

Raised Bed Garden Partners
Program Overview, Updated October 2023



Overview: Chester County Food Bank (CCFB) mobilizes the community to ensure access to real, healthy food. The Raised Bed Garden (RBG) Program increases availability of fresh produce for households at risk of food insecurity by supporting garden installations at partner organizations, providing community education on growing your own food, and by fostering community around food and gardening.

Eligibility: Organizations within Chester County, PA that actively engage households at risk of food insecurity are encouraged to apply. Preference is given to sites that demonstrate engagement of food insecure households, promote food justice rather than charity, and have reliable staff/volunteer support.

Expected responsibilities for partner garden sites: Garden beds are property of the partner site. Sites are responsible for repairs, ensuring that crops are planted, watered, weeded, harvested, and delivered to local agencies, or used in youth/community programs. Garden sites who continuously, or without consistent communication, do not follow through on agreements or expectations will not be eligible for the program the following season.

Other responsibilities include:

- Commit to growing through 3 seasons: spring, summer, fall (April through November)
- Commit to using organic/chemical free practices
- Ensure adequate volunteer support for weekly garden maintenance
- Adhere to program deadlines as requested by CCFB
- Pick up plants on designated pickup days – Schools may schedule planting days with the Community Food Access Educator who can provide seeds/seedlings at that time
- Attend 1 workshop/partner event per year
- Donate a portion of harvest to hunger relief agencies, school programming, low income garden participants, food insecure households, or youth and community-focused programs
- Record pounds of produce donated, and send reports upon request at **mid-season** and **end** of season

Cost: Beginning in the 2024 garden season, cost to participate as an official Garden Partner with CCFB will be a \$250 annual membership fee. This change accounts for the increased cost of food and supplies for CCFB. These fees will support the purchase of seeds and garden supplies to ensure CCFB can provide the necessary support to our partners. Costs for lumber and soil for builds or repairs is not included in the fee.

- If your organization needs of assistance with the membership fee, there is a grant application to determine eligibility to waive the fee. **If you are a food cupboard or pantry, the fee will automatically be waived.**

What we offer: Participating in the program provides gardens with access to the following activities or services:

- Seeds and plant seedlings for spring, summer, and fall (sites can choose what they want to grow by submitting plant order forms at the beginning of the year)

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- Materials to support healthy plant growth, including row cover, trellis stakes, and planting guides
- Access to workshops, educational support, and mentoring throughout the year, including winter.

If desired, program staff can provide consultation for the following:

Site selection & planning: Staff can offer guidance to your team on choosing a suitable location for your garden, and with planning the logistics of your build day.

Build day: A staff person may be available to lead the build day for your group on a mutually agreeable date. Sites also have the option of building their own raised beds.

Build Assistance: If you need beds built or repaired, untreated cypress lumber is available for purchase from CCFB. Hardware is included with purchase.

Beds measure 10 feet long, by 3 feet wide, by 12 inches high and cost on average \$150. Cost may go up or down pending changes in lumber pricing. If you are interested in exploring other options, please reach out to kdoughty@chestercountyfoodbank.org.



CCFB does not provide soil but can provide recommendations.

Application Process:

Prior to submitting an application, consider whether you have a suitable garden location by assessing:

- Proximity to a reliable water source (an outdoor hose bibb or spigot within 50 feet)
- Sufficient sunlight. Minimum of 6 hours of full sunlight per day. Do trees/buildings cast shade?
- Sufficient area of flat, level ground for a minimum of 2 beds with 4 foot wide paths in between.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Site visits will be scheduled with potential participants upon receipt of application. CCFB staff will coordinate with you to visit the garden site and discuss expectations of participation with a representative from your garden. Site visits do not guarantee participation in the program. Upon approval, sites will submit a signed Partner Garden Agreement and the membership fee, unless waived. If garden beds need to be built, the site will coordinate purchase of materials and schedule a build date.

If interested, complete the online application (CCFB staff can fill it out with you on the phone if access to technology is a barrier). You can direct any questions to:

Kale Doughty kdoughty@chestercountyfoodbank.org
610-873-6000 x 131