

SQUASH HUNGER

Fresh Food For All

Produce Drive TOOLKIT



GROW • EDUCATE • PROVIDE



CAPITAL ROOTS

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About Capital Roots

Capital Roots started in 1975 as a community service project of Garden Way, the former manufacturer of Troy-Bilt Lawn and Garden Equipment. Today, Capital Roots works to reduce the impact of poor nutrition on public health in New York's Capital Region by organizing community gardens, providing healthy food access, offering nutritional and horticultural education for all ages and coordinating urban greening programs in Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady and southern Saratoga Counties.

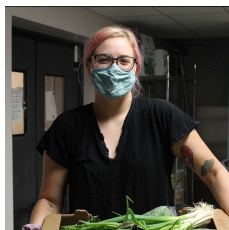
How We SQUASH HUNGER ...

Capital Roots' Squash Hunger program is a food recovery initiative that collects and distributes more than 50 tons of fresh produce annually to our region's food pantries, soup kitchens, and other food assistance programs.

Since 2004, Capital Roots has involved thousands of community members in this effort to increase the presence of fresh food on communal tables. We rely on generous home and community gardeners, farmers, distributors and markets to donate fresh produce, and we've organized a corps of volunteers who deliver to more than 100 community feeding programs throughout the Capital Region. In 2020, more than 155,000+ pounds of fresh produce made its way to hungry families through this important community program.

Why is it important to donate fresh food?

Typically, the bulk of food donated to community food programs consists of canned and dry goods. Though processed foods do fill up empty bellies, fresh food adds nutritional value to the meals served in food pantries and soup kitchens. Nutritious food empowers people with the energy they need to lead healthy, productive lives.



Contact:

Lena Faustel
Squash Hunger Coordinator
squashhunger@capitalroots.org
518-274-8685

Getting Started

Who can host a produce drive?

Anyone with an interest in providing healthy fresh produce to families and individuals in need and can organize co-workers, students, or members to participate, such as:

Schools, Colleges and Universities
Churches, synagogues, places of worship
Civic organizations (Kiwanis, Rotary, PTA)
Girl Scout/Boy Scout Troops

Organizations and clubs
Fraternities and sororities
Businesses and companies
Office and workplaces

What kind of produce drive is right for my group?

Door-to-Door Collection

You and your team will designate a date(s) and time to go door-to-door in targeted neighborhoods to collect the produce.

IDEAL FOR:

Girl/Boy Scout troops or volunteer groups.



Drop-Off Collection

Interested individuals are able to drop off produce at their convenience at a location(s), date(s), and time(s) set by you.

IDEAL FOR:

Companies or groups with an office.



When should I host my produce drive?

That's entirely up to you. Consider hosting the drive at a time your business, school, organization, or troop does not have many volunteer or fundraising activities scheduled. Summer is a great time for door-to-door collections as there is always a bounty of fresh produce available. Winter might be better for a drop-off collection and is the time when the need is greatest.

Once you choose a date, determine how long you want your drive to be. It could be as short as one day or as long as a month.

Nail Down the Logistics

How do I register my produce drive with Capital Roots?

Email the Squash Hunger Coordinator, using the subject line “SH Produce Drive Registration” with the following information:

1. Name of your organization or group and your contact information.
2. Date(s), times, and locations of your produce drive.
3. How you plan to distribute your produce. (See Page 6.)

What items can I accept?

Please keep in mind that Capital Roots is committed to improving access to healthy fresh food. That means fruits and vegetables are the most desired food items. We encourage you to accept any other food donations (i.e. canned and dry goods), but please be sure to stress that you’re hosting a produce drive.

Any produce is acceptable, but the most desired items would be produce with a long shelf life. Here is a list of some of the more durable items:

POTATOES/YAMS
SQUASH
APPLES

CARROTS
BEETS
ORANGES

ONIONS/GARLIC
TURNIPS
MELONS

PEPPERS
CUCUMBERS
BANANAS

*****NOTE: If you plan to collect during winter, be advised that produce should not be left outdoors in temperatures below 45 degrees F for any length of time as they will freeze and spoil.***

What’s the best way to transport the produce?

Plan to transport the produce in cardboard boxes which is proven to be the best option. Your local grocery store will likely have extra boxes that you can use if you are in need.

Drive-Specific Details

What are the **Top 5** things I should know about Door-to-Door?

1. Reach out to neighbors in advance of your drive using flyers, phone-calls and/or social media. This will help ensure they have produce ready for you.
2. While it is illegal to place flyers inside mailboxes, flyers can go in doorways, on porches, or (and perhaps most effective) directly in the hands of your neighbors.
3. Keep an eye on the weather. This is for the sake of your volunteers and the produce itself.
4. Targeted collections work best. Figure out which neighborhoods you want to hit and ensure you have ample volunteers signed up to help collect that day.
5. Brush up on Capital Roots and the Squash Hunger program in advance. If you are meeting people in person, they may want more info on where the produce is going. We can provide informational materials to pass along.

What are the **Top 5** things I should know about Drop-Off?

1. Be strategic about your location. Ask yourself: *Does it get a lot of foot traffic? Is it in a visible location? Depending on your intention, can anyone access it or just your office?*
2. Schedule your drop-off on a day and time that is the busiest for the location you're choosing.
3. Spread the word using flyers and social media and ask people to share!
4. Display is everything! Make your drop-off space engaging so that those who know about it are reminded and those hearing about the drive for the first time are compelled to stop by your table or bin.
5. Set up a bin check-in schedule with you and your team. You want some produce to always be in the basket, but don't want it to overflow because people will think you can't take any more donations. If you've scheduled a multi-day collection, ensure you have someone checking and collecting produce daily.

Get the Word Out

How do I get the word out about my upcoming produce drive?

Capital Roots will provide you with all the promotional materials you will need to host your own successful produce drive.

What materials are available?

- *Flyers* - This toolkit includes editable flyer templates. If accessing this toolkit offline, email the Squash Hunger Coordinator and he/she will email them to you.
- *Bushel Basket and Signage* - You have the option of borrowing a bushel basket with signage on it for use on the day(s) of the event. Email the Squash Hunger Coordinator with your request no later than one week prior to your produce drive so we can get that ready for you.
- *Informational materials on Capital Roots and Squash Hunger* - This is good to have at your table or in hand going door-to-door to educate folks on how the food will be used and by whom. Email the Squash Hunger Coordinator with your request no later than one week prior to your produce drive so we can get these materials ready for you to pick up.
- *Small Graphics to use on Social Networks* - Let us help you market your drive on your social networks. Email the Squash Hunger Coordinator and we can get those over to you.

I don't have a lot of time to get the word out. What's my best option?

Social media. Start a Facebook event. Create a fun and catchy hashtag to use throughout the drive and encourage donors to use it too when they donate. Post live photos and videos during the drive and encourage donors to as well. Any way you can call attention to your drive will prove beneficial.

Can Capital Roots help spread the word?

Yes! Once we know the date(s) of your drive, we can let our supporters know in our upcoming e-newsletter. Also, if you use the hashtag #squashhunger and tag us @capitalrootsny in any Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or LinkedIn posts, we will share those with our audience.

Follow Up After Your Drive

Does Capital Roots need to know how much we gathered?

We sure do. Weigh all of the produce and take note of how much in pounds. (If you do not have the ability to do so, please let us know.)

Ok, I've weighed the produce. Now what?

Now its time to head to food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters! If you would like to make the deliveries yourself, let us know where you live or work and we will send you a list of food assistance programs in your area.

If you prefer Capital Roots makes those deliveries, not a problem. Just let Lena know when you will be dropping it off. We can weigh and distribute it for you. The choice is entirely yours.

After you've delivered or dropped off to us, report to Lena the following:

- ☐ Total weight of produce collected.
- ☐ Pantries delivered to (if making your own deliveries)
- ☐ Types of produce collected
- ☐ Favorite photos and a short blurb about the event for us to include in our e-newsletter
- ☐ A good estimate of the number of volunteers and hours involved in planning and executing your produce drive



Produce Drive Check-List

- ☐ Decide whether to hold a Door-to-Door or Drop-Off Collection.
- ☐ Choose a date(s).
- ☐ Choose a location.
- ☐ Choose a time(s).
- ☐ Register your produce drive with Lena at squashhunger@capitalroots.org.
- ☐ Gather volunteers.
- ☐ Send out the logistics to your team.
- ☐ Spread the word!
- ☐ Host the Produce Drive.
- ☐ Report to Capital Roots.

QUESTIONS?
CONTACT LENA AT 518-274-8685 OR
SQUASHHUNGER@CAPITALROOTS.ORG.



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