



Growing to feed the hungry in Oregon's Rogue Valley

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Thank you so much for our Sow It Forward grant! It means we now have row cover cloth protection for vulnerable vegetable starts--and lots of other goodies! For the last three years, cucumber beetles have attacked our summer and winter squash starts, killing countless plants. We grow organically and each year have handpicked beetles from squash blossoms with tweezers (!) to protect beneficial pollinators and predators. Talk about a tedious, time consuming chore. So far, the cover cloth has kept our squashes safe, and they're really coming along.

This is our fourth year of growing at Rogue Valley Christian Church which hosts our garden and provides land, water and many volunteers. Our Medford Food Share Garden is just one of six ACCESS production gardens with the mission of growing fresh produce for local food relief pantries within Jackson County in Southern Oregon. ACCESS is a nonprofit social service agency that serves the needs of low-income residents and is the county's designated Food Bank. Our garden thrives with help from community volunteers and students each season. Garden helpers give a few hours a week to ensure anyone requiring food assistance also gets fresh vegetables for good nutrition. The garden also gives us the opportunity to teach organic growing practices and encourage vegetable consumption. Moving people toward a more plant-based diet and opening their eyes to the deliciousness of vegetable dishes is a hoped for goal.

How does our garden grow? Depending upon the crops, our 2240 linear feet of row space produces from 5,300 pounds to 8,200 pounds of vegetables annually. Wishing to extend our harvest season and provide greater variety, we now plant for spring, summer and fall. (The new cover cloth will protect plants from spring frosts next year.) As of now, there are tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, green beans, green onions, a variety of cucumbers, kale, tomatillos, cantaloupe, watermelon, beets, onions, cabbage, a variety of summer squash and winter squash and the last of spring's snow peas and lettuce in the ground. We're grateful for the non-GMO seed stock from the Ark Institute and a copy of *The Year-Round Vegetable Gardener*. We ordered plant ID markers from Gardener's Supply Company so newcomers to the garden will know what's growing row by row. And in expectation of a really big harvest this year, we ordered lots more plant snippers! Hoping for the best weather-wise? many thanks Kitchen Gardeners International for helping our efforts to reduce hunger in our valley.

Image (optional):

