

INFORMATION FOR LAND- SHARERS



General Info

Land-sharers are at the heart of our urban CSA program – supplying us with the land on which we plant and grow our vegetables. But, being a land-sharer is more than just providing access to fertile land. It has a number of other important facets:

- It means making a commitment to you and your family's health through the intake of fresh, healthy veggies.
- It means a commitment to your community by making it a stronger and more vibrant place to live.
- It means committing to the environment by reducing the distance food has to travel from field to plate.
- Most importantly, it means making a commitment to fresh, affordable produce and rediscovering the flavour of freshly picked veggies.

Why Should I Donate My Yard?

There are many motivating factors for people to sign up and participate in our program. Besides the addition of fresh, locally grown produce to your diet, it is a chance to join the local food movement and do something positive for your community. Here are just a few reasons why people choose to share their backyards with us:

- Reconnect with where your food comes from, who is growing it and how it is grown
- Learn how to garden and grow your own food
- Reduce time spent in caring for your property
- Get your kids outside, active and engaged in hands-on learning
- Show off your garden to guests
- Share gardening stories and recipes while bonding with your neighbours
- Get priority access to our workshops and in-garden tutorials
- Learn how to eat with the seasons

What's Involved

Land-sharers open up their backyards to our team of dedicated volunteers to convert into a beautiful and productive vegetable garden. In general, we look for flat, open and sunny spaces of at least 500 square feet. But we're not just limited to 500 square feet - the larger and sunnier the yard is, the more we can grow and the greater the impact we can have from our program. While most people choose to open up their backyard for us to work in, we can convert front yards into vegetable gardens too! Check out some pictures here ([link to Flickr page and album on front yards](#)).

One of the requirements we expect from our land-sharers is that they provide access to an outdoor hose so that our team can ensure the plants get adequate water throughout the growing season. During especially hot and dry periods, we may ask you to water the garden once per week to prevent the plants from drying out. Meanwhile, our team of volunteers will

be tending to your garden twice per week. As a land-sharer, you and your family members are invited to help out as your schedule allows.

As a participant in our program, one of the greatest benefits is the produce that we share with you, grown on all of the "farms" in your neighbourhood. Every Sunday evening starting in late May, our team of dedicated volunteers will come and harvest the mature veggies from your garden and put together a fresh bundle of produce for you to pick up at a designated area - usually one of our backyard farms.

Participation Costs

Starting in 2012, we are asking all new land-sharers to make a financial contribution to our organization. There is no minimum and no maximum amount. The reasons for implementing this policy are as follows:

1. To support the ongoing initiatives of YUF CSA

As a non-profit organization, we rely on you and our shareholders to support us in our CSA program. While we get by with minimal operating costs, there are still many hard costs, like seeds and tools, which are essential to our program. We also believe that to fully thrive as an organization, we need the support of our community and from those who believe in the value of what we are providing.

2. To invest in your garden and property

To ensure strong growth of our gardens, we add organic matter such as well rotted manure and worm castings to the soil to build up its fertility, which in turn supports the strong growth of our veggies. We also invest in equipment like hoses, sprinklers and garden tools to maximize the efficiency of your garden.

3. To support your community and the environment

Studies have shown that vegetable gardens improve the natural environment we live in by lowering our carbon footprint, lessening the heat-island effect in cities, improving air quality and reducing rainwater runoff. When you invest in YUF CSA, you are investing in the community and strengthening the local economy. Rather than lining the pockets of supermarket shareholders, you are providing youth with an opportunity to put your land to good use and teach others how to grow food. You are inspiring your family and neighbours to start their own veggie gardens and to use the money they save on other local food sources such as farmers' markets.

4. To benefit from the value of the produce you receive

Our CSA program lasts approximately 18 weeks, with each week providing a different assortment of veggies that change with the seasons. We select each variety (many of which are heirloom and less common varieties) for taste, production and quality. Many of these varieties cannot be found at your local grocery store or even at farmers' markets.

Timeline of Activities

Starting in April, we begin the process of preparing the gardens for the upcoming growing season. This includes double digging of new garden beds, direct seeding of early season plantings such as radishes, arugula, peas and spinach, and setting up garden structures like trellises and wigwams.

In late May and early June, the crops in our CSA program are ready to be harvested and the first Sunday evening pickup occurs. The veggies are harvested and distributed for an average of 18 weeks until early October.

In the fall, we clean up the beds, plant garlic for next year's growing season and let the gardens rest over the cold winter months.

Where We are Looking for Land

We are currently looking for new land-sharers in the following neighbourhoods:

- Lawrence Park North (between Lawrence Ave W and Brooke Ave, and Yonge St and Avenue Rd)
- Wychwood (between Oakwood Ave and Humewood Dr, and St. Clair Ave W and Vaughan Rd)
- Riverdale/East York (between Broadview Ave and Coxwell Ave, and Gerrard St E and O'Connor Dr)

Read What Previous Land-Sharers Have to Say

“Having just moved into my new house in the East End of Toronto but not having the time and commitment to attend to a vegetable garden, this idea immediately appealed to me. I always wanted to have my own vegetable garden, but with my irregular work I couldn't commit to it throughout the entire season. Since that spring, I developed a really great relationship with Young Urban Farmers CSA. My garden was well taken care of by their volunteers, fruits started to grow and I received a basket of the local garden's harvest every week.”

- Irene Vandertop

“In 2009, upon learning about YUF CSA and their program to grow community food sheds, we were fortunate to become involved and “donate” our backyard to the project. Immediately after contacting them, Chris and Elaine came to our house and presented a professional and dedicated business plan that saw our backyard turn into a fresh, sustainable and delicious garden. From day one, the volunteers and the YUF CSA team have been respectful and hard-working individuals... We couldn't be happier with how things turned out last summer - our backyard is now a garden and not wasted space, and every week we got the pleasure of enjoying fresh fruit and vegetables.”

- Tim and Natalia Lampman

“As well as having a tasty harvest, we enjoyed having members of YUF CSA in our backyard. Our two children, 9 and 11, could help with the gardening and understand how various vegetables grow, how they spread and fight or succumb to pests and diseases.”

- Sarah Raymond

How Do I Sign Up?

If you are interested in sharing your land with us this year, or in the future, please fill out our contact form below. Alternatively, you can contact Chris at 416-238-5715 or chris@yufcsa.com. For all interested participants in our target areas, we typically arrange for an in-person consultation to assess the conditions of your yard and to provide you with more information about our program.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. I have a shady yard and/or lots of trees, can I still participate?

A. Unfortunately adequate sunlight is one of the main contributors to a successful garden. Only fungi and a few edibles grow in shady yards and among trees and even then these generally take too much time and/or effort to maintain to be suitable for our program.

Q. I'm concerned about how my garden is going to look throughout the growing season. How are the gardens usually maintained?

A. Our team of volunteers come twice per week to tend to the garden. During that time, our main focus is on production and growing food. We do include weeding and pruning to make the gardens more visually appealing as far as our time constraints allow, though we know that having a weed-free garden is every gardener's dream. The appearance of the gardens will change over time, especially as the plants grow and develop. In the late summer and fall, the plants are quite large and some of their leaves may turn brown and start to die off.

Q. Do I have to donate my entire yard and have it turned into a garden?

A. No, however we do have a minimum requirement of 500 sq ft for all of our gardens.

Q. Do you use any chemical pesticides, herbicides, or other unnatural products in the gardens?

A. No. We follow organic farming principles in all our gardens and use natural remedies to keep bugs/pests at bay.