



Share Your Harvested Bounty

by Dana Young, UC Master Gardener

Are you inundated with homegrown fresh produce? Perhaps you have enough for your family and a small amount left over that you hate to see go to waste. There is good news. Today we would like to offer some suggestions as to how and where you can donate excess garden produce. You may enjoy it so much that you plant an extra row just for the purpose of donating it to people in need.

Before we get to that there are a few things to consider such as the produce itself. “Fresh from the garden” produce needs to withstand transporting to a giveaway place and then to a home before it ruins. Varieties for home use are usually grown and picked for flavor rather than for storage compared to commercial varieties. Soft foods like figs or apricots spoil quicker than apples or zucchini. Although refrigeration usually extends the shelf life, not all places accepting donations have access to cold storage, so keep this in mind. Minor imperfections are acceptable; however people will be eating it so it must be safe and free of toxins and decay.



Even the time of day and day of the week that you donate is important. If possible donate early in the day, Monday thru Thursday so it is available when there is lots of foot traffic. No one wants boxes of food sitting in a community center over the weekend. An example of a perfect time is during lunch at the senior center.

Next we'll consider packaging. Containers should be cardboard, paper or plastic that need not be returned to you. Many volunteers are elderly or disabled so using smaller boxes is appreciated. Perhaps you have some bags to donate. Remember that people will be eating this food so do not ever use bags that have carried meat products, cleaning chemicals, toxins, etc. or is otherwise contaminated.

Your church or club may be able to distribute food, just be sure to get permission before setting out a



box of food in the church foyer. Your pastor or priest often knows families that are struggling, so fresh produce will be welcomed. I know that in my neighborhood a box of produce in my front yard with a “free” sign would be perfectly appropriate. I love to trade extras with neighbors.

Listed below are some organizations that have given me permission to print their information. It is always a good idea to call them before you drop off produce.

Tulare Salvation Army (559) 686-2520
300 E. San Joaquin St., Tulare
Note hours, Monday – Friday, 9:00 – 5:00 p.m., closed at lunch, has large refrigerator.

Visalia Rescue Mission (559) 740-4178
741 Santa Fe, Visalia
In addition to various feeding programs they furnish food to other organizations. Call this number for a drop off site close to your area.

Food Link of Tulare County
(559) 651-3663
They have an extensive list of organizations accepting donations and are happy to assist you in finding locations that are close to your garden. Visit their website foodlinktc.org for a complete list of food banks and hours of operation in Tulare County.

Kings Community Action Org (KCAO)
(559) 582-4386
1130 No. 11th Ave., Hanford

Tulare Senior Center (559) 685-2330
201 No. F St., Tulare
This is not a formal distribution site but an example of places to leave small amounts of food. There is a table in the dining area specifically for free items. Please do not leave food there on Friday afternoons to avoid waste.

TC Harvest (559) 202-3274
This site is in Pixley but these volunteers will even harvest if necessary. They accept entire trees of produce and then donate it to feeding programs and food banks. Check out their fantastic website. www.BeHealthy.Tulare

Hanford Salvation Army (559) 582-4434
380 East Ivy St., Hanford

Koinonia Christian Fellowship (559) 584-3603
12628 Hanford-Armona Rd., Hanford

Hour of Truth Ministry 800-651-8139
936 W. Mammoth Pool Way, Hanford

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