

SONOMA GARDEN PARK



TOP LEFT: Leeks for sale at Sonoma Garden Park. LEFT: Marlie Wesner, herb and flower grower, tends to lavender plants. RIGHT: Rob Schultz prepares soil for green beans to be planted.

JESSE EVANS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

VIVA VOLUNTEERS

Sonoma Garden Park plants seeds for more community involvement

Cassady Jeremias

SONOMA VALLEY SUN

How do you get a lawyer, a bichon frise and a kid with a mohawk to play together in the dirt? Answer: Have a volunteer day at the Sonoma Garden Park.

On Saturday, June 11, volunteers planted, harvested and irrigated organic crops in the six-acre garden park, all for different reasons, and all under the hot sun.

"I just moved here a month ago," said Sonya Strahl, who brought her dog, Bijan. "I rent an apartment without a garden and I miss getting my hands dirty

and growing things." Bijan, who has become the park's mascot, comes to roll in the loose bark.

Formerly known as the Pauline Bond Community Garden, the park was left to the city by a local teacher, Pauline Bond, in her will. Now a project managed by the the Sonoma Ecology Center, the garden was recently renamed in order to encourage people to rediscover it. Promoters hope to utilize the space more efficiently and give back more to the community.

Mollyanne Meyn, garden coordinator, said she and volunteers are working on a native plant nursery — a place to grow and collect plants from this wa-

tershed, and sell them for restoration projects. Another goal is to provide more education for children and adults.

"We want to show people what they can do in their own yards," Meyn said.

The garden has a "xeriscape" landscape, that uses water-saving plants, a butterfly garden, orchards, and a crop circle filled with gently handled fruits and vegetables. Here bugs are killed with soap spray instead of pesticides.

Johnny Hein, 15, pushes his wheelbarrow through deep, chunky dirt. He is completing 20 hours of community service assigned to him by Youth and Family Services. Hein said he was able to choose from a few things, and picked working in this garden.

"I like garden work," Hein said. "I do planting, moving stuff, digging, composting."

Meyn said the staff is willing to train anyone, and volunteers are always welcome.

"We celebrate what the earth has to give," Meyn said.

Of the items dug from the dirt or cut off the branches, many are sold. The Harvest Market on Saturdays sells fresh produce at the stand in front of the garden, and more is sold to Meals on Wheels, or the Sonoma Community Center.



DIG IT!

SONOMA GARDEN PARK FACTS

GARDEN LOOT:

Asparagus, tomatoes, lettuce, potatoes, beans, onions, strawberries, carrots, figs, lavender, squash, chard, cherry plums, garlic, turnips, raspberries.

HERBS AND FLOWERS:

Lavatera, feverfew, zinnia, sunflower, cornflower, sweetpeas, basil, sage, tarragon, savory, mint, oregano, budlelia, foxglove, dahlias, larkspur.

MEDICINAL HERBS:

Valerium, mugwort, motherwort, chamomile.

VOLUNTEER WISH LIST:

Family garden coordinator: to plan and organize family garden work days, picnics, family garden compost area and more.

Harvesting and market staff:

for the Sunday Harvest Market. They need carpenters and woodworkers, help with "grunt work" weeding, harvesting and watering.

ACTIVITIES:

Movie night: June 26 "Babette's Feast." Starts at dusk, bring a picnic.

Volunteer Saturday:

10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., the next one is June 26.

Harvest Market:

Saturday's 9 a.m. to noon.

GOALS:

To bring together an organizational volunteer council, complete with monthly meetings; to have more activities for kids; more kindergarten-through-grade-12 education; and fund-raisers.

VOLUNTEERS:

Call **Cheryl** at 996-8294 for more information on how to get involved, or show up on volunteer Saturday, June 26 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. A potluck lunch follows, 7th Street East, between Denmark and MacArthur.

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