



# On Fertile Ground

UNT Health Science Center sows the seeds of sustainability —and philanthropy — at its new community garden.

| by Alison Rich |

**T**he plot thickens ... and quite literally, thanks to the efforts of an enterprising crop of folks at UNT Health Science Center. Spurred by a common vision of creating a green space where employees and students — and, eventually, the general public — could grow and harvest their own organic produce, the Office of Sustainability and its Sustainability Committee transformed a once-humble patch of dirt on West Seventh Street into a community garden. Located next to Saint-Emilion Restaurant — and, incidentally, home to a former flower shop — the site is now springing forth with a bounty of fruits, veggies and other land-to-table delights. Although it's still in the early stages, the hope, naturally, is that the garden will ultimately yield a profusion of produce. Some will grace the plates of the people tending each of the 16 4x12 plots, with the remaining 25 percent earmarked for local residents in need of nutritious fare.

“We are donating 25 percent of our produce to local food pantries, including the Northside Inter-Community Agency and the Salvation Army,” said Betsy Friauf, senior communications specialist and community garden coordinator. “Of course, people can donate more than that if they choose to.”

When the idea first floated about the UNTHSC campus two years ago, the response was overwhelmingly positive, according to sustainability coordinator Sandy Bauman.

“It seemed like a project that a lot of people were excited about and wanted to be a part of,” said Bauman, noting the garden has been a top priority since the Sustainability Committee launched in 2012. “We’re very pleased to contribute to the needs of our community. It’s a chance for all of us to work together to create a healthier community with sustainable food.”

Currently, only employees and students have plots, which were up for grabs on a first-come, first-served basis when the garden concept was still germinating; however, Saint-Emilion, one of the founding sponsors, also has a plot. (Fresh leeks on your filet de limande, anyone?) The long-range plan is to add about 16 more plots and open them to the public, Bauman and Friauf say. Watch the UNTHSC website for details as they sprout. **fw**