

# Help put garden bounty to good use

It is the beginning of the garden season, so now is a great time to talk about what you're going to do this year with your bumper crop of fruit and vegetables - just as your orange trees are heavy with ready-to-pick citrus.



**CINDY MCNATT**  
REGISTER COLUMNIST

Oh, sure, you tell yourself that this is the year you're going to freeze your fruit for later, make marmalade or whatever. Maybe you will.

Or maybe you might share your abundance with a whole bunch of hungry people. That's what Jeff and Fran Lebow in Huntington Beach do. In fact, they are so passionate about sharing the county's backyard produce that they founded a club for the purpose:

**Theharvestclub.org** will pick, pack and donate your fruits and vegetables to food banks around the county.

"This is not frivolous community service. People are still losing jobs," said Jeff, an economic developer for Southern California Edison. "Demand for food has really gone through the roof at area food banks."

Jeff and Fran will harvest for you if you can't, but they can't do it alone. The group

also needs volunteer harvesters, another truck would be handy for deliveries, and they would be thrilled if you harvested your own and dropped it off at a food bank near you.

"We've only got one truck," Jeff said. "And we're doing avocados this week. It's about all we can handle. But Orange County Farm Supply donated an avocado picker tool, and we're thrilled."

The Lebows got the idea to donate backyard produce six years ago, when they were working in their own orchard.

"It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, people don't like waste," he said. "The food banks have mostly nonperishable items. They need fresh food. We

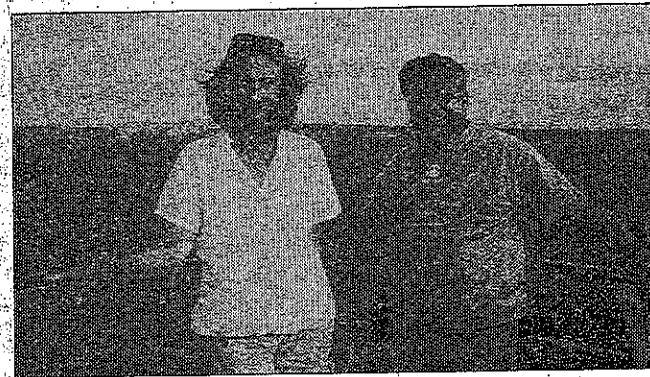


PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFF LEBOW

**Jeff and Fran Lebow launched The Harvest Club six years ago to distribute garden produce to food banks.**

like to get it to them when it's ready to be eaten."

Jeff said that most gardeners grow just about what they can eat in the vegetable garden. It's the abundance from fruit trees that overwhelms most homeowners. Especially

when the trees are mature and producing maximum fruit.

"We pick 1,700 pounds of oranges in Villa Park twice a year for one homeowner," Jeff said.

Fran and I talked about ways that neighborhoods

could organize streetwide picks. Citrus in the winter months, fruits in late spring and vegetables in the summer.

And I signed up to pick and deliver in the Santa Ana/Tustin area for growers who can't do it themselves. Garden clubs or other groups could put in a day during tomato season or the zucchini months.

It starts with The Harvest Club database. Go to [theharvestclub.org](http://theharvestclub.org) and fill out either the Grower's Contact form or Harvester's Volunteer form, or both. The Lebows will coordinate picks in your area.

**More information:** 714-847-8669

**CONTACT THE WRITER:**  
cmcnatt@ocregister.com