

Community garden appeal continues to grow in Port

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
Wednesday, 22 May 2013 17:02

<http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/052313/gardenSM.png> **All 70 plots spoken for as city's improved garden starts second season**

All 70 of the plots in Port Washington's community garden have been rented this year, the second season the garden has been operating.

"We're sold out," organizer Derek Strohl said, adding there is a waiting list of one or two people.

"It's been going great. People are chomping at the bit to get in. It's been a busy spring. We added a few new plots this year, and we're now at our maximum."

The community garden has undergone a number of changes since its inaugural season, Strohl said.



Boy Scout Ben Wichmann built a storage shed as his Eagle Scout project. The shed is used to store tools that can be used by all the gardeners, as well as items that are used by organizers, such as tillers.

In a few weeks, Scout Tom Knowski will build a picnic area as his Eagle Scout project, Strohl said. The area will include a sandbox and a couple of picnic tables that are handicapped accessible, with platforms extending out so a wheelchair can roll up to the table.

Some dwarf fruit trees have been planted by a member as well.

"We'll just share the fruit," Strohl said. "We'll tell people not to pick it all when it's ripe, just to gather a few pieces."

Some crops are already coming in, while other plants are just getting started, Strohl said.

"The garlic is doing amazing," he said. "And I've seen plenty of small green things."

Those are likely to include radishes, spinach, carrots and peas, he said.

"Pretty soon, you'll see people transplanting their tomatoes," Strohl said.

Gardeners were out in force over the weekend. Joy Ferrebee was tending her plot and checking on the kohlrabi, which are up several inches.

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Tom Urban was busy installing irrigation systems in the plot he and his wife Kathy tend as well as a double plot they are organizing for the Food Pantry.

His wife already planted much of the produce for this year in the plots, he said.

Urban said he was inspired to create the irrigation system after last summer's drought.

"We carried in buckets of water, and it was back-breaking work," he said. "Then a friend asked, 'When's Tom going to build an irrigation system?' and that became my challenge."

Urban, an engineer, said he consulted with friends who are experts in water systems to design the irrigation system. He built a demonstration unit in his yard, then showed it to Strohl and received approval to install systems in the garden.

He gets water for the irrigation systems by hooking them up to a hose that transfers water from a nearby fire hydrant to tanks at the garden.

Urban estimates it will take about 30 minutes for him to water both his personal plot and the one used for the Food Pantry.

"I'm probably the only one doing it right now, but I wouldn't be surprised if others followed," Urban said, adding he would be willing to offer advice for anyone who wants to follow in his footsteps.

For the Urbans, the community garden offers them a way to grow their own vegetables. There are too many deer for them to garden at their Hales Trail home, he said.

"You can't plant a real garden because fencing it would be too expensive," Urban said, adding the couple does have a fenced asparagus patch at their home.

"This gives us the chance to have a vegetable garden nearby."

Strohl said that eventually he would like to construct a wetland nearby to filter stormwater that runs off Hales Trail and then pumps the clean water to the garden, where it could be used for the plants.

Organizers would likely seek grant money for this project, he said.

"I don't think it will happen anytime soon," he said. "It would probably cost a lot of money. But that's the kind of thing I would like to see happen more."

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Image Information: THIS YEAR'S CROP of kohlrabi in Joy Ferrebee's plot at the Port Washington community garden has already sprouted, even as other crops have yet to peek through the ground. All 70 plots in the community garden have been spoken for, organizer Derek Strohl said. Photo by Sam Arendt