

AmpleHarvest.org^(SM)

"Sharing your garden bounty with Neighbors in Need"

F.A.Q.

General Questions

Q. What exactly is the AmpleHarvest.org campaign?

A. Created by CNN Hero Gary Oppenheimer, AmpleHarvest.org is a nationwide campaign to diminish hunger and malnutrition (while helping the environment) in America by making it easy for millions of backyard gardeners across the country to quickly find local food pantries eager to receive their excess garden bounty.

AmpleHarvest.org has received backing and support from the USDA, Google Inc., Feeding America and food banks nationwide as well as major faith organizations. It has been highlighted on the White House web site, PBS's "Growing A Greener World" as well as the CNN Heroes program.

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. 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.

Its vision is an America where millions of gardeners eliminate malnutrition and hunger in their own community. It accomplished this by educating, encouraging and enabling gardeners to donate their excess harvest to the needy in their community instead of allowing it to rot in the garden. There are no costs to the food pantries or the gardeners for use of AmpleHarvest.org. Our message to America is: **No Food Left Behind.**

Although there are a number of excellent programs that help farmers and community gardens get produce to food banks, AmpleHarvest.org is the only program in America that is solving hunger and malnutrition by moving information instead of moving food thereby helping local gardeners find neighborhood food pantries. AmpleHarvest.org, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization (EIN #27-2433274).

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.

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

A. No one knows for sure. According to a study by FeedingAmerica.org, in 2010, there were 33,500 in their network - an increase of 13% from 2006. There are no accurate statistics on how many other food pantries exist outside of the FeedingAmerica.org network, but 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 pick up 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 food gets to 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 and Android apps were 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.

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Q. I think this is a great idea... how can I help?

A. Although there are already more than 5,000 food pantries across all 50 states already registered on AmpleHarvest.org, the key to the continued success of the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign is increasing the public awareness of the effort.

As more pantries AND gardeners learn about it, more food will find its way from backyard gardens to the kitchens of those who need it most. And you can help.

- Tell your friends and family about AmpleHarvest.org
- If your house of worship, town hall, community building, etc. houses a food pantry, inform the pantry manager about AmpleHarvest.org by giving them our **food pantry-food bank flier**.
- If someone you know gardens or belong to a garden club or community garden, give them our **gardener/farmer flier**.
- You can print out this **garden shop/nursery flier**, 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. You might also want to post a copy on the public bulletin board at your local

- library
- supermarket
- house of worship
- health club/recreation facility
- Put a link from your web site to www.AmpleHarvest.org. Several graphics and widgets are available for your use at our **link to us page**. Please email info@AmpleHarvest.org for assistance with setting up the link.
- You can help to sustain the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign by making a [monetary contribution](#). Donations of \$1,000 or more earn a special listing on the AmpleHarvest.org site (and our eternal gratitude). However, any contribution, large or small, one time or recurring is greatly appreciated and will help AmpleHarvest.org diminish hunger in America. AmpleHarvest.org, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization (EIN #27-2433274)

Q. I found your site and need food for my family... can you help me?

A. We're very sorry to hear about your situation.... many people across the country are having similar difficulties.

The AmpleHarvest.org web site is designed to help food pantries in your community, where you can get food assistance, get garden fresh produce from local gardeners.

While we can't help you directly, we know where you can get help - please visit

info@AmpleHarvest.org

5/1/12-FAQ

973-409-4093

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AmpleHarvest.org/211 or call **2-1-1**. You can also call 877-652-1148 if you have any trouble getting through to 2-1-1.

United Way has people you can talk to 24 hours a day in complete confidence. They have all the services available - both government and non-profit - on their computer screens, and they can help you find a nearby food pantry, as well as other services you may need.

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Food Pantry Questions

Q. Are there any costs associated with registering on AmpleHarvest.org?

A. Nope. None. Nada. Zippo. AmpleHarvest.org is totally free both for your food pantry (also called a food cupboard, food shelf, food closet or food bank in some parts of the country) as well as the gardeners using AmpleHarvest.org to find your food pantry.

Q. What type of agency can register at AmpleHarvest.org?

A. The AmpleHarvest.org Campaign is designed to make food pantries "visible" to neighborhood gardeners eager to share their excess harvest.

Other agencies such as soup kitchens and shelters may also take advantage of AmpleHarvest.org although our model was explicitly designed to meet the exact needs of food pantries.

The two requirements to register on AmpleHarvest.org are the agency must be a not for profit 501(c)3 organization and the donated food must be distributed at no charge to the recipient.

Individuals and for-profit organizations may not register on AmpleHarvest.org.

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. AmpleHarvest.org is focused on getting fresh produce from millions of gardeners across all 50 states to local food pantries and PAR is available in those communities where they are set up to operate. AmpleHarvest.org offers gardeners nationwide 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.



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

A. Go to the [Register A Food Pantry](#) page and fill in the information in the shaded part of the page.

This [video](#) gives you a quick overview of registering your food pantry at AmpleHarvest.org.

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 photograph 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.

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

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

However, how much produce may be donated and when will vary greatly based on what part of the country you are in, 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.

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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. We are 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 when they share their bounty. AmpleHarvest.org itself does no tracking of gardeners seeking food pantries nor the amount of produce donated.

Q. We operate a "soup kitchen". Can we participate in the AmpleHarvest.org Campaign?

A. AmpleHarvest.org is designed to help millions of gardeners find food pantries and donate their excess crops to them. Soup kitchens and shelters operate differently from pantries in that they require all of the needed ingredients for a meal to be on-hand for every meal. Since local gardeners donate their produce when they harvest and only if/when they want to, you can't be assured of a steady supply of produce from the gardeners.

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If you can operate with the unpredictability of the gardener's donations, then yes... you may register at AmpleHarvest.org. If however, you need to be assured of a steady supply of produce, you should instead rely on other sources.

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](#) and [Android](#) apps were 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.

Q. How can our food bank get member agencies to sign up on AmpleHarvest.org?

A. AmpleHarvest.org works with nearly every food bank in America as well as with Feeding America itself. Because the food banks have direct access to their member agencies, we count on the food banks to help agencies learn about AmpleHarvest.org and encourage them to register themselves. This is good for the food bank because it help the agencies get access to freshly harvested and locally grown food and because it enables local food drives to get the collected food directly to the agency without bogging down the food bank with the task of sorting and distributing food donated by individuals - thereby cutting the operating costs for the food bank.

Several resources are available for food banks to share with their agencies:

- [Food Pantry Registration Information](#)
- [Food Pantry Information Including Fax Registration Form](#)
- [Video explaining how to register](#)

Please urge your agencies to see if they might already be registered on AmpleHarvest.org before possibly re-registering themselves by going first to <http://www.AmpleHarvest.org/find-pantry.php> and entering their zip code. If their food pantry does not show up, they should register it.

While we strongly encourage individual agencies to register themselves at AmpleHarvest.org, some food banks have asked to "bulk load" their agencies. If your food bank wants to take that approach, please populate the [bulk load spreadsheet](#) and follow the enclosed instructions.

Lastly, if your food bank is hosting a conference or meeting for all of your agencies and you are looking for a keynote speaker, please email info@AmpleHarvest.org with the date and location - someone will get back to you within a few hours.



Backyard Gardener Questions

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

A. 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) 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 or print out **www.AmpleHarvest.org/pantry** 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?

A. 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,

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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 few of cucumbers, should I bother to bring them?

A. 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. Are my donations tax deductible?

A. We are not tax experts, but our tax experts believe that donations may be tax deductible provided you can determine the fair market value of your donation. We spoke to our tax experts... but you'll need to talk to yours to get an answer that will be applicable to your situation.

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 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** 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.

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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. 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 to list their pantry, or if they do not have Internet access, print out the [pantry flier](#) 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.

Q. What happens if someone becomes ill after eating something I donated?

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