

Monthly Message: How local growing nourishes Shelburne

At the Shelburne Food Bank, we see every day how much fresh food matters.

While non-perishable items help us keep the shelves stocked, it's the fresh produce, like the carrots, greens, apples, and seasonal vegetables, that often make the biggest difference to the families we support. It's also the hardest to consistently provide. Fresh food depends on donations, timing, and availability, and there are many weeks when we simply don't have enough.

That's why local growing efforts mean so much to us.

In Shelburne, we are fortunate to have strong community support behind this idea. The Shelburne Community Garden, located in Fiddle Park, is one example of how people come together to grow food not just for themselves, but for others. The garden is maintained by the Shelburne Horticultural Society, whose volunteers put in the time and care to keep it running throughout the season.

It's not just about gardening, but about neighbours sharing time and effort to grow something that benefits the whole community. Fresh food doesn't always come from large systems; sometimes it comes from a backyard garden, a shared growing space, a few pots on a balcony, or a neighbour who just simply has more than they need and decides to share it. Small-scale growing may not seem like much on its own, but when it happens across a community, the impact becomes much larger.

Some members of the community regularly bring in fresh produce, and it always makes a difference. Wayne Hannon, a member of the Shelburne Horticultural Society, has even created a larger garden at his home in Melancthon and donates what he grows. Efforts like this go a long way in helping us provide fresh options to the families we serve.

There is something powerful about food grown and shared locally. It carries a different kind of value. It represents time, care and attention. It is someone deciding to plant extra seeds, knowing they could be helping someone else.

We see the impact of that generosity when fresh produce is donated to the Food Bank. A bag of freshly picked vegetables can change what a family can cook that week. Fresh herbs can turn a simple meal into something even more comforting. Even small amounts help us offer a better variety and are always received with appreciation.

But what stands out most is how accessible this kind of impact really is.

You don't need a large space or experience to contribute. A small patch of soil, a few containers or even a single planter can grow more than most people expect. Leafy greens, tomatoes, beans, and herbs can all thrive in small spaces with basic care and while not every harvest will be large, even small amounts can make a difference when shared.

We also continue to be encouraged by how often this effort becomes shared. Neighbours exchange extra vegetables. Families planting a little more than they need. First-time gardeners trying something new with intention. These are everyday acts of care that quietly strengthen the community.

There are also simple ways to get more directly involved. Those interested in volunteering with the Shelburne Community Garden can contact Brad Reid at naturalair@brighterfuture-homes.co through the Shelburne Horticultural Society. Even a few hours of time can help maintain a space that gives back to so many.

At the Food Bank, we are always grateful for any donation, but fresh produce carries a unique kind of impact. It helps us better support the nutritional needs of the people we serve, and reflect the kind of community we are fortunate to be a part of! Initiatives like ?Grow 2 Give? are great ways to set aside a small portion of what you grow specifically for donation (more information can be found on the Shelburne website).

As we move through another growing season, we are reminded that food security is not just about large donations. It is also about connection. It is about what happens when people decide to grow a little extra, share a little more, or think beyond their household.

We are thankful for everyone who contributes to that effort, whether through gardening, sharing produce or simply supporting the Food Bank in whatever way they can. It all adds up. And together, those small actions help ensure that fresh food continues to reach the tables of those who need it most.