



Real Life Fruit Orchard and Vegetable Garden Volunteer Opportunities - 2017 Season

If you harbor a passion for serving outdoors, our Real Life Fruit Orchard and Vegetable Garden will wow you.

Our orchard started in 2011 and is housed on 3 acres at Dogwood Church in Tyrone. Planted in the orchard are 140 apple trees, 55 peach trees, 300 blueberry bushes, 135 blackberry vines, 35 grape vines, and more. In 2015, we started a half acre vegetable garden producing fresh tomatoes, watermelons, bell peppers, squash, zucchini, corn and jalapeno peppers in the summer and collards, turnips, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, radishes and kale in the winter. All produce is distributed seasonally to the families of the Real Life Center. Since fresh fruits and vegetables are hard to come by on a limited budget, the orchard and garden have been a huge blessing.

Below is a brief description of what it looks like to serve on a team in our Orchard or Garden. The typical volunteer will give approximately 15 hours serving on a team. You do not need to have any experience to make an impact. Your team leaders and local experts will teach you what to do. We do not expect every volunteer to attend every team session. We know that work, vacations and life in general may stand in the way. What we do ask is that you make it a priority to attend most of your team events.

□ Peach Team

The season begins in February with pruning. Last year we spent 3 sessions pruning and each session lasted 4 hours. This team meets every 3 weeks for one hour on Saturday mornings from April 1 until the harvest begins in late June. In June and July, they harvest on Tuesday evenings and Saturday mornings. A typical harvest session takes about one hour. During the harvest season, volunteers are asked to sign up for Tuesday evenings or Saturday mornings. We do not expect you to serve twice every week. The season usually ends in early August.

□ Apple Team

The season begins in February with pruning. Last year we spent 1 session pruning and it lasted 2-3 hours. The most important project this team accomplishes is thinning the small apples off the trees right after they set fruit in the spring. Each volunteer will use scissors and cut off 90% of the apples on a tree. This thinning session will take approximately 2-3 hours if we have a good turnout. After thinning, this team meets every 3 weeks for one hour on Saturday mornings from April 1 until the harvest begins in September. September through November, they harvest on Saturday mornings. A typical harvest session takes about one hour.

□ Grounds Crew Team

Each volunteer is on a 7 to 9 week rotation for mowing the grass in the orchard. It typically takes 2-3 hours of mowing. This team also pitches in time to bush hog the church property with our tractor. Volunteers may also use our weed eater and spray tank to eliminate weeds.

□ Grape Team

This team begins the year by pruning the grape vines in January. This can take 3-5 hours depending on how many people participate. You will spend most of your time serving by harvesting grapes. The season begins in August and concludes in late October. This team picks grapes twice per week and the team prefers you to commit to a weekday session or a Saturday morning session.

□ Blackberry Team

This team spends approximately one hour per week training the canes on the trellis. Most of your time serving on this team will take place from mid-July through mid-October. This team does not harvest blackberries as it is part of the U-Pick berries we open to the public.

□ Blueberry Team

This team meets approximately every 3 weeks to fertilize or weed the berry patch for less than one hour. They also spend a few hours twice each summer pruning the blueberry plants.

□ Orchard Host Team

This team facilitates the U-Pick berry harvest in June and July. The U-Pick patch is open on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday from 9-11 am. We are looking for volunteers to commit to serve on a particular day of the week. This team is important because you are the face of the orchard, the church and the Real Life Center with the guests. This team gives out buckets and instructs the guests where to pick, and coordinates packaging the fruit in berry containers.

□ Fig/Pomegranate Team

We hope to have a nice crop of figs this year. This team will pick figs once per week and package them in berry containers. Harvest begins in late summer and extends for 4-6 weeks.

□ Real Life Garden Team

This team will oversee the $\frac{1}{4}$ acre vegetable garden for The Real Life Center. We plan to grow: tomatoes, corn, squash, cucumbers, greens, cantaloupe and possibly other vegetables. At this point, we do not have any specifics. Our goal would be that the average volunteer would spend approximately 15 hours per year. In general, the harvest begins in July and runs through August. In August, a fall garden can be planted. We are also looking for someone to lead this team who has good organizational skills and is energized by serving others. You do not need to have gardening experience as we are going to connect this team with local experts that will guide you through the season.

□ Mobile Garden Installation – Tractor Team

We have purchased all the equipment to use our tractor to install vegetable gardens for churches and individuals that are interested in giving part or all of their harvest to local food banks. This team will not take care of vegetable gardens. They will use our tractor and equipment to work the soil in preparation for planting. Our goal is to install 2-4 gardens this spring.

If interested in volunteering, please contact Amanda Hanna for additional information and questions about volunteering in the Real Life Orchard or Real Life Garden. Her contact information is: Amanda Hanna, Volunteer Coordinator Ahanna@RealLifeCenter.org. You may also write to the Real Life Center at rlc@RealLifeCenter.org.

We appreciate you!

Your Orchard and Garden Team