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Dear friends,

Welcome to the rich world of growing, sharing, and harvesting food! Did you know that Piece County boasts a network of over 70 community food projects? In addition to these gardens, orchards, and food forests, the community is working to build strong webs of food security through volunteer efforts like the Gleaning Project and Share the Harvest. Citizens are coming together with the belief that everyone deserves access to fresh, healthy, and affordable produce.

Community Gardens, orchards, and food forests are as diverse as the plants that grow in them. In addition to providing physical nourishment and being a space for tomatoes to ripen and zucchinis to multiply, they satisfy other needs. These spaces can help fill our hunger for connection — connection to one-another and to our earth. Growing plants can help bring people together, educate our youth, and be a way to give back to the community in need.

Whether your community is interested in starting their own garden or orchard or volunteering with one of our programs, the opportunities for engagement are endless. We are excited to work with you and to support and celebrate your efforts!

“To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves.” Gandhi
Creating a Community of Abundance

Our History
While Community Gardening has been an activity enjoyed by residents of Tacoma and Pierce County for decades, Harvest Pierce County was founded in 2010 through a collaborative effort led by the ACHIEVE coalition to support the garden community. The City of Tacoma took a leadership role in creating a position to support the efforts of community gardeners county-wide. In 2012 the program was established as a permanent program of the Pierce Conservation District and in 2013, the Gleaning Project was formally adopted by the program. As an organization we work to create a community of abundance through reconnecting people to their food system and to each other through community gardens, gleaning, education, and celebration.

Vision
Our region has a thriving community engaged in a just and healthy food system

Mission
Investing in people to foster and sustain an equitable and healthy community-based food system throughout Pierce County

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Our Work

Community Food Projects

Pierce County boasts a network of over 70 community gardens, orchards, and food forests! We work to support these projects in several ways:

- Facilitate the creation of new gardens and other food projects throughout Pierce County
- Build capacity among volunteers through trainings, networking opportunities, and one-on-one support
- Engage our community in the work of a just and healthy food system through celebratory and informational events
- Provide relevant, accessible education on topics related to community gardening and fruit tree care

Share the Harvest

Share the Harvest supports the efforts of community gardens, forests, and orchards to invest in solutions of hunger, food insecurity, and food injustices in their neighborhoods. Community food projects find creative ways to engage which are specific to their neighborhood’s needs. Some gardens donate to or grow on the property of a food bank location, some grow for community meal sites, some are part of low-income housing, others do neighborhood barters, and some grow for seniors and those who are physically unable to grow their own food. Participating food projects are eligible for plant starts, seeds, bins, and scales. In return, we ask that food projects keep track of how much produce they have given back to their community. Since 2012, community food projects have donated over 60,000 pounds to neighbors in need.

To see a map of all the gardens, orchards, and food forests across Pierce County, please visit our website at www.harvestpiercecounty.org
The Gleaning Project

The Gleaning Project is a volunteer based effort that works to reduce the amount of produce wasted in our community, provide more fresh food to those in need, and build community. We harvest food from farms, backyard fruit trees, and farmers markets that might otherwise go to waste and share the bounty with food banks, shelters, and meal sites.

Veggie Co-op

The Veggie Co-op is designed to give urban/suburban residents an opportunity to grow food using small-scale organic farming techniques. Volunteers work through the whole growing season (March-October) to learn how to cultivate delicious fresh produce from seed to harvest, sharing the harvest with area food banks, meal sites, and community organizations.

Classes & Workshops

Spring Summit: The best free event in town to inform, energize & connect the local community in their effort to connect with their local food supply and each other! (First Saturday in May)

Edible Garden Workshop: Explore the basics of successful vegetable gardening in the Pacific Northwest in this nine month class series—from seed to table. (Feb-November)

Fruit Tree Education Series: Learn the basics of fruit tree care and maintenance through a 7 part series. (February-June)
COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECTS
-Gardens, Orchards, and Food Forests-

What is a Community Food Project?
Community food projects include community gardens, orchards, food forests as well as the many ways communities are coming together to create a more just, healthy and sustainable food system. They are urban, suburban, and rural and grow flowers, perennials, vegetables and community. Community food projects can be one community plot tended by all, or they can be many individual plots. Locations vary from neighborhoods, parks, schools, non-profits, or hospitals. Whatever size and shape a community food project is, it is a “community-managed open space”. Harvest Pierce County believes in supporting the community to design, build, and sustain these nourishing spaces.

Why Grow Food in Community?
There are many benefits to growing food in community.

Improve Community Health
Research shows that the experience of growing food is correlated with its consumption; the more experience people have growing food, the more likely they are to eat it. As only 6% of Americans eat their recommended veggies each day* improving basic nutrition is an immediate impact of this work.

Create Connections Build Stronger & Safer Communities
In addition to providing physical nourishment and being a space for tomatoes to ripen and zucchinis to multiply, growing food in community satisfies other needs. Being involved in a community food project helps fill our hunger for connection—connection to one another and to our earth. Community Food Projects build stronger and safer communities. Working together to construct, organize, and maintain a garden, orchard, or food forest creates a sense of place and allows people to get to know their neighbors in a way they would not otherwise. By promoting agriculture within urban and rural areas, we can find creative solutions to many problems—such as waste streams, abandoned lots, and unemployment.

Combat Food Insecurity and Reduce Waste
While up to 30% of food gets thrown away in our country, far too many Americans experience hunger and food insecurity. In Washington, 1 in 5 kids’ lives in a household that struggles to put food on the table. (nwharvest.org) Through Share the Harvest and The Gleaning Project, food banks and other emergency food providers receive extra food produced in community gardens or gleaned from local farms and fruit trees that may have otherwise gone to waste. These projects improve the quantity and quality of the food distributed to those in need.
Neighborhoods with successful gardens are also beautiful, safe, and welcoming

The health and wellness of individuals is tied to a sense of belonging and connectedness. At HARVEST Pierce County, we believe that growing food in community is the strongest way to connect people to each other. Other benefits of growing food in community include:

- Increase food security by providing fresh, local, affordable, culturally appropriate means of growing one’s own.
- Community gardeners have a healthier diet on average. More than 50% of community gardeners meet national guidelines for fruit and vegetable intake, compared to 25% of non-gardeners.
- Many community gardeners report an increase feeling of safety after becoming involved in their Community Gardens.
- Gardening is a great way to exercise and spend time outdoors. 100% of communities report that a motivation for community gardening is exercise and to “get dirt underneath their fingernails.”
The most important step in building a community garden is to assemble a community of people. A community garden without interested gardeners is just a vacant lot. This step can take some time, but it is worth the investment in relationships that will sustain the site long term. It takes a lot of people to build a garden, and there are different roles that people can play – all are welcome and you will need a collection of different skills and resources.

Harvest Pierce County is available at this stage to help plan and facilitate a kick-off gathering where interested people can meet one another and begin envisioning their project. The kick-off is a great space to think big and get excited about the project. Harvest Pierce County can help answer questions and share an overview of the process from organizing your project to growing food!

**Outreach Tip-Sheet**

- Start by talking to your neighbors and friends – word of mouth is the most common way folks become informed and involved.
- Consider starting a facebook group using the proposed name of the garden so you can have people contact you without handing out your personal information.
- Identify other neighborhood groups (Churches, Neighborhood Councils, PTAs) and attend their meetings – let them know what you are doing and how they can get involved.
- Connect with local online gardening groups in Pierce County through Nextdoor, Meetup, and Facebook
- Make flyers and put them up in key places in your neighborhood (coffee shops, intersections) – ask local businesses to inform their employees and put up a flyer in their place of business.
- If languages other than yours are spoken in your neighborhood, please contact us for translation and cultural support: (253) 278-6215.
While this is not a comprehensive list, there are a couple different categories where you will need to recruit help:

- **Early leadership** – Community Gardens can take a lot of meetings and it is essential to have community members willing to take a leadership role early on. The success of a garden long term is often dependent upon being able to share leadership with all participants, but in the beginning it is important to have a small group of people willing to do the hard work of organizing and committing to get the project off the ground.

- **Building the garden** – When it comes to the task of building the garden, there are often technical skills needed for fence building or toolshed assembly. These people are important for making the garden a reality and may or may not be interested in gardening long term.

- **Long term gardeners** - Many people like the idea of having a community garden in the neighborhood but don’t intend to garden there themselves. Make sure you have a healthy list of people that will steward the garden long term. Oftentimes these people may not be interested in leadership or in the community meetings and process that it takes to get a garden started, but without them, you will have a hard time sustaining a garden.

- **General community support** – It is important to have the support of the community, even those who do not intend to garden. Neighbors can keep an eye on the site, local business can donate food or other resources for work parties, community members can donate art skills, teaching skills, or help haul excess produce to the food bank. Make a list of local businesses to reach out to for support, and encourage community members to think of the ways they can contribute – a community garden is about a lot more than just gardening.

Don’t be discouraged if not everyone wants to be part of the planning committee. But we do require that you have at least six folks who are interested in the initial organizing phase before we can officially begin the process. Finding these eager neighbors is the first and most essential step.

### Selecting a Site

Your group may or may not already have a site chosen. Community gardens, orchards, and food forests come in all different shapes and sizes – the most important thing is that the site works for the people who will be managing the site. There several important site characteristics to consider as the community selects the site.

- **Visibility** – It is a benefit to have the garden in a clearly visible location. Visible gardens are often the most successful because they serve as community gathering areas. Gardens that are tucked out of the way in a place you would never go otherwise can hinder a garden being utilized by the community and recognized as an asset. To encourage positive use of the garden it is also important to have the garden in a place where passersby can have ‘eyes’ on the site.

- **Sun** – The vast majority of vegetables and fruits don’t do well without at least 6-8 hours of full sunlight daily. Look to the south for large buildings or trees that will shade the site. Some shade on the site can be nice for relief on those hot summer days, but a very shady site will be a challenge for growing vegetables.
Access – In addition to being visible, it is also important for the garden to be accessible to both gardeners and larger vehicles such as delivery trucks. Think about parking, where the bus routes are, whether someone with limited physical mobility could enter the site, and whether a large truck trying to deliver compost could get to the garden. You may not be able to include all of these things, but they are important considerations to take into account.

Landowner considerations (public vs. private) – Different types of landowners come with different benefits and challenges to the garden – both in initial development, and long term stability. While there are many potential landowners willing to host community gardens – the differences between them can most often be thought of as the differences between public landowners (such as a city) and private landowners (such as a citizens or another agency like a church). If you are curious about who owns a particular parcel, visit www.GovME.org to see the public record. Who owns the land will inform other important aspects:

- Water - There are three types of cost related to water.
  1. Water Meter – this can be one of the largest up-front costs. A public agency may be in a better position to pay for a water meter to be installed than a private citizens’ group.
  2. Pipe instillation— to get the water from the meter to where the garden is and throughout the garden – this can be done for relatively low cost – public agencies will often have staff qualified to do this work; private citizens can often do it with volunteer labor. It helps to have a skilled volunteer.
  3. Ongoing water expense – no matter what type of ownership, gardeners are often held responsible for the cost of the water they use throughout a growing season.

- Insurance – Different types of landowners will have different requirements regarding insurance. If the landowner is a public agency that is used to insuring its public spaces, then treating the garden like a public space (and/or having gardeners sign a waiver) can often satisfy their requirements. Churches or other land-owning non-profits are also familiar with insurance costs for insuring the land they own – there may or may not be changes necessary to turn parts of the land into a garden. A private citizen is probably not going to want to pay for additional insurance to let a group of gardeners use their land. In this case, it may be best to seek out a third party that would be willing to support the community garden by handling this piece.

- Access to resources – Different ownership structures may make you eligible for different resources to assist with building the garden. In general, if the garden is on public land, it is easier to access public dollars. Private dollars can be sought to develop a garden on public or private land.
COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECTS
-Gardens, Orchards, and Food Forests-

2. Organizational Phase

Like the soil of a garden, it is essential to build community from the bottom up. To support this process, Harvest Pierce County has a series of six meetings to guide communities in completing an organizational framework using the document on page x–x, “Questions to Consider when Starting a Community Food Project.” These questions are aimed at developing a coherent document that describes the communities plan for project management and group decision making. It’s best that groups establish regular meetings and communication systems to begin this process and continue doing outreach.

Below are three guiding principles to help you navigate through these meetings:

3 Guiding Principles to Help Key Principals for Community Garden Development

Transparent decision-making processes – When participants feel like decisions are being made in secret, or in some other way that is invisible or inaccessible to them, they can feel frustrated and withdraw from the project. This can be avoided through making sure all decisions are transparent. There are many ways of doing this, but whatever you decide must be agreed upon by the group in the initial phase. If your group is tech savvy, consider using online tools such as Google Documents, Facebook Groups, Drop Box which are designed to help multiple people work on a project at the same time to help. We also recommend using a tool called the 5 Finger Consensus Model to promote full participation from all gardeners.
Shared Leadership – Often times there is a strong leader who is capable of doing much of what is needed and making many of the decisions. But when you invite people to be involved with a project such as a community garden, you need to invite them into leadership and decision making processes too, or they may get frustrated. Sharing leadership can be challenging, but it is vital for the long-term success of the garden. Far too many gardens rely on the leadership of a single, committed individual, and these gardens may fail when that person gets tired or needs to attend to other responsibilities. Community gardens represent an incredible amount of work and are far too great of a responsibility for a single person. Sharing the load is essential for success. Some additional leadership roles may include:

- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Communications Director
- Garden Maintenance
- Gardener at Large
- Youth Coordinator
- Giving Garden Coordinator
- Fruit Tree Manager
- Neighborhood Liaison
- Events Planner

We have found it is better for gardens to err on the side of more leaders than less.

Conflict resolution procedures – Many groups come to a garden project with excitement and positive feelings about getting to know neighbors, so it can be easy to neglect to imagine a time where there might be conflict around a decision that is made. But successful community gardens represent thousands of small and large decisions, and it is inevitable that at some point there will be a disagreement. Having clearly defined conflict resolution procedures in place can greatly reduce the amount of stress and tension involved when a group does run into conflict.

Active listening can go a long way to finding a solution

Step 1: have a neutral party present

Step 2: allow each party to share uninterrupted with as much respect as each party can muster

Step 3: as a mediator, summarize what each person has said until everyone feels heard and understood

If this doesn’t work, Harvest Pierce County staff are here to support you with any conflict mediation services! If things are serious, please do your best to get written or photographic documentation of the issue. Community is sometimes messy and frustrating and the occasional conflict happens, but the benefits of being in community are immense. Please let us know if you would like support with any issues you are experiencing.
Questions to Consider When Starting a Community Food Project

Community Food Projects are volunteer-led initiatives that require internal processes and communication systems to function well. These questions will help you develop an organizational framework for working together to manage the project long-term. It is important that as many stakeholders as possible contribute to ensure that it represents the collective wisdom of the group. This framework is an essential step in the development of the project and will be something that is updated over time as the group learns and evolves. And do your best to not rush the process—the benefits of doing it slowly pay-off in the long run.

1. Vision/purpose

Goal: Allow every participant to voice their ideas and hopes for the space – what is calling each person to participate? This will inform the way you develop the project.

- What type of community project does the group want to create?
- What is the purpose of the project?
- Who will the project serve?

2. Organizational structure and leadership

Goal: Agree upon a system for how participants will work together to manage the project and make decisions into the future.

- What type of organizational and leadership structure makes sense?
- What type of decision-making structure will you use? Who makes decisions?
- If you form a leadership team or committee, which decisions are made by the smaller group and which decisions are made by all gardeners?
- How will you change the rules once you’ve made them?
- How will you ensure that maximum participation is encouraged to shape the garden moving forward?
- What roles do we need to be successful? (people can perform multiple roles)
  Common Examples:
  ◦ Site Coordinator (point person for entire project)
  ◦ Maintenance Coordinator (keeps an eye on physical site)
  ◦ Plot assignment and management of a waiting list (if appropriate)
  ◦ Communication (keeping participants in the know about events, etc.)
  ◦ Money management (collecting fees, managing budget)
  ◦ Optional roles (you can come up with your own, too!)
  ◦ Food bank plot coordinator, Education coordinator, Children’s area coordinator, Outreach/Events coordinator, Compost coordinator
- How will leadership be replaced over time (and new leaders encouraged to come forward?)
3. Participation/Maintenance

**Goal:** Clarify systems for maintaining the site and how that work will be accomplished – make sure to be specific about standards of care at both the individual and communal level.

- What level of participation do we expect at both the individual level (maintaining individual plots weed free) and the communal level (participating in the maintenance of communal areas)?
- How will we provide opportunities to participate (assign tasks, work parties)?
- How will we handle individuals who don’t participate at the expected level? What are the consequences?
- How will we manage the site in times of high demand as well as low demand (how are extra plots assigned? How are communal spaces managed?)

4. Communication

**Goal:** Successful projects maintain maximum participation in decision making. Agree upon tools and practices that the group will use to make sure that all participants and stakeholders are able to communicate so this can happen easily over time.

- What is the best way for the group to communicate? How will the group ensure no one is left out?
- When should meetings take place? How often? Where?
- How will other people and organizations know about the group and the garden? How do we involve the neighbors that aren’t here? How do we maintain communications with the non-participants stakeholders over time (i.e. neighbors)

5. Conflict Resolution

**Goal:** Develop a system for managing conflict so that disagreements can be processed in a way that strengthens the group.

- How will we handle issues where people do not agree?
- How will we ensure that our garden is a welcoming place for all to contribute ideas?
- How will we ensure that our decision making process is transparent?

6. Group processes

**Goal:** Develop any necessary procedures for managing the administrative or other supportive processes.

- Tracking money – will you collect money from participants? How will you make decisions about spending it? How will you maintain transparency in the management of money? Will there be a sliding scale or other system to ensure money is not a barrier to participation?
- Fundraising - Will you write grants or request donations to support projects at the site? How will the grants be processed (who is your 501c3?) How will the money be managed?
- Water access - How will you gain access to water and who will be responsible for the water bill?
- Insurance – is additional insurance necessary? Who will be responsible?
- Neighbors – developing and maintaining good relationships is critical. Conduct outreach to those nearby and involve them to the extent possible. Consider local business and community groups as well – they often have resources and ideas to contribute.
COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECTS
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3. Design Phase

After the group has drafted the organizational framework for the project it is time to develop a design. The goal of the design is to communicate on paper the vision for how the project will look and inform the plan for creating it. It’s a good idea for community members to take a tour of the county to see other gardens/food spaces and get an idea for what they want. Harvest Pierce County can provide maps and some guidance on which gardens might be the best use of their time to visit. There are many right ways to design and build your garden and each group needs to figure out what’s best for them based in their goals and resources.

Discuss as group:

♦ Will space be divided and worked by individuals and families; will it be worked collectively by the group, a combination of both? Something else?

♦ Which types of communal areas are desired (gathering areas, food bank plots, children's areas, etc.)?

  Consider:
  ♦ Boundary – fence or other boundary (what size, what type?)
  ♦ Trees, shrubs, existing vegetation that will be kept
  ♦ Fruit trees (orchard) or berry bushes
  ♦ Pathways
  ♦ Open spaces for gathering places or other purpose
  ♦ Compost bins (or how else will we deal with the organic matter we generate?)
  ♦ Location of water (hose bibs – how many and where?)
  ♦ Communal areas such as perennial or herb beds, food bank garden, kid’s area
  ♦ Garden sign

♦ If creating individual plots – what size? What do they look like (raised beds? what type of material used, shape, height, etc.?)

Creating the design:
As you work as a group to develop a design

♦ Discuss site – any challenges?

♦ Goals for site (go back to vision/purpose)

♦ Make list of elements that the group would like to see (i.e. herb garden/orchard/children’s area/individual garden beds/etc.)

♦ Get a sense of how strongly people feel about the various elements (can do the exercise with a continuum for each element and people rate where they are)

♦ Go over the pros/cons of designing in individual vs. communal spaces
• Get a sense of who in the group is interested in individual vs. communal activities (can encourage group to make a list of individual vs. communal for people to put an x if they plan to participate there)

• Select designer and/or design teams to draft up plan

Once there is one or more proposed designs – review designs to come up with a single design that all involved feel good about. Design should be to scale, but it does not need to be professionally done. Design should have water spigot locations marked on it.

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**Giving Gardens Tips**

Harvest Pierce County encourages gardens to think creatively about how they can be a neighborhood hub of food and community for EVERYONE, not just gardeners. Many gardeners chose to commit to donating a certain amount of space and produce for neighbors in need. Produce from the garden can be incredibly useful in to a number of people and organizations: food bank, meal site, low-income housing, senior activity center, preschool, church, etc. Visit www.harvestpiercecounty.org for a list of food banks and their preferred produce. We can also support gardeners with plant starts, scales, logs, and bins for donating produce.

• Step 1: poll your current gardeners to see if there are already neighbors, organizations, or individuals that would benefit from fresh produce from the garden (perhaps someone volunteers at a low-income housing complex, or there is a community kitchen in the neighborhood).

• Step 2: set up conversation with those who would be receiving the food to co-create a connection. Questions such as:
  ♦ What produce would your organization benefit the most from?
  ♦ What would your clients enjoy eating?
  ♦ How much produce could you sustainably handle?
  ♦ How can we package or deliver the food to make it easiest for you?

• Step 3: take time to connect! Check in frequently, stay for meals, listen, and be consistent.
**Individual vs. Communal Space**

One of the primary organizing factors in community gardens is the distinction between individual plots and communal areas. Individual plots are those areas that are rented or leased to gardeners to do with as they choose – many choose to grow food for home consumption, with excess given to food banks. Many gardens have at least a portion of their garden in individual plots, some are entirely that way. Other gardens choose to have a portion of the garden planted or designed in a way that it is cared for by the entire community – the group works to maintain it, and the group shares in the benefits – here are a list of examples:

- Herb garden
- Flower garden
- Orchard
- Native plants
- Gathering place
- Children’s garden
- Children’s play area
- Demonstration garden
- Whatever else you like!

**Should We Build Raised Beds?**

Whether or not to build raised garden beds is a fundamental question in the design of a garden. Here are some pros/cons to help you with the decision.

1) **Appearance** – If the appearance of the garden is important (such as a busy street corner or an existing institution), consider building raised beds. Even if they are full of weeds, they have a more ‘tidy’ look than in-ground gardens.

2) **Ease of gardening/accessibility** – If the soil in the garden is hard to work or there are several gardeners who struggle to bend over, you may want to consider raised beds. Often the soil is easier to work, there are fewer weeds, and you can construct them to be of a height that is easier to work for gardeners with limited mobility.

3) **Cost** – The cost of raised beds makes a garden much more expensive to build. If cost is a limiting factor, you may consider amending the existing soil.

4) **Reduce risk** – In some areas of urban cities, soil contamination can be a factor. If you suspect high levels of heavy metals in your soil, building raised beds reduces your risk.

5) **Existing soil quality** – Sometimes soil in urban areas has been neglected and it can take several growing seasons to rehabilitate. Importing soil from elsewhere can sometimes be a way to speed up the time to a productive vegetable garden. Assess your soil at www.iheartsoil.org.

6) **Requires skilled labor to construct** - While raised beds are not complicated, even simple ones require some construction skills. If your garden does not have volunteers with these skills, either reach out to the community for assistance, or consider building your garden in the ground.
Pros/Cons of Garden Construction Materials

Once you decide whether or not to construct raised beds, the next question is to figure out what you will construct them out of.

Some of the factors to take into account are:

- **Aesthetics** – How important is the appearance? A garden in a very public park may be under more scrutiny than one in your backyard.
- **Cost** – Material costs can range from nothing for scavenged materials to several hundred or thousand dollars for stone, cedar, or trex lumber.
- **Durability** – Some of the less expensive options are less durable – if the labor to replace the garden will be harder for you than the cost of materials, then it makes sense to invest up front.

Anything that holds soil above the ground will work – here is a list of common materials and some of the pros/cons.

- **Treated lumber** – Today’s treated lumber is not made with arsenic and is safe for vegetable gardens. It will last much longer than regular lumber but it does cost more. Extra care should be taken when cutting the wood as the sawdust can be toxic, but once assembled, it is safe for the garden.
- **Cedar** – Cedar has natural anti-rot properties that make it a long-lasting, beautiful addition to the garden. It is also very expensive and cost-prohibitive for many garden groups.
- **Trex** – Trex is the brand name of the recycled plastic lumber available from hardware stores. It will last a very long time, but is also very expensive.
- **Fir/hemlock** – Untreated fir/hemlock lumber will not last as long as the other alternatives, but if the size purchased is at least 2 inches thick, it can last 10 years or longer. It is one of the least expensive options.
- **Stone** – Stone will last forever and it beautiful. It is also very expensive. If you have an affordable source or can re-purpose some existing stone, this can be a great way to go.
- **Salvaged materials** – Anything that hold soil up in a mound and can handle the weather can work as a raised bed – wine bottles, concrete blocks, etc.
Now that you have your design, it’s time to develop a plan for resource acquisition! Harvest Pierce County has worked to arrange for resources to be made accessible for your project. Most of the resources available are determined by both landowner and location. Pages x-x explain these resources in more detail.

In turn for the following benefits and resources, we ask all groups to host a spring kickoff meeting (by May 1st) to introduce new gardeners, review bylaws, and discuss new projects for the year OR host a fall celebration/review of the season meeting (by Dec. 1st) to discuss challenges and things that went well, plan for work to be done over the winter, and celebrate! These gathering are important to building community and increase communication between members and with Harvest Pierce County. We are available to host or facilitate these meetings as needed. Tagro and compost will be available at half price for groups that choose not to host a spring or fall gathering.

**Resources for Private Land in Pierce County**
- Priority in Green Partnership fund application
- Ability to apply for grants/fundraise under PCD umbrella
- Ability to apply for Pierce County Compost Demonstration network grant
- Free Tagro/Compost delivered

**Resources for Public Land in Pierce County**
- Priority in Green Partnership fund application
- Ability to apply for grants/fundraise under PCD umbrella
- Ability to apply for Pierce County Compost Demo network grant
- Free Tagro/Compost delivered as needed

In addition to hosting a spring or fall meeting, we ask that by June 1, you provide Harvest Pierce County with the following
- Copy of garden map with plot assignments
- Contact information for all gardeners
- Names and contact information for all wait listed gardeners
- Names of leadership team/stewards
  and
- Every two years you hold elections or some other process to renew/transition leadership positions
**Resources for Private Land—City of Tacoma**
- Eligible to receive fruit trees free of charge from City of Tacoma
- Wood chips/cardboard delivered as needed
- Priority in Green Partnership fund application
- Ability to apply for grants/fundraise under PCD umbrella
- Free Tagro/Compost – gardens will be charged half price if they choose not to participate

**Resources for City of Tacoma-owned Sites**
- Eligible to receive fruit trees free of charge from City of Tacoma
- $500 from the City for ongoing improvements
- Wood chips/cardboard delivered as needed
- Priority in Green Partnership fund application
- Ability to apply for grants/fundraise under PCD umbrella
- **Conflict Resolution support from HPC staff and PCCDR volunteers**
- Free Tagro/Compost – gardens will be charged half price if they choose not to participate

In addition to hosting a spring or fall meeting, we ask that by June 1, you provide Harvest Pierce County with the following
- Copy of garden map with plot assignments
- Contact information for all gardeners
- Names and contact information for all wait listed gardeners
- Names of leadership team/stewards
  and
- Every two years you hold elections or some other process to renew/transition leadership positions
Resources for Metro Parks owned Sites

- Eligible to receive fruit trees free of charge from City of Tacoma
- $500 from MPT for ongoing improvements
- Wood chips/cardboard delivered as needed
- Priority in Green Partnership fund application
- Opportunity to fundraise for garden under program developed in partnership with GMPF
- **Conflict Resolution support from HPC staff and PCCDR volunteers**
- Free Tagro/Compost – gardens will be charged half price if they choose not to participate

In addition to hosting a spring or fall meeting, we ask that by June 1, you provide Harvest Pierce County with the following

- Copy of garden map with plot assignments
- Contact information for all gardeners
- Names and contact information for all wait listed gardeners
- Names of leadership team/stewards
  and

- Every two years you hold elections or some other process to renew/transition leadership positions

**We Support All Projects with the Following Opportunities:**

- **Meeting Facilitation:** Harvest Pierce County staff are available to facilitate meetings if challenges arise or if your group is simply needed support.
- **Conflict Resolution:**
- Participation in Garden Leadership workshops/events/resources
- Participation in garden education events/workshops
  - **Edible Garden Series:** This is a free, 9 month, intro to gardening workshop series taught in 5 locations. It is taught in partnership with the Pierce County Sustainable Resources. Please visit www.piercecountywa.org to register.
  - **Fruit Tree Education Series:** Learn the basics of fruit tree care and maintenance through a 7 part series facilitated by Harvest Pierce County. Classes include summer and winter pruning, pest and disease control, and basic tree biology. (February-June)

- Participation in community building events
- Inclusion in HPC communications/newsletters/etc.
  - Facebook Group
  - Garden List Serv?
  - Garden Newsletter
Resource Descriptions

**Tagro** – All community gardens, regardless of location, have access to the City of Tacoma’s Tagro products. Tagro is considered ‘Class A biosolids’ – another word for treated sewage. The process used to make Tagro is unique to Tacoma and exceptional at creating a valuable garden product from something that was once waste! Gardeners throughout the area love it and swear by it. There are two available products – Tagro Mix, and Tagro Potting soil.

The Tagro Mix is a manure-like substance, designed to be mixed in with existing soil. The Tagro Potting Soil is designed to fill a raised bed and be used as a soil substitute.

**Compost** – Yard Waste compost is available to gardens within the City of Tacoma limits.

**Wood chips** – Wood chips can come in handy when trying to make a pathway where there once were weeds. All gardens in the City of Tacoma city limits can request free wood chips.

**Cardboard** – when mulching weedy areas to turn them into pathways, it is important to use a healthy layer of cardboard underneath the wood chips. Gardeners in the City of Tacoma have access to cardboard.

Tagro, compost, wood chips, and cardboard can all be ordered at www.harvestpiercecounty.org
Please order at least 2 weeks in advance

**City of Tacoma Fruit Trees** – In partnership with the City of Tacoma Public Works and the Urban Forestry program, projects within the Tacoma City limits are eligible to receive free fruit and nut trees for their gardens. Applications are typically due in December and bare root trees arrive late winter for pickup. Successful applicants will be expected to create a plan for caring, harvesting, and sharing fruit. Participants will also be able to participate in Harvest Pierce County’s Fruit Tree Education Series.
Compost Demonstration Garden Grant – In partnership with Pierce County Public Works and Utilities and the WA Dept. of Ecology, we have developed a grant source to build and support gardens in Pierce County (outside Tacoma). One of the primary goals of the grant is to support community gardens to build compost demonstration sites at the gardens. This would include building the compost site, training interested gardeners in compost management, and supporting them in the future by building and supporting a Compost Mentor Network in partnership with WSU Master Gardeners. If you are an established garden (been gardening for more than 2 years) than your garden qualifies for up to $2,000 to build the compost site plus materials for other improvements you would like to make in the garden (certain restrictions apply). If you are a new garden, in your first or second year of growing, your garden qualifies for up to $4,000 in materials.

Green Partnership Fund – Pierce Conservation District (www.piercecd.org/gpf for more information) The Green Partnership Fund was established in 2004 to further the goal of natural resource and sustainable agriculture conservation for the citizens of Buckley, Dupont, Fircrest, Gig Harbor, Lakewood, Milton, Puyallup, Steilacoom, Sumner, University Place, Tacoma, and unincorporated Pierce County. The fund was established through the cooperative efforts of the member city and town councils, the Pierce County Council, and the Pierce Conservation District Board of Supervisors. The district works to enhance and protect the following resources:

* Soil
* Water
* Biodiversity
* Salmon and shellfish
* Native plants

The Green Partnership Fund supports projects that promote efforts by partner organizations to achieve the Pierce Conservation District’s mission. Projects must protect the natural resources and/or promote sustainable agriculture in Pierce County.

Local Grant Resources

City of Tacoma Innovative Grant (City of Tacoma only) - This grant provides matching funds to grassroots neighborhood groups within the eight Neighborhood Council. Many community gardens in Tacoma have benefited from this opportunity. More information can be found at www.cityoftacoma.org

The Great Tacoma Community Foundation Spark Grant (Pierce County) - Spark Grants is a grant program designed to help bring people-powered ideas to life within Pierce County, WA. This is not your typical grant—it’s designed to support everyday people who want to spark positive change. The program leverages $1,500 “micro-grants” to fuel go-getters, grassroots organizers and connoisseurs of community who have great ideas on how to make their neighborhood a better place. More information can be found at www.gtcf.org/sparkgrants
Local Grant Resources Cont.

Tacoma Garden Club - Each year the Tacoma Garden Club selects community organizations to receive small grants. See www.tacomagardenclub.org for more information

Private Donations

Every neighborhood has individuals and businesses that may not want to garden themselves, but will enjoy the presence of a community garden in the area. Your groups is encouraged to reach out to those in the community that may be in a position to support the garden. The Pierce Conservation District can act as a fiscal sponsor for garden groups to ensure that those donations can be considered tax-deductible. Contact us for more information.

501c3 Status

Many grants available to garden groups require that the group be recognized as a 501c3 non-profit to be eligible for the grant. Many gardens are the project of churches or other organizations that already have this status. Receiving this status for your garden is a time consuming and expensive undertaking. If your garden is not already supported by a 501c3 organization and you feel like this is a barrier to a particular grant that you would like to apply for, the Pierce Conservation District can act as fiscal sponsor for you and provide that status.

Hosting a Community Managed Work Party

After you gather your resources, it’s time to get to work! With proper planning, work parties can be well attended, celebratory, and efficient. The general trick is to not underestimate the amount of preparation work that goes into a successful community work day. The following tips are designed to help you make the most out of these days.

Beforehand

♦ **Select tasks as a group beforehand.** Plan a kick-off meeting at the beginning of the season to make a rough calendar of tasks for the whole garden season with all the gardeners. Brainstorm and prioritize a list of necessary and desired things gardeners want to see done.

♦ **Communicate** not only to all gardeners, but also to neighbors and community members as well, about the agenda and tasks of the work party. We recommend at least two weeks of warning, a 5 day reminder, and a day before reminder. Keep work party days consistent as much as possible (1st Saturday of the month, March through October) and post signage at garden

♦ **Make a clear plan for the day** and email that agenda out to all gardeners beforehand. Assign leaders to manage each key task beforehand. You can order certain resources for your community garden through our easy to use online form: www.piercecountycd.org/harvest_resourceForm.html. Please allow for 2 weeks for the order to be processed.

♦ **Keep your expectations reasonable.** Remember that an important goal is get gardeners to meet, come together, and enjoy the garden and each other’s company.
Day Of

- **Set the tone** by gathering everyone together at the beginning of the day. Have everyone introduce themselves and let folks know the tasks. Encourage folks to do tasks they may be new at to build a culture of learning and adventure.

- **Keep it safe** by including a brief safety talk at the beginning of the day. Make sure only and small amount of trained gardeners are using power tools and that they are briefed on safety. And keep all hoes and shovels facing down or in a “circle of safety” so they don’t get tripped on by gardeners or children.

- **Do not assign yourself too much to do** since your primary job is to answer questions and keep things running smoothly. That is going to be hard to do if you are too busy.

- **Keep it celebratory** by having a culture of fun, laughter, and friendship. You will have a much better turn out for future work parties if you can include celebratory aspects to the day: music, snacks, fun cheers, team names, mini-workshops. Take time to appreciate that the community came out on their spare time to volunteer.

- **Snap photos** and post on facebook or in your monthly communication. Smiling faces will surely show those who couldn’t attend what a fun day they missed.

- **Children’s activity coordinator** for the day will be greatly appreciated by parents and gardeners who need to get work done, but have little ones in their midst. Little hands are great at harvesting and there are plenty of fun activities to do with kids in the garden.

Don’t forget to send out thank-you emails/calls to gardeners who helped out. Knowing that their work is appreciated will go a long way to build comradery, accountability, and friendship.

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**Gardener Tip**

If you require volunteer hours from gardeners, sending a personalized email to gardeners who have yet to complete their hours and reminding them they can accomplish that at the upcoming work party, goes a long way for increasing attendance!

~Junett Community Garden

Taking a break at Junett Community Garden
It All Starts with the Soil

Soil Amendment Basics

Soil amendments. Whether you are utilizing existing soil or importing soil to fill raised garden beds, soil amendments are a vital resource for ensuring a productive vegetable garden. Many neglected urban soils are compacted and low in organic matter. Soil amendments are designed to add organic material back into soil and improve compaction and improve soil life. In many urban areas municipalities are taking the organic waste products from urban areas and finding a new life for them in community gardens. Not only does this turn a waste into a resource, it also improves urban soil, and educates urban residents on the ecology of a city (there is no away!) Some common soil amendments are:

Biosolids: Biosolids are the digested solid portion extracted from wastewater treatment process. It may not sound pretty – but there is nothing better for creating an amazing garden. In addition to being 100% recycled and full of macro- and micro-nutrients, it works to build healthy soil like nothing else. Biosolids are held to stringent standards by the EPA and have been repeatedly demonstrated to be a safe, effective way to build healthy soil. All municipalities are tasked with managing their own biosolids – the majority treat it to a level of cleanliness that is safe for farmland (Class B) but not for the urban gardener. A small but growing number of cities are investing in the technology to produce Class A biosolids – clean enough to distribute to those gardening in urban areas.

Tagro. (www.tagro.com) The City of Tacoma invested in the late 1980s in a state of the art treatment plant that creates the highest quality biosolids – Class A Exceptional quality. Tagro – short for ‘Tacoma Grow’ has been available for gardening in Tacoma and Pierce County since 1991, and has the box of ribbons from the Puyallup Fair to prove how well it works. Incredibly popular with gardeners throughout the Northwest as an affordable, effective way to ‘make neighbors jealous’. Tagro currently blends two different products: Tagro Mix and Tagro Potting soil.

Tagro Mix: A blend of biosolids, sawdust, and sand, the Tagro Mix is designed to be a manure substitute, and used to amend existing soil. To prepare your garden for spring planting, incorporate 2-3 inches into garden beds and plant.

Tagro Potting soil: A blend of biosolids, sawdust and a composted bark, the Tagro Potting soil has better structure and drainage properties than the Mix – making it appropriate for filling raised bed or topdressing flower beds. You can use the Potting Soil directly, no need to mix it with existing materials.
**Composts:** Compost is organic material that has decomposed into a stable state that is then available for adding to soil. Anything that was once alive can be composted – therefore different composts can vary in their properties. Some of the most common composts available to urban residents are made from the yard debris that is collected curb-side from residents.

- In Tacoma and Pierce County, the finished product of the composting process is called PREP (Pierce Recycled Earth Product) and is manufactured by Land Recovery Inc (LRI).
  http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/index.aspx?NID=1565

- In Seattle and King County, the finished product of the composting process is call Cedar Grove (manufactured by Cedar Grove) http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/index.aspx?NID=1565

**Manure:** Manure can provide an incredible boost for the nutrients in your garden. Make sure the manure you use has been well aged or composted. The Pierce Conservation District maintains a manure share list for gardeners and homeowners to access. Contact the landowners and arrange for pickup or delivery. For the most up-to-date list contact Rene Scaggs at ReneS@piercecountycd.org or 253-845-9770

**Using amendments:** You can add amendments to a garden anytime, but the best times for working it into your existing garden are in the spring, before planting, and in the fall, when putting the garden to bed. It’s not complicated! Generally 2-3 inches of biosolids/compost/manure is sufficient. Just spread it around the garden and either mix it in with a shovel or use a small tiller. What to learn more about how to prepare your garden soil? Check out our Edible Garden Workshop on soils. See schedule at www.harvestpiercecounty.org

*Spreading Tagro at a community garden*
About Us
The Gleaning Project is a volunteer program of Harvest Pierce County that works to reduce the amount of produce wasted in our community, increase access to fresh food, and build community.

What is Gleaning?
Gleaning is the ancient practice of collecting leftover produce after commercial harvest. For centuries field gleaning has been a valuable resource to people in poverty. Many formal gleaning programs like Harvest Pierce County’s Gleaning Project have been established in response to the growing amount of food waste and need for food assistance.

Farm Gleans
Most farmers are never able to sell everything they produce. Even if the produce is fresh, sometimes farmers are limited by regulations and aesthetics. Harvest Pierce County staff work with local farmers and organizes groups of volunteers to glean produce from their fields that they can no longer sell. The bounty is then distributed to food banks, meal sites, and community organizations.

Urban Fruit Harvest
Fruit trees can be abundant producers. Many people have fruit trees on their property that produce more than they can handle or never event get harvested! We work to prevent fruit waste by supporting volunteers to harvest trees at the homeowners request and we share the bounty with community organizations in need.
Volunteer Opportunities with the Gleaning Project
Come Create a Community of Abundance!

There are many opportunities to be engaged with the work of growing, sharing, and harvesting food. Whether you are looking for a one time opportunity, a leadership role or would like to be involved on a regular basis, we are excited to work with you! All of our efforts are aimed at sharing food and creating more access to fresh, local produce. Most of the volunteer opportunities align with the growing season (May-October) but there are occasional opportunities in the off-season. Volunteer opportunities are appropriate for all ages but we ask that people under 18 are accompanied by an adult.

Volunteer Harvester

Volunteer harvesters are the backbone of the Gleaning Project. Our harvesters glean from farms and fruit trees from June to October. Harvest opportunities are usually between 2-4 hours and involve picking food, learning appropriate harvest techniques, and hanging outside with some awesome people. At Urban Fruit Harvests, volunteers get to take home at least 25% of the gleaned fruit and at Farm Gleans volunteers can take home at least 1 serving of produce home. The rest is shared with a community organization or food bank in need. As a volunteer harvester, you can register for gleans online at www.piercecountygleaningproject.org as they come up—there is no weekly requirement.

Neighborhood Fruit Coordinator

Neighborhood Coordinators are the point person leading volunteers on weekly fruit harvests and organizing logistics like fruit donation and record keeping. Coordinators receive training from Harvest Pierce County staff in early summer and receive a small stipend & mileage reimbursement or use of a van.

Neighborhood Fruit Monitor

Neighborhood Fruit Scouts commit to registering new fruit trees for gleaning and checking on registered fruit trees to make sure they are healthy and ripe for picking! Scouts are a bridge to homeowners providing information on gleaning and pest management resources. They receive training from Harvest Pierce County staff in early summer and receive a small stipend & mileage reimbursement or use of a van.

For more information please contact Harvest Pierce County staff at (253) 278-6215
Neighborhood Fruit Scouts

Fruit Scouts check on registered fruit trees to make sure they are healthy and ripe for picking. This is a great independent volunteer opportunity and includes training in fruit tree care and pest management. Whether you like to walk, bike, or have a car to get around, fruit scouts are an important part to making sure that healthy fruit gets harvested. Scouts receive a small stipend and mileage reimbursement. For more information contact Harvest Pierce County.

Work Parties

Throughout the year Harvest Pierce County hosts various work parties at sites such as the Hilltop House Demonstration Orchard, the Veggie Co-op at Franklin Pierce School District Farm, and various other community food projects.

Group Opportunities

We love working with all kinds of groups and we are happy to find an opportunity that suites your group's schedule and needs. Please contact Harvest Pierce County to start a conversation.

Register your Fruit Tree

If you have fruit trees on your property, we encourage you to share the bounty. You can register your fruit tree online or over the phone and volunteers will help pick your fruit and share the harvest with a community organization in need.

www.piercecountygleaningproject.org | 253-278-6215
The Veggie Co-op is program that supports volunteers to grow thousands of pounds of fresh food shared with the emergency food system and Franklin Pierce School District while educating participants in best practices for sustainable vegetable production. Volunteers manage the farm with help of HPC staff from seed to harvest, connecting with their food system, community, and environment. Veggie Coop is family friendly and thrives off the knowledge and experience participants of all ages.

**Learning by Doing**

Veggie Coop volunteers learn the basics of sustainable agriculture from starting seeds in a greenhouse to harvest techniques that yield the most fresh produce! Participants also have a chance to dig deeper into long-term farm management strategies and multi season farm planning by learning about soil health/nutrient management, crop rotations, and much more.

**Share food with the larger community**

In return for their hard work, 50% of the produce grown is divided into “shares” for volunteers and their families, the rest is shared with community organizations and the Franklin Pierce School district.

**Get Involved**

Harvest Pierce County asks that volunteers commit to the whole growing season (March-October). Get in touch to come to a regular work party and check out the farm or get commit as a long-term volunteer.

**Contact:**

Matt Price, MattP@piercecountycd.org or 263-278-6215.