

Elgin Gleaners Gleaner and Gleaner Leader Information

What is Elgin Gleaners? We are a community group in Elgin St. Thomas that connects underused fruit trees with individuals in need. Many people in Elgin St. Thomas own fruit trees, but do not want or need all the fruit that they produce. At the same time, there are individuals and families in Elgin St. Thomas that struggle to afford fresh fruit. Volunteers pick fruit from trees on interested homeowners' properties and the harvest is split 3 ways: 1/3 is offered to the homeowners, 1/3 is offered to the volunteers, and the remaining 1/3 is donated to community groups (such as the Good Food Box, community meals programs, and school nutrition programs).

Goals for this project:

- Increase access to fresh, local produce for those in need
- Increase feelings of connectedness to the community by donating fruit to those in need
- Increase volunteers' skills and knowledge related to properly picking fruit
- Increase homeowners' skills and knowledge related to caring for their fruit trees
- Reduce food waste

Gleaner role:

Success depends upon what volunteers bring to this community group. The ability to harvest fruit can be taught. What we need are volunteers who are committed and excited to be a part of this project! As a volunteer you'll work with others to pick fruit on homeowners' properties. With your enthusiasm, professionalism, and courtesy everyone will benefit.

As a gleaner, you will be responsible for:

- Working with homeowners, other volunteer Gleaners, and the Gleaner Coordinator
- Picking fruit on homeowner properties
- Possibly transporting the necessary equipment needed on pick days
- Possibly transporting the donated fruit to the specified community group
- Making sure everything runs smoothly, for example:
 - Notifying the Gleaner Leader if you will be absent
 - Leaving the space as tidy as when you arrived
 - Being respectful of other volunteers, homeowners, and property
 - Maintaining your own personal safety
 - Contributing to a positive team environment

Benefits of participating:

- Providing fresh fruit to community groups and programs
- Being active in your community and developing social connections with others
- Receiving a portion of the fruit picked
- Experience working with fruit trees
- Possible leadership experience

Things to bring with you when you come to pick fruit:

- Appropriate sun protection such as sunscreen and protective clothing (i.e. hat, clothing to cover your arms and legs, etc.)
- Eye protection (i.e. sunglasses)
- Closed-toed, non-slip shoes to protect your feet.
- Water for drinking, especially if it's a hot day
- Medication if you're allergic to bee or wasp stings
- Containers for bringing your share of fruit home such as boxes or durable bags
- The Gleaning Recording Sheet and pen (Gleaner Leaders only)
- A thank-you card for the homeowner (Gleaner Leaders only)
- The required equipment (i.e. baskets, pruning shears, picker poles, etc.)

Documents to review:

- Orchard Ladder Safety Sheet
- Harvesting Fruit Information Sheet
- Gleaning Recording Sheet

Safety checklist for when you arrive at a pick:

- Check in with the Gleaner Leader and await instructions from them.
 - Notify the Gleaner Leader of any pertinent health information (e.g. allergies)
- Be mindful if the property has any pets outside
- Look for environmental hazards such as:
 - Low-hanging power lines
 - Bee or wasp nests
 - Fallen debris that you could trip on
 - Terrain drop-offs, holes, slopes
- Clear the area surrounding the tree of any hazards. Keep equipment to the side while working

Liability:

All Gleaners must sign a waiver form before beginning to pick. Elgin Gleaners and homeowners are not responsible for personal injury. Please be safe while you work.

Gleaner Leader procedure:

Setting up:

- Arrive 5 minutes before the pick is supposed to begin. Introduce yourself to the homeowner if they are home.
 - If they have pets, ask that they be kept inside during the pick
 - Find out if there are any safety hazards
 - Find out if they want a share of the fruit and if they have containers for it
 - Find out if they want fallen fruit to be disposed of or left to compost around the tree
- Ensure all volunteers check-in with you
- Ensure Gleaners have submitted signed waivers. If not, have Gleaners sign waivers and submit these to the Gleaner Coordinator
- Clear the picking area of any debris or hazards
- With the volunteers help, bring the equipment to the picking site
- Make sure volunteers know what they are doing. Monitor them during the pick to ensure that they work safely
- Fill out the Gleaning Recording Sheet

After the pick:

- Weigh the fruit with the scale on a flat, hard surface
- Fill out the rest of the Gleaning Recording Sheet and submit it to the Gleaner Coordinator
- Divide the fruit into 3 shares: 1/3 for the homeowner, 1/3 for the volunteers, and 1/3 for the specified community program.
- Put all the equipment away
- Leave the yard as tidy as when you arrived
- Leave a 1/3 share of the fruit with the homeowner
- Take the donated fruit to the assigned food program or store overnight to be delivered the next day. Contact the Gleaner Coordinator within 3 business days of the pick to provide information from the Gleaning Recording Sheet.



ELGIN Gleaners

Sorting fruit:

Type	Where does it go?	Weigh for final tally?
On the ground when you arrived	Disposal	No
Damaged fruit (bruised, split, etc.)	Volunteers or disposal	No
Windfall (fell on ground during picking)	Volunteers or disposal	Yes
Good fruit	Shared between homeowner, volunteers, and food programs	Yes

*Disposal can be in a garbage, compost, or yard waste bags

Gleaner Leader – Other important details:

- If it's raining or bad weather, cancel the pick. Work with the Gleaner Coordinator to find an alternate time. Contact the other volunteer Gleaners and homeowner to reschedule.
- Try to sort the fruit into boxes based upon level of ripeness (i.e. place ripe fruit in one box, and less ripe fruit in another box)

Elgin Gleaners Fruit Tree Maintenance and Harvesting Fruit Information

Properly caring for fruit trees will help increase the amount, quality, and size of fruit produced each year. This information sheet includes some general guidelines on how to properly care for fruit trees and tips for harvesting fruit.

How to properly care for fruit trees:

Proper pruning is needed to stimulate growth of the tree and to help enough light to reach the buds. This will help to produce more fruit. However, too much pruning can decrease the amount of buds that form and delay early fruit production. The ideal time to prune fruit trees is when the trees are dormant, in the winter and early spring. However, proper pruning techniques can be used in the summer months, if pruning during the dormant seasons is not possible. Normal summer pruning should occur in late July or August.

Pruning techniques:

- Prune the trees lightly to create some pockets or gaps. This will help as much light to reach the buds as possible.
- Long leafy parts of the tree should be cut back in August to stimulate tree growth. A good rule of thumb is to cut back branches that are over 1-foot-long without many buds.
- Always know where your hands are when pruning trees to maintain your safety. Hold the top of the branch with one hand and cut at the base of the branch.
- Make sharp, clean cuts to expose a wound of the smallest diameter. The cut should be flush with the branch that is left to grow.
- All branches can have buds pointed in different directions. To help new bud growth away from the centre of the tree, make cuts above buds that are aimed outward.
- Avoid cutting shorter branches that are full of buds. These buds will become next year's fruit.
- Avoid cutting the main upright stem on the top of the tree, called the "leader". This is needed to help the tree grow upwards.
- If you used the pruning shears on a tree that was diseased, do not use them again on another tree before they have been sanitized. This can spread the disease to other trees and kill the trees.

How to properly harvest fruit:

When harvesting fruit, start from the bottom of the tree and work your way up. This will prevent any fruit from falling onto other fruit on the tree and bruising or damaging it. When harvesting fruit, hold on to it gently, like an egg, to prevent bruising. A fruit picker pole can be used for fruit that is hard to reach by hand. When safe, a ladder can be used if the fruit picker poles do not reach the fruit.

Harvesting techniques:

- Before harvesting fruit, lay out a tarp at the base of the tree. This will prevent any falling fruit from touching the ground.
- Be very careful not to damage the branch that the fruit is attached. This is where next year's fruit will come from.
- To harvest the fruit, practice "eye to the sky": gently hold the fruit from the bottom (the "eye") and roll upwards and twist off the branch.
- Try to pick fruit with the stem attached. This will increase the shelf life of the fruit.
- Be careful not to drop or damage fruit. Bruised or opened fruit will rot quickly and cause the other fruits to ripen faster and rot.
- To prevent bruising or damaging the fruit, gently lay fruit into boxes. Be careful not to overfill the boxes.
- Don't shake trees to harvest fruit. This could damage the tree, does not look professional, and the fruit that touches the ground is at risk of E. coli contamination.
- Fruit that is wormy, split, or damaged should not be donated or given to the homeowner. It may be taken by volunteers or composted.

Tips for harvesting apples:

- Apples may be ready from July-October. However, most varieties are ready between September-October.
- An apple is ready for picking when the colour of the skin has changed from green to the usual colour of that variety of apples (i.e. from green to red, green to yellow, or green to red with green).
- The fruit should detach easily from the tree.

Tips for harvesting cherries:

- Cherries may be ready for picking in June-July
- Cherries should be picked when the fruit is firm, juicy, and brightly coloured.
- Cherries should easily separate from the tree when plucked

- Keep cherries dry and discard any crushed fruit. Their juice can spoil the other fruit around them during storage.

Tips for harvesting peaches:

- Peach may be ready for picking in August-September
- Peaches should be picked when firm, have a yellow collar at the stem of the fruit, and have a smooth skin
- Avoid picking peaches when the collar is still green tinged

Tips for harvesting pears:

- Pears may be ready from August-October
- Unlike most other fruits, pears don't ripen well on the tree. They should be picked when the fruit is firm. If they are picked when the fruit feels soft, they will be soft and mushy in the centre.

Tips for harvesting plums:

- Plums may be ready in late July-October
- Plums should be picked when the skin of the fruit has changed to the usual colour for that variety:
 - Yellow plums are usually ready from July-August
 - Red plums are usually ready from August-September
 - Purple and blue plums are available until late October
- Plums should be picked when the fruit is slightly firm and under-ripe
- Many plums will have a white powdery coating when they are ripe. This coating is harmless.

Fruit that falls during a pick:

- Important: fruit that touches the ground (windfall) is at risk of E. coli contamination. This can make people very ill.
- Fruit that is found on the ground when arriving should be composted or thrown away
- Fruit that falls while picking should not be donated or given to the homeowner. Volunteers may take it at their own risk.

Elgin Gleaners Orchard Ladder Safety

When used properly, ladders are very helpful tools for picking fruit. Like any tool, it is important to respect the dangers of using ladders and work safely.

Setting up:

A tripod orchard ladder is designed for use on soft, uneven ground. It is not used as a general purpose ladder on hard, smooth surfaces. To be used safely, the feet of the ladder and tripod pole must stick slightly into the ground.

Injuries can occur while using a ladder. It is important that the ladder be inspected every time before being used.

Inspection checklist:

- Rivets, joints, fastenings are in place and secure
- Steps are in place and secure
- Steps are free of dents, bends, and damage
- Ladder is free of rust, grease, or oil
- Tripod leg is intact, free of rust and cracks, and not able to bend
- Footplate is free of cracks and rust

Do not use a ladder that is damaged or unsafe in any way. Report any safety issues or damage to the Gleaner Coordinator as soon as possible. If a ladder falls, always inspect it before using it again.

Environment:

- Be aware of overhead dangers such as electrical lines and tripping hazards such as holes, roots, erosion, drop-offs, and fallen branches
- Watch out for bee or wasp nests
- Keep equipment and tools out of the way
- Clean up the area around the tree

Positioning:

- Never use the ladder on a hard surface; use an A-Frame ladder in this instance
- Place the ladder close to the tree and firmly into the ground to prevent collapsing, slipping, moving, or falling
- Ladders placed on sloped ground must have the tripod leg placed uphill
- Never balance the ladder against a branch

Climbing and using:

- Never climb the tree directly; always use a ladder if the fruit cannot be reached by hand or through use of a fruit picker pole
- Ensure that only one person is on a ladder at a time
- Have a second person at the base of the ladder, keeping it steady
- Wear closed-toed shoes with non-slip soles
- Have three-points of contact with the ladder at all times (two feet and one hand or two hands and one foot)
- Climb the ladder with both hands on the sides of the ladder. To keep your hands clean from dirt, do not place hands on the foot grips.
- Pass equipment straight up and down the ladder and do not extend below knee level
- Do not stand on the ladder's top three steps
- Do not overreach past ladder side rails; move the ladder to reach new areas on the tree
- Always face the ladder while using it

Transporting:

- Ideally, have two people carry the ladder
- Secure the tripod leg so that it doesn't swing out while carrying the ladder
- Carry the ladder in the horizontal position by placing the arm through the ladder and resting the side rail on your shoulder
- Watch out for other people and objects while carrying the ladder

Common injuries:

- Sprains and strains from overreaching while picking and carrying the ladder improperly
- Fractures, concussions, and dislocations from a fall
- Most falls occur at the top of ladder and are due to slippery steps, unstable ladders, and not maintaining proper contact with the ladder

What to do in the event of an injury:

- Inform the Gleaner Coordinator of all injuries as soon as possible

Emergencies:

- Call 911
- If you suspect that someone has a neck or spinal injury, do not move them
- When able, record details in the notes section of the Gleaning Recording Sheet
- Call the Gleaner Coordinator to inform them of the injury

Non-emergencies:

- Seek medical attention if necessary
- When able, record details in the notes section of the Gleaning Recording Sheet
- Call the Gleaner Coordinator to inform them about the injury

Thank you for participating with Elgin Gleaners. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Gleaner Coordinator.

Elgin Gleaners Volunteer Registration Form

Thank you for your interest in Elgin Gleaners! Please submit this form to the Gleaner Coordinator once complete.

Name

Phone number

Email address

Address

Emergency Contact (name)

(relationship to you)

(phone number)

We value diversity. We will be polite, patient and understanding and treat people and others' property with respect. We will aim to ensure that people feel safe and welcome. We will alert the Gleaner Coordinator to any incidents of ill-treatment or injustice that negatively impact a person or group of people in relation to our volunteer role with Elgin Gleaners. We will respect the privacy and confidentiality of each other and of other volunteers and homeowners. We will not disclose information read in documents, heard in conversation with other volunteers or staff or in relation to an incident that involves participants, volunteers, or staff of Elgin Gleaners. We aim to contribute to the goals of Elgin Gleaners.

- Gleaner and Gleaner Leader Information Sheet
- Orchard Ladder Safety Sheet
- Harvesting Fruit Information Sheet
- Professional Standards & Confidentiality
- Waiver of Liability and Release
- I consent to sharing my contact information with Gleaner Leaders and the Gleaner Coordinator as needed to schedule pick days.
- I understand the policies, procedures and expectations as outlined.

Participant name (printed)

Participant signature

WAIVER OF LIABILITY AND RELEASE

Please read the following carefully. Please complete the following to participate in the Elgin Gleaners program. If you have any questions, please have them answered before signing this document.

I, _____, being at least 18 years of age and not being subject to
(PRINT FULL NAME)

any other disability at law, understand that there are some risks and hazards involved in harvesting fruit. I agree to assume all such risks and hazards and bear all costs associated with any injury arising from my participation as a volunteer. The following is a non-exclusive list of some of the risks and hazards that may be encountered while participating in this program: falling from a tree, falling off a ladder, being poked by a tree branch, allergic reaction to an insect bite, having fruit or branches fall on your body, damage to another person's property. Being aware of this, I (the 'Releasor') WAIVE, RELEASE, AND DISCHARGE Elgin Gleaners, YWCA St. Thomas Elgin, and Elgin St. Thomas Public Health (the "Releasees"), other volunteers, and tree owners from any liability should an injury or medical event occur. The Releasees, other volunteers, and registered tree owners ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE for any injury, damage, or loss of any kind suffered by a volunteer during, or as a result of, participation in any program, activity, or event related to Elgin Gleaners.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT, AND I AM AWARE THAT BY SIGNING THIS AGREEMENT I AM WAIVING CERTAIN LEGAL RIGHTS WHICH I MAY HAVE AGAINST THE RELEASEE(S).

Participant name (printed) _____

Participant signature _____

Date _____

Witness name (printed) _____

Witness signature _____