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## Nurture Demonstration Garden Keeps Giving

By **Kim Treger**



### Garden Feeds a Community

Each week, families who are part of the Northfield Township Food Pantry are receiving bags of freshly harvested, organic produce along with recipes created specifically for the vegetables and herbs picked that week. These crops were planted last April by local nonprofit Nurture as part of their Grow Your Own Food Project at the Giving Gardens of St. Philip Church in Glenview.

The crops of Nurture's Grow Your Own Food program.

The hot temperatures and abundant rains this summer made for a great growing season and resulted in an amazing transformation to the Nurture Demonstration Garden which donates 100% of its produce to the pantry, located just across the street.

### The Roots of the Grow Your Own Food Program

Nurture is a North Shore, grass roots organization founded in 2008 to address issues including hunger, childhood obesity, wellness and an increasingly unhealthy food chain.

With a focus on low-income families with children at high risk for nutritional and health problems, Nurture programs encourage families to increase consumption of naturally grown whole foods, especially fruits and vegetables. But Nurture's program directors are aware that buying quality, fresh vegetables can be challenging when shopping on a limited food budget so the Nurture Grow Your Own Food program was initiated in 2010 in response to this obstacle. The goal is not only to provide the participants with foods, but far more importantly, to teach them how to provide for themselves, in keeping with Nurture's philosophy, based on the old proverb, "give a person a fish and you feed them for a day; teach a person to fish and you feed them for a lifetime".

Nurture is a 100-percent volunteer organization engaged in helping the local community in a hands-on way. The Grow Your Own Food lesson began in March, when Nurture invited alumni families from Nurture programs to attend a free conference led by Jeanne Pinsol Nolan of the Organic Gardener. The session focused on soil preparation, planting, and harvesting vegetables. Participants were given free seeds, donated by Jonny's Selected Seeds and invited to participate in tending the eight 12x12 plots that Nurture underwrote in 2010. In April 2010, organic compost and fertilizer was brought in and with help from crew members from The Organic Garden, the soil was prepared. Over the next several months, the gardens were tended by volunteer Nurture coordinators with the help of St. Philip and alumni families.

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The garden has yielded a bounty of food for the families who participated and who receive food through the Northfield Township Food Pantry. Six alumni families participated in tending the garden. Crops, including salad greens, herbs, beans, squash, cucumbers, tomatoes and beets were abundant throughout the harvest season. Families worked together in the gardens to learn gardening techniques, understand more about food origins and growth, and experience the amazing pleasure and taste of fresh, healthy food, though the greatest yield from this garden may be the lessons that are learned in the process.

#### How Does This Garden Grow?

Nurture's good work is completely a volunteer effort and the Grow Your Own Food program needs a consistent supply of volunteers. This garden is the result of a community of people working together on behalf of the community. Pastor Dawson and Sue Schmittroth of St Philip Church coordinated and staked the overall garden and installed rabbit fencing. Team leaders Paige Carney, Michelle McKenna and Elizabeth Thomas coordinated volunteers, planned and completed the weeding, seeding, and planting. Hawks Patrol (Boy Scout Troop 20 of Winnetka) and Master Gardener Jen Roberts, founder of the Organic Pantry Project also volunteered. Johnny's Seeds donated over 50 packets of seeds and local nursery West End Florist was kind enough to donate two Honey Crisp Apple trees for the adjacent fruit orchard. Husband and wife team Gina and Jeff Gooden of Wilmette transported the trees and planted them. Nurture alumni families from NTFP adopted some of the plots to grow their own food. In addition to growing fresh, organic food for these families, the Giving Gardens has been donating a variety of salad greens, herbs, beans, squash, cucumbers and tomatoes to the NTFP. To find out more or to come and lend a helping hand, visit [www.nurtureyourfamily.org](http://www.nurtureyourfamily.org).

#### Keywords

Nurture, Garden, Non Profit, Vegetables, Nutrition, St Philip



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