



# GARDENS ON THE GO

## HOW TO MANUAL

Everything you need to know to start a Gardens on the Go bagged produce sales program in your neighborhood!

**JANUARY 2021**

Healthy Tarrant County Collaboration

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## Background

Gardens on the Go provides a low-cost way to bring fresh fruit and vegetable sales to neighborhoods lacking grocery stores.

Texas Health Harris Methodist Azle pioneered this model in 2013. The hospital bought fresh produce at a steep discount. Community partners provided volunteer manpower to divide the produce into bags with a \$5 wholesale value. The bags were sold to people in underserved neighborhoods at cost for \$5 cash per bag. As volunteers provided the manpower, the \$5 covered the actual costs of the program, making it both budget neutral and self-sustaining.

In 2016 Tarrant Area Food Bank replicated the program to bring fresh produce sales to underserved neighborhoods in River Oaks and Arlington. Once again, the model delivered fresh produce at affordable prices in neighborhoods without easy access to grocery stores.

In July 2019 Healthy Tarrant County Collaboration partnered with Health Options & Alternatives at Higher Praise Family Church in southeast Fort Worth to expand wholesale priced fresh produce to yet another underserved neighborhood.

In November 2019 the Harvesting Hope Community Garden at First Christian Church in Arlington opened yet another Gardens on the Go program.

In July 2020, Greater Mt. Tabor Christian Center opened yet another Gardens on the Go program in the Stop Six neighborhood of southeast Fort Worth.

### **Advantages:**

- The program can be started with very little upfront cost.
- The number of bags produced and can be increased or decreased based on customer demand and the availability of volunteers.
- By working with a wholesale distributor, the food will cost less than it would if purchased at a retail store. This helps customers stretch their grocery budgets.

### **Disadvantages:**

- The bags are generally sold once every week or every other week for a couple of hours. So, the food is not available every day.

## What You Need to Have

Any community organization or group of interested people can start a Gardens on the Go program. However, it is important to make sure the group has the necessary space, supplies, and volunteers needed to succeed.



### Physical space:

- A location with space to receive and store several cases of produce plus secure space to store the Gardens on the Go supplies listed below.
- Indoor space to set up and fill the bags with the produce and store the bags until time to sell them. It helps if this area has good climate control, as heat can cause some items to wilt quickly. A bonus is a refrigerator. Leafy greens in particular will wilt in just a few hours.
- Outdoor space to set up and sell the bags. It helps if the parking lot or area allows drivers to pull in and leave without having to turn around.



### Volunteers:

- A designated person who will coordinate placing the food orders, receiving the shipments, and paying for the food.
- Volunteers to pack the bags. For a small number of bags (e.g. 50) 3 to 4 people can do the work in about 30 minutes once they are familiar with the process.
- Volunteers to sell the bags. Generally, 3 to 4 people can handle the job for a small number of bags.
- Volunteers to help promote the program. People will not show up like magic - you have to continually remind them when and where the bags will be available for sale. It helps to have volunteers on hand who can stand at the street waving signs to attract customers.

# What You Need to Have

## Supplies:

1. Two 8-foot or 6-foot folding tables to hold the bags during sales. The folding tables are easier to carry in and out.
2. A few folding chairs.
3. Pop-up tent if the sales area does not have any covering like a covered portecochere or walkway. [Link here](#)
4. One or two Rubbermaid commercial utility carts to help move materials and bags back and forth. [Link here](#).
5. 2 to 4 feather flags with poles to set out to attract attention. [Link here](#).
6. Yard signs to set along the roadway to direct customers. These should be in both English and Spanish in most neighborhoods. The signs say “Fresh Produce”, “Seasonal Selection”, “\$5 / bag”, and “Turn Here”. You may also want signs that say “Fresh Produce \$5 / bag” that volunteers can hold and wave at the street. [Link here](#).
7. Locking cash bag to use during sales. [Link here](#).
8. Industries Locking Security Bag Marine Blue -[Link here](#).
9. Locking cash box to store money in between sales days. [Link here](#).
10. Bags with handles. Due to the shipping charges it is good to order 3 to 4 cases of bags at a time. The distributor, Uline, is located in Coppell. If you have the ability to go there to pick up, you can save the shipping charges. If you have tax exempt status, they will allow you to set up a tax exempt account. [Link here](#).
11. Plastic gloves for volunteers to wear while handling the produce. [Link here](#).
12. Cash for making change. About \$20 in \$1 and \$5 bills should be enough.

## Schedule:

Determine what day(s) of the month and hours you will be open for sales. With volunteers, the weekends are often more convenient than weekdays. Most of the current Gardens on the Go programs open twice / month – first & third Saturday or second & fourth Saturday.

Also decide how many hours you will be open on sales days. Most current programs plan for a 2-hour sales window plus 30 minutes before and after to set up and clean up.

# Marketing

A simple flyer in both English and Spanish can be used to promote the program. People have to be continually reminded of the availability of the program. If possible, distribute flyers to:

- Homes in the neighborhoods closest to the sales location,
- Churches,
- Barber shops and beauty salons,
- Laundromats,
- Community centers,
- Any other places in the area where people gather.



Also, distribute information using your social media accounts. The more ways you spread the word, the better.

If possible, take a photo of the contents of the bag arranged nicely and send that out on your social media.

Do a price check at Walmart online to determine what the retail price would be for that week's bag and promote that as well. We often find that the Walmart price for the same items would be \$10 to \$13!

# Wholesale Distributor

## Farmers Market Fort Worth

5507 E. Belknap Street | Haltom City, TX 76117

Contact: Kyle Sayers | 817-838-8526 | Kilroy1963@yahoo.com

Kyle can be your best friend! He emails the price list weekly – produce prices change frequently – and we send the order in to him on an email at least 24 hours before the food needs to be delivered. He does not require a minimum order, and you can order individual units. For example, greens are packed 24 / case. If filling 50 bags, you order 2 cases + 2 more bunches of greens. He keeps the credit card number on file and runs the charge after the food is delivered. He then emails a copy of the receipt back.

### An example of the email order is:

Hi, Kyle -- Here is the order for ((Church name)) this week. As usual, if anything on this list is not good, please let us know what would be better.

### Order:

Bananas, 40# - 1 case

Cucumbers, Select - 2 cases

Collard or Turnip greens, 24 ct - 2 cases + 2 more bunches - may mix if needed to get pretty greens

Onions, Yellow, Medium, 50# - 1 case/bag

Oranges, 113 ct - 1 case

Pears, 120 ct - 1 case

Potatoes, 90 ct - 1 case/bag

Zucchini, 20 # - 2 cases

Tricolor Cherry Tomatoes, 12 ct - 3 cases + 4 more clamshells

### Delivery:

Please deliver to ((Church name and address)) at the kitchen entrance behind the church. Please ask the driver to call about 30 minutes prior to delivery:

-- ((Contact Person)): 817-XXX-XXXX.

Many thanks,

Linda Fulmer | Executive Director | Healthy Tarrant County Collaboration

## Produce Selection

Heartier produce and shelf-stable produce do better in bags, like apples, potatoes, oranges, etc. Items that get bruised easily do not do well, such as grapes, strawberries, etc. Take advantage of produce in season

### Common items selected:

- Potatoes, regular and sweet
- Onions
- Oranges
- Apples
- Lemons, limes
- Bananas
- Tomatoes
- Squash, butternut, acorn, spaghetti, zucchini
- Peppers

It is best to stick with staple items that people are more likely to be familiar with.





# Calculating How Much to Order

We use an Excel file with formulas built in to determine the order. The Excel file has a number of formulas built into it that helps determine how many cases of each item to order, and what the per bag raw food cost should be. The goal is to have an estimated per bag cost of \$4.75 or less, as the bags cost \$0.25 each.

First, make sure that you have the quantity of bags per week filled in correctly in the **[a] qty/week column** all the way down to the bottom of the column:

Kyle Sayers-817 838-8781 <kilroy1963@yahoo.com>											Friday, October 4, 2019			
Higher Praise		a			e		b		c		d		f	
Item	case pack	# of units per case	qty/week	units per bag	Total Qty needed	cases per distribution	cost per ea	cost per case	cost/ mkt			Cases	Total \$	Items in Bag
APPLES GALA XFCY 88-138CT	113	113	40	2	80	0.71	\$0.26	\$ 29.75	\$21.06					
APPLES, FUJI	113 ct	113	40	2	80	0.71	\$0.23	\$ 25.75	\$18.23	y		1	25.75	
APRICOTS	144	144	40	4	160	1.11	\$0.17	\$ 24.00	\$26.67					
AVOCADOS 70CT	70 ct	70	40	2	80	1.14	\$0.31	\$ 21.75	\$24.86					
BANANAS GREEN GREEN 40 LB	40 lb.	90	40	2	80	0.89	\$0.23	\$ 21.00	\$18.67					2-3 bananas
BELL PEPPERS RED	25 LB	50	40	1	40	0.80	\$0.34	\$ 16.75	\$13.40	y		1	16.75	
CABBAGE Medium	50 lb	18	40	1	40	2.22	\$0.99	\$ 17.75	\$39.44					
CANTALOUPE	12 ct	12	40	1	40	3.33	\$1.23	\$ 14.75	\$49.17					
CARROTS CELLO CALIF	48-1 LB	48	40	1	40	0.83	\$0.60	\$ 28.75	\$23.96					
CAULIFLOWER	12 ct	12	40	1	50	4.17	\$1.31	\$ 15.75	\$65.63					
CELERY	36 ct	36	40	1	40	1.11	\$0.69	\$ 24.75	\$27.50					
CORN YELLOW	48 ct	48	40	4	160	3.33	\$0.30	\$ 14.50	\$48.33					
CUCUMBERS SELECT	45 lb.	65	40	1	40	0.62	\$0.26	\$ 16.75	\$10.31	y		1	16.75	
EGGPLANT FANCY	18/24CT	17	40	1	40	2.35	\$0.97	\$ 16.50	\$38.82					
GRAPEFRUIT 48 CT	48 ct	48	40	2	80	1.67	\$0.47	\$ 22.50	\$37.50					
GRAPEFRUIT 56 CT	56 ct	56	40	2	80	1.43	\$0.39	\$ 21.75	\$31.07					
GRAPES RED	9 ct	9	40	1	40	4.44	\$2.53	\$ 22.75	\$101.11					
GREENS, TURNIP	24 ct	24	40	1	40	1.67	\$0.78	\$ 18.75	\$31.25					
LEMONS FANCY/SUNKIST 200 CT	200 ct.	200	40	4	160	0.80	\$0.16	\$ 31.75	\$25.40					
LETTUCE - ROMAINE	24 ct	24	40	1	40	1.67	\$0.77	\$ 18.50	\$30.83	y		2	37	
LIMES PERSIAN 110 CT	110 ct	110	40	4	160	1.45	\$0.33	\$ 35.75	\$52.00					
MANGOS 9 CT	9 ct	8	40	1	40	5.00	\$0.81	\$ 6.50	\$32.50					
NECTARINES	25 lbs	50	40	2	80	1.60	\$0.42	\$ 20.75	\$33.20					
ONIONS GRN 4 DZN	4 DZN	48	40	1	40	0.83	\$0.29	\$ 13.75	\$11.46					
ONIONS RED MEDIUM	25 lb	30	40	2	80	2.67	\$0.00		\$0.00					
ONIONS WHITE MEDIUM	50 lb	110	40	2	80	0.73	\$0.15	\$ 16.75	\$12.18	y		1	16.75	
ONIONS YELLOW MEDIUM	50 lb	100	40	1	40	0.40	\$0.15	\$ 15.00	\$6.00					
ORANGES SUNKIST/FANCY 113 CT	113	113	40	2	80	0.71	\$0.21	\$ 23.75	\$16.81	y		1	23.75	TX
ORANGES CARA CARA / 72 CT	72 CT	72	40	2	80	1.11	\$0.34	\$ 24.75	\$27.50					

Second, new price lists go into effect each Thursday. Kyle or Fritz usually email the new list each Wednesday or Thursday morning. Make sure to double check the prices of the items you want to order and update as necessary in the **[b] cost per case column**.

Next, identify which of last week's items you do not want to reorder, and remove them from the columns to the right. In **[c] column N** there is a y (for Yes), for items you want to order.

Also add the **[d] number of cases** needed for the order. You can estimate this by looking at the **[e] Cases per Distribution** column to the left.

You also want to erase the formula in the **[f] Total \$ column** for items you are not going to reorder.

# Calculating How Much to Order

Once you have erased all of the items you are not going to reorder, check to see what the remaining items cost per bag by looking at the **[g] lower right corner**.

GRAPEFRUIT 56 CT	56 ct	56	40	2	80	1.43	\$0.39	\$ 21.75	\$31.07										
GRAPES RED	9 ct	9	40	1	40	4.44	\$2.53	\$ 22.75	\$101.11										
GREENS, TURNIP	24 ct	24	40	1	40	1.67	\$0.78	\$ 18.75	\$31.25										
LEMONS FANCY/SUNKIST 200 CT	200 ct.	200	40	4	160	0.80	\$0.16	\$ 31.75	\$25.40										
LETTUCE - ROMAINE	24 ct	24	40	1	40	1.67	\$0.77	\$ 18.50	\$30.83	y		2					37		
LIMES PERSIAN 110 CT	110 ct	110	40	4	160	1.45	\$0.33	\$ 35.75	\$52.00										
MANGOS 9 CT	9 ct	8	40	1	40	5.00	\$0.81	\$ 6.50	\$32.50										
NECTARINES	25 lbs	50	40	2	80	1.60	\$0.42	\$ 20.75	\$33.20										
ONIONS GRN 4 DZN	4 DZN	48	40	1	40	0.83	\$0.29	\$ 13.75	\$11.46										
ONIONS RED MEDIUM	25 lb	30	40	2	80	2.67	\$0.00		\$0.00										
ONIONS WHITE MEDIUM	50 lb	110	40	2	80	0.73	\$0.15	\$ 16.75	\$12.18	y			1				16.75		
ONIONS YELLOW MEDIUM	50 lb	100	40	1	40	0.40	\$0.15	\$ 15.00	\$6.00										
ORANGES SUNKIST/FANCY 113 CT	113	113	40	2	80	0.71	\$0.21	\$ 23.75	\$16.81	y			1				23.75		TX
ORANGES CARA CARA / 72 CT	72 CT	72	40	2	80	1.11	\$0.34	\$ 24.75	\$27.50										
PEACHES	25 #	75	40	3	120	1.60	\$0.34	\$ 25.75	\$41.20										
PEARS BARTLETT	120	135	40	2	80	0.59	\$0.23	\$ 30.75	\$18.22										
PEARS RED	45 ct	45	40	1	40	0.89	\$0.55	\$ 24.75	\$22.00										
MINI PEPPERS, 12 - oz	24 ct	24	40	1	40	1.67	\$0.63	\$ 15.00	\$25.00										
PINTO BEANS	50 lb	50	40	1	40	0.80	\$0.49	\$ 24.50	\$19.60										
PLUMS BLACK 125CT BX	28#	125	40	2	80	0.64	\$0.26	\$ 32.75	\$20.96										
POTATOES 90 CT	90 ct	90	40	2	80	0.89	\$0.18	\$ 16.00	\$18.00	y			1				16		
POTATOES BAKER 90 CT	50 lb	90	40	2	80	0.89	\$0.19	\$ 16.75	\$14.89										
POTATOES RED A1	50 lb	120	40	4	160	1.33	\$0.15	\$ 18.50	\$24.67										
RICE	50 lb	50	40	1	40	0.80	\$0.38	\$ 18.75	\$18.75									0	
SQUASH ACORN	35 lb	16	40	1	40	2.50	\$0.00		\$0.00									0	
SQUASH BUTTERNUT	33 lb	19	40	1	40	2.11	\$0.00		\$0.00									0	
SQUASH SPAGHETTI	33 lb	14	40	1	40	2.86	\$0.00		\$0.00									0	
SQUASH YELLOW	20 lb	45	40	2	80	1.78	\$0.28	\$ 12.75	\$22.67										
SQUASH ZUCCHINI	20 lb	45	40	2	80	1.78	\$0.37	\$ 16.50	\$29.33	y			2				33		
SWEET POTATOES	30 lb	45	40	2	80	1.78	\$0.49	\$ 22.00	\$39.11										
TOMATOES, Grape	12	12	40	1	40	3.33	\$1.00	\$ 12.00	\$40.00										
TOMATOES ROMA XFCY RED	25 lb	120	40	2	80	0.67	\$0.11	\$ 13.75	\$19.00										
TOMATOES VINE RIPE 2 LAYER	25 LB	60	40	2	80	1.33	\$0.00		\$0.00										
YAMS JUMBO (SWEET POTATOES)	40 LB	30	40	1	40	1.33	\$0.95	\$ 28.50	\$38.00									0	
<b>Total Cost</b>									<b>\$149.10</b>		<b>\$3.73</b>	10					185.75		4.64

**g**

Now you are ready to start adding new items to the order. First, on the price list look for items that come close to having the number of units you need to go with the number of bags you plan to make. For example, if you want to fill 50 bags, look for items that have around 25, 50, or 100 units per case.

If the price list just shows the number of pounds, you can do a Google search to find out about how many of the items make up a pound, e.g. onions, cucumbers, etc. You can also ask Kyle for help in estimating quantities.

Also, look for things that you know are in season, as these will be fresher and nicer than things that are old or out of season. For example, the first time we ordered, we asked for grapefruit. Kyle told us that grapefruit were old and mealy. Another time the corn was priced well and I asked him if it was good. He told me that the corn was getting old and was discounted to get rid of it. So, Kyle is a good person to make great friend with!

# Calculating How Much to Order

## To add a new item to the list:

Highlight the row in yellow.

Put “y” for “yes” into column N **[h]**

Put the number of cases needed into column P (Cases). Base the number on Cases per Distribution in column I.

Add the formula for calculating the per bag cost in column R.

- To do this, put your cursor in one of the rows that already has the formula in it and hold down “Control” while hitting “C”. In this case your keyboard letter “C” stands for “copy”.
- Then put the cursor into column R in the row where you need to add the formula.
- Hold down “Control” while hitting “V”. This should paste the formula into that row, and then let all keys go. If you do not see a number appear, then the formula did not copy over.
- Check the per bag cost in the lower right corner of the worksheet to see how much more you can add, or if you need to take something away.

Kyle Sayers-817 838-8781 <kilroy1963@yahoo.com>										Friday, October 4, 2019				
Higher Praise										<b>h</b>				
Item	case pack	# of units per case	qty/ week	units per bag	Total Qty needed	cases per distribution	cost per ea	cost per case	cost/ mkt		Cases	Total \$	Items in Bag	
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CUCUMBERS SELECT	45 lb.	65	40	1	40	0.62	\$0.26	\$ 16.75	\$10.31	y	1	16.75		
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ONIONS WHITE MEDIUM	50 lb	110	40	2	80	0.73	\$0.15	\$ 16.75	\$12.18	y	1	16.75		
ONIONS YELLOW MEDIUM	50 lb	100	40	1	40	0.40	\$0.15	\$ 15.00	\$6.00					
ORANGES SUNKIST/FANCY 113 CT	113	113	40	2	80	0.71	\$0.21	\$ 23.75	\$16.81	y	1	23.75	TX	
ORANGES CARA CARA / 72 CT	72 CT	72	40	2	80	1.11	\$0.34	\$ 24.75	\$27.50					
PEACHES	25 #	75	40	3	120	1.60	\$0.34	\$ 25.75	\$41.20					
PEARS BARTLETT	120	135	40	2	80	0.59	\$0.23	\$ 30.75	\$18.22					
PEARS RED	45 ct	45	40	1	40	0.89	\$0.55	\$ 24.75	\$22.00					
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PINTO BEANS	50 lb	50	40	1	40	0.80	\$0.49	\$ 24.50	\$19.60					
PLUMS BLACK 125CT BX	28#	125	40	2	80	0.64	\$0.26	\$ 32.75	\$20.96					

## Preparation and Set Up

### **Packing the Bags:**

Pull out the number of bags you plan to fill. Produce does not always come in exact numbers, so what is important is to fill the number of bags you plan to sell.

If something is in short supply, add more of the other items to the bags that are missing an item.

Set up an assembly line for the volunteers to fill the bags. Volunteers should wear disposable gloves while handling the produce.

Fill with the heaviest items first (like potatoes) and the least durable items on top (like tomatoes and bananas).

You may find from time to time that some of the items in the boxes have spoiled. This can be expected – fresh produce is perishable, and sometimes items begin to spoil between being packed at the producer's location and delivered to you.

Farmers Market Fort Worth purchases produce from a number of suppliers, but they do not open and inspect the cases before delivering them to you.

### **Setting Up and Selling:**

On the day of sales, plan to have volunteers arrive at least 30 minutes to an hour early. Set up activities include:

- Setting up folding tables to set bags on for sale
- Setting out the feather flags and yard signs
- Preparing the cash bag with change
- If it is hot outside, bring out a smaller number of bags at a time. The hot weather can cause produce to wilt.

The utility cart can be helpful in moving tables, chairs, and other items back and forth. To make sales contactless, encourage customers to put their cash in their trunk and pop the lid when they pull in. This way volunteers can retrieve the cash and put the food into the car safely. Assign one volunteer responsibility for the cash bag.

When finished, have two volunteers reconcile the cash. The cash, minus the amount you started with for change, should be given to the person whose credit card is used to pay for the food and the bags.

## Closing the Event

### **Leftover Bags:**

Ideally you want to sell out every time, but if you do have leftover bags, plan some strategies for getting them sold. Some ideas include:

- Reach out to church members to see if they would like to buy a bag and take it to them.
- Contact the local fire station to see if they would like to buy a bag or two.
- Volunteers may also like to buy a bag – this is good food at a steep discount, and who can't use a good deal?
- Volunteers may also have family members who would like a bag or two.

After you have exhausted all options for selling any leftover bags, consider donating them to a local food pantry. Worst case, if the food spoils before you can find someone to take it, it will do well in a compost. We have five urban farms in east and southeast Fort Worth, and each of them can use items for compost.

Please contact Linda Fulmer at [LindaFulmer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:LindaFulmer@sbcglobal.net) or 817-451-8740 if you need to find a farmer to take the items.

### **Donations:**

From time to time someone will donate money to a Gardens on the Go program so that people who do not have \$5 cash can have a bag. This is fine – just have a plan for how to keep track of donations received and bags that are then donated to people.