



# Down to Brass Tacks

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BRASS TACKS INITIATIVE



Tomatoes donated to the Peace Center Food Shelf by local gardeners will help to provide nutritious meals to families facing food insecurity.

## The Transformative Impact of Gardening

Gardeners understand the joy and satisfaction that comes from nurturing a garden and reaping a bountiful harvest. One of the most rewarding aspects of tending to your plants is seeing them produce fresh fruits and vegetables. Beyond the physical and mental health benefits that gardening offers, it can also significantly impact broader societal and environmental issues, such as reducing food insecurity, food waste, and carbon emissions.

### Reducing Food Insecurity

Every gardener faces a point in the season when they have more produce than they can possibly consume. While sharing the excess with neighbors is a great way to prevent waste, donating it to a local food shelf or pantry will ensure it goes to people who really need it.

Rita Goggins, the volunteer coordinator for the Peace Center Food Shelf in New Prague, emphasizes the importance of sourcing food to keep the shelves stocked, as they run on a tight budget. "When we get produce from local gardeners, it creates more room in our budget to purchase nonperishable items like canned food and cereal or personal care items such as body wash and toothbrushes," says Goggins.

Consumers accustomed to donating nonperishable items during food drives often overlook fresh donations of locally grown produce. However, Goggins highlights the importance of ensuring a diverse selection of donated foods and providing fresh, nutritious options to those facing food insecurity. Websites like AmpleHarvest.org facilitate connections between growers and food pantries, ensuring surplus fruits and vegetables reach those in need.

Gardeners can even go one step further and dedicate space specifically for donating. *(continued on page 3)*

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# Plate-To-Garden Event

Saturday, May 10, 2025 | 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

New Prague Farmer's Market  
801 Main Street E, New Prague, MN

## Compost Sale Fundraiser \$5/bag

Compost provided by  
SMSC Organics Recycling Facility



### Thank you to our partners

Innovative Waste Recycling  
Minnesota Composting Council  
SMSC Organics Recycling Facility



**Free**  
**Mother's Day  
Make-and-Take\***  
\*while supplies last

**Free**  
**Register for the  
New Prague Household  
Organics Drop-off Site!**  
Residents of Scott and  
Le Sueur County only.



## JOIN US

The Brass Tacks Initiative is seeking volunteers for the following committees to help us continue our mission to support sustainable practices in the food stream through research, education, and collaboration.



### Marketing

Establishing, maintaining, and growing the visibility of BTI. Helps promote our programs, products, and services.

### Development

Helps BTI achieve its mission by developing new resources and funding opportunities for the organization.

### Outreach/Education

Plans and implements educational events that inform and engage communities on sustainability in the food system.

For more information visit our website [www.thebrasstacks.org/volunteer](http://www.thebrasstacks.org/volunteer)  
or email [Rachel@thebrasstacks.org](mailto:Rachel@thebrasstacks.org)

## The Transformative Impact of Gardening

*Continued from page 1.*

"I often tell people to plant what their family will eat plus one extra row or one extra plant for the Peace Center," says Goggins. "This way, they don't grow too much and create a lot of extra work for themselves."

### Reducing Food Waste

Consumers often purchase more food than they can eat, leading to significant waste. Approximately 40% of the food supply in the United States is wasted at the consumer and retail levels, much of which is attributed to overbuying. However, this statistic does not account for the food wasted during harvesting, processing, or transportation before it reaches consumers. The longer food has to travel, the greater the likelihood it will spoil. Additionally, food is often harvested before it reaches its peak ripeness, resulting in a loss of nutrients that it would have absorbed if given the time to ripen naturally on the vine.

By growing our own fruits and vegetables, we can reduce reliance on store-bought produce, minimizing overbuying and spoilage. This addresses food waste, promotes sustainability in our communities, and strengthens personal connections to the food we consume.

### Reducing Carbon Emissions

In addition to addressing food waste and increasing food security, gardening plays a significant role in environmental sustainability. Cultivating produce locally reduces the carbon footprint of transporting and packaging store-bought goods.

Produce in grocery stores often has to travel long distances to reach consumers. For example, a quick scan of the produce section in a typical Minnesota grocery store will reveal sweet peppers and green onions from Mexico, cauliflower and carrots from California, and potatoes from Idaho. Some items traveled 2,000 or more miles before reaching the grocery store shelves. Additionally, most of these products come with packaging to make them easier to transport, and this packaging is



*A young gardener collects tomatoes from her family's garden. These plants will provide her family with a steady supply of fresh vegetables throughout the growing season. This practice not only saves money but also contributes to reducing food waste and carbon emissions.*

often made of plastic that is challenging to recycle, leading to it ending up in landfills. By growing your own produce, you can reduce carbon emissions and eliminate the need for packaging altogether.

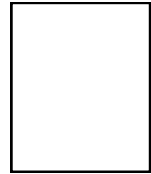
Reflecting on gardening's vast impact, it becomes evident that its benefits extend far beyond the boundaries of our own backyards. Whether it's combating food insecurity, curbing food waste, or reducing carbon emissions, tending to a garden offers transformative effects for both individuals and communities.

### Make a Contribution and help us continue to support a sustainable food stream!!

Your contribution of any size helps us provide free and low-cost programs to families, small businesses, and other organizations.

Scan the code or visit [www.thebrasstacks.org](http://www.thebrasstacks.org) to make a donation today!





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## ***About BTI***

The Brass Tacks Initiative is a 501c3 nonprofit founded on a mission to support sustainability in the food stream through research, education, and collaboration.

Our name comes from the phrase "let's get down to brass tacks." The phrase means to address the most important facts of a project or problem. The fact is food waste is a problem with environmental, economic, and social impacts. We believe the only way to make an impact on food waste is to **research** best practices and new methods of recycling, **collaborate** with the companies who are generating waste to find alternatives to the landfill, and make sure that current and future leaders are equipped with the **education** needed to make sustainable impacts in their community.

*For more information about BTI visit our website [www.thebrasstacks.org](http://www.thebrasstacks.org) or contact us via email at [info@thebrasstacks.org](mailto:info@thebrasstacks.org).*