



Bounty Garden gets green light

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DANVILLE -- The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, and hungry people in need, will reap the benefits of a bountiful Bounty Garden at Hap Magee Ranch Park.

The Town Council unanimously approved a license agreement with the Bounty Garden Foundation at its Nov. 15 meeting,

The agreement authorizes the foundation, a nonprofit led by the Alamo mother-daughter team of Heidi and Amelia Abrahamson, to take control of an area behind the Swain House in the park, at 1025 La Gonda Way, for its garden. The area straddles the border of Alamo and Danville.

"We were really happy," said Heidi Abrahamson.

One of the purposes of the garden is to provide opportunities for community education, particularly in organic gardening, and volunteer participation by green-thumbed residents. As part of the license agreement, pesticides and fertilizers are prohibited from being used in the garden.

All produce grown by volunteers in the Bounty Garden will be contributed to the food bank, unlike in a community garden, where the gardeners grow food for themselves. The closest distribution points are Danville, Concord and Walnut Creek, but the food may be taken to the Food Bank's Concord warehouse.

Currently, phase I of the garden is planned with raised redwood beds to be located around the smaller of the barns on the property.

"Eagle Scouts have led all of our work days, and last weekend, students from Athenian School and students in environmental studies at San Ramon Valley High School helped build," said Abrahamson. "We are trying to build 24 beds before it rains, and then we'll do the last eight when the sun comes out."

A third work day to complete the construction of the 18-inch-high beds is scheduled for January. The 32 wooden beds will be transported and situated on the garden site, ready for soil and planting of the Bounty Garden's first crop. But it really depends on the weather, Abrahamson said.

"You have to get to the garden along trails, and you can't haul things when they are muddy without harming the trails," she said. "We must remove the asphalt, which will be taken care of in a recycling program, then grade and create drainage."

If the weather cooperates, planting will begin in the spring.

In addition, the historic barn nearest the Swain House -- one of two on the property -- was approved for rehabilitation by the foundation. Plans are for it to be used as storage for the garden, for a seedling room and The Gallery for the public in the main room.

"We originally wanted the barn closer to the creek," Abrahamson said, "but we are now using the smaller barn. The barns are an integral part of the ambience of the program."

The replacement of some roof beams, installation of a new metal roof, replacement of necessary wall boards and exterior paint are considered to be the bulk of needed barn rehabilitation. The cost estimate for the barn work is approximately \$22,000.

For more garden information, including how to volunteer or to become a volunteer gardener, visit <http://thebountygarden.wordpress.com> and click on "the Garden Program."