



## Master Gardener Volunteers of Cobb County Plant a Row Project



**Project Location:** 2382 Pine Mountain Road, Kennesaw, GA 30152

**Project workday:** Wednesday, 9 a.m. (Times may vary during summer months.)

**Project Chair:** Susan Dawsey (770-426-7479) **Co-chair:** Amy Whitney (770-590-0813)

In early 1999 the Master Gardener Volunteers of Cobb County officially changed the name of their Demonstration Vegetable Garden to the MGVOCC Plant a Row for the Hungry project. Thus, MG volunteers joined the burgeoning nationwide effort of local community volunteers who, under the direction of the nonprofit Garden Writers Association of America, grow and donate produce to local food banks, soup kitchens and service organizations, in order to help feed America's hungry.

In 2006 the MGVOCC relocated the Plant a Row project from its original site on County Services Road to the city of Kennesaw's 13-acre Smith-Gilbert Arboretum, formerly a private property and now under development as a public garden. With access to the former estate's irrigation system and plant nursery, the MG Plant a Row gardeners welcomed the opportunity to increase their community assistance to people in need.

Each year MG volunteers, who garden organically, applying only 10-10-10 fertilizer, choose vegetable varieties, based on research, experience and expert opinion. Practicing what they preach, the PAR gardeners also follow soil test recommendations and maintain records of crop rotation, insect problems and individual crop yields.

During the busy growing season, volunteers harvest ripe tomatoes, corn, beans, potatoes, okra, peppers, cucumbers, squash, melons, and basil before bagging, weighing and delivering the fresh produce to the Marietta food bank of Cobb County's Center for Family Resources, for distribution to its clients. In 2007 MGVOCC donated over one ton of vegetables and melons, bringing the project's total for its first 10 years to almost six tons of fresh produce.

The harvest begins with white potatoes in June and ends with sweet potatoes in mid-October. After the volunteers clear out the dead plants, they put the garden to bed for the winter and go home. In spring the MGVOCC repeat the cycle as mulch goes down and plants go in.

Susan Dawsey, project chairperson since 2000, echoes the sentiments of the other volunteers when she says, "I love the idea of giving fresh vegetables to people to make a difference in their diets and lives." Helping people locally is a big incentive for these gardeners, and new volunteers are always welcome. "This is a BIG garden!" says Susan.



*The mission of the MGVOCC is to advance the horticultural education and practices of its members and to promote the knowledge of and interest in gardening to the members and to the public.*

For more information contact Carolyn Gentry, Master Gardener Coordinator at the Cobb Extension. Phone: 770-528-4070