

Evanston Now

Edible Evanston Orchard Fest to celebrate harvest

By [Edible Evanston](#) on October 7, 2015 - 10:06am



Edible Evanston volunteers building raised beds on Dewey Avenue. Edible Evanston holds its first “Orchard Fest” from 2 to 4 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 18, in Eggleston Park to celebrate the harvest season at the Eggleston Anniversary Orchard, as well as Edible Evanston’s season of events.

These activities included sharing hundreds of pounds of locally-grown food with those in need, launching a program to build gardens and train novice food gardeners, and providing free educational workshops.

It will still be a couple of years before apples and most other fruits will be harvested from the trees planted in the first orchard in an Evanston public park, but the group plans to celebrate how far the orchard has come.

The Orchard Fest will include Farmer's Market-sourced apples and other fruits, live music, games and food. Families, friends and neighbors are all invited to explore the orchard and discover what's growing, listen to some music, and help envision the orchard's future growth.

Eggleston Anniversary Orchard, located across from the Evanston Ecology Center at Bridge Street and McCormick Blvd., was originally envisioned by the Northwestern University Brady Scholars in 2013, and embraced and expanded by Edible Evanston in 2014 and 2015.

It now contains more than 80 fruit and nut trees including apples, plums, pears, Asian pears, peaches, and hazelnuts, and more than 30 raspberry bushes. Edible Evanston also created a naturalized area, focusing on Illinois native plants, near the western section of the orchard.

Other initiatives from the group focus on sharing with those in need and helping new gardeners. Edible Evanston has an innovative solution for surplus produce grown right here in our city. Sometimes gardeners grow a little (or a lot) more food than they know what to do with, so in 2012 the group began collecting produce grown in Evanston and distributing it to those in need through two partner food pantries.

Edible Evanston has just wrapped up 2015 collections at four community gardens through the city. In North Evanston, at McCormick Community Gardens and Twiggs Community Gardens, produce collected is delivered each Saturday during the growing season to the Hillside Food Pantry on Crawford Avenue. The group delivered to the pantry more than 27 varieties of locally grown vegetables and herbs, ranging from the obvious, like 147 bunches of Swiss chard, kale and other greens as well as more than 100

tomatoes, to the less expected, like a couple of pints of Tomatillos and 64 bunches of herbs.)

Faith Albano, Hillside Pantry's Coordinator of Food Distribution and Food Rescue, says, "We are so thankful to Edible Evanston for the fresh produce! It helps provide food to people who don't normally get fresh produce."

Edible Evanston is still tallying results for pickup points in South Evanston at James Park and Elks Park, which serve The Harvest Pantry on Howard Street.

A grant from the Evanston Community Foundation is allowing Edible Evanston to build gardens for those who need help growing food. Through the New Gardeners program, launched this July, volunteers built and planted raised bed gardens at six homes in August and one school this month.

Each gardener is assigned a mentor and receives free educational workshops and free seeds. Residents help build their garden and are responsible for its care. New gardeners who are able, pay what they can for materials, and those seeking financial assistance are encouraged to apply. Applications are available at edibleevanston.org for spring 2016 gardens and are due by Feb. 1.

Edible Evanston, an outgrowth of Evanston 150 Anniversary's Ten Big Ideas, supports local food-growing and sharing and holds educational workshops to assist and encourage growing food in Evanston.