



Common Good Gardens

Common Good Gardens is a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization whose mission is to grow and deliver fresh vegetables and fruit to people in need, to improve the nutritional quality of food available to the needy and to educate the public about gardening, by sharing gardening expertise and providing hands on experience.

The garden was started in 2002 by gardeners who wanted to use their gardening knowledge to benefit others. Grace Episcopal Church in Old Saybrook offered the use of its land and water. Over the years the garden has expanded and along with physical growth came increased gardening knowledge.

The garden is "no till." We rely on a huge production of nutritious compost to enrich the soil. We grow companion plants to attract beneficial insects and fence for deer and burrowing animals. We soil test three times a year and add natural amendments when necessary. The garden supplies more than 21 varieties of vegetables and fruits and 6 herbs that are often too expensive for many in our community to purchase on their own.

The Planting Committee meets regularly and maintains bed records on each crop and variety in each bed. This information is used to form next year's plan. We try for three plantings in each bed each season.

Our volunteers come from all walks of life and range in age from 5 to 90 years old. Many volunteers have completed the Master Gardener Course. We have a "come when you can and do what you can" philosophy which works well, but there is always a need for more workers.

Volunteers who work in the garden are the backbone of our success, but there are many who contribute in other ways. For example, an irrigation company donated the automatic irrigation system. An Old Saybrook resident donated the blueberry bushes, the Essex Garden Club donated the asparagus roots and Old Saybrook second graders donated tools. Our next-door neighbor felled trees, cleared his land and installed a well for our water use. A seed company donates seeds and a commercial farmer is growing garlic for us. A local builder donated materials and labor for our garden shed.





We meet to plant, harvest and work Tuesday and Saturday mornings and Thursday afternoons to correspond to the Shoreline Soup Kitchen & Pantries' schedule. This way we assure fresh produce for the guests without the need for refrigeration. The pantries, which provide three days' worth of food to over 500 families each week, are located in churches in Old Saybrook, Niantic and Old Lyme.

A group of volunteer drivers picks up from six farm stands that donate fruits and vegetables. The produce is brought to the garden and sorted in accordance with the needs of each pantry. Individual community residents also bring us their excess produce.

We regularly conduct tours during the growing season and advise others who wish to start a similar garden, and are pleased that we have been instrumental in the start-up of four other gardens in the shoreline community.

Common Good Gardens gratefully recognizes the generous support it has received from individuals, foundations, organizations and corporations, which has enabled it to plan, plant, harvest and deliver fresh produce for those in need each year.

The garden produces between 5,000 and 7,000 pounds of its own produce annually, plus an additional more than 5,000 pounds donated by others. This year we grew over 9,000 pounds - a new record. Since its inception in 2002, the garden has provided more than 294,000 pounds of fresh produce to the Shoreline Soup Kitchen & Pantries.

