

AmpleHarvest.org

"Sharing your garden bounty with Neighbors in Need"

Two Looks at Hunger in America

One out of eight Americans needs food assistance, but the local food pantry usually can't provide fresh produce.

It is not news to anyone that the economy is bad - really bad!

What might be surprising is how many of your neighbors are now "food insecure" - a fancy government term for hungry. The statistic from *before* the recession was that 36 million people, or about 12% of the US population were receiving *some* type of assistance for food - and now, it is a lot higher.

The place where families usually get food assistance is called a "food pantry" - most often a small room in a neighborhood place such as a house of worship or similar setting. They are typically supplied by regional food banks, sometimes local grocery stores and the generosity of the people in the neighborhood.

They usually have shelves containing dry packed or canned foods, juices, and other household necessities. There may be a refrigerator with dairy products and other perishables at the pantry.

However, fresh produce is almost never available.

It does not have to be that way.

Millions of American homeowners grow more food in their backyard gardens than they can possibly use.

It is not news to anyone that the economy is bad - really bad!

Even before the economic problems started, many Americans enjoyed growing fruits and vegetables in their backyard gardens. They got pleasure from being outdoors while also having a supply of fresh food for the table.

Now driven by economic uncertainty, more people than ever are gardening in their backyards as well as in community gardens.

For many, it can feel like forever while they wait for their garden to start producing tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, squash, etc. But once they start harvesting their crops, it comes with a vengeance.

The typical backyard gardener will consume as much of their harvest as possible, can, preserve or pickle some, and then share more with their friends and neighbors. Yet in many cases, the harvest continues.

The rest often ends up left to rot in the garden, put in the compost pile, or worse, tossed into the garbage.

It does not have to be that way.

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The AmpleHarvest.org campaign diminishes hunger in America by enabling backyard gardeners to share their excess garden produce with neighborhood food pantries.

These backyard gardeners would be happy to share some of their harvest with a neighborhood food pantry but usually can't because the pantries are often hard to find - many not having a web site or even a phone number.

To address this situation, the AmpleHarvest.org^(SM) campaign has been established with the goal of enabling America's backyard gardeners to quickly find local food pantries in need of fresh produce.

The AmpleHarvest.org web site enables a food pantry to register its name, address, phone etc. - even an optional photo of the building to make it easy to find. It also accepts information on the days and hours gardeners' donations will be accepted.

The site also enables a gardener to enter their address or zip code and find all of the registered food pantries within the distance they are willing to travel. It also displays a map and optional driving instructions.

The AmpleHarvest.org campaign is a grass roots effort and has the support of the US Department of Agriculture, VFW, Google, Catholic Charities, Garden Writers of America, and many other organizations. 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. Having as many food pantries as possible registered on AmpleHarvest.org is critical to making this campaign succeed.

You Can Help Diminish Hunger in America

If you know of a food pantry in your community, you can help diminish hunger by printing www.AmpleHarvest.org/pantry.pdf and giving it to the pantry manager. There are between 30,000 and 40,000 pantries in America... nearly every community has at least one. This is our most urgent task. Please help.

If you are or are friends with a backyard gardener, a local farmer, garden club or community garden member, you can help diminish hunger in their community by going to www.AmpleHarvest.org/gardener.pdf and sharing it with the grower.

An estimated 100 billion pounds of food - enough to totally eliminate hunger in this country, is thrown away annually.

It does not have to be this way - *and you can help change that!*

info@AmpleHarvest.org

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973-409-4093

AmpleHarvest.org is a program of Sustainable West Milford, a non-profit 501(3)(c) organization