



who will YOU feed today?

# Guide to Starting a FoodPool version 3.0

FoodPool  
6114 La Salle Ave, #332  
Oakland, CA 94611

by Andrew Sigal  
Founder/director  
FoodPool  
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## 1. Introduction

Hunger in America is becoming a more and more critical issue. Wonderful people are coming forth in communities everywhere to help. I have spoken to a lot of individuals who have at one time or another wanted to start some kind of group to get their gardens' abundance to those in need. But they're worried about trying to get something like that going. Once it's up and running, the time commitment to organize neighborhood food collection can be quite manageable, but getting started can be daunting. That's where this guide can help.

When thinking about starting up this kind of group, there are suddenly a million questions: how do I contact people? Where is my local food bank? Is there some food pantry, soup kitchen, or school lunch program in my area that would be appropriate to receive produce? Are there legal concerns? There are so many questions that it can quickly become overwhelming, and very few people have all the skills needed to answer all these questions and solve all these problems. Meanwhile, you also have to keep your own life going – taking care of your family, working at a job, doing laundry, and so forth. So, a lot of food gathering (“gleaning”) groups never make it off the drawing board.

When I started the pilot FoodPool in my neighborhood I faced all of these questions. One by one I solved them. It took some real time and effort, and there were some false starts, but I forged ahead and built a group that worked. Immediately I realized that I should share all of that effort and learning. By "sharing" what I had learned I could make it much easier for others to help their own neighborhoods.

I owe a debt of gratitude to all of the gleaning groups that navigated this path before me and shared their experience and advice. With this *Guide to Starting a FoodPool*, I hope to “pay that forward” to a generation of individuals that care enough to help feed their neighbors in need.

## 2. Quick-start overview

We believe that this guide will make it as easy as possible for you to start a FoodPool in your neighborhood. We have tried to answer any questions that you might have. We encourage you to read this entire guide as we believe it contains a lot of helpful information. However, to get you started quickly, here are the steps to getting your FoodPool going. See sections 6 and 7 for details.

1. Find out if there is already an organization in your area that is collecting garden produce (this may be your local food bank.)
2. Contact your local food bank. Your food bank should be able to give you information about groups that collect food in your area as well food pantries, soup kitchens, and other organizations that can use your food donations.

3. Contact one or more of the organizations recommended by your food bank and make sure that they are able to accept fresh produce. Find out their hours and needs.
4. Decide how you want to connect with gardeners in your area that have excess produce, as well as non-gardeners who can volunteer their time. Don't forget about people who have fruit trees but not vegetable gardens.
5. Determine how you would like to stay in touch with the donors and volunteers in your FoodPool.
6. You're ready to go! Collect up your produce, take it to your partner organization, and watch the smiles.

### **3. Independent FoodPools**

FoodPool believes in the idea of small, independent groups working to achieve common goals in their own communities. We feel that this works well because each region is different and the people in a community know how best to organize and serve within their area. What works well in San Francisco might be ineffective in Boston. The best possible approach to a FoodPool in Boise might involve an idea that would never occur to someone in Santa Fe. Since the purpose of FoodPool is to feed as many people as possible, and save garden produce from going to waste, we want to take advantage of the knowledge that local organizers are able to bring to bear.

This *Guide to Starting a FoodPool* includes a variety of ideas and suggestions; however, we encourage you to pick and choose among them to find what works for you and to innovate wherever possible to make FoodPool work for your community. As long as you are getting food to people in need, we are anxious to assist you with whatever strategies you adopt!

## 4. Small is beautiful

FoodPools work best when they are small. There are several benefits to limiting a FoodPool to a few streets, a neighborhood, or other small geographic area:

- It is much easier to reach out to neighbors nearby than to try to create a large, dispersed group.
- People in the FoodPool get to know each other.
- By connecting gardeners in a community with a nearby food pantry, soup kitchen, etc., those donating their time and/or produce are more directly connected those being served. This fosters community building while helping to fight hunger.
- In most cases it is easier to inspire people to work on a small, local project than a large, far-reaching one. The time commitments required by working small and local are more manageable and acceptable to people who might otherwise be reluctant to volunteer for a FoodPool.
- There is less driving required to collect and deliver donated produce, which is good for the drivers and good for the environment.

## 5. How much of a time commitment is it to run a FoodPool?

The answer depends primarily on three things:

1. **How large a geographic area do you want to cover and how many volunteers are in your FoodPool?** It goes without saying that a FoodPool encompassing an entire urban zip code will take a considerable amount of time and effort to run. A FoodPool that gathers garden produce from a half a dozen people on your street should be very, very, easy. How much you choose to take on is up to you (and again, we recommend going smaller rather than larger.)
2. **What kinds of things do you choose to have your FoodPool do?** Do you want to organize volunteers to pick fruits and vegetables (*please see the section on “gleaning”*) or will you ask all of your donors to pick their own food and bring it to you? Do you want to hold promotional events? Do you want to spend time networking with other local hunger relief organizations? All of these decisions about how you run your FoodPool will impact how much time you have to commit.

Furthermore, you may find that people will come to you to tell you about trees covered with fruit just a few miles away, or a gardener they know in the next county who has lots of extra produce. The temptation can be almost irresistible to go and harvest. It is up to you to decide if you want to take the time to organize volunteers from your FoodPool to travel a distance and collect that food. Of course it's wonderful if you do, but it is also very easy to burn yourself out in this way. It is better to keep a successful FoodPool running in your neighborhood than to try

and do too much.

3. **Are the people in your FoodPool committed, diligent, and organized?** The more self-organized and committed your volunteers are, the easier it will be for you to run the FoodPool. If you have volunteers that can help with the organizational tasks, it's easier still.

We recommend that you start small, and growing your FoodPool over time (yes, I am a broken record player.) You may wish to begin with just your street or a few friends that you know in your neighborhood, and then grow further once you feel comfortable. If you are tempted to grow your FoodPool into a large organization, you're probably better off encouraging other people to start their own FoodPools in neighboring areas.

Ultimately the time commitment depends on how much time you are willing to give. But beware, the more you learn about hunger in America the more you will want to help.

## 6. The steps to starting a FoodPool

The following is a brief outline of how we recommend starting a FoodPool. Each step is then detailed below. As always, these are suggestions, not requirements. (Note: this is the same list from section 2 above, copied here for your convenience.)

1. Find out if there is already an organization in your area that is collecting garden produce (this may be your local food bank – see #2 below.)
2. Contact your local food bank. Your food bank should be able to give you information about groups that collect food in your area as well food pantries, soup kitchens, and other organizations that can use your food donations.
3. Contact one or more of the organizations recommended by your food bank and make sure that they are able to accept fresh produce. Find out their hours and needs.
4. Decide how you want to connect with gardeners in your area that have excess produce, as well as non-gardeners who can volunteer their time. Don't forget about people who have fruit trees but not vegetable gardens.
5. Determine how you would like to stay in touch with the donors and volunteers in your FoodPool.
6. You're ready to go! Collect up your produce, take it to your partner organization, and watch the smiles.

## **Step 1 - Find out if there is already an organization in your area that is collecting garden produce**

We don't want to duplicate efforts, and in some parts of the country there are already terrific groups gathering garden produce for food pantries. Searching for existing programs is a valuable first step. (Note: You may do this second if you wish, since your local food bank might be a good resource for finding other local garden gleaning groups.) If there is already someone doing what FoodPool does, we recommend joining them and helping them with their valuable work.

In addition to asking your nearest food bank, searching online can be a good way to find food collection groups. The word "gleaning," along with the name of your city or county will often turn up the names of groups in your area. However, there might be groups near you that aren't online, and some of them are not well publicized.

If you discover that there is an organization collecting produce for charity in your area, it's worth digging a little bit deeper to find out if their mission really is the same as that of a FoodPool. We have found a number of groups that sound like FoodPools but aren't. For example, there are groups that collect only fruit from trees; some groups are established for exchanging food among a group of gardeners, not for donation; you will also find groups that collect backyard garden produce for the local food bank, but only do so once or twice a year as a special event; and then there are organizations that do gleaning in the traditional sense of the word – they harvest leftover produce from farm fields, not from backyard gardens. All of these types of groups are performing valuable work – keeping food from going to waste is fundamental to our mission. However, their presence in the community does not mean that starting a FoodPool won't add value.

## **Step 2 - Contact your local food bank**

When you contact your local food bank, hopefully they will already be aware of FoodPool. If they aren't, explain to them that you are setting up a neighborhood group to collect garden produce for donation to food pantries (you may want to direct them to the FoodPool web site for more information.) They are likely to be happy to help you. However, be prepared for the possibility that they may be short staffed. It can take a while before you're able to reach the right person with whom to discuss your FoodPool.

To find your nearest food bank we recommend going to FeedingAmerica at <http://feedingamerica.org/>. This is the parent organization for most of the foodbanks in America. There you can search by state, or click the "Find My Food Bank" button, and then enter your zip code.

### **Step 3 - Identify and contact one or more local organizations that distribute food to people in need**

As part of your conversation with the food bank, you should ask them to suggest one or more of their “member partners” that you could work with directly. (Food banks generally collect food which they then distribute to “member” organizations throughout the community, which then in turn distribute to individuals – it is kind of like a wholesale/retail model.)

Ideally your food bank will connect you with a member partner that is near your neighborhood. There are several benefits to working with a neighborhood food pantry, soup kitchen, or other local food distribution outlet. Among them:

- Working directly with a member partner helps strengthen relationships in your community – your neighborhood is helping feed people nearby. This is more immediate and potentially more rewarding than providing assistance to people far away. This in turn may do more to inspire your donors and volunteers.
- Unlike commercial produce picked under-ripe for delivery to distant grocery stores, homegrown vegetables are generally picked at their peak of ripeness. This is one of the great benefits of gardening. However, fruits and vegetables picked ripe are delicate and perishable, so they benefit from the shortest possible trip from the garden to the table. Produce brought to the food bank might end up being stored, handled, and transported multiple times before finally being delivered to those that need it.
- Your local member partner may be better able to help you determine what kinds of foods their clients can use. For example, delivering herbs and vegetables used only in one specific ethnic cuisine may not provide much help if the clients of your member partner aren't of that ethnic group and don't know how to cook with them.
- Last but not least, delivering to a nearby food pantry or soup kitchen saves driving time and fuel.

It is important when selecting a partner organization to make sure that their schedule is compatible with yours. Occasionally food pantries are open all day every day, but this is rare. Most are staffed by volunteers and have limited hours during which they can accept donations. A nearby food pantry that can only accept donations for a few hours at inconvenient times might not work out as well as one that is farther away but can accommodate the schedules of *your* volunteers.

### **Step 4 - Decide how you want to contact gardeners in your area**

We believe that *you* are the expert on how to reach volunteers in your area. Generally speaking the places that gardeners, foodies, and community activists frequent are the best places to go to find people to donate produce and time to your FoodPool. Here are some suggestions. You may like to try them, or just use them to prompt your own ideas.

- Make up a flyer announcing your FoodPool (you may wish to start with one of the examples provided on FoodPool.org.) Ask to post these flyers at area garden shops and home centers.

- Gardening clubs are another of the top resources for finding people in your area that garden and might have excess produce that they would like to donate to a good cause.
- Setting up a table at your local farmers market is one of the best ways we have found for spreading the word about FoodPool. Be aware that most farmers markets have rules about who can set up a table at the market. You will need to contact your farmer's market management ahead of time to be sure that they will allow you to promote your FoodPool there. Make sure that they are aware that you will not be selling food and will not be competing with the farmers.
- Civic organizations in your area are an excellent way of meeting people to join your FoodPool. These might include your local 4-H, garden clubs, and the like. If you are a member of Freemasons, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, etc., they are an outstanding resource.
- Schools, churches, synagogues, mosques, etc., are ideal for connecting with your neighbors and telling them about your FoodPool.
- In some areas posting a notice on craigslist.org under the one of the "community" categories will get the word out to people that are interested in volunteerism and hunger relief.
- If meetup.com is active in your area, you might consider establishing a "meetup" for your group.
- Community newspapers and newsletters, radio and TV shows, lawn signs, and paid advertising all have great reach and varying degrees of effectiveness.

### **Step 5 - Determine how you would like to stay in touch with the donors and volunteers in your FoodPool.**

This will depend a lot on how comfortable you and your volunteers are with the internet and email. Your communication network could be as simple as wandering around your neighborhood chatting with neighbors, using email, social media sites, etc.

We recommend using email as it is quick, efficient, and environmentally low impact. If you and your volunteers are all comfortable with email, it can save a lot of time and effort in maintaining contact with your group. However, there are people that are not online, or not comfortable with email, so even if you are wired-in, you still might need to establish a hybrid system for keeping in touch with everyone.

### **Step 6 - Feed some people!**

## **7. OK, I've got people signed up, I'm connected to a partner food distribution group, and we're ready to go! What next?**

Congratulations and **thank you!** As you know, FoodPool's mission is to collect excess garden produce that would otherwise go to waste, and deliver it to people in need. As long as your FoodPool is supporting that mission, we want you to do whatever works best to achieve that goal.

As a model, here is how the pilot FoodPool group (established in the Montclair district of Oakland, California), operates:

- Weekly, the FoodPool leader sends an e-mail to volunteers using the mailer system that FoodPool provides. Generally the e-mail talks about what produce was collected the previous week and anything else that is noteworthy. Then the message reminds people of the date and time of the next delivery to the food pantry.
- Anyone who has anything to donate brings it to the group leader's home or other designated drop-off location.
- On the appointed day, either the leader or a volunteer drives the collected goodies to the food pantry.

*Note: Originally the plan was to have the driver go from house to house in the neighborhood collecting fruits and vegetables. However, we found in Montclair that different people may or may not have excess produce on different days, and the people in our neighborhood keep very varied work hours. This made having a specific time for a carpool-like collection impractical. As a result we switched to this "hub and spoke" approach, which has been working well.*

You may choose to follow this model. However, the sky is the limit as to how you want to organize *your* FoodPool. Maybe you like the hub and spoke idea; maybe people in your neighborhood keep the kind of regular schedules that would allow a circular carpool to work; maybe everyone wants to get together for a pancake breakfast on Saturday mornings and then drive around collecting donations. Your time, energy, geography, climate, and volunteers will dictate how your FoodPool operates.

## 8. A few rules

There isn't much to say about rules for FoodPools. We believe that common sense and goodwill works better than any set of rules. However, we would be remiss if we weren't clear on a few points:

- Food collected by FoodPools is to be donated to organizations serving people in need. Donated food should not be sold, unless such a sale is part of a fundraising drive to support charitable organizations and the food donors are aware before they make their donation that their donated food is going to be sold for such a purpose.
- FoodPools should not discriminate against any donor or any food recipient, on the basis of race, creed, age, gender, and so on. Hunger knows no such barriers, nor should charity.
- FoodPool leaders **should** refuse to accept donations if there is any question about the safety or purity of the food. If you have any reason to believe that a donor is providing tainted food, it should not be accepted or redistributed.
- FoodPool leaders should exercise reasonable care in accepting, storing, and delivering donated produce. Food donated for redistribution should be treated with the same care and attention that you would treat food for yourself or your family.

- FoodPool leaders should always exercise a reasonable amount of care and caution as relates to volunteers:
  - Volunteers should not be asked, encouraged, or allowed to undertake tasks which could endanger them. Particular care should be taken if under-age volunteers are involved in a FoodPool to make sure that youthful exuberance does not place them in harm’s way.
  - Conversely, if a FoodPool leader has reason to believe that a prospective volunteer is untrustworthy or dangerous, they should not be allowed to participate in the activities of the FoodPool.
- Note that there is no contract between FoodPool and individual FoodPool leaders, nor amongst individual FoodPool leaders.

## **9. FoodPool’s position on “gleaning”**

[For a definition of “gleaning,” please see the Frequently Asked Questions in the appendix.]

Initially, FoodPool was supporting gleaning produce. However, we have recently been advised by the director of another national hunger organization that there are liability issues of which we had not previously been aware. Therefore, for the time being, FoodPool is no longer endorsing gleaning by local FoodPools, and suggest that you only accept food that has been harvested by the donor.

As with most FoodPool policies, individual FoodPool leaders may independently choose to provide the service of picking fruits and vegetables on private or public lands. But as a general policy, FoodPool Headquarters cannot recommend or endorse gleaning.

We hope to have this issue resolved soon so that we may again support gleaning by FoodPools.

## **10. Why start a “FoodPool” instead of starting your own, independent group?**

There are a lot of places where people are collecting food for donation – in Sonoma County, California, there’s a group called Farm-to-Pantry that’s been doing this for years. In the city of Alameda, California, “Alameda Backyard Growers” does the same thing. We are aware of similar groups in Houston, TX and Vancouver, BC, Canada. In Portland, Oregon, and Napa, California, the local food banks themselves collect garden produce. We think this is wonderful and applaud all these efforts.

So, if you want to start collecting food to take to a food bank or food pantry, why make it a “FoodPool?” We believe that FoodPool brings you a number of benefits:

- By adopting the name “FoodPool,” you benefit from all of the promotion we are doing. All of the efforts by FoodPool at a national level will raise awareness about your FoodPool. Moreover, the promotion done by other local FoodPools helps people find you too!
- If people in your area have food to donate, the “Find a FoodPool” page will direct them to you and the “Contact” page gives them an easy, built-in means to reach out to you.
- A community of FoodPool leaders – we’re not there yet, but we envision a time when FoodPool leaders can support each other with best practices, and ideas.

## 11. Why *NOT* start your group as a “FoodPool”?

Are there any reasons why it could be a bad idea to use the name “FoodPool?” I would like to say that there are a thousand reasons to use the name “FoodPool,” and no reasons not to. However, there are some possible, theoretical reasons *not* to be a FoodPool:

- If anyone at FoodPool headquarters, or at a neighborhood FoodPool somewhere, acts in an unethical way and sullies the name “FoodPool,” such bad publicity could damage local FoodPools.
- If you live in a community where “nationally branded” charities are viewed with suspicion, the name “FoodPool” could be a negative.

We believe that the benefits of being a FoodPool far outweigh the negatives, however, the decision to join or not is entirely up to you. We would love to welcome you as a FoodPool leader!

## 12. Copyright

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## Appendix A - Frequently Asked Questions

### A1. What does the word “gleaning” mean?

The meaning of the verb “glean” has evolved over time, but it has always referred to collection of food for the poor.

Gleaning is a very old idea. In the Old Testament (the Hebrew Torah), farmers were instructed that they must leave the corners of their fields un-harvested so that the poor could come and take food to eat. The word “glean” itself is thought to originate in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, derived from the Latin *glennare*, “to make a collection.”

In modern times, and until quite recently, “gleaning” has usually referred to going through a field after the farmer has already completed the harvest, collecting any produce that was left behind for donation to charity. (The original name of Feeding America was “America’s Second Harvest.”) Agricultural fields often provide an abundance of food after harvest for many reasons:

- Items that are unripe at the time of harvest are left behind. Those who follow later on to glean the field may find these items have ripened.
- Plants which are not pulled in the process of harvesting (tomatoes, strawberries, broccoli, etc.) will continue to bear even after the farmer has deemed the crop done.
- In America, consumers tend to demand that fruits and vegetables be absolutely immaculate – produce with any kind of blemish may be left in the field to rot.
- Wholesale and retail distributors in America tend to insist on produce of a uniform size and shape. Fruits and vegetables that might be perfectly edible, but which are too big, too small, or otherwise misshapen are not harvested.

In the last few years the definition of “gleaning” has been expanded in many circles. Especially in urban areas, the word “glean” has been used more and more to refer to picking fruits from trees for donation to charity. There are a variety of circumstances in which people choose not to pick the fruit of their own trees and invite others onto their land to pick the fruits and carry them away. There are also groups that specialize in picking fruit from trees on public lands for donation to charity.

Another thing that has been happening recently is the merging of the notions of “gleaning” and “foraging.” This is unfortunate, since the two words have very separate meanings and it is valuable to have each in our vocabulary. “Foraging” is the act of searching for food or provisions. The presumption is that the foraged goods are for personal consumption, not for donation. Worse yet, the media has been connecting the word “forage” more and more often with “dumpster diving.” While “dumpster diving” may or may not have merits, it is a notion that inspires revulsion in many Americans. The blending of these three separate ideas – gleaning, foraging, and dumpster diving – is creating confusion for many people, and has the potential to turn some away from the charitable act of “gleaning.”

We strongly encourage everyone to use “gleaning” and “foraging” as separate, independent terms and educate others about the value that each of these activities can bring.

## **A2. What about liability?**

Fortunately, in the United States, people who donate food are protected from liability in the event that a recipient believes that they have been harmed by that food. The full text of the *Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act* can be found in on the USDA web site. We have added it to the FoodPool web site as well for your convenience.

There are a couple important caveats:

- The law does not protect you if you are found to have been “grossly negligent” or intentionally provided food that was unfit for human consumption.
- The law does not (and cannot) prohibit a recipient of food from filing a lawsuit. If you have not been negligent or intentionally malicious, you will be found innocent. However, in the USA one individual may sue another for any reason whatsoever, no matter how absurd and no matter what laws are on the side of the defendant.

Regarding gleaning, there are open questions about liability should a volunteer be hurt while harvesting produce on a donors’ property. Until these questions are resolved, FoodPool is unable to endorse gleaning.

## **A3. What if my local food bank says that they only accept non-perishables?**

It is very common for food banks to specify that they do not accept perishables. In fact, it's one of the reasons that FoodPool exists. Generally speaking, food banks work by accepting large contributions of food from big organizations such as grocery store chains, wholesale distributors, bakeries, and so forth. They then redistribute to their network of member organizations – food pantries, soup kitchens, after school lunch programs, etc.

Because of the nature of running a large operation - often with a small staff - they normally have to institute some pretty strict scheduling. They receive shipments of food on a certain dates from certain organizations, then sort it, store it, and finally redistribute to their member agencies on some kind of schedule – either delivering it in their own trucks, or having member partners come to collect their allotment from the food bank.

The member agencies then have their own schedules – again, often dictated the need to make do with a small staff and volunteer support, which may not always be available. So, the member partner

organization will store the food that they receive from the food bank, and then either redistribute it to people needing assistance in their neighborhood, or prepare it into meals which they serve.

Unfortunately, storing fresh produce is a problem. It has a limited shelf life and may require refrigeration. Refrigeration requires space, hardware, and electricity. And, if produce goes bad, it has to be disposed of. Some food banks have made fresh produce a priority and worked to solve all these problems. There are even food banks that have gone so far as to actively glean fruits and vegetables, such as the Napa County Community Food Bank. Sadly, these are the exception, not the rule. The net result is that the ultimate clients of the food banks, the hungry people they are trying to serve, never get fresh produce of any kind from the food bank or their member agencies.

One of the fundamental elements of the way that FoodPool works is to connect local neighborhood FoodPools directly with food pantries rather than with the food bank. For example, at the pilot FoodPool in Montclair, even though the Alameda County Community Food Bank can accept donations of produce, we work directly with a food pantry that is just a couple of miles away. That food pantry distributes to its clients on Wednesdays and Fridays. FoodPool Montclair accepts donations of produce from neighborhood gardeners on either Wednesday or Friday morning (or Tuesday or Thursday night), bringing it directly to the Telegraph Community Center Food Pantry, where it is immediately distributed to people in that neighborhood. There are no refrigeration problems, no scheduling issues, no multiple handling of delicate produce, and no issues of spoilage. Just high-quality fresh garden produce going (almost) directly to people who need it most.

So, if your local food bank cannot accept perishables, then a FoodPool in your neighborhood is even more valuable than in places where the food bank is set up to receive and redistribute produce. Note: we do not avoid contact with the local food bank. Quite the contrary, we work with them to find local member agencies that can accept our donations.

### **A3. What about lemons?**

In California (and other Southern and Western states in the US), many people grow citrus trees as ornamentals. These trees often produce huge crops of fruit that go uneaten. While oranges and grapefruits are clearly edible food, very few people sit down to a meal of lemons or limes.

The number one question asked of FoodPool Montclair was “will you accept lemons.” The answer is “absolutely!” While it is true that a squeeze of lemon juice adds little to a hungry person’s daily calorie intake, it can make an otherwise unpalatable food-pantry based meal much more enjoyable.

Many parents that are on food assistance try to provide homemade, healthful meals for their families. But because of the cost of quality produce and the limited products available at food pantries, their results don’t appeal to their kids that have come to expect fast-food-like plates of processed sugar, fat,

and salt. Lemons, limes, and herbs are expensive, so get left off the shopping lists of those on food assistance.

When FoodPool Montclair brings bags of lemons to the local food pantry, they are always gone in no time.

#### **A4. Should we donate herbs?**

The same statements about lemons apply to herbs. If you have parsley, basil, rosemary, epazote, or other herbs growing abundantly in your garden, imagine trying to cook an enjoyable meal based on canned goods, beans, and rice without an herb in sight.

It is true, herbs provide little in the way of calories, but they produce 1000 times their weight in happiness.

One note: it is helpful to write down on a piece of paper what the herbs are that you are donating. Not everyone can identify every herb they run across, and a person that is familiar with an herb when it is dried might not recognize it fresh. Giving the staff at your member agency a “cheat sheet” will help them get the right herbs to their clients. This will save everyone embarrassment if they aren’t recognized.