



HARVEST CHECKER

The main responsibility is to help reduce produce waste. This includes performing twice-per-month harvest checks in garden plots; notifying the WCG Garden Manager about waste; and overseeing the alternate produce distribution routes for gardeners unable to use all the food from their plots. If you are ever unable to complete these responsibilities, please contact your WCG Garden Manager.

As per garden policy, gardeners are expected to harvest their ripe produce regularly. However, it is often the case that gardeners are overwhelmed with produce during the harvest season, with one-third of plots showing produce waste. This is a tremendous loss of fresh vegetables, and it can encourage passersby to assume that the plots are abandoned and that they may harvest without permission. In this way, one plot's food waste becomes a liability for the entire garden. It is important for you to understand these dynamics and to be the WCG's eyes in the garden.

Twice Per Month Harvest Checks

From July through October, please perform harvest checks during the week of the 1st and the 15th of each month. Carry the plot map and record any produce waste you see. Specifically, look for overripe dropping, or rotten fruits from tomatoes, cucumbers, etc; overgrown summer squash like zucchini; greens that are bolting (going to seed) without any harvesting; Snap peas and snap beans that are drying on the vine, etc. To help gardeners identify when they are in need of harvesting, please mark their plot with a green harvest marker from the shed. Apply the stake with the RED end pointing upward.

Obviously, some of these determinations will be quite subjective, so it's good to have a sense of the appropriate stages for harvesting different vegetables. It's also possible that gardeners are intentionally allowing produce to go beyond its edible stage. Don't worry - the WCG Garden Manager will clarify this with gardeners when issuing harvest citations. Always err on the side of waste prevention, as the overall purpose is simply to remind gardeners of the expectation to regularly harvest, and encourage them to share. If you interact with gardeners during the course of your duties, please approach them in a positive and helpful way. In no case is it your role to enforce plot harvests.

Shortly after each harvest check, forward the plot numbers and a brief description of the produce waste to the WCG Garden Manager. They will provide the gardeners with a harvest notice. If you DO NOT have any violations to report, please contact the WCG Garden Manager and let them know that is the case. If they don't hear from you, they will assume you were unable to complete the check and find someone else as a substitute.

Overseeing Alternate Produce Distribution Routes

WCG requires the garden use two produce distribution methods: First, a "free basket" that hangs on the outside of the garden fence in which gardeners can leave surplus produce for anyone. Secondly, gardeners can share exclusively with other gardeners by using the green and red harvest markers. If the gardener chooses, they can flip the red-tipped harvest marker you left in their plot upside down, so that the GREEN end points up. This signals to others in the garden the "green light" to harvest any produce that the plot owner identifies in an email to the garden listserv. When the gardener no longer wishes to share their produce in this fashion, they simply put the harvest marker back in the shed.

These two produce distribution methods require very little effort on your part. However, please clean the free basket regularly of any spoiled produce, and also line the bottom with straw or newspaper to keep the heat off of the free veggies. Any additional distribution options you want to try will require the approval from your WCG Garden Manager first. For example, some Harvest Checkers request to retrieve the free basket at a regular time of month (Sunday nights at 7pm, for instance), store it in a cool place, and then distribute the contents to a food bank. Other possible options include taking it to senior centers, selling it to raise garden funds, or just going door to door in your neighborhood.

