

Community garden may become home to bees

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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Organizers of Hales Trail site consider adding hive to help pollinate crops, give apiarists hands-on training

A proposal to place a beehive at the Hales Trail Community Garden in Port Washington is being considered by organizers.

Bethel Metz said the possibility is one she has been discussing with Derek Strohl, who led the campaign to create the garden.

“It’s natural. One goes hand-in-hand with the other,” she said. “You can’t have a garden or produce without bees, and you can’t have bees without food.”

Many community gardens throughout the country are homes to beehives, and they are operated without problems, Metz said.

“We have a lot of people interested in how this works,” she said. “Our community now is very aware of urban beekeeping, and this is one way of continuing that conversation.”

Metz, who said the proposal is only in the discussion stages, said she and her husband wouldn’t relocate the hive at their house but instead place a new one at the garden.

She and her husband would care for the hive, Metz said, adding that if other people are interested in caring for bees, the hive could be used for hands-on training.

“There are people who want to learn a lot more about it,” she said.

Strohl said he has discussed the concept with a number of gardeners at the community garden, and they were supportive of the idea.

Allowing bees would be mutually beneficial, he said, noting the insects would help pollinate the crops grown there.

However, Strohl said, the bees wouldn’t spend all their time in the garden, noting they travel miles to obtain nectar.

“People wholeheartedly support having the bees as long as we inform the gardeners,” Strohl said, adding the garden’s license with the city would have to be amended to allow the hive. “We all know having the bees would be a great service for the gardens.”

The garden would also need to get approval from neighboring property owners before a hive

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could be placed there, he said.

Strohl said he expects to review the concept with the Port Parks and Recreation Board in the coming months to see if it is possible.

“We’re in the early stages of this,” Metz said. “By no means is this something we expect to happen.”

Strohl said the garden exceeded all expectations in its inaugural year.

“I’m thrilled. It was just lush,” he said. “I’m amazed at the quality and quantity of produce that came out of that soil. We didn’t put anything into it.”

Some gardeners are amending the soil now, using manure brought to the site this summer by an area farmer, he said. Gardeners have until Dec. 31 to reserve their plots for next year.

“I anticipate we’ll have a pretty high renewal rate,” he said. “It was such a good feeling to see the community garden work, to see gardeners share their knowledge with each other and come together.”