



Guidelines for Donating Tree Fruits to Good Cheer Food Bank

- No groundfall.** For food safety reasons as well as quality control, we cannot accept tree fruits gathered from the ground. *(No, not even if you saw it fall. Sorry, no exceptions!)*
- Separate and record varieties.** Please keep different fruits (apples vs. pears) and varieties (fuji vs. granny smith) sorted separately from each other. If you know the variety name, write it directly onto donation boxes. For unknown varieties, we'd love any info you can share with us about the fruit. *Does it store well? Make great pies? How much ripening time is needed?*
- Sort as you go.** Check for pests as you harvest and remove damaged fruits from donation pile.
- Handle fruits gently.** Try to minimize handling by harvesting directly into the sturdy, stackable box you will deliver fruit in. *(See chart below).* Whenever possible, move fruit gently one at a time rather than dumping from one box or container to another.
- Keep stems attached** to the fruit for better storage qualities.
- Box (don't bag) fruit.** Fruits in paper or plastic bags are susceptible to damage during handling. Please help us maintain the best quality possible and *deliver fruit in sturdy, stackable boxes* instead. We'd be happy to supply you with a box, if needed.
- Please harvest and pack fruits according to the chart below:**

| Fruit | Harvesting & Handling | Pack & Box Type |
|------------|--|--|
| Apple | Pick when ripe (dark seeds, juicy flesh, fruit starts to fall from tree.) Inspect carefully for apple maggot. | Apple or banana box Max box weight: 40 lbs |
| Asian Pear | Pick ripe, but not overripe. Inspect carefully for apple maggot. | Banana box or folding crate Fruit less than 5-6 layers deep |
| Peach | Harvest just before fully ripe, when flavor is full but fruit is still very slightly firm (not hard) | Low, flat boxes Fruit only 1 layer deep |
| Pear | For best flavor, do not ripen on the tree. Pick fruits mature but unripe. Deliver immediately so we can monitor and control the ripening time. | Low, flat box Fruit 1-2 layers deep at max |
| Plum | <i>Please pick 2-3 days before full ripeness!</i> Plums ripen very quickly off the tree and it often takes us a few days to get them all distributed to clients. | Low, flat box Fruit 1-2 layers deep at max |
| Quince | Pick ripe, but not overripe. Ripe quince will still be hard, but turning yellow and aromatic. Harvest before brown spotting or areas of softening occur. | Banana box Maximum box weight 40 lbs |



Guidelines for Donating Garden Produce to Good Cheer Food Bank

- 1. Pick food at its prime.** Vegetables should be harvested early in the day before it gets warm. Each item should be visibly inspected for bruising, insect damage and ripeness. Please pick your zucchini at a reasonable size, *before they grow into whales*, and harvest greens before they bolt.
- 2. Follow safe harvesting practices.**
 - Before harvesting, wash your hands and clean all harvest tools with soap and warm water
 - Collect and transport produce in clean, food-safe containers
 - If you use pesticide or herbicide in your garden, always read and follow label recommendations
- 3. Dry and clean but unwashed whenever possible.** Remove root matter and any muddy outer leaves, but don't wash donations of berries or leafy greens (they store longer unwashed. If needed, gently shake greens upside down to dislodge remaining debris. Muddy root vegetables may need to be sprayed off and air-dried.
- 4. Donate freshly-picked produce between 9:30 AM and 4:00 PM Mon–Fri.** Please plan ahead and deliver produce as soon as possible *on the same day you pick it*. This helps retain the nutritional value and freshness of your harvest.
- 5. Leave yourself plenty of time to make a donation.** You can help us speed things along for everyone involved by delivering produce in bags or boxes that you do not need us to empty and return to you. If needed, we will provide you with a box!
- 6. Would you eat it?** Be sure to donate only quality produce and compost any that isn't fresh. A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself, "Would I eat this?" Anything that is wilted, overripe, cut or broken open, infested with insects, or showing signs of decay should not be donated.
- 7. Call ahead! If you have a large amount (more than 50 pounds) of produce to donate,** you can help us out by letting us know ahead of time what you're bringing and when you plan to deliver. Call the food bank at (360) 221-4868 and ask for our Produce Manager.
- 8. Are you planting a row for the food bank?** E-mail goodcheerfreshfoods@gmail.com and let us know! If you plan to grow a crop specifically for donation to Good Cheer, we would *love* to know what you're growing, how much, when you planted it, and your estimated harvest date. This helps us coordinate donations and plantings.



Quick Reference Harvest & Delivery Guide

| Produce Item | Special handling Instructions |
|---|--|
| Beets, carrots, and radishes | Spray or rinse dirt from root, keeping greens dry if possible. Air dry briefly until no longer dripping. |
| Berries | Do not wash. Harvest and deliver in a low, flat box; pint size berry cartons; or quart-size ziplock bags. |
| Greens and herbs | Harvest in cool, dry weather. Do not wash. Remove root matter and dirty outer leaves. If needed, gently shake greens upside down to dislodge any remaining debris. Deliver in plastic bags or waxed produce boxes. |
| Onions, scallions, leeks, and garlic | Do not wash. Trim roots and shake/brush off dirt as much as possible. |
| Rhubarb | Wipe off mud, but do not wash. Leave stems long if possible. |
| Tomatoes | Harvest almost ripe, flavorful but still slightly firm. Pick on a dry day. Do not wash or refrigerate. Deliver in boxes (not bags) with fruit stacked 1–2 layers deep at max. |
| Tree fruits | No groundfall. Separate by variety. Deliver in sturdy, stackable boxes. Do not wash. |
| Winter squash | Leave stems attached for better storage qualities. Wipe off any dirt or mud with a damp rag. Allow winter squash to “cure” in a warm, sunny place for 2–3 days after harvest. |
| Zucchini and other summer squash | Harvest small to medium in size whenever possible. If needed, wipe away dirt or mud with a dry cloth. Do not wash or refrigerate. |

FAQs About Donating Produce to Good Cheer Food Bank

Q. When should I drop off my donation?

A. You can drop off donations between 9:30 AM and 4:00 PM Monday through Friday. The food bank is closed weekends.

Please do not leave donations outside when we are closed! Thank you.



Q. How do I apply to have the Gleeful Gleaners come harvest fruit from my tree?

A. Please visit our website and [fill out the fruit tree donor form](#) at least 3 weeks before the fruit on your tree is ripe. The more heads up time you can give us, the more likely it is that we will be able to coordinate a volunteer picking crew to harvest your tree!

Q. Do you care if I grow organically?

A. We can use all fresh produce donations, organic or not. Either way, *please tell us!* We use organic growing practices here in our growing spaces and encourage home gardeners to do so as well, for the health of our community and environment. Resources are available from the [Washington State Master Gardeners](#) to help you garden organically.

Q. I have chickens. Can I donate the eggs?

A. Yes, we love fresh egg donations! Clean eggs should be put into standard one dozen cartons and marked with the date of collection. If you don't have cartons, we can provide some to you.

Q. I have extra plant starts. Do you want them?

A. Yes! Starts are very popular with clients and volunteers alike. E-mail goodcheergarden@gmail.com to let Camille Green, our Garden Manager, know what varieties you're bringing, and we can provide printed educational materials alongside your starts to help new gardeners know when and how to plant and care for them.

Q. Can I donate homemade salsas and jams I made with produce from my garden?

A. Under current food safety regulations, we cannot accept foods processed at home. However, if you would like to share a recipe, give a cooking demonstration, or volunteer to process fruits and vegetables here in our on-site kitchen, please e-mail goodcheerfreshfoods@gmail.com!

Q. I'm worried about liability. What if somebody gets sick from donated food?

A. If food is good to the best of your knowledge, your donation is protected from liability by the [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act](#). As always, if you have a reason to question the food safety of an item, it should not be donated.

Q. Growing season is over; can I still help?

A. Yes! Cash donations to support the Fresh Food on the Table Program are always welcome. And your time and talents are valuable donations as well. Become a Good Cheer volunteer today! Contact Shawn Nowlin at community@goodcheer.org.