



**Issaquah Food and Clothing Bank  
Volunteers – Donor Cultivation Roles  
Harvest Issaquah: The #GleanTeam  
Last Updated 3/27/2017**

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## Food & Clothing Bank

### The #GleanTeam: An Overview

By the end of this section, you will have learned about the purpose and place of gleaning in the Harvest Issaquah program, what to expect in a “typical” glean, how to recognize ripe fruits and vegetables, how to use fruit pickers and harvest bags, and how to be most efficient as a #GleanTeam.

At their core, #GleanTeams foster goodwill and assist with donor cultivation while bringing the harvest to our customers’ tables and saving food from landfills. #GleanTeams meet at the IFCB at 1:00 on Tuesday afternoons (June-Sept), load the van, meet up at the designated harvest site, harvest the food, and take care of small gardening tasks which will leave the area looking nicer than it did when the team arrived.

Helping local gardeners (and taking pictures and hash tagging along the way!) bridges the gap which may exist between a property owner’s *desire* to donate and their *ability* to do the work, and lets the community see that the Issaquah Food and Clothing Bank builds mutually-beneficial relationships with donors which directly impact our customers’ shopping experiences.

Our goal is to foster your desire to donate at least one Tuesday afternoon a month, so our clients can get the freshest produce and our donors are relieved of the stress of accommodating a harvest which is too big for their use. **We are also looking for #GleanTeam Leaders!**

**#GleanTeams do many different things. During the course of a shift, you will probably:**

- Load the van,
- Drive to harvest location (the Lead Gleaner drives the van),
- Work with a team of 4-6 Gleaners to harvest fruit,
- Complete small gardening tasks, such as picking up fallen fruit or watering plants,
- Load the van,
- Return to the Issaquah Food Bank,
- Unload, weigh, and put away donations, and
- Report poundage to Marissa so she can do a happy dance ☺

Last year, our #GleanTeams collected almost **2,000 pounds** of fresh fruit from public and private lands! This year we’d like to see that number increase, while also seeing greater variety in what we’re able to rescue from composters.



**P.S. Don’t forget how much fun you’ll have! This is a fun and rewarding position which allows you connect with others, build relationships with team members and donors, enjoy the weather, and ultimately bring fresh, high-quality produce to our store!**

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## The #GleanTeam Check-List: Everything You Need

Warehouse items (please pack toward the front of the van, on left side):

- ☐ Orchard Ladders
  - ☐ Please strap in place on the left side of the van
- ☐ 27 crates (nine, three-crate cubes)

Harvesting tools, located in John and Megan's office (please pack on right side, by the sliding door):



- ☐ Crates of harvest bags
- ☐ Tarps
- ☐ Fruit pickers
- ☐ Buckets, if we're harvesting berries
- ☐ Harvest Issaquah A-frame sign
- ☐ Crate of drinking water

Warehouse items (please pack toward the back, by the doors):

- ☐ 1 hand-truck

Optional: Bring your own....

- ☐ Eye protection
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Gardening gloves

**Thank you for your help!**



## #GleanTeam: How to Prepare, Harvest and Deliver Fresh Produce

### Volunteer Shifts (Tuesdays):

- 1:00-4:00 – #GleanTeam Leader
- 1:00-4:00- #GleanTeam Members (2-5, depending upon the expected size of the harvest)

### 1:00- Pick up the van from IFCB.

- **Tip:** Be sure to sign the log!
- Load the van.
- Get location information from Marissa or Megan.

### 1:15- Leave, taking the van and having #GleanTeam members carpool together.

### 1:30- Arrive at the harvest location.

- If appropriate, lay down tarps before setting up orchard ladders.
  - **Remember: We can't give our customers food which has touched the dirt.**

### 3:15- Clean up

- Pick up compost/ food which has fallen on the ground.
  - If possible, place compost in yard-waste containers.
  - If no yard-waste container is available, we can bring compost back to the IFCB and dispose of it. Just be sure *not* to weigh this food in, though, because it doesn't go to feeding customers.
- Load the van.

### 3:30- Return to the IFCB.

- Upon return, lay out four empty crates: Two to stack for food needing to be weighed in and two in front of the Food Drive shelves for stacking after weigh-in.
- Weigh in the harvest and label it with the item and date (eg. Apples 8/20/17) before placing stacks in the appropriate place in the cooler.
- Unload the van and return items to their proper locations.

### 4:00- All done!

- Return the van to its parking space and fill out the log (Leads).
- Bid your comrades adieu.
- Report poundage to Marissa@IssaquahFoodBank.org so she can do a happy dance 😊

**Thank you for your help! You are making a big difference in the lives of our customers by helping provide them with quality, fresh produce; you're building goodwill with the community by helping make donating easier, and you're saving food from ending up in landfills. You rock! Have a wonderful day!**

## When to Harvest Fruit

When a #GleanTeam deploys for a harvest, we want to be sure they're able to collect as much quality produce as possible. We do our best to ensure the health of the tree and fruit, and to send #GleanTeams to areas well-suited to the size of the team and the amount of time they have to collect food. Here are some suggestions for recognizing quality fruits and vegetables.

*Apple* — Unfortunately, there is no sure method to determine maturity for all varieties. If picked prematurely, the fruit is likely to be starchy or sour, tough, small, and poorly colored; if picked overripe, it may rot poorly.

- In red varieties, observe the portion of the apple that faces the interior of the tree. When the ground color of red varieties changes from leaf green to yellowish-green or creamy, the apples are ready to harvest.
- In yellow varieties, the ground color becomes golden. Mature apples with a yellowish-green background color are suitable for storage.
- **Apples will improve in storage if they are picked when hard but mature, i.e., showing the mature skin color.**
- When harvesting, do not remove the stems from apples that will be stored.



*Blueberry* — Harvest when fruits are fully colored and begin to soften. They should come off the plant easily when you collect them with your fingers and drop them in your palm until your hand is full.



*Grape* — Taste grapes to determine peak ripeness. Grapes change color before they are ripe.

*Pear* — Harvest when the ground color changes from a dark green to a yellowish-green, but while the fruits are still too firm to eat.

- Do not allow the fruits to become fully ripe on the tree. Pears ripen from the inside out and allowing them to become fully ripe on the tree results in development of gritty stone cells. Fruits will be ripe on the outside, but mushy inside.
- Additional guides to proper harvesting time are when the fruit separates from the twig with an upward twist of the fruit and when the lenticels (spots on the fruit's surface), which are white or green on immature fruits, become brown.



*Pear, Asian* — Unlike European pears, allow fruits to become fully ripe on the tree. Harvest when fruits can be easily pulled from the branch or spur.

*Plum* — Harvest when the flesh starts to soften. The skin changes color before the fruit is mature.



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*Raspberry* — Harvest when the fruit is fully colored and separates easily from the center.

*Strawberry* — Harvest when fruits are uniformly red and beginning to soften. Harvest with the green leafy cap and stem attached.



## When to Harvest Vegetables

*Bean* — Harvest before pods are full sized and when seeds are tender and about one-fourth developed.

*Broccoli* — Harvest when flower head is fully developed, but before the flowers begin to open into bright yellow flowers. Cut 6 to 7 inches below the flower head. Side heads will develop after the main head is cut and also can be harvested as they develop.



*Brussel Sprouts* — Twist or snap sprouts from the main stem when they



are hard, compact, deep green, and about 1 to 1½ inches in diameter. The lowest sprouts mature first and plants can be harvested for a month or more.

*Cabbage* — Harvest any time after the head has become firm, but before it splits. Head size will vary based on variety or cultivar, fertility, and spacing. On early cabbage, cut just beneath the solid head.



*Carrot* — For storage, pull or dig roots when they reach the appropriate size for the variety. Use care when harvesting since bruising favors the development of soft rot during storage.



*Cauliflower* — Harvest by cutting the heads from the underlying stem when they are full-sized, usually 6 inches or more in diameter, but still white and smooth.



*Cucumber* — Proper harvesting size is determined by intended use. *Pickles:* Sweets



are 1½ to 2 inches long; dills are 3 to 4 inches long. *Fresh slicing:* Cucumbers are 7 to 9 inches long and a bright dark green. *Burpless:* Harvest when 1 to 1½ inches in diameter and up to 10 inches long. Leave a short piece of stem on each fruit.

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**Kale** — Plants may be harvested in two ways. Either cut off the entire plant when leaves reach full size, or periodically harvest the lower leaves. Allow the inner leaves and crown to remain and the plant will continue to produce new foliage.

**Pea** — *Garden peas*: Harvest when pods are fully developed and plump but still green and tender, and before seeds develop fully. *Edible pod*: Harvest when the pods are fully developed, but before seeds are more than one-half full size. *Snap peas*: Harvest as for garden peas.



**Pumpkin** — Harvest pumpkins when they are fully colored and the skins have hardened enough to resist the fingernail test. Harvest before a killing frost.



**Squash, summer type** — Harvest when fruit is young and tender. Your fingernail should easily penetrate the rind. Long-fruited varieties, such as zucchini, are harvested when 1½ inches in diameter and 4 to 8 inches long; scallops are taken when 3 to 4 inches long.



**Swiss Chard** — Small plants can be harvested and used as greens when thinning the rows. Cut large leaves and stems when they are fully expanded, leaving the crown to regrow.



**Tomato** — For peak quality, harvest when fruits are fully colored and firm. At temperatures near 90°F, tomatoes may soften before they are fully ripe. At this time, pick pink tomatoes which will finish ripening indoors



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### How to Use Harvesting Equipment

The IFCB has harvesting equipment which is especially useful for tree fruit.

**Picking baskets** have poles extend to reach higher-hanging apples, pears and plums.



- **To extend the pole**, find the silver ring-band and turn the knob to the left. Pull the pole and basket upward with your non-dominant hand. Holding them in place, turn the knob back to the right until it is tightly in place. You're ready to go!
- The top of the basket has hooks which you can use to "grab" fruit from its top. Once the stem is between two of the hooks, give the fruit a little "tug." If it's ripe, it should fall into the basket.
  - Depending upon the size of the fruit, you can fit up to five pieces into the basket before needing to empty the basket into your harvest bag. Speedy!

You can wear **harvest bags** by placing the strap over your head and having the bag hang at your dominant hand's side.

- If you're hand-picking, you can use both hands, and then your dominant hand to place fruit in the bag.
- If you're using the picking basket, use your dominant hand to stabilize the basket. Use your non-dominant hand to guide it. When you lower the full basket, use your dominant hand to retrieve the fruit and place it in the bag.



#### Remember these safety tips!

- Begin harvesting fruit at the top of the tree and work down. This way, you will be descending the ladder as the fruit bag becomes fuller rather than ascending the ladder.
- Don't climb above the third rung from the top of your ladder.
- Always face the ladder and avoid leaning or using branches for support.
- Rest the fruit bag on the rungs to reduce back strain.
- Empty the fruit bag before it becomes too heavy or full.
- Be sure to wear shoes that cover your toes and have sturdy soles and a substantial heel to help you avoid slipping.

