden to rot. If they are good enough for the gardener to eat, they are good enough to share with neighbors in need.

Encourage your Gardeners to Help Add New Pantries to AmpleHarvest.org

Just as important as sharing produce with pantries is helping to register new food pantries on AmpleHarvest.org. If food pantries are not registered on AmpleHarvest.org, they remain invisible to gardeners.

There are over 30,000 pantries in America located in houses of worship, YMCAs, civic organization buildings. If your gardeners knows of a pantry in their community, ask them to please give www.AmpleHarvest.org/downloads/pantry.pdf to the pantry manager urge them to visit www.AmpleHarvest.org. Signing up is quick and easy, and free.

An estimated [100 billion pounds of food](#) - enough to totally eliminate hunger in America, is lost annually to waste.

It does not have to be that way.

Please share this information with any other gardeners you know.

Thank you.

Gary Oppenheimer

AmpleHarvest.org founder & Master Gardener