

Garden to share its fruits with all

Church's project will help furnish tables at potluck

By Carol Reeves
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Gardeners have spent the last three months turning a bare plot of land on property owned by the Westside Community Church in southwest Corvallis into a flourishing community garden. Now, they want to share the harvest with others.



A potluck and work party for the general public is set for 6 p.m. Thursday at the garden site at 4000 S.W. Western Blvd.

Ten low-income families have been gardening plots measuring 20 feet by 20 feet and other gardeners have been working a 100-foot by 40-foot space dubbed the "community farm."

A series of food-preservation classes for low-income residents will start the following week and two cooking demonstrations using the garden's produce are scheduled later in the growing season.

"We'll be covering boiling water bath and pressure canning, freezing and dehydrating," said FireWorks chef Intaba Liff-Anderson, who will be teaching the food-preservation classes along with Eneida Hallenborg in the community center at First United Methodist Church, 1165 N.W. Monroe Ave.

The cooking lessons will be taught in English from 9 a.m. to noon on Wednesdays, Sept. 17 to Oct. 1 and in Spanish from 2 to 5 p.m. on Saturdays, Sept. 20 to Oct. 4.

The skills being taught in the classes, sponsored by the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, are part of a statewide effort to build community food security and empower low-income residents to meet their food needs.

"Food-security issues affect low-income residents more than the rest of us," Liff-Anderson said. "Food preservation is a way of stretching the food dollar and preserving local food at the same time."

Many sources, including local farms, are donating produce to use in the preservation classes in addition to that grown in the Westside Community Garden.

On Sept. 26 at 7 p.m. the Westside Community Church will host a cooking

demonstration on how to make green salsa using some of the tomatillos growing in the community garden at 7 p.m. The church is also offering a “Harvest and Cook” demonstration Oct. 9 featuring Liff-Anderson and Hallenborg cooking produce from the community garden on-site.

A sliding scale donation up to \$5 is requested to participate in the cooking classes or demonstrations.

“It’s exciting to see the garden providing food to help support a variety of programs we’re offering through the EMO Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership,” said project manager Liv Gifford. The cooking classes, garden and a Latino buying club are all part of a three-year USDA Community Food Projects Grant which emphasizes community self-reliance and comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues, she said.

About eight families participated this summer in the buying club based at St. Mary’s Catholic Church in which they submitted weekly orders for organic vegetables from local farms, Gifford said.

Liff-Anderson said she could still use donations of produce from local gardeners and canning jars for the food preservation classes. Freezer storage is available, so donations can be made anytime, she said.

To make a donation or register for the cooking classes, call 760-5964. Reservations are due Sept. 15 for the English-speaking classes and by Sept. 18 for the Spanish-language classes. To sign up for the cooking demonstrations, call 754-7239.