

Earth Days



Sandy Bauman, the UNT Health Science Center's sustainability coordinator, says support for the community garden is amazing.



Passionate gardeners are cultivating a community plot in Fort Worth's Cultural District.

By Meda Kessler Photos by Mark Graham

It was a warm weekend in February, and the dirt was flying at an empty lot near Fort Worth's Saint-Emilion restaurant.

While the unpredictable Texas weather had not been kind to its early efforts, the University of North Texas Health Science Center Community Garden was under way.

Sandy Bauman is the sustainability coordinator for UNTHSC. For the last two years, she has been helping the faculty and students better their quality of life and manage resources more efficiently.

"From day one, I heard multiple people say we needed a community garden. And not just the staff, but many students," says Sandy. "We sent out a questionnaire last April for Earth Day and got a huge response."

Sandy and others visited already-established community gardens: one at the University of Texas at Arlington and Common Ground in North Richland Hills, a private-civic partnership, to get a crash course in what works and what doesn't.

Then there was the challenge of finding a plot of land. "This lot was supposed to be the home of a new storage building, but instead, we were able to use it for the garden," says Sandy.

In January, a call went out to faculty members and students offering the chance to become "plot guardians." With a set of guidelines outlining commitment and expectations, garden coordinator Betsy Friauf and Sandy got a huge response; immediately they had a waiting list.

With the help of the UNTHSC's Facilities Management department, 16 4-foot by 12-foot raised beds were built and irrigation installed, along with the addition of a small storage shed for tools and other garden equipment.

Betsy notes that they've had great support from



The development staff at UNTHSC share a plot, which they have given an optimistic name.



the community, including Calloway's Nursery, Silver Creek Materials and Archie's Gardenland as well as next-door neighbor Saint-Emilion, which has a sponsor plot.

Karin Kelly Tronche, co-owner of Saint-Emilion with husband Bernard, admits she doesn't have a green thumb. She called in friend Anne Potthoff, an avid gardener, for help.

Anne suggested they plant sun-hardy tomatoes, peppers, herbs and zucchini — for the squash blossoms. "We're not the French Laundry, and we don't have Yountville weather, but it's a tiny start," says Karin.

Part of the mission of the community garden is to donate 25 percent of the



THE DETAILS

UNTHSC Community Garden The garden is at 3629 W. 7th St., Fort Worth. The garden for now is limited to faculty and students but one day will be available to the public. If you'd like to donate supplies, call Sandy Bauman at 817-735-2451.

crops to local food pantries, including the Northside Inter-Community Agency. NICA's outreach director Robert Ludlow was on-site in February to meet and thank the gardeners and volunteers.

"This is just the first phase," says Betsy. "There's room to expand, and hopefully we can open to the community at large someday." 360

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