



Bulletin #4337



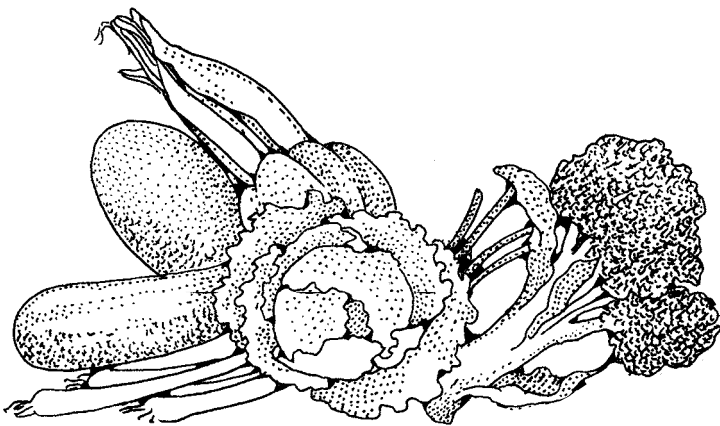
Plan Before You Donate Produce

The 100' by 100' garden that the Williams family planted year after year had been a great source of food for their family of five children, two parents and the grandmother who lived in a small, rural Maine town. Nowadays, however, the abundance of green beans in the last week of July is much more than their family can use. With the children gone, canning, freezing and cooking large meals are things of the past. They still enjoy gardening, though.

How can the Williams family help others who might need their garden produce?

Donating produce from your garden to a local food bank, pantry, or kitchen can be a very rewarding activity and certainly is greatly appreciated by the receiving organization. *A successful donation of perishable products requires some advance planning and coordination.*

Occasionally, gardeners encounter problems when donating and get the feeling that the help is not welcome. This is frequently caused by a lack of communication between donor and recipient.



Successful Growing – Successful Donations

There are two situations that can result in the desire to donate garden produce. The first occurs when an overabundance of produce is grown and the gardener doesn't want it to "go to waste," so a donation is made to a local organization. The second is a planned effort where the gardener plants crops specifically intended for donation.

The first situation is very common and most gardeners have experienced it on a regular basis. Also, this is often when difficulties occur when making the donation.

If you expect to have surplus produce (or even think you might), then it's wise to connect with the organization you want to donate to before the crop is ready. You need to know what they will accept, how much or how little they can use at one time, and the days and hours that you can deliver to them. Once you have all of this information, both you and the recipient will benefit.

The final caution when donating surplus produce is to harvest when the crop is at the proper stage of growth. For information on harvesting, refer to our bulletin #4303, *A Donor's Guide to Vegetable Harvest and Storage*. Too often, gardeners with surplus crops tend to delay harvest until they are sure they will not use the produce themselves. By then it may be overmature and of no use to the recipient.

The second situation, where crops are planted with the intention of donating, is usually the easiest to manage.

Successful Donating Starts with You

Steps to success:

1. Determine how much space you wish to donate to the project.
2. Make a list of the possible crops you can grow in this space.
3. Contact the recipient to determine the crop they need or can use effectively.
4. Determine when and how much to donate at one time.
5. Ask about the condition of the crop that the recipient prefers: washed, trimmed, etc.
6. If you are growing storage crops like squash, potatoes, onions or carrots, determine the maximum and minimum amounts that can be stored at one time.
7. Plant and grow the crops on your list that fit the needs of the recipients.
8. Harvest and deliver the crop.

If you follow these steps, the receiving pantry, food cupboard, or soup kitchen will get produce that is most useful to them, and you grow crops that fit your garden plan.

For more information about local food pantries, kitchens, and other produce recipients, contact your county Extension office.

Other fact sheets in the Food for ME series:

- *A Donor's Guide to Vegetable Harvest and Storage*, bulletin #4303
- *Donating Food to Food Pantries*, bulletin #4302
- *Food for Your Community: Gleaning and Sharing*, bulletin #4301
- *A Food Pantry Wish List*, bulletin #4304
- *How to Organize a Community Food Drive*, bulletin #4305
- *Organizing Your Community Garden*, bulletin #4300

To order these publications, call your county Extension office or visit the UMCE Web site at www.umext.maine.edu.

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