

“It’s fulfilling to teach people how to grow different types of vegetables—and grow them well,” says Eliza Potter, who is also in the chefs’ good books for all the fresh herbs the Garden provides.

SHARE YOUR FARE

A wave of “fresh and local” enthusiasm has inspired us all to grow our own food. And some gardeners are using their traditional veggie plot to make a difference—by sharing their space or donating over-abundant crops. Here are some ways you can use your green thumb to give back:

Volunteer at a community garden

Contact your local horticultural association to see if they can put you in touch with a community garden. Each spring, Eliza Potter, coordinator of the Fort Calgary Community Garden, orders and plants heritage seeds and organizes volunteers to tend the veggie patch. In 2009, the Garden, which has been sponsored by Suncor Energy Foundation since 2001, donated more than 3,000 pounds of food to three local organizations.

Sign up for a garden allotment

Toronto gardener Helen Racanelli was recently matched with a young student who is going to help her plant a vegetable garden, share the harvest and donate the surplus to a local organization called The Stop Community Food Centre in Toronto, which works to increase access to healthy food for at-risk members of the community. “I get to mentor a beginner gardener, share some of the chores like weeding and watering, and also ensure that all the gazillion backyard tomatoes have a nice home to go to,” says Helen when asked about her motivation for joining. Go to [Sharing Backyards \(sharingbackyards.com\)](http://SharingBackyards.com) to find a garden or to share your own. Read more about Helen’s experience sharing her garden at canadiangardening.com/cogardening

Donate your harvest surplus

Gone are the days when you had to knock on neighbours’ doors to get rid of your excess zucchini. Why not donate your extra produce instead? You may not be able to give to a huge kitchen that would need a more substantial shipment, but what you could do is add to someone else’s donation, or find a smaller shelter or organization in need. Start by exploring your options at your local food bank.

