

Growing veggies for good

The Bounty Garden set to open June 1

by **Jessica Lipsky**

Photos



What do you get when combine compost, seeds and the desire of a mother and daughter who want to give back to the community? Most likely, broccoli, kale and beans from [The Bounty Garden](#).

The recently constructed Bounty Garden located at Hap Magee Ranch Park, was conceived by the mother/daughter team of Heidi and Amelia Abramson after three years of meetings with the town and county. The non-profit garden is committed to providing a source of fresh vegetables to the local Food Banks of Contra Costa and Solano Counties.

Although the Abramsons have always grown tomatoes and basil, they only came to understand the value of fresh produce after visiting local food banks to take a closer look at hunger in their community.

"Everywhere we went, everyone wanted to help the food bank but nobody really knows the importance of fresh vegetables," Heidi, an architect, said. "They're hard to store, so they're hard to transport, so they're hard to come by, so the idea of a local source is great."

The Bounty Garden will officially open on June 1 for the spring planting season with 24 garden beds, each hand built by Eagle Scouts, high school students and volunteers. Twelve of the beds will have two crops grown each year and the other half will have one long crop, Heidi said adding that the nonprofit rotates "cool" and "warm" crops depending on the season.

Two garden cycles are already underway: cool crops of cabbage, spinach and radishes alongside warmer crops such as tomatoes and squash, all gardened by a tight knit group of volunteers dubbed The Hive. Hive members will orchestrate The Bounty Garden's four-part program, which is designed to provide a framework for gardeners of all levels through education and skill share.

"When you leave the program hopefully you'll feel confident to build your own bed, grow a seed or know who to go to for help," Heidi said of the workshops, which include composting and seedling cultivation. "Hopefully our community will grow and grow and grow from The Bounty Garden."

As a part of the program, gardeners are asked to visit their vegetable beds at least once a week and keep a journal to log their weekly visits, observations and part in the history of their beds.

In exchange for their participation, five special days are offered each season to learn basic gardening techniques, answer questions and to meet fellow gardeners.

While all the garden beds are spoken for and there is a waiting list several people long, Heidi said she is excited to expand her community. The Bounty Garden will never take more than half a program of returning gardeners, she noted.

"This is small in comparison to what the food bank requires, but large...in the number of people that have had their hands in growing and developing (The Bounty Garden)," Heidi



said.

The serene location at Hap Magee Ranch Park, offers lots of passersby the opportunity to see firsthand the work of the volunteers as they plant, water and harvest their crops. A test planting in October, one conducted without irrigation or soil testing, proved perfect for growing vegetables with excellent shade for composting and sun for beds, as well as a gathering space in an existing barn.

"I think the very special mix of historic buildings with modern amenities in such a well-maintained natural environment is testament to the town's exemplary capabilities and I am incredibly proud to be a part of this lovely, cherished place," Heidi said.

For more information on volunteering or visiting The Bounty Garden, visit <http://thebountygarden.wordpress.com/the-garden-program/>.