

## **Senior Gleaners of San Diego County**

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Generic release for newsletters, newspapers

### **Retirees seek fruit donors and volunteers to supply food banks during pandemic**

The Senior Gleaners of San Diego County need fresh fruit donations and volunteers to supply food banks, churches and other groups feeding hungry county residents during the pandemic.

Donating fruit saves residents the work of picking and disposing of extra fruit. Donors receive a receipt for tax deduction purposes. To schedule a crew of Senior Gleaners, call 619-633-9180 or e-mail: [SDGleaners@aol.com](mailto:SDGleaners@aol.com). Visit the Web site at: [www.seniorgleanerssdco.org](http://www.seniorgleanerssdco.org).

Since 1994, Senior Gleaners volunteers aged 55 or more have gleaned tons of produce annually throughout the county. Besides gleaning produce, the group daily collects unsold products donated by grocers.

Along with donations of produce, the organization needs volunteers to assist with picking and hauling. Most gleaners volunteer 3-4 hours one day per week, but there are no required minimum commitments.

All the food is provided at no cost to the San Diego Food Bank and similar organizations. In 2019, the group collected nearly 160,000 pounds of food that would have otherwise been wasted. Volunteers worked almost 5,570 hours—recovering 29 pounds per hour volunteered.

Even though the group distributed nearly 80 tons of food last year, more work is needed, according to Senior Gleaner Board President Barbara Turner. "In our county alone, at least 500,000 tons of food is wasted annually, adding 18 percent to landfill volumes, while 500,000 people live in poverty," she said.

"Rather than compost edible food or dump it in landfills where it creates harmful methane gas, it makes more sense to support groups like gleaners that will get the food to people who need it," Turner said.

Gleaning groups maintain a single Web site listing organizations throughout the county seeking spare produce. Visit [www.sandiegogleaners.org](http://www.sandiegogleaners.org) to find descriptions of each group, contact information and the geographic area each serves. Turner noted that groups listed on the Website work with donors who have only a couple of backyard trees, homeowners with small orchards and farmers with hundreds of trees.

**WHAT'S A GLEANER?** For centuries, gleaners have collected food that would otherwise be wasted to feed the hungry. The term originates from the practice of landowners leaving portions of their fields or crops for the poor to harvest to feed their families.