



# Association of Arizona Food Banks

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[www.azfoodbanks.org](http://www.azfoodbanks.org)

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**Local Gardeners Encouraged to Connect with Food Banks via AmpleHarvest.org**

PHOENIX, ARIZONA: With nearly 15% of Arizona's population living in poverty, and 1 in 5 children struggling with hunger, the Association of Arizona Food Banks is encouraging and assisting the nearly 1,700 food banks and pantries in Arizona to register with [www.AmpleHarvest.org](http://www.AmpleHarvest.org), a nationwide effort to enable neighborhood food pantries to be easily located by local backyard gardeners wishing to share their excess bounty with neighbors in need.

"Two years ago, my own garden grew more produce than we could possibly use, and I quickly found that there are only so many cucumbers you can give to friends and still have them call you a friend," says AmpleHarvest.org founder Gary Oppenheimer. "When I searched on the Internet for pantries, the nearest one listed was 25 miles away even though my own town has five. That was when it became clear that AmpleHarvest.org was desperately needed."

To address this, the AmpleHarvest.org website enables food pantries to register their name, phone, address, an optional photograph, and day(s) of the week and time of the day they'll accept the gardeners' produce. The site also offers personalized driving directions to help gardeners locate the pantry.

"Demand for food, especially fresh fruit and vegetables, is especially high in light of the economy," said Brian Simpson, director of communication for AAFB. "By utilizing AmpleHarvest.org, local gardeners throughout Arizona can more easily assist their local food pantries and make a difference in their communities."

Traditionally, local food pantries receive food from regional food banks, government programs and neighborhood donations. Fresh produce can be hard to come by because of distribution and storage issues. At the same time, backyard gardeners frequently find that their gardens provide far more produce than they can use, but struggle to locate nearby pantries because they typically don't have a presence online or in the yellow pages.

AmpleHarvest.org is an outgrowth of the Ample Harvest program at the West Milford Community Garden in West Milford, New Jersey, and is operated by Sustainable West Milford, a 501(c)(3) sustainability organization.

Established in 1984, the Association of Arizona Food Banks is a private, non-profit organization serving five-member regional food bank warehouses (Community Food Bank, Desert Mission Food Bank, St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance, United Food Bank, Yuma Community Food Bank) and a network of nearly 1,700 food pantries and agencies. As one of the first state associations in the nation, AAFB was instrumental in the development of a statewide gleaning project, and our advocacy efforts have brought about beneficial state and federal legislation for our member food banks and the people they serve. For more information, to find a food bank or pantry in your area, or to learn more about donation and volunteer opportunities, please visit [www.azfoodbanks.org](http://www.azfoodbanks.org).

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