



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

Windy City Harvest

Richard J. Daley College

A Growing Community Enterprise



What is Windy City Harvest?

Windy City Harvest is a social enterprise that provides a nine-month certificate training program and internship in sustainable horticulture and urban agriculture. Students grow fruits and vegetables using organic methods and gain experience in a variety of urban farming and horticulture activities through work placements with other organizations and production sites. The program is offered in partnership with Richard J. Daley College/Arturo Velasquez Institute and accredited by the Illinois Community College Board.

Who participates?

Adults, 18 years and older from the city of Chicago are eligible to participate.

What do the students learn?

Participants acquire hands-on experience with sustainable vegetable production and learn essential business skills, including planning, pricing, sales, and marketing.

Students receive six months of hands-on instruction in greenhouse and outdoor growing practices, followed by a three-month paid internship. New in 2011, the program includes training in aquaponics—a method of growing organic produce and fresh fish year-round using a symbiotic, closed-loop system. After satisfactory completion of the curriculum and training requirements, students achieve certification in sustainable horticulture and urban agriculture. The certificate from the Richard J. Daley College readies participants for employment in the new “green collar” jobs sector.

Windy City Harvest will soon offer additional credit-earning opportunities to graduates and other qualified applicants through mini-certificate courses in areas such as aquaponics, composting, rooftop fruit and vegetable gardening, food safety and preservation, micro farm business development, and native plant gardening.

Where does it take place?

Windy City Harvest participants study at the Richard J. Daley College’s Arturo Velasquez Institute at 2800 South Western Avenue in Chicago, and at other sites. The locations provide year-round greenhouses, fully equipped classrooms, and high-quality outdoor plant production spaces.

What is the future of windy city harvest?

The growing demand by individuals, commercial establishments, and educational and healthcare institutions for locally grown, affordable produce indicates a bright future for Windy City Harvest and its graduates. The future is even more promising, given Mayor Emanuel’s plan to expand healthy food access to all Chicago communities.



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Where is Windy City Harvest produce sold?

- Dill Pickle Food Co-op
- Green Grocer Chicago
- Pilsen Community Market
- Chicago Botanic Garden Farmers' Market
- Edible Alchemy Food Co-op
- Fresh Moves
- Midwest Foods

Who are the Garden's partners in the initiative?

Major funding for Windy City Harvest is provided by an anonymous donor, the Cook County Environmental Control Department, The Helen V. Froehlich Foundation, Leo S. Guthman Fund, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Institute of Museum and Library Services, Polk Bros. Foundation, SARE-Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, and the United States Department of Agriculture NIFA. Additional support is provided by an anonymous donor, the Alvin H. Baum Family Fund, The Brinson Foundation, The Crown Family, Kemper Educational and Charitable Fund, Midwest Foods, Sara Lee Foundation, HSBC – North America, and the Steans Family Foundation. Also contributing to Windy City Harvest is NeighborSpace.

Cook County Boot Camp

Windy City Harvest also operates a production and training garden at the Cook County Sheriff's Boot Camp, an alternative sentencing facility for young men. Employment has been shown to be powerful in reducing recidivism among ex-offenders, and through its partnership with the Boot Camp, Windy City Harvest has developed a progression of opportunities for this population, including an eight-week residential garden program at the Boot Camp, paid transitional jobs for selected graduates, and certification in environmental literacy for green jobs. Graduates of the Boot Camp residential garden program are encouraged to apply to the Windy City Harvest certificate program.

Short Courses on Organic Vegetable Production

Windy City Harvest offers a series of short courses on organic vegetable production and post-harvest food preservation. The courses are offered at the Arturo Velasquez Institute (2800 South Western Avenue) and descriptions are available on the Windy City Harvest web page.

For more information, visit www.chicagobotanic.org/windycityharvest for details or contact Angela Mason, director of community gardening, at windycityharvest@chicagobotanic.org or by calling (847) 835-6970.



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www.chicagobotanic.org/windycityharvest

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