

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

"Sharing your garden bounty with Neighbors in Need"

## Media/Press Kit

### About the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign

When AmpleHarvest.org web site was first released in May of 2009, approximately 38 million Americans were listed as food insecure (defined as people who either do not have enough or are at real risk for not having enough food for their family).

According to US government statistics released only six months later, that number increased to nearly 49 million people, or one out of every six Americans; this despite the fact that America loses/wastes almost 100 billion pounds of food a year, or about one pound per person per day according to the **New York Times**.

To put this in perspective, the number food insecure people in America exceeds the populations of Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont and West Virginia - added together.

These people often rely on one of the estimated 30,000 to 40,000 local food pantries in America to help meet the nutritional needs of their families. (Note... in some parts of the country, a food pantry is referred to as a *food shelf, food closet, food cupboard or food bank*)

In most communities a food pantry is typically located in a house of worship or similar community building. Usually run by volunteers, these pantries are the final distribution point for food and household items (such as toiletries, diapers, paper goods, etc.) available to those most needing it. Although they are in nearly every community in the country, people in the area who do not need assistance from the food pantry rarely where it is located.

Food pantries receive the bulk of the food they distribute from periodic deliveries provided by large regional warehouse operations called food banks. The majority of these food banks are part of a nationwide network operated by Feeding America ([www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org)).

Unlike your local supermarket whose daily food deliveries allows it to stock and sell fresh produce,

the less frequent deliveries by food banks means that only canned fruit and vegetables can usually be provided to most food pantries.

Because canned vegetables are often processed with extra salt and fruit with a sugary syrup, either of which can contribute to future health problems (high weight or blood pressure, diabetes, etc), some writers have suggested that the availability of fresh produce at food pantries through the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign may help to lower the future health care costs in America.

While 49 million Americans are food insecure, 41 million Americans, according to the National Gardening Association, grow vegetables, fruit and herbs in their backyard, rooftop, patio and windowsill gardens.

A typical gardener plants their seeds or seedlings and then eagerly waits to begin the harvesting. As the growing season progresses, there will often be a far larger harvest than the gardener can use, preserve or give away to friends.

Historically, most gardeners have disposed of the excess produce, composted it, or left it to rot in their garden.

The AmpleHarvest.org Campaign web site provides these gardeners with the opportunity to instead easily find a local food pantry within a specified driving distance that is eager for their garden bounty.

A gardener overwhelmed with a bountiful harvest can go to the AmpleHarvest.org site to find pantry on the **Find A Pantry** page. They simply enter their home address or zip code and the number of miles they are willing to travel to a pantry.

AmpleHarvest.org displays a listing of food pantries, sorted by distance, along with a Google map.

Once the pantry has been selected, AmpleHarvest.org displays the desired day[s] of the week and time[s] of day when the pantry can accept donations. It will also show a photograph of the pantry (if provided) along with Google driving instructions from the gardener's location to the food pantry. Click [here](#) to see an example of what the gardener might see.

Gardeners who share their garden bounty with a food pantry are encouraged to email IShared@AmpleHarvest.org to let us know what and how much was donated.

Donating through AmpleHarvest.org is not limited just to backyard gardeners. Millions of Americans grow tomatoes, cucumbers, berries and other foods on their patio or rooftop. Even urban dwellers find that they can easily grow herbs (fresh chives, parsley, mint, and other herbs are particularly appreciated by pantry clients) in windowsill gardens. Lastly, many food pantries use AmpleHarvest.org to list those store bought items (canned foods, paper goods, toiletries, etc.) they are most in need of, making AmpleHarvest.org helpful to shoppers as well as gardeners.

AmpleHarvest.org is an opt-in directory - only those pantries that choose to participate or are registered by their managing food bank will appear. Since most food pantries find that the garden



produce is quickly taken by their clients - often within hours of delivery by the gardeners, refrigerated storage at the pantry is rarely an issue. Food pantries, almost always struggling to meet an ever growing need for food assistance, greatly appreciate the community support AmpleHarvest.org enables them to receive.

AmpleHarvest.org continues to reach out to food pantries across the nation, encouraging them to take advantage of the generosity of the local gardeners. The outreach is done through the food banks, service and faith organizations as well as social networking such as **Twitter** and **Facebook**. Anyone who knows of a food pantry in their community is strongly encouraged to forward the appropriate flier to the food pantry manager for their review.

At the same time, AmpleHarvest.org continues to encourage millions of gardeners across America to visit the site to find a local food pantry and to be generous with their donations when they harvest their gardens. The outreach to the gardeners is done on the Internet (thanks to a very generous grant from Google.com), Master Gardeners nationwide, and social networking such as **Twitter** and **Facebook**.

*Although many Americans are themselves suffering from economic difficulties, the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign enables gardeners to help diminish hunger in their community by reaching into their back yard instead of their pack pocket.*

The Story Behind AmpleHarvest.org

*by Gary Oppenheimer  
AmpleHarvest.org Founder*

Shortly after I became the director of the West Milford Community Garden in late 2008, I learned that some of our garden plot holders -- like millions of backyard gardeners nationwide -- left large amounts of their garden produce unharvested when they grew more than they could possibly use.

Aware that hunger is a problem in our community, I suggested that we created a committee that would help to gather this extra food and deliver it to local food pantries. The program was named Ample Harvest.

Food pantries however were hard to find, in large part because most operate without an Internet site or yellow page listing. Google for example listed the nearest food pantry as being in a town 25 miles away, even though our own town had several of them. And it turns out this same challenge was faced by backyard gardeners nationwide wishing to share their bounty.

To address this dilemma, we created the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign to provide a way for millions of backyard gardeners with extra garden produce to find local food pantries. In doing so, gardeners could share their excess garden bounty and, garden-by-garden, help diminish hunger in America.

Initially conceived of in March 2009, with the help of two volunteer web designers (one of whom is a former food pantry client), the AmpleHarvest.org site was created and tested starting in April 2009. Seven weeks later on May 18, 2009, AmpleHarvest.org rolled nationally.

AmpleHarvest.org received enthusiastic support and backing from Google.com, the USDA, Rotary International, VFW, numerous faith groups as well as many media outlets and food/hunger bloggers.

We reached out to food pantries across the country through social networking, food banks, Master Gardeners, faith organizations, and many other groups.

In August of 2009, the National Gardening Association partnered with AmpleHarvest.org to help inform its members about the campaign. On October 16, 2009 (World Food Day), only 150 days after its initial roll out, AmpleHarvest.org announced that the 1,000<sup>th</sup> food pantry ("Rosie's Place Groceries" in Boston, MA) had joined the campaign.

In December 2009, at the recommendation of United Way, AmpleHarvest.org started to provide online resources to help individuals who had come to AmpleHarvest.org in need of food assistance.

To promote its goal of enabling as many backyard gardeners as possible to donate excess garden produce to as many food pantries as possible, the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign pursues two separate tracks simultaneously:

1. To encourage food pantries across America to join the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign (it is free). Currently, there are more than 1,700 food pantries registered on the site (**you can view a nationwide map of all registered food pantries on the site**).
2. To inform the more than 40 million (from a study by the National Gardening Association) Americans who grow vegetables, fruit and herbs, that they can donate their extra garden bounty to a local food pantry.

Everyone involved in the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign has donated their time and talent. The team supporting the campaign includes two web designers, a social networking expert, a PR specialist, a SEO (search engine optimization) expert and a Google Analytics expert. A number of other people have donated legal, non-profit management, food bank/pantry and marketing expertise and talent.

AmpleHarvest.org operates as a not-for-profit organization. There are no costs to the food pantries or the gardeners for use of the site.

#### Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. What exactly is the AmpleHarvest.org campaign?**

A. It is a nationwide effort to diminish hunger in America by making it easy for **millions** of backyard gardeners across the country to quickly find local food pantries eager to receive freshly picked crops for their clients. AmpleHarvest.org enables gardeners to find food pantries within a specified distance of their home and then view the pantries desired day/time for receiving donations.

AmpleHarvest.org also displays personalized driving instructions to the pantry as well as (if provided) a photograph of the pantry - making it easier to find.

Lastly, for the benefit of gardeners during a non-growing season or anyone else interested in making a donation, AmpleHarvest.org also provides pantries the opportunity to list store bought items they are in particular need of.

Although there are a number of excellent programs that help farmers and community gardens get produce to food banks, AmpleHarvest.org is a national campaign focused on helping local gardeners find neighborhood food pantries.

**Q. What is the difference between a food bank and a food pantry?**

A. Food Banks are large scale operations that collect and distribute food and other household items to local food pantries, soup kitchens, etc. Food Pantries are local walk-in facilities where families in need go to get food. *(Note: In some parts of the country, what we are calling a "food pantry" is instead referred to as a "food shelf", "food closet", "food cupboard", "food share" or even "food bank". For the sake of simplicity, AmpleHarvest.org uses only the terms "Food Bank" and "Food Pantry").* The typical food pantry operates out of a local house of worship or other civic building. Most of the foods distributed by the pantries are packaged, canned or dry goods. Refrigeration is usually limited to dairy items such as milk and cheese. Produce is rarely available.

**Q. How many food pantries are there in the country?**

A. No one knows for sure. According to a study by FeedingAmerica.org, in 2006, there were 29,674. By some estimates, there may now be more than 40,000.

Whatever the number, it is too large.

**Q. Why don't pantries offer fresh produce?**

A. Unlike supermarkets that get deliveries from food wholesalers daily assuring that you'll get fresh produce, food banks and other sources do less frequent deliveries of food to pantries. As such, lettuce or tomatoes that looked great on Monday when the food bank got them would be pretty limp or mushy a week later when finally delivered to the local food pantry.

Backyard gardeners however can harvest their produce and deliver it to the pantry on the same day. Furthermore, if the pantry clients pickup the produce that same day, they will benefit from eating food that is even fresher than what can be purchased at a food store.

**Q. Why do gardeners grow more food they can use?**

**A.** In an ideal world, gardeners would plant only enough to satisfy the needs of themselves and their friends. The reality of gardening (and farming in general) is that all sorts of things beyond the control of the gardener influence the ultimate size of the harvest. In a growing season with lots of sun, adequate rain, no late or early frosts, no serious pest problems (small pests such as fungus, pests a bit larger such as insects, pests a lot larger such as ground hogs or rabbits, and very large pests such as deer) etc, the grower gets a larger harvest. If however, any of the above appear (more often than not, several can appear at the same time), the harvest is significantly reduced.

Because the gardener never quite knows how good (or bad) the growing season will be, they usually grow more plants than they need--just in case a fungus laden insect traveling in the fur of a deer sized ground hog attacks the garden. The result is that if one or more of these bad things do not attack the garden, the harvest can easily exceed the needs of the grower.

AmpleHarvest.org exists to insure that the extra produce gets to food pantries instead of being left to rot in the garden.

**Q. I don't garden/am not gardening right now... can I still contribute?**

**A.** YES!

Not everyone gardens and gardeners do not garden all the time. Food pantries need fresh produce - but they also need a variety of store bought items all year long.

Pantries are encouraged to add information to their AmpleHarvest.org page listing store bought items they are most in need of (they may also list items they don't need!). If the pantry you found has listed store bought items they need, buy what you can afford on your next shopping trip (or check your kitchen cabinets) and drop them off at the pantry at the day/time they listed for donations. The free [AmpleHarvest.org iPhone app](#) was designed to help you find a food pantry when you are not near your computer... such as when you are shopping.

Please check the expiration date on the items you are bringing to the pantry (from your home or from a store). Even canned goods expire. Food pantries do not distribute, and will dispose of food past its expiration date.

## Food Pantry Questions

**Q. Is the AmpleHarvest.org campaign different from Plant-A-Row for the Hungry?**

**A.** Yes. Both programs work very hard to get fresh garden produce to the food insecure. While AmpleHarvest.org is focused on fresh produce from millions of backyard gardeners nationwide, PAR also works with farms and community gardens. AmpleHarvest.org offers gardeners online real-time information about their neighborhood pantries. Additionally, AmpleHarvest.org also offers gardeners and non-gardeners alike, the opportunity to see what store bought items the food pantries in their community are most in need of. A food agency can easily participate in both programs.

**Q. Our pantry has no refrigeration for storing produce, what do we do?**

**A.** Because many pantries have limited refrigeration capacity with little or no room for bulky produce such as lettuce or melons, they usually provide only canned fruits and vegetables.

AmpleHarvest.org solves this problem.

On the **Register a Pantry** page, you are encouraged to put the day[s] of the week and the time of day that gardeners should deliver their produce to you. You can then invite your clients to come later that same day to get the garden fresh produce. The produce should be in and out of your pantry within 1 to 2 days at most. Any produce harvested from a backyard garden can survive quite well without refrigeration for a day or so.

**Q. How does our pantry register on AmpleHarvest.org?**

**A.** Go to the **Register A Pantry** page and fill in the information in the shaded part of the page. Here are some helpful hints about registering:

1. Select a user name and password that is easy for you to remember, but not easy for others to guess. You will need your email and password in the future if you want to update the information on your page. Passwords should be at least 7 characters long.
2. The **Street Address** field should contain ONLY the address - no PO Box numbers, no floor numbers, etc. All words should be spelled out. AmpleHarvest.org uses Google Maps to help gardeners locate your pantry. If Google Maps does not recognize your address, it will not process properly. If you are in doubt, go to <http://maps.google.com/> and enter your street address followed by your zip code (i.e. 123 Main Street 10024). If Google Maps shows your location properly, enter it into AmpleHarvest.org. Otherwise try testing a variation of your address. For example, if 10 Saint Marks Pl does not work, try 10 St. Marks Pl instead.
3. Make sure that the State field properly displays your state.
4. If you have a digital camera, you may want to take a photo graph of the front of your pantry - it may make it easier for gardeners to find. Photographs should be up to 1000 X 1000 pixels and in a .jpg format.
5. Many pantries are using the **Additional Information** field to list those store bought items the pantry needs - enabling non-gardeners to also help out your pantry.
6. Lastly, \*carefully\* type the characters in the shaded box. This helps to assure that only accurate information is added to the data files.

**Q. Our pantry just registered on AmpleHarvest.org. What should we do next?**

A. There are several steps you can take:

1. Send an announcement to the local press and electronic media announcing your participation in the AmpleHarvest.org campaign. A sample [press announcement \(including AmpleHarvest.org logo graphics\) is available here](#) for your use.
2. Let other food pantries and similar agencies in your area know about the AmpleHarvest.org. You may want to email or fax information about AmpleHarvest.org to these neighboring pantries. A [sample email document is available here](#).
3. Help inform the gardeners in your community about the opportunity to share their produce with a food pantry. Print out this [garden shop flier](#), and ask your staff and clients (!) to take it to your local
  - garden shop
  - nursery
  - lawn and garden section of your local Home Depot/Lowes/Sears/Wal-Mart, etc.
  - hardware store

and ask them to post it by their cashier or in another conspicuous location. It can also be posted on the public bulletin board at a local

- library
  - supermarket
  - house of worship
  - health club/recreation facility
4. If your food pantry has a web page, put a link on your page to the [www.AmpleHarvest.org](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org) site.

Please visit the [Welcome to AmpleHarvest.org](#) page for additional helpful information. You can also print the information by clicking [here](#).

**Q. When might we start getting some garden produce for our clients?**

A. According to the [National Gardening Association](#), an more than 40 million American households will be growing fruit, vegetables and herbs in 2009.

However, how much produce may be donated and when will vary greatly based on the time of the year, what type of growing season your region experienced, and how the backyard gardeners in the area prefer to plant their gardens.

Some backyard gardeners grow a single crop for the year. They may plant only tomatoes for example, and if that is the case, you'll start seeing them come in the mid to late summer as the harvest continues. Others plant three separate crops; a spring cool weather crop (lettuce, broccoli, peas, beans, etc) that will be ready for harvest around June, a warmer weather crop (tomatoes, peppers, berries, etc) that will be harvested in the late summer, and a fall cool weather crop (winter squash, carrots, potatoes, etc) that may come in the late Fall. It all depends upon what the gardener decided to grow.

Your staff and your clients can help influence the gardeners in your community to share their produce with a local food pantry. Please visit the [Informing the Gardener](#) page to learn more.

**Q. How much produce should we expect to receive for our clients?**

A. That again will vary greatly based on what type of growing season your region experienced and how many backyard gardeners are in the area.

A growing season with terrible weather (too much or too little rain, late or early frosts, etc) or pest problems may result in a smaller than desired crop leaving the backyard gardeners with enough for their own needs and not enough to share.

Another item influencing the amount that you will see is the nature of the surrounding area. A food pantry in a large metropolitan area may not have the benefit of many backyard gardeners in the immediate vicinity, so they may see a smaller benefit. Pantries in suburban or rural areas however should see a significantly larger volume of deliveries simply because there are more backyard gardeners in the vicinity.

**Q. Our food pantry is in a large city, should we even bother to get listed on AmpleHarvest.org?**

A. Absolutely YES.

Nationwide, we are seeing a resurgence of gardening in cities--abandoned plots, community gardens, roof top gardens, and even "upside-down" tomato growing. Even the [White House](#) now has its own vegetable garden! Someone growing in the city [can](#) harvest as much as their rural counterparts. All they need is good soil, sun, rain and like every other gardener, some luck.

**Q. Should we report the produce donated by local gardeners?**

A. Some food banks have expressed an interest in receiving this information so you should contact yours to see if this information would be helpful to them.

Gardeners are welcome to send an email to [IShared@AmpleHarvest.org](mailto:IShared@AmpleHarvest.org) when they share their bounty. AmpleHarvest.org itself does no tracking of gardeners seeking food pantries nor the amount of produce donated.

**Q. Can AmpleHarvest.org help us get donations of store bought items?**

**A. YES.**

You can use the **Additional Information:** field on your listing to let the public know what store bought items you are in particular need of, such as pasta, cereal, toothpaste, etc.

The [AmpleHarvest.org iPhone app](#) was designed to help shoppers find a food pantry when they encounter a special sale in the store. Make sure that you list those store bought items you most urgently need in the "Additional Information" section of your pantries listing. Update it as often as necessary by selecting [Register/Update A Pantry](#), and then entering your username and password in the "Existing Pantries Log In Here" section on the left side of the screen.

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## Backyard Gardener Questions

**Q. What do I do if AmpleHarvest.org does not list any food pantries in my neighborhood?**

Your help can be critical here.

Food pantries are often "under the radar"--they do not have a web site, signs on the front door, or yellow page listing. That is why we created AmpleHarvest.org, to make it possible to find a pantry in your neighborhood.

If we do not list a pantry in your area, please help us find one. How? See if a place of worship or other civic organization in your community has one. Call your regional food bank ([www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org) can help you find it) and ask them if they can help you.

Once you do find one, contact them to see if they'll accept your produce. ALSO, please ask them to visit [www.AmpleHarvest.org](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org) or print out [www.AmpleHarvest.org/pantry.pdf](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org/pantry.pdf) and give it to them. You can also ask them to contact the other nearby food pantries to let them know about AmpleHarvest.org. If they are not Internet savvy, you may want to help them register on AmpleHarvest.org.

Once they are registered, the next backyard gardener in your area looking to share their bounty will not experience the problems you did.

**Q. I love the idea of sharing my produce, what do I do once I have found a pantry?**

First and foremost, see if a preferred delivery day of the week and time of day is listed. It is important to adhere to the pantries scheduling information if they provide it so as not interfere with their operations. If no day/time is listed, call or email them to find out when they would like you to deliver the produce.

On the day of your planned delivery, harvest your crops in the early morning while they still have some of the coolness of the evening air. If they have dew, wipe them dry with a paper towel. Each item should be visually inspected for serious bruising, insect damage, and ripeness. **Do not donate produce that you would not buy for your own family.** Produce that is overripe, has mushy spots, or is seriously blemished should either be made into a soup, stew, or go into a compost pile but not donated. (Note, if you used any pesticide on your garden, please take the time to clean each piece of produce as recommended by the pesticide manufacturer on the label before you let **anyone** eat it.)

Next, unless they have given you other instructions, package your produce in paper supermarket bags and take them to the pantry at the requested time. If you find the pantry convenient to get to, you can continue to share your produce with them through the rest of the growing season. Alternatively, you may decide to go back to AmpleHarvest.org next time and select a different pantry - spreading your produce over several pantries.

Whichever way you choose to do it, it will be greatly appreciated. Lastly, please remember to let your fellow gardeners know about AmpleHarvest.org, so they can share the bounty of their garden at their harvest time.

**Q. I have "a lot" of tomatoes but only "a handful" of cucumbers, should I bother to bring them?**

Yes! The produce you bring will be pooled with that of other backyard gardeners in your area. For all you know, the next gardener might bring only 3 tomatoes and two bags of cucumbers.

Remember, the key thing is that food should not be wasted, especially when so many Americans are having a hard time feeding their families.

Your bounty, large or small, will help to diminish hunger in America.

**Q. Do the pantries care if I grow organically?**

A. Most do not - they are perfectly happy with fresh produce, organic or not. HOWEVER, you may want to let the pantry know if you use organic methods in case one of their clients prefers it. Having said that, if you do grow organically, you will harvest healthier food without depleting the earth as much.

**Q. Growing season is over... can I still donate to a food pantry?**





A. Pantries need your help all year long. Visit [AmpleHarvest.org](http://AmpleHarvest.org) to see if your local pantry has listed any store bought items that they are in particular need of. Any donations will help.

**Q. Would you like to know if I shared my garden bounty?**

A. We'd love to know about it. Send an email to [IShared@AmpleHarvest.org](mailto:IShared@AmpleHarvest.org) and let us know how much produce you were able to share. You might also want to visit our Facebook page and post the information there too.

There is no need to identify yourself if you don't want to, simply sign it with your initials and your city and state.

**Q. I know about a food pantry that is not on AmpleHarvest.org, what should I do?**

A. Just because you know about the pantry does not mean that other backyard gardeners in your area also know about it.

Please make every effort to inform the pantry about [AmpleHarvest.org](http://AmpleHarvest.org). The key to success of the campaign is to have as many food pantries as possible listed on the site.

The best thing to do is either to visit the pantry and suggest that they go to [www.AmpleHarvest.org](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org) to list their pantry, or if they do not have Internet access, print out the *pantry information* in the green box on the left and give it to them. They may need your help to actually do the registration. Please remind them that there is absolutely no cost or obligations involved with listing on [AmpleHarvest.org](http://AmpleHarvest.org).

**Q. What happens if someone becomes ill after eating something I donated to a food pantry?**

A. You are protected by the Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act signed during the Clinton administration. The Act is intended to encourage donations of food to nonprofit organizations while providing the donor with "Good Samaritan" protection. You are provided protection from criminal and civil liability providing you did not exhibit gross negligence. The text of the act is at [www.usda.gov/news/pubs/gleaning/appc.htm](http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/gleaning/appc.htm)