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## Indoor vegetable garden at Tufts helps feed homeless

Posted by Matt Rocheleau February 12, 2014 03:40 PM

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(Tufts University)

By Matt Rocheleau, Boston.com Staff

A new indoor vegetable garden at a Tufts University research facility in Boston is helping to feed homeless people at a nearby shelter.


The Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University and the Massachusetts Horticultural Society have partnered to run the garden located in a street-level lobby of the Tufts research center in the Chinatown neighborhood.

The garden is an extension of the horticultural society's Garden to Table initiative, which offers hands-on learning to people interested in growing their own vegetables. Last year, the initiative donated nearly 4,000 pounds of produce to food pantries.

Vegetables grown at the Tufts building are donated to St. Francis House, a downtown day shelter that serves as many as 700 meals daily and provides basic, rehabilitative, and housing services for homeless people.

"The produce we receive will help us provide high-quality meals and model healthy eating," said a statement from Leslie Oliver, food services manager at St. Francis House. "Our guests will not only enjoy the fresh flavors of these combined greens, they will receive the nutritional benefit of vitamins, minerals, and fiber."

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The indoor garden consists of three elevated beds filled with soil and starter fertilizer, grow lights, and a drainage system. Signs installed alongside the crops explain the nutrient content of what's being grown.

"Having an indoor vegetable garden that's visible from a busy city street is a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the role of nutrient-rich foods in chronic disease prevention and in maintaining good overall health," said a statement from Tufts nutrition science professor Simin Nikbin Meydani, the research center's director.

John Heine, special projects administrator at the research center, said the caretakers of the garden hope to be able to collect a steady harvest every two to three weeks.

"Our initial plantings consist of radishes, beets, turnips, Vietnamese mint, tatsoi and kale," he said in a statement. "These items were specifically chosen given the time of year and the controlled indoor environment. For some variety, we plan to change the types of food we plant every few months."

*Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [matthew.rocheleau@globe.com](mailto:matthew.rocheleau@globe.com). Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).*



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