



Garden Leader Handbook



Our Mission

Our Mission is to **create** community around local food traditions; **grow** fresh, healthy, local food, making it accessible to Charlotte's low-income citizens; and **share** knowledge and passion for sustainable food production.

About Friendship Gardens

Friendship Gardens is an expanding network of community, school, faith-based, institutional, public, private, and backyard gardens. Most of our garden partnerships share their harvest for the benefit of Friendship Trays who provide over 750 meals a day to members of our community who have limited access to healthy food. To the community: we offer educational workshops, volunteer and leadership opportunities, community connections, and food access to those with limited options. For more info please visit our website www.friendship-gardens.org

About our Garden Network Model

We love to help groups garden. We can help with garden design, consulting, and advice as groups work through the process to plan their garden. We can work with a group to lead a volunteer day to build the garden. Ongoing, we offer seeds, plants, gardening advice, access to our network of garden leaders for ideas, and the opportunity to donate produce to help feed those in need. In return, each garden in our network teaches gardening in some way to their community and donates a portion of their harvest to Friendship Trays, our parent organization and our local meals on wheels program. We rely on our garden leaders to deliver the donated harvest to Friendship Trays. More on that later.

Each group that hosts a garden is self-managed. They run the day to day watering, weeding, planting, etc. We ask that each garden name a "garden leader" to represent the group and act as our main communication contact.



The Friendship Trays “Most Wanted” Vegetable List

The Friendship Trays chefs are really good at incorporating whatever is donated into a nutritiously balanced meal. Therefore, we are happy to receive any fresh veggie donation. For those that want a bit more direction, here is a short list of the “most wanted” vegetables. The list is a combination of what the Friendship Trays kitchen uses the most and what produce is easiest to prep and incorporate into the meals. Some gardens choose to plant one or two of these crops on a designated plot for Friendship Trays, others harvest for Friendship Trays on specific dates. The veggies are not listed in rank order of preference.

Spring/Fall

- Carrots
- Onions (large, sweet)
- Turnips
- Potatoes
- Broccoli
- Greens

Summer

- Bell Peppers
- Tomatoes
- Cucumbers
- Eggplant
- Sweet Potatoes
- Green Beans
- Squash

Friendship Gardens Food Safety Guidelines for Donated Harvest

Thank you for helping provide fresh, healthy food to the Friendship Trays meals-on-wheels recipients! It is important to consider the safety and quality of the harvest being donated by following these simple guidelines.

Would You Eat It?

- Please donate high quality produce to Friendship Trays.

Personal Hygiene

- Prior to harvesting wash hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Dry hands with a clean towel or air dry.



- Do not smoke or use tobacco products while harvesting.

Safe Harvesting

- Collect and transport produce in clean containers that are in good condition (no cracks or deep scratches) and are dedicated to food collection or storage. Plastic baskets, buckets, and coolers work well.
- Clean all containers, scissors, and other harvesting tools with warm, soapy water immediately prior to harvest.
- Store harvest tools separately from other garden tools and label them appropriately.
- Remove large pieces of dirt from the produce by shaking gently or rinsing with water.
- Children under 18 years of age should be supervised while harvesting.

Safe Storage

- Deliver produce to Friendship Trays on the same day that it is harvested. This increases the freshness of the harvest and helps retain nutrients.
- If produce needs to be stored at home, place produce in a clean food-grade plastic bag, label "Friendship Trays", and store in a clean refrigerator away from raw animal products and without exposure to open containers.

As a donor, you are protected by the "Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act" (<http://www.foodtodonate.com/Fdcmain/LegalLiabilities.aspx>) This law protects donors from civil and criminal liability should the product donated in good faith cause harm to the needy recipient.

Instructions for Donating Harvest to Friendship Trays

Where: Please deliver harvest donations to Friendship Trays (2401-A Distribution St. Charlotte, NC 28203). Drive around to the back of the building to find the parking lot and door. The harvest weigh in station is directly to your right as you enter the building. You will see the scale, computer, and refrigerator.

When: Harvest can be delivered to Friendship Trays anytime Monday-Friday 7:00am-3:00pm. We are often open and available after 3pm, but please call first to make sure we are there (704) 333-9229.



How: Before you deliver please read and follow the [Safe Food Handling Guidelines](#) included in this manual. One of the ways we measure our impact is by weighing all the produce that comes in to Friendship Trays. In order to track the harvest most efficiently, we are using a computerized system.

- The weigh-in station is located just inside the main entrance to Friendship Trays. If the computer is turned off, please turn it on. Do not use paper and pen unless there is a problem with the computer.
- There is a shortcut to the harvest form in the middle of the desktop on the computer screen. If it does not open properly, the internet signal may not be working. You can either: a) turn the computer off and back on to allow the computer to reset [if that doesn't work, let a staff person know]; b) use your smartphone; or c) use pen and paper.
- Enter the data and click "enter" for EACH TYPE of produce. The data is time-stamped in the database, so you will only need to enter: name of garden, type of produce, and weight. Each type of produce will be a separate entry. Note: We've grouped the produce into larger categories, so if you bring in kale and collards, those can be weighed together and put into the "dark leafy green" category. SHORTCUT: Use the list posted to identify the type of produce and as you start typing, the category should pop up. Same for your garden name.
- When you are done, make sure you click "enter" for the final produce, then leave the produce in the cooler to the left or (use your best judgement) take it back to the kitchen staff to put in the walk-in cooler.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much food does each garden have to donate?

There is no set amount of harvest that you must donate to Friendship Trays. With the interest of sustainability for your gardeners in mind, we require that you keep some of the harvest to share with your gardeners. Donate what you can to Friendship Trays and make sure that your gardeners are eating from your Friendship Garden as well.

What if I need to schedule a volunteer work group?

Organizations and businesses often contact Friendship Gardens wanting to bring a group of volunteers to one of our gardens. If you would like to host a work group in your garden and you are willing to direct/host them on that day, please let Henry know: henry@friendship-gardens.org. He will add you to a list that he will contact when potential volunteer groups reach out to



Friendship Gardens.

Is there a place to share pictures and stories about my garden?

We love to help our gardens tell their story. Please visit our [Friendship Gardens Facebook Page](http://www.facebook.com/friendshipgardens) <http://www.facebook.com/friendshipgardens>. Here you can learn more about Friendship Gardens, upcoming workshops, and news from the rest of the network of gardens. We also encourage you to share pictures and updates from your garden on this facebook page. If your garden gets some press, please share that with us so that we can be sure to share it within our community on all our social media outlets.

I want my gardeners to go on a tour of Friendship Trays to learn about the mission. How do I schedule that?

We often give tours of Friendship Trays, The Community Culinary School of Charlotte, and our Friendship Gardens Demonstration garden to interested groups and current garden network partners so that they can see how their garden fits into a broader mission effort in the city. If you would like to schedule a tour for your group please contact Henry Owen.

How can Friendship Gardens help?

We support each garden in a unique way depending on the garden and the people working in it. Every garden in our network is independently managed, which means the gardeners who volunteer in a particular garden take care of all aspects of their garden, including the financial and volunteer needs that sustain the gardens day-to-day operations. For new gardens, we shepherd the garden team through the process of site selection and garden planning as well as through the development of a strategy for organizational sustainability. Friendship Gardens supports gardens with knowledge and training, large volunteer groups and special events, connections to community resources, and material resources when available.

We are creating a community of gardens that will support each other during the more challenging stages, such as when a garden is in need of a new garden leader. Our network of gardens and garden leaders support each other so that our combined impact is greater than our individual impact. We share materials and ideas and we find areas to collaborate--from recipes to curriculum ideas to testing out new gardening techniques.

How does each garden help Friendship Gardens?

We thrive off of our gardens and we couldn't do it without them! A lot of what we do depends on volunteers getting their hands in the dirt to grow great food. With a network of gardens we are able to collect a large amount of produce grown from gardens all over the city. Every harvest donation, large or small, is important. It all adds up to a whole lot of food that does a whole lot of



good. Donated harvest is used in the Friendship Trays meals to help feed those in need.

Hosting Volunteer Groups

Friendship Gardens is often contacted by groups wanting to volunteer in one of our gardens. These groups come from businesses, churches, civic groups, clubs, etc. As a garden leader in our network you may be contacted by a Friendship Gardens Staff member to host one of the work groups in your garden. Please read the below tips for working with groups of volunteers.

- Plan your work day. Several days prior to the work day, walk through the garden and identify projects or tasks that the volunteers will complete. Better to be prepared with more work than not enough.
- As you are planning your projects, take note of the tools that the volunteers will need. Do you have all the tools you need? Are you going to ask volunteers to bring tools? Do you need to borrow tools from Friendship Gardens?
- Bring extra water and work gloves. Even if the volunteer group plans to bring their own water and gloves it is a good idea to have extra.
- Reach out to the group contact a couple days before to confirm all the details.
- You should arrive 15-30 minutes before volunteers are scheduled to arrive to that you can organize all the tools and supplies.
- Volunteers may not arrive all at once. As they start to trickle in, have something for them to do right away so they aren't sitting around waiting. If you already have plants in the ground, watering is a great 'quick start' activity.
- Once most of the group has arrived, gather the group and welcome them. Tell them important info like here the bathrooms are, where drinking water is, what they will be doing, and how your garden fits into the Friendship Gardens network (more on that below).
- If this group project was scheduled through Friendship Gardens, it is important that you briefly explain how your garden fits into the network. It can be as simple as "we partner with Friendship Gardens to grow food and donate a portion of the harvest to Friendship Trays, the meals on wheels program." Ask them to visit our website for more information www.friendship-gardens.org
- When the work is done, bring the group together again to say 'thank you' and take a group picture. Ask the organizer if the group has a social media presence. If they do, ask them to connect with Friendship Gardens on Facebook and Twitter.