

Alamo Heights Community Garden Chock Full of Fall Fruits and Veggies

By KATIE NICKAS



Volunteers at the Alamo Heights Community Garden enjoyed cooler temperatures one recent September morning as they pulled weeds, planted cabbage, radishes, carrots, beets and broccoli and collected compost from the raised beds in preparation for fall planting.

Situated in the Olmos Basin and floodplain near the Hondondo Creek Trails, the garden saw its share of stress this season.

The southern half of the garden was inundated with water following the flooding in June, receiving as much as 12 inches of rain in one morning, said regular volunteer Karla Toye.

The garden is thriving with Brussels sprouts, hot peppers, jicama and other bountiful crops despite the challenging weather, and gardeners are anticipating a variety of fun fall events, including a possible scarecrow contest, said gardener and coordinator Linda Hallstead.

"Everything here is done by volunteers," Toye added, noting that the Boy Scouts helped build the raised beds and the shed and planted fruit and ornamental olive trees.

"It's designed to be a communal-style garden where people can come and work and share in the produce," she said. "We have more than 100 people on our e-mail list, but we invite people to come and help whenever they can."



The Community Gardeners alert volunteers through e-mail to upcoming group grower days, calling out for needed seeds and supplies.

Not surprisingly, many of the frequent volunteers to the community garden are gardeners.

"It's just great to get your hands into the soil," said Mona Kandel as she pulled up clods of Bermuda grass. "This is my first day volunteering here. Just getting all the volunteers and the beds made is such progress, and then getting the dirt, too, is something really special."

Charlotte Wenger, a resident of Alamo Heights who tended to the butterfly garden, said it is very satisfying to see things grow.

Striving to make the garden a center for urban ecology and conservation, the gardeners added a rain barrel to catch the runoff water from the gutters and flow into the drip irrigation system.

➤ continued on page 4

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