

Gather It!

How to Organize an
Urban Fruit Harvest



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Introduction

People all over the world are organizing projects in which excess fruit from backyard trees is harvested and shared with others. In the words of one organizer, fruit sharing is “the most common sense type of community development.”¹

This handbook is a response to the question: *How do we start a fruit harvest in our own neighborhood?* It is based on Solid Ground’s Community Fruit Tree Harvest project in Seattle, Washington, started in 2005. Solid Ground, in turn, learned much about how to start a residential fruit harvest from earlier work done in British Columbia.²



Solid Ground’s harvest began as a neighborhood project harvesting 500 pounds of fruit in 2005. By 2008, it had expanded to a citywide hub-and-spoke model, with neighborhood harvesting ‘hubs’ that picked 15,000 pounds of fruit. These neighborhoods and communities are now stepping forward to organize their own very local fruit harvests. This handbook is intended to help them, and other harvest groups everywhere, with that effort.

Why Harvest Urban Fruit?

Unlike planting a garden, owning a fruit tree is often unintentional: Many tree owners find that they have ‘inherited’ a fruit tree. Growing and harvesting the fruit may seem intimidating, if not an actual nuisance. But there are many reasons to think differently about urban fruit.

- Urban fruit is food – *local* food. Apples from down the street have the same benefits as apples from the store, and they are typically fresher.
- Many people can’t afford to buy organic produce – while most people with fruit trees have more than they can use. This creates opportunities for sharing.
- Harvesting fruit can build ties between neighbors and promote an interest in fruit trees, thus building community knowledge and resources.
- Unharvested fruit poses sanitation and pest problems. Dropping to the ground, the fruit creates a mess, attracts rats and other animals, and serves as a host for next year’s fruit pests.
- Unharvested fruit is a moral hazard, creating waste out of a much-needed resource.
- Harvesting and eating urban fruit can show children exactly where fruit comes from.
- Urban fruit is a potential source of revenue to support individuals and causes.

1) *Harvesting Abundance: How to Start a Fruit Tree Project*. Lifecycles and the Victoria Fruit Tree Project with support from Human Resources Development Canada.

2) *Ibid.*

Harvesting Fruit in the City: Special Challenges

While various communities use different approaches, all urban harvests must address three key questions: *Where is the fruit? Who will pick it? How will the harvested fruit be used?*

Finding answers to each of these questions, it turns out, is less of an issue than finding the correct balance between them. For example, having lots of fruit to harvest becomes a problem if there are too few fruit pickers: Much of the fruit may be left to fall, and the project can lose credibility. On the other hand, large numbers of excited harvesters with nothing to pick creates disappointment and also reduces credibility.

Not enough appropriate recipients for harvested fruit means that fruit could be left to rot in the box. This is complicated by the fact that, without cold storage facilities, most harvested fruit must find a home quickly.

Finally, the need to find a balance between fruit donations, harvesters and recipients for the fruit is complicated by the unpredictability of ripening. There are many varieties of urban fruit, each ripening on its own schedule. Within a small area, one tree may ripen this week, another tree next week, and a third tree next month. Juggling the volunteer harvesters and willing recipients with variable ripening times poses unique coordination challenges.

Fruit Harvesting: Four Models

The projects described below provide four different approaches to harvesting urban fruit and sustaining this effort from year to year. (See Appendix 5 for a list of other fruit harvests.)

Community Fruit Tree Harvest, Seattle, WA, www.solid-ground.org/Programs/Nutrition/FruitTree

Community Fruit Tree Harvest is a project of the Lettuce Link program at Solid Ground, a human services nonprofit agency serving the greater Puget Sound region. A central coordinator works with neighborhood-based volunteers to harvest fruit from residential trees and distribute it to a variety of organizations. In 2008, 14,000 pounds of apples, pears, Asian pears and plums were harvested from about 150 sites and distributed to more than 60 agencies. The project has spawned a number of related projects, such as Community Harvest of Southwest Seattle (www.gleanit.org) and City Fruit (www.cityfruit.org). Coordination of the project is supported by grants on a year-to-year basis.

Fallen Fruit, Los Angeles, CA, www.fallenfruit.org

Fallen Fruit began with activist artists mapping all the fruit on public property in their Los Angeles neighborhood and encouraging others to do the same. For Fallen Fruit activists, fruit is a metaphor for thinking about new ways to use the city. Other decentralized web-based projects that aim to build community and informally connect people who have fruit with those who want it include: Forage Oakland (www.forageoakland.blogspot.com), Neighborhood Fruit (www.neighborhoodfruit.com) and Veggie Trader (www.veggietrader.com).

LifeCycles Fruit Tree Project, Victoria, B.C., www.lifecyclesproject.ca/initiatives/fruit_tree

The LifeCycles Fruit Tree Project is a community-based harvest effort similar to the Solid Ground harvest described above. To generate revenues needed to support itself, LifeCycles has begun collaborating with entrepreneurs on a line of products that include apple pie gelato and pear sorbetto, quince paste and jelly, apple cider vinegar and hard cider. In a similar vein, the Neighborhood Harvest in Ashland, Oregon sells portions of the fruit they harvest through a fruit CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), at a growers market, to restaurants and to individuals. Volunteer harvesters also receive a portion of the fruit harvested, and a portion is donated.

Village Harvest, San Francisco Bay Area, CA, www.villageharvest.org; 1.888.FRUIT.411

Village Harvest is a large, year-round, volunteer-run harvest. In 2008, the project harvested 120,900 pounds of fruit using more than 200 volunteers. In order to harvest the most fruit possible, Village Harvest gives priority to harvesting fruit trees belonging to seniors, people living with disabilities, and homeowners with *at least* 150 pounds of fruit. Households with less fruit are urged to harvest and donate it themselves. The project uses web tools to register fruit donations, enlist volunteers, and provide extensive education and resources to fruit tree owners. Village Harvest is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and supports itself through donations, sales of preserves and volunteer participation.

How to Run an Urban Fruit Harvest

This section describes how to set up a mid-size harvest that relies primarily on volunteers. The eleven steps involved in planning and running a harvest fall into four phases:

Phase One: Planning

- 1) Decide on the scope
- 2) Set up a steering committee
- 3) Decide how to gather information

Phase Two: Laying the Groundwork

- 4) Recruit fruit tree donors
- 5) Find equipment & storage locations
- 6) Recruit & train volunteers
- 7) Decide how to use the fruit

Phase Three: Harvesting

- 8) Develop a scheduling plan
- 9) Harvest & deliver the fruit

Phase Four: Wrapping up

- 10) Manage harvest data
- 11) Say thank you



PHASE ONE: Planning

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Decide on the scope

Defining the scope of the harvest means thinking about the goals of the harvest, its size (how much do you want to take on?), its geographical area and which fruits to harvest.

Goals

Harvests that aim to rescue potentially wasted fruit to feed those in need see the quantity of fruit harvested as a measure of success. In other harvests, building ties between neighbors is most important. In these harvests, the number (or quality) of harvest events – or the number of neighbors involved – is what counts. In still others, the opportunity to involve youth or others in the community is the key goal. Being clear about the primary goal(s) of the harvest helps you answer future questions about how it should be organized.

Geographic area

Another consideration is spatial: What geographic area will the harvest encompass? Obviously, all harvests are geographically bounded, but it is possible to tightly define the geographic area up front, working within those parameters. Alternatively, you can loosely define the area and harvest everything that comes up.

Types of fruit

Decisions about which fruits to harvest depend on what's available, what people can use, and what is most efficient for volunteers to pick. In Seattle, the most available (and popular) fruits are plums, pears, Asian pears and apples. Although kiwis, figs, cherries, peaches and grapes are sometimes available, recipient organizations have less experience distributing these. If you develop a diverse group of recipients, you may be able to distribute a wider variety of fruits. And while berries are popular, they require a great deal of volunteer time, pound for pound. (On the other hand, berry picking is a good option for family volunteer groups.)

Set up a steering committee

Unless there is paid staff to run the harvest, you will need a group of five to ten interested people to serve as a steering committee. And even if you have a staff member, it helps to have interested and diverse community members plan your harvest project. If the harvest is part of an already-existing organization – such as a parent/teacher group, a church group, or a public service group – their members can serve as a steering committee. If the harvest is a new, stand-alone project, steering committee members can be recruited from the community at large. Look to those interested in community agriculture, the staff of recipient organizations, people looking for volunteer opportunities, neighborhood groups,

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and anyone else interested in urban fruit. Enthusiasm and follow through are important qualifications. Successful methods for recruiting steering committee members include targeted listservs, newsletters, flyers and word-of-mouth.

The following tasks can be assigned to steering committee members prior to and during the harvest: publicity, equipment and storage solicitations, outreach to recipients, volunteer outreach/training, data management, and harvest coordination (unless this is done by paid harvest staff.) Each task is described more fully later in this handbook. It's optimal to

begin steering committee meetings about three months before the expected start of the harvest. In Seattle, this would mean early May for a harvest that begins in mid-July. Three months allows for three committee meetings and enough lead time to accomplish most tasks.

Decide how to gather information

People can provide information about their fruit trees by registering online, calling a phone number, filling out a questionnaire, mapping their tree, or responding to door-to-door solicitations. Having the questionnaire and system for gathering information figured out *before* publicizing the project is a good idea.³



Online registration

People can register their trees online by answering some basic questions. See the registration forms used by the Community Harvest of SW Seattle (www.gleanit.org/treedonorform.html) and Village Harvest (www.villageharvest.org/homeform.htm) for examples. The obvious advantage is that this method is quick and doesn't require staff time; in addition, data can be fed directly onto a spreadsheet or into a database. The disadvantages of online registration are that it requires a website and technical skills, and it may not capture nuanced information such as, "*There is an unfriendly dog in the yard. Call first.*" It is also fairly anonymous.

Phone intake

Many fruit harvests provide a phone number to call. Solid Ground's Community Fruit Tree Harvest refers callers to Seattle Tilth's Garden Hotline, where hotline staff ask the tree owner a series of questions. Other programs have their own phone number. The advantage of phone intake is that it is available to the elderly and others who don't use the internet. It also allows tree owners to ask questions, raise concerns, and provide information specific to their own tree or situation. On the other hand, phone intake takes more staff time and may require that data be re-entered into a spreadsheet or database.

³ See Appendix 2, p. 18, for sample intake questions used by Solid Ground's Community Fruit Tree Harvest project.

Questionnaire or survey form

Intake forms, or questionnaires, can be left in strategic locations for potential fruit donors to fill out and mail in. These locations include a tree owner's front porch and a variety of public spaces. Again, this method takes less staff time up front but requires that data be entered manually into a data management system.

Map trees online

City Fruit offers an online fruit tree mapping tool that allows tree owners to map their trees and indicate whether they want to donate fruit (www.Cityfruit.org). While the tool is easy for the tree owner to use and feeds data directly into a data management system, it only collects basic information. Follow up with the tree owner is needed before harvesting.

Person-to-person interviews

Structured interviews (with the questionnaire or intake form) are the most effective way to gather information – particularly if the conversation happens below the fruit tree. In addition to gathering detailed information about the owner's interests and needs and providing information about the harvest, this approach allows you to evaluate the tree – is there enough fruit on it? How difficult will it be to pick? The downside is that it takes more time – and gas or pedal power.

PHASE TWO: Laying the Groundwork

Recruit fruit tree donors



The amount and type of effort you put into recruiting fruit tree donors is directly related to the scope of your project. If the harvest is limited to a particular geographic area, only publicize it there. If it is a city-wide harvest with a large volunteer base, advertise it more broadly.

Remember this point: *People are happy to donate their extra fruit and are very responsive to your appeals. Too much promotion can easily result in more donations than you can handle. So – publicity-wise – it makes sense to start small, incrementally increasing the outreach efforts if needed.*

Flyers

Flyers can be used in a number of ways, as described below. See Appendix 3, p. 19, for Community Fruit Tree Harvest's flyer. It solicits fruit trees, volunteers and those who might need fruit on one small flyer. (This flyer can be used by others by modifying the logo and other contact information.)

The flyer should provide the potential fruit donor with a means for providing you with information – online, by phone, on a survey form, etc.

Recruiting fruit donors

The following is a list of methods you can use to promote the harvest and solicit fruit donations. In general, these methods start with those that have the smallest reach and move to those that connect with the broadest audience. (Again, consider how many trees you can actually harvest.)



- **Word of mouth.** Talk to your neighbors, school or church community, etc.
- **Flyers.** Leave flyers on the doorsteps or porches of people who have fruit trees in their yards. If you're harvesting in a particular neighborhood, go door to door. If you're not geographically limited, give a batch of flyers to your steering committee, volunteers and other supporters, and ask them to leave flyers wherever they see fruit trees.
- **Canvassing.** Instead of just leaving a flyer, knock on the door and talk to the tree owner about the project.
- **Targeted listservs.** Figure out whose listservs reach the people you want to contact (a certain neighborhood, a community group, those interested in gardening, etc.) and post a notice there. Again, some listservs are narrowly-focused while others go citywide.
- **Flyers in public spaces.** Post flyers in places that serve those you want to reach. Examples include libraries, food co-ops, coffee houses, community centers and public markets.
- **Websites, Facebook, blogging & newsletters.** Post information on your own website or on other community groups' sites, including Facebook pages, neighborhood blogs and Twitter streams. Put information in newsletters. Brainstorm your natural supporters and piggyback on their outreach efforts. If you're not technology-oriented, find someone on your steering committee (or someone's teenager) to pursue social networking strategies.⁴
- **Media.** Harvesting unused fruit is a story that appeals to all media. Even the *New York Times* ran an article on community fruit harvests. Pitching the story to the media is most successful once the harvest has begun. Call or email your local papers and/or radio stations with the story idea – but be ready for the large number of requests this publicity can generate!

⁴) When posting information on social media sites, include a way for potential tree owners and volunteers to get in touch with you for the most current information (i.e., website, phone number or email address). Also, keep in mind that information released via the internet is easily truncated or altered.

Find equipment & storage locations



“Standard equipment”⁵ for a fruit harvest includes:

- 8-foot orchard ladder
- two (*or more*) fruit picking tools, with extensions
- simple first aid kit
- pocket knife (*for cutting into fruit to check for worms*)
- cardboard boxes
- picking bags
- scale

It’s useful to bring a rake for clean up and thank you cards for the fruit tree owner. It can be convenient to store this equipment in a single location where it can be picked up by the harvest crew – and returned at the end of the harvest. Also, many hardware stores have been willing to sell ladders and fruit pickers at wholesale to community harvest groups.

Ladder

Use an orchard ladder – *not* a stepladder. An orchard ladder has a wide base that tapers towards the top and a single pole that extends out; this tripod construction makes the ladder both more stable and maneuverable. The pole can be maneuvered in and around main branches and the trunk, allowing the picker to climb up into the heart of the tree. An orchard ladder is also more stable when picking the outside branches, or canopy.

Orchard ladders range from six- to 18- or 20-foot tall. Since it’s not safe to stand on the top rung, six foot ladders may be too short for most situations (too many just-out-of-reach fruits may lure pickers to the top rung). For most trees (and most people), an eight-foot ladder is adequate and safest. Taller ladders (10- to 12-foot) are more difficult to set in place and to transport without a truck. An eight-foot orchard ladder fits into most station wagons.

In certain situations, especially when the tree is tall and there is a great deal of fruit near its center, extension ladders may be useful. They are safest when set into the center of the tree, against a trunk or a main branch. Extension ladders shouldn’t be set against a branch at the outside of the tree.



As noted earlier, hardware stores are often willing to sell ladders wholesale to community harvest groups. Orchard ladders are available on Craigslist, community members may lend ladders for the season, or harvest volunteers may bring their own ladders.

5) Some harvests use large tarps for use in shaking down plums and cherries. Gloves are important when harvesting citrus fruits, and hand pruners can be helpful to clear away branches.

Fruit picking tools

Fruit picking tools are most often used to pick fruit when standing on the ground. The most common tool, known as a ‘fruit picker,’ consists of a cage-like head (often lined with foam rubber to cushion the fruit) at the end of a pole. Many are constructed so you can add an extension pole to reach taller fruit. The ‘cage’ at the top of the pole is pronged, to pull the fruit from the tree. Fruit pickers are most effective for harvesting larger, hard fruits, such as pears, Asian pears and apples, and they can be purchased at hardware stores and online. Prices range from about \$15 to \$30 each. Some harvests are making homemade fruit pickers out of bike spokes, twist ties and a broom handle.



Cardboard boxes

Use *shallow* cardboard boxes to store the harvested fruit (unless you have mesh plastic cartons or other specialized produce bins⁶). Sturdy cardboard is also important for supporting the fruit. Deep boxes – and ones that shift and move the fruit around – increase the likelihood that fruit on the bottom will be crushed or bruised. Smaller boxes are easier to lift and carry. Free cardboard boxes are available at many retail outlets. Building an ongoing relationship with a particular source can be helpful: You can have a dependable source of boxes, and the store benefits by not having to break them down for recycling.

Scale

While produce scales may be useful, a standard bathroom scale works. Weigh someone holding the box of fruit and weigh them again without the fruit, computing the difference in weight. (It’s difficult to read a bathroom scale when there is a box of fruit sitting on it.) Used bathroom scales are available at Goodwill and other secondhand stores. A hanging fish scale also works well, provided it can hold at least 50 pounds. A technique to get around weighing each box of fruit is to use uniform-size boxes. Weigh a full box of fruit and use this weight to approximate the total harvest weight.

Fruit picking bags

Most commercial fruit picking bags or buckets have harnesses or shoulder straps to hold the bag to the body, leaving hands free to pick fruit. Many have a rigid top opening so that fruit can be easily placed inside the bag. For non-commercial harvesting, soft canvas or nylon bags are best. Again, these can be purchased at secondhand stores or made by hand. A small backpack, worn on your front, works well. It shouldn’t be too large (soft fruit gets crushed in big bags), and should have a top opening that allows easy access into it.

Storage locations

It’s convenient to store the harvest equipment, boxes and picking bags in a single location where they can be picked up by the harvest crew – and returned at the end of the harvest. (The same location could be used as a fruit drop off and pick up site.) One option is to use empty garages volunteered by neighborhood participants. Mapping these locations can facilitate communication.

⁶ Don’t store fruit in plastic bags. Since the plastic doesn’t ‘breathe,’ moisture produced by the fruit is retained in the bag, and fruit spoils more quickly.



Recruit & train volunteers

Recruiting volunteers

Harvest volunteers can be recruited using many of the methods used for soliciting fruit donations: talking to people, flyers, targeted listservs, newsletters, Facebook and other social networking tools, media and websites. In fact, you can recruit harvest volunteers on the same flyer, email, etc., that you use to recruit fruit donations. Organizations like the United Way maintain databases of community volunteer opportunities and reach a wide audience of people interested in volunteering. Church and school groups, service clubs and other organizations are often interested in participating in harvests as community service events. Since most high school students have service learning requirements, harvesting fruit may be an option for them. (The main barrier to this is timing: Most harvesting takes place in August and September, when students are out of school or just starting – and not yet focused on service learning requirements.)

Before soliciting volunteers, decide who will field their responses – probably a steering committee member (or paid staff, if you have them). You need to provide that person’s contact information and a way to compile volunteer information. Volunteers can be enrolled in person, by phone, via mail or online. In addition to contact information, you may want to find out the volunteer’s availability, whether they have a car/station wagon, who they may be bringing to the harvest, their level of commitment (one-time, ongoing, etc.), how much lead time they need, and where they want to harvest.⁷

Volunteer training

Many – if not most – volunteers have little experience picking fruit. For that reason, some fruit harvests put effort into formal volunteer orientations.⁸ They could include the following topics:

- ***how the harvest works*** (basic logistics)
- ***what to wear:*** long-sleeved shirt, long pants, closed-toed shoes, eye protection (glasses, sunglasses), hat (trees are dirty and dusty)
- ***what to bring:*** water; boxes and bags (not plastic); bee/wasp allergy protection
- ***how to use the ladder & fruit picking tool***
- ***how to tell if fruit is ready to pick***
- ***how to pick fruit***
- ***what not to take:*** fruit from the ground, fruit that has been sprayed (if you decide to select only organic fruit)

It’s useful to have several volunteer orientations, since new people typically join the group mid-harvest, motivated by the fruit they see on trees. Some harvest projects orient volunteers onsite – that is, at the tree before the harvest – and/or provide them with web-based or printed information beforehand.

⁷ The Community Fruit Tree Harvest at Solid Ground uses a volunteer application form. Completing and signing an application form designates the volunteer as an ‘official’ Solid Ground volunteer (for insurance and other purposes).

⁸ See Appendix 4, p. 20, for the Community Fruit Tree Harvest’s Sample Volunteer Information Sheet.

Liability

Fruit tree owners are exempt from liability for injuries to gleaners who are collecting fruit on their property for donation to others by the federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act of 1996 (www.usda.gov/news/pubs/gleaning/appc.htm) unless there is gross negligence or intentional misconduct by the tree owner. You can protect your project from liability for injuries to volunteers in a several ways. If your project is housed within a larger organization that provides insurance coverage for volunteers, your project's volunteers may be covered by this policy. If so, check out what paperwork is required. Your project could purchase commercial liability insurance from an insurance company that works with nonprofit organizations. Or, if there is no insurance to cover volunteers, you can ask them to sign a waiver.

Decide how to use the fruit

Most fruit harvest projects give fruit to organizations serving people who otherwise couldn't afford fresh produce. Possibilities include food banks, meals programs, senior centers, low-income housing facilities, youth and children's programs, special residential facilities, school snack programs, shelters, and drop-in centers. It may be possible to funnel fruit through larger organizations that glean and distribute food from a variety of restaurants and grocery stores, much like a gleaning wholesaler. A few harvests sell a portion of the fruit, and others use certain ratios for distributing it to the tree owner, the volunteer pickers and charitable organizations. The Neighborhood Harvest in Ashland, Oregon, for example, distributes a quarter of the fruit to the tree owner, the pickers, charitable groups and sales. Making a good match between the available fruit and the recipient organization takes planning. Here are some considerations:



- ***How will fruit be used?*** What types of fruit are appropriate? A shelter or food bank, for example, can distribute fruit that clients will eat soon, like plums and eating apples. Green pears and cooking apples aren't appropriate for homeless clients – but they may be useful at a senior center or given to the cook at a residential facility. Try to match the type and quality of fruit with its end use.
- ***How much fruit can the organization use?*** Give what they can use – and not more than they need. Otherwise, disposing of food waste becomes a problem for the recipient. A medium-size box of fruit weighs 25 to 45 pounds, depending on the type of fruit and how full the box is.
- ***How often can they receive and distribute fruit?*** Do they want to schedule deliveries, or can they handle fruit on a drop off basis? Some organizations may need to plan menus around expected fruit; others use whatever they have on hand.
- ***When can they receive the fruit?*** Some programs – like food banks – are only open once or twice a week. Don't plan to distribute very ripe fruit to an organization that won't be open for several days.
- ***Where are they located?*** Finding recipient organizations located in the neighborhood where the fruit is harvested cuts down on transportation and promotes relationships between those who donate and harvest the fruit and the recipients.
- ***Consider how to get fruit to seniors*** and others confined to their homes. Connect directly with housing programs for seniors and adults living with disabilities to assess how to meet their needs.

Create a spreadsheet or database of recipient organizations

Interview the recipient organization to find out their location, phone, contact person, hours and days for receiving fruit, types of fruit desired, quantities desired, how often fruit is wanted, and where, exactly, to bring the fruit.

In-person interviews are preferable because they allow you to observe the drop off location, understand more clearly how the fruit will be used or distributed, and meet the person in charge. *The protocol for many organizations is to say “yes” to any offer, even though it may not be appropriate.* Having a person-to-person conversation helps the recipient organization outline exactly what types of fruit will be of most benefit to its clients. (Following up with the recipients at the end of the season is a good way to find out if the fruit was useful to them. So is keeping good lines of communication open during the harvest season.)

Create a spreadsheet or database of recipient organizations and provide this to volunteers. If the data can be searched by variables (e.g., which organizations can use plums on a Monday?), volunteers will be able to make more appropriate deliveries. A list of recipients developed by the Community Fruit Tree Harvest can be found at: www.solid-ground.org/Programs/Nutrition/FruitTree/Documents/WhereToDonate.pdf.

PHASE 3: Harvesting



Develop a scheduling plan

The logistics of running a harvest include deciding when fruit is ready to pick, scheduling the harvest, recruiting a harvest team, getting the team and the equipment to the site (and back), picking the fruit, delivering it to an appropriate recipient and recording data about how much was picked and where it went. This section discusses some options for setting up harvests.

The key challenge in coordinating a fruit harvest is balancing the number of available volunteers with the amount of fruit ready to pick at any given time: both are unpredictable. This is complicated by the fact that predicting the readiness of fruit for harvest ahead of time is also difficult – it’s often determined by the weather.

How can you tell when the fruit is ready?

Deciding on the optimum time for picking fruit is as much art as science. And unfortunately, fruit tree owners may not be reliable sources: They often call when the fruit is overripe and falling on the ground. Since the harvest of any particular tree must be scheduled in advance, deciding when to pick the fruit takes planning. One approach is to train the tree owner to observe the fruit and report when it is nearly ready. Another option is to assign neighborhood ‘scouts’ to monitor the progress of the fruit. The harvest coordinator could also routinely check on the status of the fruit, organizing the trees on a priority basis. None of these methods is fool-proof, since ripeness ultimately depends on the weather. Not only do

ripening patterns vary from year to year, the quantity of fruit also varies. Some years there will be a heavy crop, the next year very few. Here are some general guidelines for when to harvest different fruits:

- **Plums** are picked when they are sweet and slightly soft. In some trees, plums exposed to hot sun will be ripe while those in the shade will be hard. Unless you plan to go back to the tree later, it will be necessary to choose the point at which the most plums are ripe. Green plums don't tend to ripen much after they are picked.
- **Apples** and **Asian pears** are also picked when they are ripe. Twist the fruit: If it easily snaps off the branch, then taste it for ripeness. Even tart apples lose that 'chalky' taste when they are ripe.
- **European pears**, like Bartletts, are picked green and hard (and allowed to ripen for a few days, or a week, after harvest.) A pear is ready to pick when the stem pulls readily away from the branch.



Scheduling

Pre-scheduled harvests. Harvests can be set for certain days of the week, with volunteers signing up ahead of time. The coordinator then knows how many people will be able to harvest on any particular day and can arrange transportation and equipment. This approach also lets volunteers plan ahead. Because it's not possible to know how much fruit will be ready on any particular day, pre-scheduled harvests can result in a mismatch between fruit and volunteers, with too little fruit and too many volunteers, or vice versa. When pre-scheduling harvest events, pay attention to the recipient's schedule. If fruit is going to a food bank or meals program, consider the days it's in operation. Most fruit (pears excepted) should be eaten soon after harvesting, so don't pick fruit on Saturday for a food bank that doesn't open until Tuesday.

Ad hoc harvests. An alternative approach is to let the need to harvest a particular tree trigger a call for volunteers. After being notified (by the tree owner or a neighborhood volunteer) that fruit is ready to harvest, the harvest coordinator sends out an email request for volunteers and creates a harvest team from those who respond. The team decides when, within the specified period, they will harvest the tree. This approach requires a large pool of potential volunteers and/or a group of dedicated volunteers willing to harvest without a schedule, and it depends on a central coordinator who is highly responsive to email. It doesn't address the needs of volunteers who don't use email regularly, and for those who do, it can lead to email overload. It may also be difficult for people who need to schedule ahead.

Combination. An approach that combines some pre-scheduled harvests with *ad hoc* appeals for help may preserve the benefits of each approach while solving some of the problems inherent in each. Another possibility is to send weekly emails to volunteers about upcoming harvests and let them sign up.

Online scheduling tools. Scheduling tools like a shared Google calendar can reduce phone calls/emails and facilitate information-sharing between the coordinator and volunteers. Its effectiveness depends on the willingness and ability of everyone to go online and use the tool.

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Harvest & deliver the fruit

So many variables are involved in a harvest event – donors, trees, weather, volunteers, quality of fruit, recipients – that it’s nearly impossible to pre-plan each detail. Flexibility and a good sense of humor go a long way. Here is a sketch of how the “ideal” harvest might run:

Tree is ready!

The tree owner calls the harvest coordinator to say that a tree is ready to pick. A harvest volunteer confirms this by checking out the tree in person. The volunteer notes how many people and what types of ladder(s) will be needed to pick the tree. (A small tree needs only a couple of pickers, a larger one requires up to four.)

Harvest is scheduled.

The harvest coordinator schedules a time to pick the tree. It could be a pre-scheduled harvest, with volunteers already signed up, or an *ad hoc* call for volunteers. The harvest is logged into a Google calendar with relevant details, and volunteers are contacted about where and when to meet. Someone is assigned to deliver the ladder and other equipment. If ladders or picking tools are needed to reach the fruit, there should be enough for each volunteer. **Note:** Consider using a phone tree to reach volunteers who don’t use email.

Deliver the equipment.

A volunteer with a station wagon or truck picks up the ladders, boxes, picking bags, picking tools and scale at the storage/drop off location and brings them to the harvest site – where the rest of the volunteers are assembled. Alternatively, volunteers bring their own ladders, or they use the fruit tree owner’s ladder.

Pick the fruit.

Yes, pick the fruit! Here are some things to remember:

- For apples and pears, lift and twist. Plums will give easily.
- Ripe? Pears are picked while still hard (not yet edible). Apples and pears are ready if they can be easily removed from the branch. Plums on one tree may ripen at different times – pick those that are starting to soften. If they are very soft or split, put into yard waste bins (or keep for yourself).
- Keep stems attached to fruit, if possible. (Fruit lasts longer in storage that way.)
- If some of the fruit is ready, and some is unripe, segregate it into separate boxes and label these.
- Try to pick all of the fruit on the tree (unless you plan to come back later or it’s unreachable).
- Use the fruit picker for higher fruit.
- **Don’t take fruit that has touched the ground.** There is a risk of E. coli, and bruised fruit spoils faster.
- Don’t take wormy or unattractive fruit. A general rule is that if you wouldn’t want to eat it yourself, don’t take it.
- Don’t overfill boxes and bags, especially with soft fruit.
- Don’t stand on the top two rungs of the ladder.

Sort & weigh the fruit.

Remove damaged, split and wormy fruit. Weigh fruit and record the amounts. Depending on your harvest protocol, you may give some fruit to the tree owner and harvesters, saving the rest to donate. Leave fruit on the tree owner's porch – if that is the agreement – and leave a card thanking them.

Clean up the site.

Dropped fruit and broken branches should be raked or gathered into a pile. Put this into a yard waste bin, if available. Since dropped fruit attracts pests, it shouldn't be left beneath the tree.

Deliver the fruit.

In some cases, fruit will be returned to a fruit drop off and storage location (often the same garage where ladders are stored) for later delivery by other volunteers. In other cases, harvested fruit will be delivered directly to the recipient organization after harvesting. In either case, leave a flyer with the fruit noting that, *"This fruit was harvested by _____.* Although it hasn't been exposed to pesticides, wash it before eating."

Return the ladder & equipment to the storage location.



PHASE FOUR: Wrapping up

10

Manage harvest data

Data about fruit trees can be managed on a spreadsheet or in a simple database. Over time, this information creates a useful inventory of community fruit assets. Important data include:

- **Tree owner information:** name, contact information, level of interest, do they have a ladder?
- **Tree data:** type, location, height/size, typical readiness date (e.g., late August, early September), fruit quality
- **Harvest data:** tree accessibility, equipment needed, pounds harvested, fruit quality, fruit distribution

Managing the data can be a role for a steering committee volunteer or a paid harvest coordinator. Alternatively, data could be managed through a shared online spreadsheet, with volunteers entering data as they harvest.



Say thank you

The success of a fruit tree harvest relies on the commitment of volunteer pickers and the willingness of tree owners to donate fruit. If they feel good about what happened, they are likely to participate again. So take care to thank them. Some ideas:

- Leave a thank you card behind with the tree owner after harvesting the fruit.
- Send everyone an end-of-harvest report summarizing what happened, how much was harvested and where it went. Let them know the aggregate effect of individual contributions like their own.
- Send each tree owner a thank you note telling them how much was harvested from their tree and where it went.
- Create an email list with weekly or monthly updates, so everyone stays informed.
- Regularly update a web-based graphic that shows the increasing pounds harvested.
- Hold an end-of-year party (jam-making? cider pressing?) event for harvest volunteers.
- Hold an end-of-year debrief about how to make the harvest better next season.
- Write news stories/newsletter articles/Facebook entries about the success of the harvest.

Conclusion

Urban fruit harvests tap into a fundamental value – don't waste good food. For many, the sight of ripe fruit lying on the ground is disturbing, especially when others can't afford to buy the same fruit. The proliferation of urban harvests is very much motivated by the urge to prevent this dissonant situation.

Harvesting local (urban) fruit makes less sense economically. Under the current organization of food production/distribution, it is cheaper to fly apples in from New Zealand than to harvest them locally. The decentralized nature of urban 'orchards,' non-standard fruit varieties, variability in ripening, and other complex logistics involved in harvesting urban fruit work directly against the economies of scale that lead to conventional profitability.

So while this handbook is designed to help interested communities start up urban fruit harvests that rely on grassroots, volunteer involvement, the question of whether fruit harvests can become enduring fixtures of their communities remains an issue to work on into the future.



Appendix 1: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How can you tell if the fruit is ready to pick?

A: Deciding the optimum time for picking fruit is as much art as science. Fruits with pits, like *plums*, *peaches*, *apricots* and *cherries*, are picked when they are sweet and slightly soft. In some trees, plums exposed to hot sun will be ripe while those in the shade will be hard. Green plums don't tend to ripen much after they are picked. *Apples* and *Asian pears* are also picked when they are ripe. They are ready if the stem easily breaks away from the branch when twisted. If it does, taste the fruit: Even tart apples lose that 'chalky' taste when they are ripe. *European pears*, like Bartletts, are picked green and hard (and allowed to ripen for a few days, or a week, after harvest). A pear is ready to pick when the stem pulls readily away from the branch.



Q: What about liability if volunteer harvesters get hurt?

A: Fruit tree owners are exempt from liability for injuries to gleaners who are collecting fruit on their property for donation to others by the federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act of 1996 (www.usda.gov/news/pubs/gleaning/appc.htm) unless there is gross negligence or intentional misconduct by the tree owner. You can protect your project from liability for injuries to volunteers in several ways. If your project is housed within a larger organization that provides insurance coverage for volunteers, your project's volunteers may be covered by this policy. If so, check out what paperwork is required. Your project could purchase commercial liability insurance from an insurance company that works with nonprofit organizations. Or, if there is no insurance to cover volunteers, you can ask them to sign a waiver form.

Q: Can the fruit tree owner claim the donated fruit as a charitable deduction for tax purposes?

A: Yes, the value of the fruit can be claimed as a charitable deduction for tax purposes. It's the fruit donor's responsibility to determine the value of the donation; typically, the market value of the fruit is multiplied by the number of pounds donated to arrive at a value. If a receipt is provided to the fruit donor for tax purposes, it should be provided by an organization with 501(c)3 status. This could be the project that harvests and delivers the fruit, or it could be the final recipient organization (e.g., the food bank). Relying on the end recipient, however, creates an extra piece of follow up to get the receipt from the recipient organization back to the fruit donor.

Q: What is an orchard ladder?

A: An orchard ladder is one with a wide base that tapers towards the top and a single pole that extends out. The tripod construction makes the ladder both more stable and maneuverable: The pole can be maneuvered in and around main branches and the trunk so that the picker can climb up into the heart of the tree. An orchard ladder is also more stable when picking the outside branches.

Orchard ladders range from six- to 18- or 20-feet tall. Since it's not safe to stand on the top rung, six-foot ladders may be too short for most situations (since too many just-out-of-reach fruits may lure pickers to the top rung). For most trees (and most people), an eight-foot ladder is adequate and safest. Taller ladders (10- to 12-foot) are more difficult to set in place and to transport without a truck. An eight-foot orchard ladder fits into most station wagons.

Q: How should fruit be stored?

A: Fruit should be stored in shallow cardboard boxes or cartons in a cool place. If packed too deep, fruit on the bottom will be squashed. Remove fruit with cuts or openings, as these can rot and contaminate nearby fruit. If possible keep the stem on the fruit (removing the stem may cause tears and be a source of rot). Never store fruit in plastic bags; these hold moisture and promote rot. Since pears must be stored for a number of days – up to a week or so – to ripen, keep them in a cool, darkish location, in a container that isn't airtight.

Q: Why do some trees produce a lot of fruit one year and very little fruit the next year?

A: There are a number of possible reasons for little fruit production by a given tree in a particular year. Some trees seem to 'ebb and flow,' producing lots of fruit one year followed by a year of little fruit. In other cases, weather is to blame: If heavy rains prevent bee activity while the tree is in blossom, there will be less pollination and thus less fruit. Finally, stress to the tree – say from heavy pruning or disease – can mean that the tree puts less of its energy into fruit production.

Appendix 2: Fruit Tree Donor Intake Questions

(Developed by Community Fruit Tree Harvest, a project of Solid Ground's Lettuce Link program in Seattle, WA.)

Name: _____

Address (include zip please): _____

Phone Number: _____

- 1) Can we contact you via email? If yes, what is your email address?
- 2) What kind of tree(s) do you have? *(Must be apple, pear, Asian pear, plum or grape.)*
- 3) Did you spray the tree? *(Natural products like clay and oil are OK; no chemicals and no regular tree services.)*
- 4) How tall is the tree? Do you have a ladder? *(If so, how tall is the ladder? What type of ladder is it?)*
- 5) Tree health: Is it infested? *(If so, with what?)* Did you eat the fruit last year?
- 6) Fruit ripeness and quantity: When will it be ripe? When was it ripe last year? How much fruit does it produce? Is it ripe now? How dense does it look? How many grocery bags do you estimate?
- 7) Accessibility. *(Flat or hilly? Locked gate? Dog? Any other barriers to picking?)*
- 8) Are you able to help us pick the fruit?



Appendix 3: **Flyer to Recruit Fruit Tree Donors (& Volunteers)**

(Developed by Community Fruit Tree Harvest, a project of Solid Ground's Lettuce Link program in Seattle, WA.)

Got fruit? Give fruit!

Solid Ground's Lettuce Link program encourages you to share the bounty of fruit trees with those in need in your community.

Tree owners . . .

If you have harvested more healthy fruit than you need and would like resources about where to donate it, contact Sadie at sadieb@solid-ground.org or 206.694.6751.

If you need help harvesting your pesticide-free, worm-free apple, plum or pear trees for donation, contact Seattle Tilth at help@gardenhotline.org or 206.633.0224.

Volunteers . . .

If you would like to help pick and deliver donated fruit, contact Sadie at sadieb@solid-ground.org or 206.694.6751.

In 2008, Community Fruit Tree Harvest volunteers picked more than **14,000** pounds of fruit and delivered it to Seattle food banks and meals programs – fruit that would otherwise fall to the ground and go to waste.

What fruits?

- apples, plums, pears, peaches, grapes
- pesticide-free
- worm-free
- harvested from the tree (not the ground)

What neighborhoods?

We and other community groups harvest fruit in all Seattle neighborhoods. To start a fruit tree harvest in your own neighborhood, contact Sadie at sadieb@solid-ground.org or 206.694.6751.

What time commitment?

Volunteers commit three hours – or one picking shift – although many people decide to do more than one shift. Volunteers work in teams.

What other help?

If you can't pick fruit but want to help, volunteers are needed to sort fruit, scout trees for ripeness, contact food banks and deliver the produce.

The Community Fruit Tree Harvest is a collaboration between Solid Ground's Lettuce Link program & Seattle Tilth.



Appendix 4: Sample Volunteer Information Sheet

(Developed by Community Fruit Tree Harvest, a project of Solid Ground's Lettuce Link program in Seattle, WA.)

Community Fruit Tree Harvest Volunteer Information 2009



The **Community Fruit Tree Harvest** connects Seattle residents who have extra fruit from their residential trees with volunteers who harvest this fruit and deliver it to those who can use it. We depend on volunteers to pick and deliver this fruit. In 2008, volunteers harvested and delivered 14,000 pounds of pesticide-free plums, apples and pears.

Who gets the fruit?

Fruit is made available to persons who otherwise lack access to fresh, organic produce. Last year volunteers delivered fruit to more than 63 different community organizations including food banks, meals programs, shelters, low-income apartment complexes, programs for children and youth, and senior facilities. Without the coordinated efforts of the fruit tree harvest project volunteers, much of that fruit would have fallen to the ground and rotted.

Who gives the fruit?

Most fruit comes from private residences in Seattle – from people who can't use all their fruit and hate to see it wasted. None of the fruit has been sprayed with pesticides.

How can you help?

From July through October we need help harvesting trees and delivering fruit. There are many options:

- 'Scout' trees in your neighborhood to see if they are ripe and harvestable before sending volunteers to harvest.
- Attend scheduled harvest work parties.
- Be on call to harvest fruit in your neighborhood. (An email or phone call will go out to volunteers in a particular neighborhood where a tree is ripe. Volunteers who are available will make arrangements for picking.)
- Provide garage storage for ladders, picking buckets, and/or harvested fruit.
- Deliver harvested fruit to food banks, meal programs and low-income apartments.
- Meet with staff at recipient organizations to determine how to best serve their needs when donating fruit.

Trees.

If you have friends or neighbors who need assistance in harvesting their pesticide-free, worm-free apple, pear and plum trees for donation, please have them contact the Seattle Tilth Garden Hotline at 206.633.0224 or help@gardenhotline.org. The Garden Hotline does the initial intake for trees, and then sends the information over to us at Lettuce Link.

Other questions & information?

Please contact Sadie Beauregard at 206.694.6751 or sadie@solid-ground.org.

How to Harvest Fruit

(Volunteer Information continued)

When:

- Harvesting begins in mid-July (with early plums) and continues into October.
- Harvest times vary by area and availability of fruit; volunteers arrange time for fruit tree harvest with owner.

Where:

You will either meet at the site of the tree or at the neighborhood drop off site. The drop off location is a person's garage or another place where ladders, fruit pickers, boxes, etc. are stored and where fruit is dropped off after picking. The drop off location for your neighborhood is: _____

What to bring:

- Long-sleeved shirt, eye protection (glasses, sunglasses), hat, old clothes
- Drinking water
- Boxes and bags (**Note:** For soft fruit, use boxes that aren't too deep. Otherwise, fruit on the bottom can be smashed.)
- Ladder, if you have one
- Fruit picker, if you have one, for higher fruit

Staying safe & being courteous:

- If you have bee or wasp allergies, bring medical protection.
- Watch for traffic.
- Only climb as high as you are comfortable (don't use the top two steps of a ladder). We will only pick as high as is safe.
- If you smoke, step away from the crew and house. Bring hand soap or gloves so the scent doesn't linger on the fruit.

How to pick:

- For apples and pears, lift and twist. Plums will give easily.
- Ripe? Pears are picked green. Apples and pears are ready if they can be easily removed from the branch. Plums on one tree ripen at different times – pick those that are starting to soften. If they are very soft or split, put into yard waste bins (or keep for yourself).
- Keep stems attached to fruit, if possible. (Fruit lasts longer in storage that way.)
- Don't shake the trees.
- **DO NOT** take fruit that has touched the ground. There is a risk of E. coli, and bruised fruit spoils faster.
- Use the fruit picker for higher fruit (experienced volunteers will demonstrate).
- Don't overfill boxes and bags, especially with soft fruit.

After fruit is picked:

- If the donor requested a bag of fruit, leave it with the person or on their porch.
- Leave a donation letter and thank you note.
- Weigh the fruit and record numbers.
- Make sure the yard is as clean as we found it; put unusable fruit that was picked in yard waste, if available.
- Deliver or store fruit for next day delivery.

Appendix 5: List of Harvest Projects

Washington State

- Community Fruit Tree Harvest, www.solid-ground.org/Programs/Nutrition/FruitTree, Seattle, WA. Community harvest with 14,000 lbs in '08 delivered to more than 60 groups.
- Community Harvest of Southwest Seattle, www.gleanit.org, Seattle, WA. Neighborhood project coordinating harvest and providing education on food preparation/preservation and tree care. 4,500 lbs in '08.
- Phinney Sustainable Harvest, www.cityfruit.org, Seattle, WA. Neighborhood harvest researching how to make urban fruit harvests sustainable.

Arizona & Oregon

- Iskash*taa Refugee Harvesting Network, www.iskashitaa.org, Tucson, AZ. Community harvest involving volunteers from African refugee communities (primarily Somali Bantu). ~20,000 lbs annually.
- Neighborhood Harvest, Rogue Valley, www.neighborhoodharvest.org/roguevalley, Ashland, OR. Community harvest that distributes fruit in quarters – to owner, charity, picker and market. 3,000 lbs in '08.
- Portland Fruit Tree Project, www.portlandfruit.org, Portland, OR. Community harvest with workshops on tree care and fruit preservation. ~3,500 lbs in '07.

California

- Fallen Fruit, www.fallenfruit.org, Los Angeles, CA. Project promoting neighborhood-building through the mapping and eating of private/public fruit, 'art jams,' tree plantings and other activist/artistic events.
- Forage Oakland, www.forageoakland.blogspot.com, Oakland, CA. Blog that connects people who have fruit with those who want it.
- Fruitful Harvest, www.freethefruit.org/Home_Page.html, San Gabriel Valley, CA. Community-based harvest.
- North Berkeley Harvest, www.northberkeleyharvest.org, Berkeley, Kensington, El Cerrito, Albany and Richmond, CA. Community-based harvest. 7,000 lbs in '08.
- PUEBLO (People United for a Better Life in Oakland) Urban Youth Harvest, www.peopleunited.org/uyh.html, Oakland, CA. PUEBLO, Cycles for Change, and the Oakland Mayor's Summer Jobs Program partner to pay Oakland teenagers to harvest backyard fruit for low-income seniors using bicycles.
- Senior Gleaners, www.seniorgleaners.org, Sacramento and five northern California counties. Seniors glean fruit and produce from gardens, yards, orchards and supermarkets for distribution to low-income people and seniors.
- SF Glean, www.sfglean.org, San Francisco, CA. All volunteer community harvest.
- Spiral Gardens Neighborhood Harvest, www.spiralgardens.org, SW Berkeley, CA. Organize community gardens, produce stands and a fruit harvest, including the Neighborhood Harvest, a community harvest in Oakland, Berkeley, Albany and inner East Bay.
- Village Harvest, www.villageharvest.org, 1.888.FRUIT.411, San Francisco Bay Area. Large-scale, year-round harvest throughout the Bay Area. >120,000 lbs in '08. Provides information on self-harvesting, resources on tree care and fruit preservation, and lists organizations needing fruit.

East Coast

- Earthworks, www.earthworksboston.org, Boston, MA. Urban Orchards promotes the planting, care and harvesting of fruit trees in urban environments.

Outside the U.S.

United Kingdom

- Grow Sheffield, www.growsheffield.com, Sheffield, England. The Abundance project donates fruit to organizations; distributes it from a 'mobile fruit unit' at a shopping mall; makes juice, jams, pickles and preserves; sponsors classes on tree care; and promotes fruit tree planting.
- The Fruit Picking Project, www.organiclea.org.uk and www.hornbeam.org.uk, Project of OrganicLea, Lea Valley (edge of London) and the Hornbeam Centre, Walthamstow, England. Also known as the 'scrumping project,' a quarter of the fruit goes to the fruit owner; the remainder is sold as fruit, jam, pickles and juice at a café and market stall. 24,000 lbs in '07.

Canada

- Earth Matters Fruit Tree Project, www.earthmatters.ca/youth_initiatives/past_projects/fruit_tree_project.html, Nelson, B.C. Community fruit harvest that aims to reduce the attraction of bears to urban fruit.
- Hamilton Fruit Tree Project, www.environmenthamilton.org/eatlocal, Hamilton, Ontario. A project of Hamilton Eat Local.
- Lifecycles Fruit Tree Project www.lifecyclesproject.ca/initiatives/fruit_tree, Victoria, B.C. Community fruit harvest in greater Victoria since 2000. 30,000 pounds in '08. Published *Harvesting Abundance*, a guide to starting a fruit harvest, and partnered with entrepreneurs to produce products like apple cider vinegar, quince paste and apple spice ice cream.
- Not Far from the Tree, www.notfarfromthetree.org/about, Toronto, Ontario. Creates neighborhood harvest hubs, envisioning a network of linked neighborhood harvests. 3,000 lbs in '08; expanding to another neighborhood in '09.
- Richmond Fruit Tree Sharing Project, www.richmondfruittree.com, Richmond, B.C. Community fruit harvest started in 2001. 3,880 lbs in '05.
- Vancouver Fruit Tree Project, www.vcn.bc.ca/fruit, Vancouver, B.C. Community-based, volunteer-run harvest that partners with community kitchens. 5,000 lbs in '06.

If you're reading a print version of this handbook and discover broken web links, you can find the most up-to-date version on this webpage:

[www.solid-ground.org/
Programs/Nutrition/
FruitTree](http://www.solid-ground.org/Programs/Nutrition/FruitTree)



We believe...

- Our community has the resources, will and ability to end poverty.
- All people have the right to food, shelter, social justice and opportunities.
- Racism perpetuates poverty. To end poverty, we must undo racism.

We believe that together, we can build a community free from poverty, prejudice and neglect in which all members stand on Solid Ground with the skills and confidence needed to achieve their dreams.

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