

Edible Avalon Community Gardens



Edible Avalon is a unique community garden program for residents of Avalon Housing and their neighbors. [Avalon Housing](#) is the largest provider of permanent supportive rental housing for people with extremely low incomes in Washtenaw County, Michigan. The majority of Avalon households include people who were homeless or who have a mental or physical disability. Most rely on food banks to support their diet. Access to fresh, nutritious food is limited.

[Edible Avalon](#) builds permanent raised bed community organic gardens onsite at Avalon properties, provides seeds and tools, installs rain barrels for irrigation, and helps residents plan and plant their garden plots. What makes the program unique is that this beginning is followed by ongoing weekly visits from dedicated volunteers throughout the season who share organic gardening expertise, monitor the garden's health, distribute and collect recipes and information at the garden information kiosk, and organize weekly classes on methods of preparing, using, and preserving the harvest. Classes have included canning, making jam, uses of herbs, and lacto-fermentation. Fieldtrips to the Farmers Market and local CSA's are also planned for 2010.



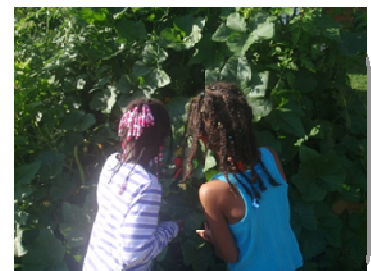
In addition, there is a youth and children's program which includes weekly activities such as building a sunflower fort, tasting herbs, identifying seedlings and vegetables, growing a pizza garden, and creating their own dishes from what is ready in the garden. This summer, the youth program will have a booth at the West Side Farmer's Market where they will be able to sell products from their vegetable and cut flower gardens.

Edible Avalon provides opportunities for participants to develop new skills, increase their time outdoors and social interaction, and take on roles as mentors to new gardeners and leaders in the program. Several participants will themselves be leading classes next year in nutrition and cooking.



Edible Avalon is about much more than gardening. Gardens are deliberately designed to be attractive and long-lasting (most are built of stone), and are placed adjacent to public spaces to maximize the participation of and interaction between neighbors and Avalon tenants, providing them opportunities to come together in a common purpose. Neighborhood organizations, for example child daycare centers, are specifically invited to have plots in the gardens. The gardens and their programs have built a positive impression of Avalon's properties in their communities and garnered numerous compliments from neighboring residents.

In 2009, thirteen new gardens were built, and it is anticipated that we will be constructing 5 additional beds at new sites in 2010.



How YOU can help Edible Avalon!



There are many different ways to get involved and help support Edible Avalon! Please review the list below and see what fits for you. Have an idea or way to help that you don't see listed here? Just email us at the contact info below and we'd happy to chat about it with you!

Become a site volunteer!

Edible Avalon site volunteers are a critical part of the success of the program. Site volunteers adopt a particular garden for a season, helping with planting, tending and harvesting and monitoring the gardens throughout the year for pests and diseases. They also work with the program coordinator to plan and provide additional programming such as arranging classes on cooking or nutrition, or recipe sharing. The Site Volunteers also provide valuable feedback to the program participants on garden needs, techniques and responsibilities.

An extensive knowledge of gardening is *not* required for Site Volunteers, and they are supported by the program coordinator through the season. They are expected to make bi-weekly visits to the garden, and the season runs roughly from April – October.

Participate in building new garden beds!

Currently, Edible Avalon has 6 permanent gardens, and in 2010 we anticipate expanding that with between 2 and 4 new sites. The beds are either constructed from garden stones or wood, and (with a group helping out) can be built in a day.

The build days are led by the program coordinator, working from tried & tested build plans. It is a great activity for groups that want to volunteer together for a day, and be able to see the long term benefits of their hard work when done! New bed construction takes place in April.

Sponsor a garden!

Want to get involved, but don't have the time? You can support Edible Avalon by making a donation (through Avalon Housing), or by sponsoring a garden. Site sponsors are recognized with signs at the garden, as well as listings on our website and annual reports. Either existing or new garden sites can be sponsored. Please contact us for more information.

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