

Gleaning Guidelines

1. When gleaning, remember we are on another person's land. We are guests and don't want to abuse the privilege. If in doubt about whether something is alright to do, ask first.
2. Listen closely to the instructions given to us about how to glean each item. There will be certain ways to harvest produce that avoid damaging the plant/tree or increasing work for the farmer after we have gone. Each farmer will also have his/her way of doing things, so gleaning the same item at different farms may still be different.
3. Stay in the designated gleaning area and walk only where told (i.e. between the rows but not across them). Avoid walking on any plants or roots.
4. Check the area where the group has gleaned. We must make sure we leave nothing behind.
5. Children under 12 years of age should be closely supervised by parents or other responsible adults.
6. Glean and park only in those areas designated by the farmer.
7. Safety is of the utmost importance in gleaning. If any activity is of questionable safety, do not do it. Be sure to avoid climbing trees or fences, riding on the backs of moving trucks and working near farm machinery.
8. Respect the food and the farm and remember that this is the farmer's livelihood and often his/her home.



Easy Tips for Getting Started with Gleaning

Start small. Find a handful of volunteers (hopefully at least one of whom is experienced with growing and harvesting vegetables.) Talk to one or two farmers that you have a personal connection with. Keep in mind that testing the waters and establishing systems while you are working with small quantities and small groups will be easy.

Volunteer Management

- Create a system for mobilizing volunteers on short notice – an email list, Facebook page, or a phone tree. Most farmers will offer 24 – 48 hours notice.
- Inform volunteers ahead of time what the crop will be, what they need to bring (gloves, pitchfork, knife, etc.) and be sure to give them directions and a meeting point at the farm.
- Make it easy on farmers. Establish a key person whom the farmer will contact and who will lead the volunteers once in the field. Trust is built over time. In some cases, the crop has been abandoned so plant damage is not an issue, in other cases you are being offered a pick on plants that will continue to produce for the farmer.
- Be sure you know what you are allowed to harvest. Mark rows clearly, discuss which vegetables or fruit may be taken and which may not be. Then tread lightly and stay where you are supposed to be. Do not wander through the farm in other rows or areas without permission, and do not harvest anything else.
- Decide ahead of time if you will allow children or not. This can be a very important educational experience (for all involved) but you may want to wait until you have an established trust with farmers. Children need to be closely supervised by their accompanying adult, especially when the crop is still producing.

Distribution

- Reuse free empty boxes from your local grocer or liquor store (beer boxes are ideal for holding 20 pounds of just about anything, although they may not be appropriate if you are leaving them in a place where folks may be in addictions recovery!). Plastic kitchen trash bags work well for greens like lettuce, kale, bokchoy and will hold 7 – 10 pounds. Empty feed bags are good for bulky crops like corn, and your grocer will probably save for you the mesh bags that onions and potatoes ship in (these are really good for potatoes as the dirt falls out and also lets them dry a little).
- Standardize units of weight to make distribution to various places easier. If every box of squash weighs 20 pounds, you can count the boxes up rather than doing inordinate amounts of math!

Island Grown Initiative P.O. Box 622 Vineyard Haven, MA 02568

- Follow up with those whom you distribute to. Check on quantities. Can they use more? Or less? Do they have storage issues? Are there some crops that move better than others? etc.
- Let everyone bring home some of the harvest for themselves. Bring paper or plastic grocery bags just for this purpose. Allowing folks to bring home food is a nice way to thank them for their services and can be a motivating factor in some cases. Promote this option in your food pantry or soup kitchen and you may get a lot of helpers! “Do you want to bring some home for dinner?” is a good question and suggests portion control. If someone seems to want extra, it’s probably because they need it. In my experience, some people won’t take anything, most take a little to try (a great way to introduce people to the goodness of fresh local food), and a few take a bag full. You will get to know which members of your harvest team/s are in need if you don’t already.
- Delivering the produce the same day is usually easiest. Develop a system to let your people know when the food will arrive (if they are on the volunteer recruit email list they will know anytime there is an upcoming glean). Some crops are highly perishable and will need to be refrigerated as soon as possible (i.e.: greens), while others can sit on the back of a truck in the shade overnight. There may be a walk-in cooler in the community that you can use to store things short term as needed.
- Create a tracking system. Weigh the produce and keep a list of how much of what crop goes to what organization. If you use an online spreadsheet, you can add farmers to it so they can track their own donations. If you are a non-profit, be sure to send them a donation letter at the end of the season for tax purposes. We usually send the quantities and let the farmer place values.

General

- Relationships are key. Endeavor to develop good working relationships with farmers, volunteers and those who run the recipient programs or kitchens. We all need to work together for best results.
- Only basic tools are needed to start. You’ll want some harvesting tools such as, pocket knives, a fork or two for root crops, a scale (we used bathroom scales at first but package scales work better – Uline has some good shipping ones), gloves are nice for some crops but folks can bring their own. You need bags and boxes (ideally recycled and disposable that you can leave when you drop off the produce), and you’ll want to have a first aid kit including some poison ivy wash and snack or two for diabetic emergencies. A gallon of water and some dixie cups are good for very hot weather when people forget to bring their own to the field. Now you’re ready for anything!
- Keep program costs low. They should be proportionate to the amount you are harvesting. If your expenses are over \$1.00 / pound for delivered food, you might as well buy farm seconds and save your volunteers a lot of work!
- When you are ready to grow, promote the program. Take photos to share, talk to the press, advertise in “things to do” listings online, on radio and in print. Create a flyer to share information about the program.
- Have fun! Gleaning is a joyful act of service.

Organize Your Own Glean!

A "How-to" Guide for Starting a Gleaning Program in Your Community

What is gleaning?

- A tradition that dates back to biblical times whereby leftover produce is gathered following a farmer's harvest

Why glean?

- To support local food banks and those in need
- To utilize crops that would otherwise be wasted
- To foster relationships between community members and local agricultural figures

How do I prepare my own glean?

1. Organize a committee (assign a chairperson as the leader) to plan and coordinate the glean
 - a. Make a plan for the size of the project (how many donors/how large) and the number of volunteers needed to accommodate that size
 - b. Make a list of resources you will need: transportation for produce and gleaners, storage for gleaned products, tools for harvesting (i.e. knives, gloves, scale, water-proof clothing, hats, sunscreen), refreshments (or at least water) for volunteers
2. When you have your plan organized, gather information for when you reach out to the donors
 - a. Identify potential donors (farmers, farmers markets, community gardens) in your area
 - i. Identify farms through the [state USDA website](http://mass.gov/agr/massgrown) (mass.gov/agr/massgrown)
 - ii. Identify farmers markets through the [National Farmers Market search engine](http://usda.gov/farmersmarkets/) (usda.gov/farmersmarkets/)
 - iii. Identify community gardens through the [American Community Garden Association](http://communitygarden.org) (communitygarden.org)
 - b. Prepare information for donors about the [Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act](http://usda.gov/news/pubs/gleaning/seven) (usda.gov/news/pubs/gleaning/seven) which absolves donors of responsibility if food harvested becomes unsafe or poses health risks to consumers
 - c. Other details that should be provided to the donor:
 - i. The proposed use of the gleaned food (i.e. where it is going)
 - ii. The volunteers who will glean and the supervisor overseeing the gleaners on-site
 - iii. A timeline for your glean – get their opinion on when/how long would be best to hold your event
 - iv. The contact person throughout the project for questions or concerns
 - v. Insurance coverage for the gleaners – two issues:

*Tip:
Collect sturdy crates/boxes to be used every year

*Tip:
Providing tools and water for volunteers will increase participation!

*Tip: Let donors know volunteers will glean for 2-4 hours per day

1. Liability for gleaned produce - refer to the Good Samaritan Act listed above
2. Liability for volunteers – if volunteers are students, this can be covered by student universities, farmer's liability insurance is also a possibility, OR volunteers can be asked to sign an insurance waiver form identifying the farmer/donor is not responsible in the event of injury or death while gleaning (this may not be acceptable to your donor so keep that in mind)
 - vi. A method for washing gleaned produce prior to transporting it for donation
 - vii. A system for recording gleaned food
 - viii. Plans for publicity (ask donor if their name can be used in any public discussions of the glean)
3. Now that you have done your research and have prepared your script, reach out to the donors asking them to join you in your efforts to fight hunger in the community
4. Once you enlist donors, recruit volunteers
 - a. Assign a lead person for the gleaning site to supervise the gleaners and the project
 - b. Designate knowledgeable people to help volunteers learn how to harvest correctly
 - c. Identify volunteers who can legally drive (for safe transporting of gleaned produce and volunteers)
 - d. Create a volunteer waiver to inform volunteers to:
 - i. Lift crates/boxes properly
 - ii. Never set gleaned food on the floor (even if it is in crates)
 - iii. Use a cart to transport heavy crates/boxes whenever possible
 - iv. Always wash hands before handling food, after using the restroom, eating, drinking, and smoking
 - v. Any additional safety guidelines pertinent to the donor site/gleaning event
5. Reach out to local businesses and civic groups to ask for help with transporting gleaned food and with providing harvesting tools, portable toilets, and refreshments for volunteers. Be sure to get written commitments for all services.
6. Set a date for your event!
7. Contact local food banks, homeless shelters, food emergency centers, or other facilities to arrange to donate the gleaned products
8. Advertise your glean – some methods of advertising include through local newspapers, on facebook or twitter, emailing listservs, posting flyers

*Tip: Contacting local schools is a great way to involve 4-H students!

*Tip: Harvest Season is BUSY, try to contact donor during non-harvest months

To-Do List

What to do *one week* before the event:

- Prepare directions to the donor site for all forms of transportation
- Prepare directions to donation sites for those transporting gleaned produce
- Check with donor sites about time of start, volunteer parking, areas to be gleaned, # of boxes needed
- Prepare and distribute tip sheets for volunteers: what to wear, what to bring, time commitment, what to expect for transportation and refreshments, where produce will go
- Prepare your volunteer waiver
- Check back with food banks and other donation sites to make sure they are still willing to accept gleaned products

What to do *one day* before the event:

- Mark areas at gleaning site for volunteer parking and areas of produce to be gleaned
- Prepare and put up signs marking a central meeting place for volunteers
- Set up tables where volunteers get/return gleaning containers
- With the help of the donor-site manager, set up a produce cleaning station for volunteers
- Set up tables where volunteers can get water and take rest breaks
- Notify the media if you want coverage

What to do *on the day* of the event:

- Direct gleaners to central meeting place – welcome them, review safety procedures and designated gleaning areas (including beverage/rest areas), have volunteers sign insurance (if necessary) and volunteer waivers
- Provide cold water for volunteers
- Have volunteers clean/organize gleaned produce to be ready for transport/donation
- Load gleaned produce into arranged transportation and provide transporters with directions to donation sites
- Ask volunteers for help with clean-up (encourage volunteers to take some gleaned produce home)
- Call donation sites to ensure gleaned food was received

What to do *after* the event:

- Send pictures of gleaning event to local newspapers, donor and donation sites
- Call donation sites to see how gleaned food was used
- Send thank-you notes to donor and donation sites
- Survey volunteers to get feedback for future gleaning events
- Encourage farmers/donor sites to share their experiences with state legislators
- Document all details of the event for gleaning event-planning in the future

Quick Gleaning Information Sheet (Theresa Snow-Author)

When coordinating and directing a gleaning program, group or event there are a number of variables to consider, steps to follow, contacts to make, people to involve and supplies to gather. Salvation Farms has offered the following guidance to act as stepping stones for organizations on their way to increasing food security in their communities through the practice of gleaning.

Important Components:

- Find a farmer or multiple farmers who would welcome a well-managed volunteer crew onto their farms for the purpose of gleaning.
- For each farm determine a date or a sequence of dates, as well as crop type(s), rough amount(s), and area(s) of the farm to be gleaned.
- Find a gleaning coordinator with vegetable farming experience or an association with the farm(s). This individual will help the farmer feel comfortable with the arrangement and demand little of their busy time.
- Start collecting containers. Contact your local grocery stores. Ask them to save wax boxes and flats for the purpose of supporting regionally based gleaning. Be sure to pick them up as scheduled. Purchasing these containers can be costly. Dependent on crop volumes you may need to make this investment. You will also need field containers. These will likely consist on 5 gallon buckets and bushel size totes.
- Establish your distributions site(s). Research what connections can be made with your regional food bank. Where and when can produce be picked up by the food bank? Research potential local recipient sites. Where is your local food pantry, soup kitchen, senior care center or early learning center? Make contacts, maybe volunteer at the site; find out if fresh food donations are welcome.
- Be prepared to provide or have arranged transportation for donation deliveries or to cold storage for future pick-up. Do you know someone with a truck, wagon or van? Does gleaning require you drive into the field. Can your vehicle do that? What are the conditions of the field, muddy ?
- Find potential storage options in case produce needs to be stored before distribution. Farms often have refrigeration units on site; ask your farmer(s) for space or suggestions.

- Make sure that you are educating your volunteers about the farm that they are gleaning from, about hunger, food loss and local agriculture. Volunteers need to know what is expected of them. Make them aware of farm rules and task techniques. Please remind them that they are helping of their own free will, can leave whenever they would like and can choose not to engage in any task they find uncomfortable.
- Assist with necessary fundraising by soliciting your gleaning groups' friends and family. Ask local businesses for financial support or in-kind donations.
- Keep good records. Track all produce amounts and crop types harvested from each farm and its destination. Keep track of time and money investments, as well as volunteer hours and mileage for personal vehicles used in the field or for produce deliveries.
- Recruit volunteers. Run press releases in your area newspapers, hand out flyers, coordinate promotional events and utilize social media outlets. All types of citizens make great volunteers; be creative about who you target as potential gleaners.

In The Field:

- Volunteers should know where to park and meet. They should sign-in and out: name, time in and out and contact information. First-timers should complete an agreement and a waiver of liability.
- Prior to or upon entering the field, conduct a farm introduction. Educate volunteers about the farm, why the produce is available; establish rules and the goals for the day. Introduce the farmer if he/she visits the gleaning group.
- Be clear about where you are gleaning and what crops you are gleaning. Offer techniques for harvesting, handling and boxing different types of produce.
- Encourage conversation, water breaks, hard work, cooperation and good morale. Always be ready and happy to answers questions.
- At completion tell the volunteers how much they've harvested and who will be receiving the produce. Make sure that the area is clean of any trash and that all supplies are cleared from the field.
- All produce available should be collected, boxes weighed and labeled with at least its contents, source and weight. Bring your field vehicle as close as you can to the gleaning area. It will offer some shade for full produce boxes and convenience. Field scales are often an important investment for tracking weights of product gleaned.
- Have transportation arranged to take gleaned produce to your pre-arranged storage location or to emergency food provider sites as soon as possible to maintain the highest quality of product possible.

Preparing Your Volunteers:

- Provide directions and instructions for meeting at a participating farm.
- Recommend appropriate clothing for season and harvest tasks.
- Suggest water, snacks and a watch if they need to leave at a particular time.
- Advise using the restroom before coming to glean as these are often not available around most farm fields.
- Encourage volunteers to give only what is most appropriate for their lives. Gleaning as a volunteer should always be fulfilling and never a burden.
- Remind them to respect the farm, themselves and each other.

Approaching and Working with Farmers

No matter what scale a farm is a farmer is always busy. It is always best to call and email (if they email) prior to just stopping by as it is common courtesy. But often, the best way to actually speak to a farmer is to just stop by the farm.

First, it is very important that you state the obvious fact that you are fully aware of how busy the farmer is and that your intention is not to take much of their time but that you just wanted to meet them introduce yourself and tell them a little about the work that you do. At this point let them provide the signals for how long the conversation should last, essentially how long their work must stop. Presenting a clear proposition for the relationship you desire to have with them is of utmost importance. Be sure to leave them with your contact information and if nothing else make sure you make a good impression, one that shows them you know something about farming or in the least that you are 100% determined to do what you proposed to do with/for them.

Winter or the off season is often a good time to connect with a farmer. At this point, you can often find a farmer in the house (if their farm is located on their home property), in the office or greenhouse if it is seed starting time.

Once you've made contact be sure that you maintain the same level of appreciation for and attentiveness to their time as you did on your first visit. Farmers tend to be straight shooters – so start honing your skills. You'll want to learn how to be direct in your needs and clearly provide the information they need to consider what you are proposing. Also always follow through on your word, be sure to display your ethic for hard work and have dedication to your work, and always be consistent and outwardly thankful. All of this will leave most farmers impressed and receptive.

To make your gleaning experience as smooth as possible, it is important to be fully prepared. Below is a check list of supplies you'll want to consider having on hand for any glean.

Tools:

- ✓ Boxes
- ✓ Bags
- ✓ Totes of varying volumes
- ✓ Duct tape (best for wax boxes)
- ✓ Harvest tools; Knives, shovels
- ✓ Gloves
- ✓ Field scale
- ✓ Pens
- ✓ Sharpies
- ✓ Clipboard
- ✓ Scrap paper
- ✓ Harvest totals tracking binder
- ✓ Volunteer sign-in binder
- ✓ Paperwork for first time volunteers
- ✓ Calculator
- ✓ First-aid kit
- ✓ Rain Gear; optional
- ✓ Snacks & water; optional
- ✓ Sunscreen & bug repellent; optional

2016 Gleaning Liability Waiver

PLEASE BE CAREFUL!

Step with care – ridges, dips, rocks, and holes may be hidden by plants or weeds. The ground may be especially slippery when wet.

Please do not lift anything that feels too heavy – there are others who can assist. Pace yourself and take breaks as needed.

Drink plenty of water and rest in the shade if you feel tired or overheated.

Common hazards include poison ivy and deer tick diseases. ☺

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Any health or other concern we should be aware of: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Safety is extremely important for all gleaning events. For the protection of all involved, this disclaimer is necessary: I do not hold Island Grown Initiative, its board, members, employees or volunteers liable for any injury, accident or death while participating in a glean or food recovery event. Neither will I hold the person(s) who owns and/or operates the farm from which we glean or area in which we recover food, liable for accidents, injury or death.

In the unlikely case of accident or injury during gleaning, I hereby give permission for any medical treatment which may be deemed necessary and reasonable by a doctor.

Signature of Participant: _____

Signature of Parent/ Guardian if participant under 18: _____

Photos, videos, audio and other images in which I appear may be used by Island Grown Gleaning for news coverage, publicity, reports, displays, for web or electronic news or promotional purposes.

Initial: _____



Date:

To:

Dear

Thank you for your contribution of _____, that Island Grown Gleaning received on _____. No goods or services were provided in exchange for your contribution.

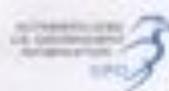
Island Grown Gleaning is a program of Island Grown Initiative (a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit). We provide volunteers to harvest excess produce from local farms and we deliver it free of charge to our schools, elders, and community members in need. This program helps reduce food waste and provides delicious, nutritious, locally grown food to those who need it most.

In order to provide this important service to our community, we must rely heavily on donations from individuals and foundations. Volunteers in all capacities are also an integral part of our programs. All assistance is greatly appreciated.

On behalf of everyone we serve, thank you!

Sincerely yours,

Jamie O’Gorman
Program Coordinator
Island Grown Gleaning



Public Law 104-210
104th Congress

An Act

To encourage the donation of food and grocery products to nonprofit organizations for distribution to needy individuals by giving the Model Good Samaritan Food Donation Act the full force and effect of law.

Oct. 1, 1996

(H.R. 3428)

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. CONVERSION TO PERMANENT LAW OF MODEL GOOD SAMARITAN FOOD DONATION ACT AND TRANSFER OF THAT ACT TO CHILD NUTRITION ACT OF 1996.

(a) CONVERSION TO PERMANENT LAW.—Title IV of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 is amended—

(1) by striking the title heading and sections 401 and 403 (42 U.S.C. 12671 and 12673); and

(2) in section 402 (42 U.S.C. 12672)—

(A) in the section heading, by striking “MODEL” and inserting “BILL EMERSON”;

(B) in subsection (a), by striking “Good Samaritan” and inserting “Bill Emerson Good Samaritan”;

(C) in subsection (b)(7), to read as follows:

“(7) GROSS NEGLIGENCE.—The term ‘gross negligence’ means voluntary and conscious conduct (including a failure to act) by a person who, at the time of the conduct, knew that the conduct was likely to be harmful to the health or well-being of another person.”;

(D) by striking subsection (c) and inserting the following:

“(c) LIABILITY FOR DAMAGES FROM DONATED FOOD AND GROCERY PRODUCTS.—

“(1) LIABILITY OF PERSON OR GLEANER.—A person or gleaner shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability arising from the nature, age, packaging, or condition of apparently wholesome food or an apparently fit grocery product that the person or gleaner donates in good faith to a nonprofit organization for ultimate distribution to needy individuals.

“(2) LIABILITY OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION.—A nonprofit organization shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability arising from the nature, age, packaging, or condition of apparently wholesome food or an apparently fit grocery product that the nonprofit organization received as a donation in good faith from a person or gleaner for ultimate distribution to needy individuals.

“(3) EXCEPTION.—Paragraphs (1) and (2) shall not apply to an injury to or death of an ultimate user or recipient of the food or grocery product that results from an act or omission

of the person, gleaner, or nonprofit organization, as applicable, constituting gross negligence or intentional misconduct.”; and

(E) in subsection (f), by adding at the end the following: “Nothing in this section shall be construed to supersede State or local health regulations.”.

(b) **TRANSFER TO CHILD NUTRITION ACT OF 1966.**—Section 402 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12672) (as amended by subsection (a))—

42 USC 1791.

(1) is transferred from the National and Community Service Act of 1990 to the Child Nutrition Act of 1966;

(2) is redesignated as section 22 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966; and

(3) is added at the end of such Act.

(c) **CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—The table of contents for the National and Community Service Act of 1990 is amended by striking the items relating to title IV.

Approved October 1, 1996.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 2428

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 104-661 (Comm. on Economic and Educational Opportu-
nities).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 142 (1996):

July 12, considered and passed House.

Aug. 2, considered and passed Senate, amended.

Sept. 5, House concurred in Senate amendments.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS, Vol. 32 (1996):

Oct. 1, Presidential statement.

Gleaning: A Biblical Act of Generosity

Posted: 09/22/11 02:17 PM ET

I had no epiphany. No transcendental enlightenment. At least not while I was walking down the long and verdant corridors of cornrows swaying and swishing like some cosmic leafed-out beaded curtains. I was there to work, to glean ripe sweet corn, one cob at a time... twist and tug, twist and tug, twist and tug... until my little corner of the field was harvested.

I was one of 20+ volunteer gleaners who in two hours harvested over 1,700 pounds of fresh corn that would've otherwise been plowed under. We represented a wide swathe of community who'd come out to do some good work on an achingly beautiful late-summer morning. And Jamie O'Goeman, our leader and the coordinator of Island Grown Gleaning (IGG) (www.islandgrown.org/gleaning) made short order of getting the corn into the hands of school cafeteria directors to help support healthier lunches for students. From that one farm (www.morninggloryfarm.com) the bounty was quickly distributed as donations first to the schools and then to elder centers, recovery and employment programs and even the county jail. IGG manages gleans that have donated over 12,000 pounds of fresh veggies like greens, carrots, beets, beans, corn and squashes, in this growing season alone.

These are great things to behold.

Most of the volunteers had heard about the glean from the local papers. However one man learned about it through his church. "This is really biblical, isn't it?" I commented. "Gleaning? It's in the Bible?" he replied. I winced. It was great he was there but that threw me. I thought gleaning was woven into us, into the very fabric and foundations of agrarian societies. To save food that would otherwise be plowed under. The redistribution of wealth, taking care of those who for whatever reasons, need help... it's all there in the Bible, the Torah. Right? So why, when and how did we miss it?

Picking corn, I mulled it all over. How sorely disconnected we are from our food from where it comes from, how it's grown, who grows it, even how to cook it to who gets access to it. Sadly given this context, it wasn't surprising then, that the divides between history, culture, religion -- to farms, gleaning and feeding community, would be any different.

In Deuteronomy 24:19-22 from the Torah portion, *Ki Tetzei*, three times G-d commands farmers to leave food in their fields for "... the stranger, the fatherless and the widow." Rabbi Caryn Broitman of the [Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center](#) interprets "the stranger" as today's immigrants. "The fatherless" as children "and the widow" as the elderly and the unemployed because historically, a widow was one who had no ability or access due to circumstances, to make a living on their own. Gleaning quite literally connects the margins of the fields to the people who are marginalized in our food systems, one harvest at a time.

Today, good whole food is being plowed under while there's a battle raging out there about highly processed, sugared and fatty foods generally served to students in school systems. The frightening epidemic of childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes is so disturbing and seemingly ironic, against the backdrop of the USDA's recently released stats on the number of children in our country who were "food insecure" in 2010: [16.2 million](#). Food (re)distribution, access and costs are complex, multi-dimensional issues. But it's the kind of food and the kind of education we provide for our children that raises awareness, creates change and solutions to our problems.

There are many legitimate reasons (beyond Biblical commandments) why a farm will have food left in its peripheries, vulnerable to being tilled under and they are not necessarily reflections of bad or wasteful farming practices. Frequently it's situational, such as a lack or loss of labor or severe and dramatic changing weather patterns. On larger farms, mechanized harvesting techniques can skip over produce. Blemishes on tomatoes for example, can deem them as seconds, and hence not economically valuable enough for a farmer to harvest whilst they will be perfectly good, healthy and safe to eat or to process or put up for later. The potential to help feed the margins is all in the farms. It's a matter of connecting the dots to get it to them.

Taking a break that day, we shucked a few cobs for ourselves to taste. Raw, from stalk to mouth, warm sweet corn milk burst, kernel by kernel. I was humbly reminded that I'm able to stand in this part of the field today by the grace of G-d. For tomorrow, it could not be so for my family and me. I mean, aren't we all "the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow?" It was a blessing to work, to take action and enjoy the fruits of my labor so sensually and spiritually. One gleaner, a boy all of seven, maybe eight years old, exclaimed with kernels stuck between his toothy grin, "This corn tastes better than candy!" And I thought, "Lord, you are one lucky kid..."

Follow Ali Berlow on Twitter: www.twitter.com/AliBerlow



Capicum's off to Clarissa Stead. *Mark Alan Lovewell*

Don't Let That Food Go to Waste

Peter Brannen *Thursday, October 29, 2009 - 9:38pm*

At Morning Glory Farm in Edgartown the summer's undulating sea of cornstalks and striated expanses of green have given way to the frost-kissed and fallow soil of fall. A biting damp wind sweeps over the fields, heralding months of cold privation. It would appear that this year's harvest is over. But for a group called the Martha's Vineyard Gleaners, it is just beginning.

"Gleaning is an old agricultural tradition in which farmers would open up their fields after they did their harvest, usually to the needy in the community, to pick what's left," said Noli Taylor, coordinator for Island Grown Schools.

At the end of the harvest season on the Vineyard, when farms lose both their summer labor and a significant portion of their market in summer visitors, many farms simply plow unharvested crops into the ground. To prevent this wasteful practice the Island Grown Schools program — a

project of the Island Grown Initiative that provides local, fresh food to Island school systems and connects students with their agricultural heritage — has teamed up with The Sowing Circle, a women's agricultural society, to recruit members of the community to gather this leftover bounty from both private and commercial farms around the Island for use in the community.

This year's has been a bumper crop.

"We knew that we were going to get a frost, one night two weeks ago," said Cheryl Harary, wholesale manager for Morning Glory Farm. "We had already gone out and done our frost picks and had tons of extra boxes of food in the back to store, so I called Noli in the morning and we got a glean set up that day. I said, have at it."

That day's harvest was especially prodigious. Produce rescued from the oncoming frost included some 400 ears of corn, 300 pounds of peppers, 360 pounds of eggplant, an "uncountable" amount of lettuce and a smattering of tomatillos and hot peppers — all of which would have been ruined by frost in the coming days.

This gleaned food is an ideal choice for Island school cafeterias struggling to balance the need for nutritious, hearty meals with the logistical and financial demands of feeding more than 2,200 students. As Island Grown literature points out, "By receiving some Island produce at no or low cost, food service directors could be empowered to spend a little extra buying food from local farms during the other points of the growing season."

And imperfect crops that retain all their nutritious value but otherwise would be difficult to sell at market can be put to good use in school lunch programs.



Genevieve Hammond smiles at her haul of aubergines. — Mark Alan Lovewell

The crew responsible for reaping the impressive yield at Morning Glory included 22 students from the high school leadership class as well as 15 volunteers from the greater farming community.

"It was really amazing," said Ms. Taylor.

In fact, this first season of gleaning has been such a success that a program originally intended to provide fresh Island food to the Tisbury, Edgartown, Oak Bluffs and public charter schools has expanded its reach to provide surplus vegetables to the Edgartown senior center, Island Elderly

Housing, the Dukes County jail and the high school culinary arts program. In addition, each volunteer at the Morning Glory event was able to take home a personal stash of produce.

On Tuesday from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. there will be another glean at Morning Glory Farm. Volunteers are welcome.

Although tender crops like corn and peppers are done for the season, hardier cool weather crops like root and cruciferous vegetables are still thriving. Next Tuesday's gleaning is expected to turn up a thousand pounds of potatoes.

"This time of year you can't dig potatoes out of the ground because the soil is so hard," explained Ms. Harary. "So we'll go out there with the tractor right beforehand and as we go over them the potatoes will all fly up through the air, and they'll land on the surface. Then it's just a matter of walking down a row and collecting them in bushel baskets."

For students recruited to glean, the events are about more than just an opportunity to gather crops. The Island Grown Schools program seeks to get young people involved with local food production, and these outings provide adolescents an opportunity to get in tune with the seasonal rhythms of agriculture.

For others the outings are an academic affair. Next week students from a ninth grade American history class plan to participate in a gleaning event to illuminate the more workaday operations of the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal. While gathering crops they would be proud to know that its namesake exponent considered cultivators of the earth the most valuable citizens.



Vineyard Notebook

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Gleaning

By Ali Berlow

There was no epiphany, really. No earth-shaking, ground-breaking transcendent enlightenment. Not while I was walking down the rows, gleaning forearm-thick, dense cobs of sweet corn. One cob at a time I would twist and tug, twist

and tug, twist and tug. Once one old seed bag that I'd dragged alongside was full and heavy enough for my back, I set it on the edge of the field for another volunteer to pick it up in her truck, along with all the other bags the gleaners had harvested that day. And then I'd start to fill up another bag until my cornrows were done.



Once the designated field was picked clean enough (we'd been instructed to leave undeveloped or under-pollinated cobs on the stalks, for other creatures to eat) the harvest was weighed and piled into trunks of cars and truck flatbeds. Jamie O'Gorman, the Island Grown Gleaning coordinator, was quick with our next instructions. "Let me know if you need directions to the backdoor to the Edgartown School cafeteria. Who's going to the elder center at Woodside Village by the Chappy ferry? Aquinnah? And the jail!" She asked, informed and cajoled when required, all while making notes and tallies on her ever-present clipboard of volunteers' contact info, number and weight of bags, farm, date, weather and distribution destinations.

I was one of many hands making gleaning light work on that achingly beautiful late-summer day. It was the kind of morning where honeybees lingered lazily on flowers, the clear sky was Technicolor blue and a nearby gaggle of Canada geese seemed to take one long look around, saying good-bye, before flying south. We were families, those with little kids, with a teenager, and with multi-generations in tow. We were gardeners, teachers and those retired. We were a swath of community — locals and tourists on their summer vacation alike all who had come out to do good work. Some had heard about the glean from a local newspaper. One fellow had heard about it through his church where Jamie had spoken about the program.

"This is really biblical, isn't it?" I commented. "I don't know anything about that. Gleaning — it's in the Bible!" the fellow who had heard about it from

There are many legitimate reasons why a farm would have food left on its peripheries, vulnerable to being tilled under — and these are not necessarily reflections of bad or wasteful farming practices.



his church replied, saying he'd simply wanted to take action. Besides, he liked the work, to be outside and on the farm. I was momentarily taken aback. Gleaning, I thought, was woven into us, from the very beginning of agrarian societies. Saving food that would otherwise be plowed under, the redistribution of wealth, taking care of people in your community ... it's well-versed in religious texts from Christianity to Judaism to Islam, in the Bible, the Torah, the Koran. But then again, considering how severely disconnected we are in general from food in this country — where it comes from, how it's grown, who grows it, how to cook it, and that the aver-

age food item travels 1,500 miles from somewhere to your table — sadly, it is not surprising at all that the disconnects exist between knowing about our agrarian history, to how to harvest crops, to the opportunities of gleaning, to how to feed people.

There are many legitimate reasons why a farm would have food left on its peripheries, vulnerable to being tilled under — and these are not necessarily reflections of bad or wasteful farming practices. Frequently it is situational, such as a lack or loss of labor. Also severe and dramatic weather patterns that threaten crops such as heavy rains, flooding or early frosts — can trigger emergency gleans. On larger farms, mechanized harvesting techniques can miss produce. In addition, society as a whole is made of demanding consumers, tenacious about perfection, and the marketplace obliges our fantasies about food. Blemishes on tomatoes for example, deemed as "seconds" are hence not economically valuable enough for a farmer to harvest and market but yet they'll provide perfectly good, healthy, fresh and safe food nonetheless, especially if processed during harvest season and put away for later use. Basil pureed and frozen for a pesto or tomatoes can be turned into sauce for a later school lunch in February. Corn cut from the cob, frozen or canned for a future succotash, salad or soup, makes for healthy, nutritious ingredients and meals. The potential to feed the margins and our school children, is all there. It's simply a matter of connecting the dots.

Island Grown Gleaning

Island Grown Gleaning (IGG) was established as a program under Island Grown Schools (IGS), a local farm-to-school initiative. It was launched in 2008 with \$5,000 in seed money by a private donor who was interested in getting fresh food into the schools.

IGG leverages the pre-existing infrastructure and social contacts between farmers and school cafeteria directors of the Island Grown School program. Plugging into IGS was a good strategic move that supports the success of both programs, IGG and IGS, and supports local farms as well.

The farms that participate receive public recognition for their good works in donating food.

Not all the gleaned produce is donated. The farms also benefit by having their bins and storage areas filled by volunteer gleaners, with plenty of overage left to donate.

Volunteer gleaners are recruited and coordinated via an email listserve, a Facebook fan page (Island Grown Gleaning), and local talks at community venues to raise awareness about the program.

Ten thousand pounds of produce were gleaned and distributed the first two years plus 12,000 pounds as of August 2011.

Produce gleaned from farms:

- kale
- Swiss chard
- turnips
- lettuce
- carrots
- beets
- squashes
- eggplant (a small amount)
- beans
- corn

And from private homeowners' gardens:

- apples
- pears

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FOOD INSECURITY TODAY

On September 7, 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released the following statistics: "14.5 percent or 17.2 million American households were unable to consistently put food on their tables for their families last year. The USDA report, *Household Food Security in the United States in 2010*, also showed that 16.2 million children, one out of every five, lived in households that struggled to afford food, skipped meals or ate inadequate diets due to a lack of money and resources." These are shocking statistics on hunger that are compounded given that there is good, wholesome food that's being plowed under while there's a battle raging about the highly-processed, subsidized and fatty foods that are generally served in schools. The frightening epidemic of childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes is so disturbing and yet seemingly ironic against the backdrop of the USDA's recently released statistics on the millions of children in our country who were "food insecure" in 2010.

There is no question that food distribution, harvest/gleaning, access, efficiencies and costs are complex, multi-dimensional issues. But it's also what kind of food and what kind of education we provide for our children that matters, raising awareness, providing solutions and eventually making changes. Children are our future. Feeding them well, feeding them fairly and rescuing

perfectly good food whilst doing so is a win-win-win solution.

All in all, on that August day in one small cornfield in Edgartown, Massachusetts more than 20 volunteer gleaners harvested about 1,200 pounds of fresh corn in two hours that would've otherwise been plowed under. It was immediately donated to three local school cafeterias, elder centers and even the county jail's kitchen.

These were acts to behold. And my own awakening (which was more like a grounding) came from one single cob. Standing in the middle of the long, leafy rows swaying like green beaded curtains, a couple of us took a break to smack an ear and feed ourselves on raw corn, from stalk to mouth, kernel by kernel with sweet milk bursting. It was a blessed feeling to be able to work, to take action and to enjoy the fruits of my labor sensually as well as spiritually. One gleaner, a boy all of 7 or 8 years-old, summed up his moment enthusiastically with milky juice dripping down his chin, "Corn tastes better than candy!" and I thought "Oh boy, he is one lucky kid."

For more resources about gleaning and food insecurity:

Society of Saint Andrew www.ssa-hunger.org
Boston Area Gleaners www.bostonareagleaners.org
AmpleHarvest.org — connecting home gardeners to food pantries

across the country www.ample-harvest.org

Share our Strength — ending childhood hunger by 2015

www.strength.org

FoodCorps www.foodcorps.org

Farm to School www.farmtoschool.org

Island Grown Initiative www.island-grown.org

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