



The Fentress Giving Garden

A collaborative, interdenominational food ministry
Issue 2026-1, May 2026

Your scribe enjoyed a long awaited and lengthy winter break. Your garden did not.

There are crops growing every day of the year in the Fentress Giving Garden, and this year is a good one already. You'll see on page four we harvested over 1,800 pounds of cabbage, collards, carrots, and kale, and turnips. Most of those crops were well into development at the turn of the year. In addition, we've had a bumper crop of beautiful Romaine lettuce this spring. Of course, all that we harvested, we shared with our neighbors in need.



Spring is well underway, and we're rapidly approaching the busiest time of our garden year. Sunday school children planted squash seeds and will be eager to see their plants bear fruit. We are growing potatoes, cucumbers, squash, garlic, onions, sugar snap peas, green beans, lettuce, tomatoes, and peppers at this point. Soon we'll plant eggplant, sweet potatoes and winter squash, and look forward to harvesting what we pray will be a beautiful and nourishing crop. Zinnias, sunflowers, marigolds, and basil are there and, when they bloom, will nourish the soul and help enhance our vegetable crops.

None of this happens by itself. Almost daily, groups of volunteers meet at the garden to attend the various tasks necessary to keep our garden productive and attractive.



People come and go. We said farewell to a stalwart family of volunteers as they move out of the area. Allie, Henry, Lola and baby Adam are proof that all ages are welcome and can be helpful. We appreciate and love them all. Our volunteers mostly come from area churches, but we welcome anyone who wants to experience the joy of participating in a well-organized and operated activity that exists solely to help our neighbors in need. Blue clothing is not required, but it is certainly welcome. We are a casual and comfortable group.



“What is there to be done? You said the crops are already planted, so what remains,” you ask? Well, the crops must be nurtured. They need water, weed control, mulching, pest control, occasional pruning, occasional fertilization, and of course harvesting.



Once harvested, the produce must be distributed to our partner food pantries. When a crop is finished, the land must be prepared for its follow-on crop.



Gardening materials need management. We use leaves and pine straw for mulch, as well as other materials, like mushroom compost, to amend the soil. Each of these requires some amount of management to keep them where they belong, move them to their point of use, and the like.



The garden has a significant amount of infrastructure requiring occasional maintenance. Much of it was recently upgraded, but there are continual



needs for small repairs, changes, or additions. Notably, last year a Scouts America Eagle Project provided steps and a deck in front of our storage shed and a new planter box to grace our entrance lane. We have an additional container with a similar need.



Our irrigation system is substantial, designed and built for versatility, and looks more complex than it is. As crops mature and are replaced, that system needs to be adjusted to properly water the new crops and “fertigate” them when needed using water-borne fertilizer.



Pick any sentence in the paragraphs above and you’ll see we need a variety of talents and interests to make this whole thing work well. If you are not yet a part of us, we’d love to have your involvement. Yes, we need involved volunteers to ensure this garden succeeds, but you, as an individual, are very likely to gain personal blessings, as well. It is enormously satisfying to observe the growth, to hear the birds sing, to admire the harvested produce, to put fresh food in the hands of people who need it, and to make new friends who share a love for this place, God’s grace, this mission, and this opportunity to serve our community.

To learn how you might play a part, please contact Judy Speas (judithspeas@gmail.com) at Centerville Baptist Church, or Janet Grubbs (jdgrubbs72@gmail.com) at Great Bridge United Methodist Church.

If you’re unsure about how you might participate or you just want to learn more about the Fentress Giving Garden, stop by any time you see people present at our location on Centerville Turnpike in Chesapeake. I assure you, someone will welcome you and help you get acquainted with our operation.



Who We Support

We currently support these local faith-based food pantries:

- Agape Food Pantry – Great Bridge United Methodist Church
- Impact Community Food Pantry – True Way Church
- Father Romeo D. Jazmin Food Pantry – Prince of Peace Catholic Church
- House of Blessing – Harvest VA, Assembly of God, via Plant a Row for the Hungry, a Chesapeake Master Gardeners activity.

We Have Harvested this Year

We're off to a great start. Look at the table below to see what we harvested and donated so far. All numbers are harvest weight in pounds:

Vegetable	Jan 1 – 20 May	2026 Total
Cabbage	361	361
Carrots	206	206
Collards	875	875
Kale	174	174
Lettuce	478	478
Peas, Sugar Snap	59	59
Turnips	<u>187</u>	<u>187</u>
Total	2340	2340

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