

Meijer Donates Unused Seeds to Help Feed Families, Partnering with Greater Lansing Food Bank

A new seed donation program at 36 mid-Michigan Meijer stores has the potential to grow thousands of pounds of fresh produce for area families, and keep its packaging out of landfills.

In partnership with the Greater Lansing Food Bank's (GLFB) Garden Project, donated seeds will not only stay out of landfills and be planted the following year, but the food grown from those seeds will also help bring more produce for low-income neighbors and food pantries.

"We are able to take seeds that Meijer and the seed company would be getting rid of and pass those on to low-income gardeners, who can then use them to grow part of their food supply in the coming season," said Julie Lehman, Garden Project Manager at GLFB.

Because of Garden Project, all unsold, end-of-season seed packets are sorted and distributed for the next growing season to families and pantries in need. Garden Project supports nearly 90 community gardens and more than 500 income-eligible home gardeners within GLFB's seven-county mid-Michigan service area. The program cultivates just over 1 million pounds of food throughout the season, equating to about 100,000 meals, annually.

The program came to fruition thanks to our Lansing Distribution Center Services Manager Michael Gray, who already had a strong relationship with GLFB. Meijer donates fresh produce to GLFB, which the food bank then distributes to pantries across the area, so helping GLFB source donated seeds for gardeners to grow their own produce was a natural expansion of our partnership.

"It's just building on our longtime partnership with Greater Lansing Food Bank and really strengthening that community presence for Meijer. The nice part is, 36 stores are taking part in this first effort," said Michael, who oversees our waste and recycling programs. His responsibility is to make sure we're diverting as much waste as possible.

He learned from Jeff Lynch, a Buyer for the Meijer Garden Center Division, that seeds are typically disposed at the store level, at the vendors' request, at the end of each season because federal law prevents them from being sold the following year.

Bringing Michael's idea to life, Jeff contacted Burpee, a longtime seed vendor with Meijer and the Pennsylvania company quickly responded. They were thrilled to support the effort of using Burpee seeds to grow food for families in need or in community gardens that support food pantries. Burpee has also been a sponsor of the Meijer PGA Classic for *Simply Give* which raises money every year to support Midwest food pantries.

"Burpee has a long tradition of helping out the community and donating products, so this was a good fit for them and their values," Jeff said. "Hopefully, this can be the start of more things to come. If the program goes well, we could roll it out to all Michigan stores next year and, hopefully, to the full chain after that."

Additional assets available online: [**Photos**](#) (4)

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