



A Very Green Idea

In this challenging economy, more people, including the residents at Friendly Village Modesto, are choosing to grow their own vegetables instead of buying them.

Earlier this year, Friendly Village resident managers Janet and Dennis Dollar were approached by resident Sheila Lopez with the idea of planting an on-site community garden.

Sheila suggested that a recently vacated homesite on Apollo Street would be the perfect location for the garden until a new home would be placed there.

After several meetings with residents and management, the project was approved by Bill Schweinfurth, Director of Operations for Vedder Community Management.

In preparation for the building of the garden, the vacated homesite was cleared and leveled with road base materials.

Sheila and her husband Al built fourteen garden boxes, measuring four feet by eight feet and sixteen inches in depth. Sixteen yards of soil was ordered for the boxes, and included compost purchased from the City of Modesto's green waste recycling facility. One of the local church youth groups helped fill the garden boxes with the soil and compost mixture. Once this process was complete, Sheila and Al installed

a watering system to each garden box, allowing residents to start planting their favorite vegetables.

The focus of the garden is to grow the vegetables organically, without the use of pesticides and other commercial fertilizers. Several of the residents used red earth worms for fertilizer, and lady bugs to control unwanted pests.

Due to the positive feedback from the residents, plans are in the works to expand the garden to include additional garden boxes. A small pop-up greenhouse and a composting area are also in the planning stages.

The garden not only provides nutritious free food, it has also become a social gathering place for the resident gardeners. It is not uncommon for several gardeners to show up early in the evening to pull weeds, share a glass of wine, and compare carrots and beets.

Resident Joe Kravanja states, "This has been a great experience. I look forward to being able to share what I am growing, especially next spring when we will start growing tomatoes." Resident Jake Hunter, who has never gardened before says, "I kept seeing all the activity going on and went over to see what it was about. After talking with Sheila and Al, I decided to get my own garden box; I've been having a lot of fun learning new things and meet-

ing other residents for the first time. It's been a great experience." ■

Special thanks to Janet and Dennis Dollar for contributing this article.

Friendly Village Modesto is managed by Vedder Community Management.

