

HPHC Las Vegas Shine City volunteers at Ahern Orchard and Las Vegas Rescue Mission

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On August 13, 2022, Shine City Project returned to Ahern Orchard! Started in February 2016 by Ahern Rentals, Ahern Orchard is an area just north of Downtown Las Vegas with over 3,200 plants and fruit trees! Spreading across 10 acres, peaches, apples, European and Asian pears, figs, pomegranates, and grapes, as well as hybrids such as pluots, plumcots, and apriums can all be found there! All fruits that are grown at Ahern Orchard are donated to local organizations and charities supporting food-insecure families and individuals in Las Vegas. Ahern Orchard is one of sixteen stops on the Pioneer Trail because of its historical significance with Las Vegas' first Korean immigrants in the 1930s and 1940s.

On this cloudy and humid Saturday morning, our Shine City Project volunteers met up to help harvest fruit at Ahern Orchard! Our group was assigned to help pick out peaches, white peaches, and plums! To assist with the task, we had fifteen Shine City Project volunteers with two of our volunteers joining us for the first time! For the peaches and white peaches, we had to be careful not to pick peaches that may have been damaged by insects. We had to inspect the peaches carefully for small cracks and crevices as they have been a way for insects to enter the inside of the peach. Often, these small openings can be found near the stem of the peach. No one wants to bite into a peach to find half of an insect!

Compared to the pluots we picked out last week and the plums that we picked out later, peaches were the most challenging to harvest. Though peaches are a beloved fruit by many, they are also a delicious, sweet treat for a number of pests and insects. As we were picking out peaches from the trees, though one side of the peach may look perfect and unharmed, with one twist, we may find a large bug on the other side ready to spook its next victim. Because of these bugs, this caused the task of picking out peaches to be a little unsettling and frightening. A lot of the bugs that we found were June beetles which were large, flying insects which were often green in color. What was supposed to be a calm and peaceful service project quickly became one of terror and anxiety.

However, despite these small challenges, we did our best to accomplish our task! Some of our volunteers managed the task by having a stick in one hand for protection. In the end, we were able to harvest most of the peaches from one section of the orchard and all of the plums from a single row of trees! Though it was a little scary at first, it was a great day to be at the orchard!