



Different service clubs and organizations are eager to help



Pumpkins in two colours



Cherry tomatoes ripening

FEED YOUR COMMUNITY

with Plant a Row ~ Grow a Row

By Lorraine Payette

It can be hard to resist temptation when the seed catalogues start arriving in the mail. All those bright glossy photos of vegetables and flowers make that urge to get out and grow something of an overpowering force. The warm, fresh air; the chance to get down in the dirt and plant foods that are delicious to eat and good for you; the opportunity to share your handiwork with others in your family – the dream sends us to fill out forms and send those orders for seeds and plants, to start our tomatoes and peppers and other seedlings to be ready for that perfect moment to set them in the ground and get that garden going.

Why not move the dream one step farther along and plant some extra to donate to the food bank? Even a few plants can make a tremendous difference.

Yields of different fruits and vegetables vary, but a single tomato plant grown in a cage

can produce from 12 to 20 pounds while you can get 6-10 pounds of zucchinis or 6-10 bell peppers per plant. Imagine what you would get by putting in six extra plants. Ten-foot rows can produce 60 pounds of onions; 17 pounds of cucumbers; 10 heads of lettuce; 4 pounds of shelled peas; or 8 pounds of green beans. If enough people do this, the amount of food produced can be staggering.

This is exactly the idea behind the national Plant a Row • Grow a Row campaign.

“The success of a Plant a Row • Grow a Row campaign depends on getting the local gardening community pledged to donate fresh vegetables, fruit and herbs to food banks and/or soup kitchens in need,” says their official website.

“The Gananoque community garden is part of the Gananoque and Area Food Access Network which is linked to the Gananoque

Food Bank,” said Joanne Merkley, head of the Community Garden and member of the Food Bank. “We have 23 raised beds at the Arthur Street location and several new accessible beds have been built this fall on the west side of town in the Oak Street Park and will be ready for planting this spring.

“The national initiative Plant A Row • Grow A Row is promoted to our gardeners through garden meetings and our Facebook page.”

Although people usually think most about donating to the Food Banks over the Christmas season, need doesn’t end with the holidays. Food insecurity is a frightening reality in our communities, and donations are more than gratefully accepted year-round.

Priorities have shifted to making healthier foods available to all, so the Food Banks now look for highly nutritious, vitamin rich fruits and vegetables in addition to lower fat, salt and sugar items. People of all ages use the service, and products for all ages from baby food through Ensure are more than welcome. Non-perishable staples like rice, pasta and dried beans are usually well stocked, so garden fresh foods are much appreciated.

“Local businesses such as Home Hardware, Thornbusch Landscaping and Donovan’s Hardware donate all their produce to the Food Bank,” said Merkley. “The Food Bank also has a large garden bed.

“This past summer I had the opportunity to work with a co-operative student from GISS. I believe if they put in 110 to 120 hours of work during the summer, related to their future studies, they receive a credit. We

worked during the mornings watering, weeding and collecting fresh produce from the Food Bank gardens and one for the Culinary Program at GISS. In the afternoons we moved on to the Food Bank. We were able to portion out and distribute hundreds of pounds of fresh produce by the end of the season. This was a great opportunity for youth to learn about gardening and food insecurity in our community.

“All varieties of vegetables are popular choices for clients at the Food Bank, although beets aren’t as popular as other veggies. Root vegetables such as potatoes, carrots and parsnips are a bit better to grow, as they are less perishable, and can be harvested when needed by the Food Bank.”

People of all ages enjoy getting out and working in the gardens. While not everyone has space at home for a garden, the community gardens give them the opportunity to grow their own food and even help their neighbours.

Many of the local communities in Leeds-Grenville have Community Gardens and Food Banks. **Some of these are Gananoque and District Food Bank, 55 King St E, lower level, Gananoque, 613-382-4434; Operation Harvest Sharing - Food Bank, 58 Buell St, Brockville, 613-342-0605; The Salvation Army - Brockville - Emergency Assistance, 175 First Ave, Brockville, 613-342-5211; South Grenville Food Bank -Prescott 136 Henry Street West, 613-925-2444; South Grenville Food Bank - Cardinal Site, 618 County Rd 2, Cardinal, 613-657-1967; South Grenville Food Bank - Spencerville Site, 16 Centre St, Spencerville, 613-925-2444; Thousand Islands Baptist Church - Food Cupboard, 229 Park St, Brockville, 613-342-9552.**

The local Food Banks should be able to help you find a community garden near you or maybe you might have an interest in starting one and they can help with information on how to go about this worthy endeavour.

In Gananoque, there is a yearly fee of \$20 per bed which is waived for low income families (who will be supplied with seeds, plants, tools and the help of an experienced gardener if required). To adopt a bed, contact them at gan.communitygarden@gmail.com or message them on their Facebook page Gananoque Community Garden. **To learn more about the Plant a Row • Grow a Row program, please go to <https://www.millergroup.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/plant-a-row-grow-a-row-2.pdf> . LH**



Darlene George and Gwen Hundrieser of the Gananoque Food bank couldn't wait to get started planting



An amazing variety of foods can be grown in a relatively small space



Learning to plant cucumbers is a very serious business