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# Planting the Seed

A local Sonoma collective feeds the community and supports employees at the same time.

BY PATI NAVALTA POBLETE

**M**any heroes have emerged during COVID-19 to ensure that we are all healthy and fed as we shelter in place.

In Sonoma, known for its organic, farm-to-table restaurants and wineries, Sonoma's Best Hospitality Group ([sonomasbesthg.com](http://sonomasbesthg.com)) has been working with local farmers to provide healthy meals for the community and to support their employees during the shelter-in-place mandate issued by Gov. Gavin Newsom.

The local collective includes popular destinations including Cornerstone Sonoma, Cottage Inn & Spa, Ramekins, Sonoma's Best Modern Mercantile and Guest Cottages, and Harrow Cellars.

Since March 25, Sonoma's Best Hospitality Group has served free meals to any member of the Sonoma community in need. Meals are prepared by the chefs at the Ramekins Catering kitchen using food provisions that Sonoma's Best Hospitality Group purchased from local restaurants in need of revenue sources and from local farmers in need of buyers. Many restaurants and farmers have perishable, high-quality ingredients that

are prioritized in order to help support local businesses and prevent unnecessary spoilage.

Since the shelter-in-place mandate, Sonoma's Best Hospitality Group's goal has been to provide essential food resources to the community, utilizing all the resources at their disposal, including mobilizing their chefs, kitchen, waitstaff and drivers to meet the urgent needs of the community while sustaining work for their employees.

## VICTORY GARDEN

For those who have turned toward growing their own food and gardening for therapy, Christopher "Landy" Landercasper, director of farming operations for Sonoma's Best Hospitality Group, offers tips on growing your own "victory garden," a term that emerged from World War II as people grew gardens to ensure there was enough food. "While we aren't looking at food shortages now," Landy says, "it's never a bad idea to bolster our local food system with locally grown organic fruits and vegetables, not to mention using gardening for stress relief."

According to Landy, late April is the ideal time to plant summer crops that are more susceptible to cold nights including basil, eggplant, winter squash, melons, peppers and tomatoes, but can be planted in May as well.

"If you have a bit of extra space and know you will be living in the same place for several years, planting perennials or orchards can be a great long-term project. It gives you something to look forward to on a longer time scale, which is always a good thing to remember in stressful times," says Landy. "It is also fun to revisit trees you planted years before and watch them over generations. Many years from now, future generations may enjoy the fruits of the orchards planted during the pandemic year. The best time to plant a tree is 15 years ago; the second best time is today!"

Many places may be short on vegetable seeds, so Landy recommends [pickacarrot.com](http://pickacarrot.com) as a seed-finding source. "It aggregates many seed companies into a single search space, so if you know something you really want to grow but can't find the seed," he notes, "it may be a good place to search."