

NEWS

## From Giving Garden to Community Giving Project

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**Brainerd Dispatch**



The Giving Garden, created by the University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardeners of Crow Wing County in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, provided an opportunity to use gardens at the Northland Arboretum to grow vegetables for residents in need. A total of 1,200 pounds of fresh produce (2,400 vegetable servings) were donated to the Salvation Army and Sharing Bread Kitchen for distribution.

In 2021 the Giving Garden project grew into the Community Giving Project with three integrated projects: Bedding Plants, Container Gardens, and the Giving Garden. Members of the Bedding Plant Project grew 250 plants to be used in the Container Gardens and the Giving Garden. The Container Garden Project donated more than 145 container and bedding plants to several Crow Wing County organizations including: Veterans Administration, Pequot Lakes Food Shelf,

Garrison Lions Club, CRMC Senior Living Crosby, CRMC Social Workers and Sharing Bread Kitchen. Remaining plants became the strong support for the Giving Garden.

The 2021 goal of the Giving Garden is to donate 2,000 pounds (4,000 vegetable servings) to the Salvation Army, Sharing Bread Soup Kitchen, and food shelves throughout Crow Wing County. As of Aug. 17, 1,000 pounds of produce have been donated with heavy produce such as cabbage, squash, and apples still to be harvested.

Additionally, Master Gardeners have been creating pollinator gardens throughout Crow Wing County including MN Teen Challenge, the Northland Arboretum, downtown Nisswa and the Lutheran Church of the Cross in Nisswa. They assist with the gardens at Woodland Gardens Samaritan Home and contribute to a resident and visitor experience in collaboration with downtown Brainerd by maintaining the planters located throughout the downtown area.

Finally, education is a significant commitment of Master Gardeners. Instructions on how to grow and use their vegetables are included with the Container Gardens and provided to Giving Garden recipients. Master Gardeners reach Crow Wing County residents through activities including: a Head Start Gardening event for 100 children; monthly library seminars via zoom reaching 80-120 participants; garden club presentations; helpline assistance through the Extension office; and the weekly "Ask the Master Gardener" column in the Brainerd Dispatch publication.