

Growing for the Food Bank

DO YOU PLANT TOO MUCH IN YOUR VEGGIE GARDEN? It's a common mistake (I do it just about every year). Then you're faced with disposing of the extras, and there's only so much you can freeze or give to neighbours. Well here's an idea: a program that actually encourages you to grow an extra row of vegetables to donate those in need. The annual "Plant a Row ~ Grow a Row" program is now in its seventh gardening season. It's a volunteer-based program that builds on the long-standing tradition of gardeners loving to share their harvest with others.

The program was originally launched nationally through the combined efforts of the Canadian Association of Food Banks, the Garden Writers Association, and the Composting Council of Canada. Almost 1.5 million pounds of fresh produce have been donated since the national program began in the year 2000.

"Once the harvest comes in, there are always extras," says Susan Antler, of the Composting Council of Canada. "In addition to family, neighbours and friends, it would be great if you would also consider sharing your garden's bounty with neighbourhood food agencies."

All kinds of fresh produce are needed and appreciated by food banks. Root vegetables such as carrots, potatoes, onions, beets and parsnips are best, but any produce that can be easily handled and stored is welcome — including broccoli, cabbage, peas, beans, tomatoes, radishes, sweet peppers, eggplants, and zucchini (and who *doesn't* have extra zucchini?!), as well as firm fruits such as apples and pears.

Plant a Row ~ Grow a Row has benefited tremendously from the generosity of many, many gardeners and organizations connected with the garden. To get involved visit their website at www.growarow.org or call 1-877-571-GROW. You can connect with the Ottawa Food Bank at 745-7001, or visit their website at www.theottawafoodbank.ca.