



HOSTING A GLEAN - THE DETAILS

What you need to know about hosting a glean in your fields, orchards, or backyard trees

Info about the program: The Gleaning Project is a program of the **Bellingham Food Bank** focused on getting our community more access to local and fresh foods while helping our farms and neighbors. Our volunteers harvest thousands of pounds of produce each season from local farms, orchards, and backyard trees to feed families in need across Whatcom County.

We are here to help you get that surplus crop out of the field, clean-out a row as the season ends, or pick loaded fruit trees, and get that food to people in your community!

How it works:

- You **contact** our gleaning coordinator (phone or email) with information about the crop you want harvested (quantity, quality, location, etc.). Together we **schedule a day and time to glean**. We also like to plan a visit before the glean, to get a better idea of what we need, parking, how many volunteers to bring etc.
- On gleaning day, we arrive with the necessary harvest tools, parking signs, volunteers, crates, and our box truck.
- We **harvest your crop** and transport it back to the Bellingham Food Bank where it will be stored, distributed, or shared with our partner food programs.
- You receive a **thank you/tax receipt** at the end of the season with the weight of your donation and details about the gleaning season!

What is gleaning? The act of harvesting leftover, extra, or surplus produce from farm fields and orchards. Giving a home to produce that would otherwise not be harvested and eaten!

*Our volunteers gleaned over **82,000 lbs** of produce in 2024!*





MORE INFORMATION AND COMMON QUESTIONS

- **Can you come glean my backyard garden?** We do not glean home gardens, but you can donate your home-grown crops to the food bank yourself! Check out our [website](https://www.bellinghamfoodbank.org/glean) for more information!
- **I have extra produce already harvested.** Reach out and depending on quantity we may be able to collect it from your farm. We can transfer into our crates or macro-bins. We also glean at the Saturday BFM and can take extra produce then.
- **What about liability?** The Bellingham Food Bank has liability insurance - so you are not liable for our volunteers while they are on your property participating in the glean. We take safety very seriously! There will also always be a food bank employee at all planned gleans.
- **Do I have to be there while you glean?** Up to you! We can glean while you are on the property or not, as long as we have the necessary information to get the job done!
- **When do you schedule gleans?** We generally schedule gleans for 2 hours, Tuesday-Saturday. Our staff will arrive before volunteers to set up parking signs and get ready for the glean. We are a seasonal program, so we can glean from April to the end of October.



- **Where will my produce go?** We bring your produce back to the Bellingham Food Bank. It is then stored, put on our shopping floor, or packed into home delivery boxes. We also function as a regional distribution center, so gleaned produce can be re-distributed to food pantries/programs across Whatcom County.
- **Will I know how much I donate?** Yes, we weigh and record all gleaned produce donations and send you that information in a letter/receipt at the end of the season (end of October). If you need those details earlier, let us know!

scan to check out our
website! →

<https://www.bellinghamfoodbank.org/glean>



Connect with us today!
gleaning coordinator: Emily Pittis
(360) 303 - 0912
glean@bellinghamfoodbank.org



ORCHARD AND BACKYARD TREE GLEAN DETAILS

We love to harvest fruit, but it can be a delicate process! Here are some things to keep in mind:

- All gleaned fruit must be from the tree, we do not collect any ground-fall fruit.
- We strive for high-quality fruit, so nothing that is buggy, bruised, or majorly damaged. It's always good to ask yourself - would you eat the fruit? If not, we won't be able to glean it. Check out these [helpful guidelines from NW Fruit Rescue](#), a local program in Whatcom County.
- If your trees are SUPER tall and overgrown, we will likely not be able to glean. Look around at your property and make sure the fruit can be accessed safely from the ground, fruit pickers, or short ladders.
- **Just one tree?** We often have to say no to single trees, unless it's HUGE and loaded with fruit. We recommend connecting with your neighbors to find out if they are interested in helping you harvest OR finding out if there are multiple trees in your neighborhood we could glean at once!



When is my fruit ready to harvest and when should I reach out?

- Different fruit will be ready at different times. Here are some ripeness tips:
 - **Apples:** fruit should taste good, seeds will have turned dark brown, and they should be easy to pick. Be aware that apple trees often drop many apples early in the season before the fruit is ripe.
 - **Pears:** the stem should break cleanly and the fruit will be slightly soft and colored (European pears ripen off the tree). Asian pears ripen on the tree and will be turning brown/yellow, slightly soft, and taste good.
 - **Plums:** fruit will start to turn purple, red, yellow (depending on variety) and begin to soften. They should not be wrinkly or squishy!
- We can always come out to check on your fruit, and sending pictures can be helpful too. Want more info? Check out this super detailed [ripening guide](#) made by City Fruit, a nonprofit in Seattle WA.
- Please reach out BEFORE your fruit is ready, we need a few days to visit your site and connect with our volunteers. Reaching out 1-2 weeks before your fruit needs to be harvested is great!



More questions or unsure if gleaning will work for you? Please reach out and we will figure it out together!

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