

The greening of Eugene

Harvest your own crop — land courtesy of Eugene

By BECKY ANSHUTZ
Of the Emerald

You don't need your own plot of land or necessarily a green thumb to produce fresh vegetables in Eugene.

The city offers gardeners plots of land and practical information to grow their own urban gardens.

The community gardens program runs four garden sites in the Eugene area — one at the end of N. Polk Street, one at 15th Avenue and Hayes Street, and one at 28th Avenue and High Street. The fourth, at the program center at 301 N. Adams St., serves as a classroom for 10 beginning gardeners.

The program stresses getting the most out of a piece of land in an urban environment, says program supervisor Carol Brewster.

"You can garden indefinitely as long as you remember that you need to replace what you take out," Brewster says.

Community gardeners use organic fertilizers. No chemical fertilizers or pesticides are allowed.

Rent is \$16 per year for a 20- by 30-foot plot, plus a \$10 cleaning deposit. A 20- by 15-foot plot costs \$10 per year with a \$5 deposit. The program refunds the deposit in November when gardeners remove plastic, boards and dead vegetation.

The program's general registration ended March 3. But gardeners can obtain one of 30-35 remaining plots by calling the program office at 687-5323.

Last year, the city rented nearly 186 plots to 500 people by June. Two to three family members or friends usually work a plot, Brewster says.

Gardeners supply their own tools to work the soil. Spigots located between

every four plots supply the water. "After that, it's up to the individual," Brewster says. "You get what you want to grow in the manner you want to grow it."

Brewster and four other staff members publish a monthly news letter of gardening advice. A staff person works at one of the gardens each week, and they are eager to advise over the phone or in person any time, Brewster says.

Peas and onions already dot the garden sites, and beets and lettuce soon will appear, she says. Meanwhile, gardeners are preparing vegetables for transplanting.

Brewster says during harvest times, gardeners worry most about vandals. But vandals do little besides taking an occasional ripe tomato or cucumber. Fences and garden locations act as deterrents.

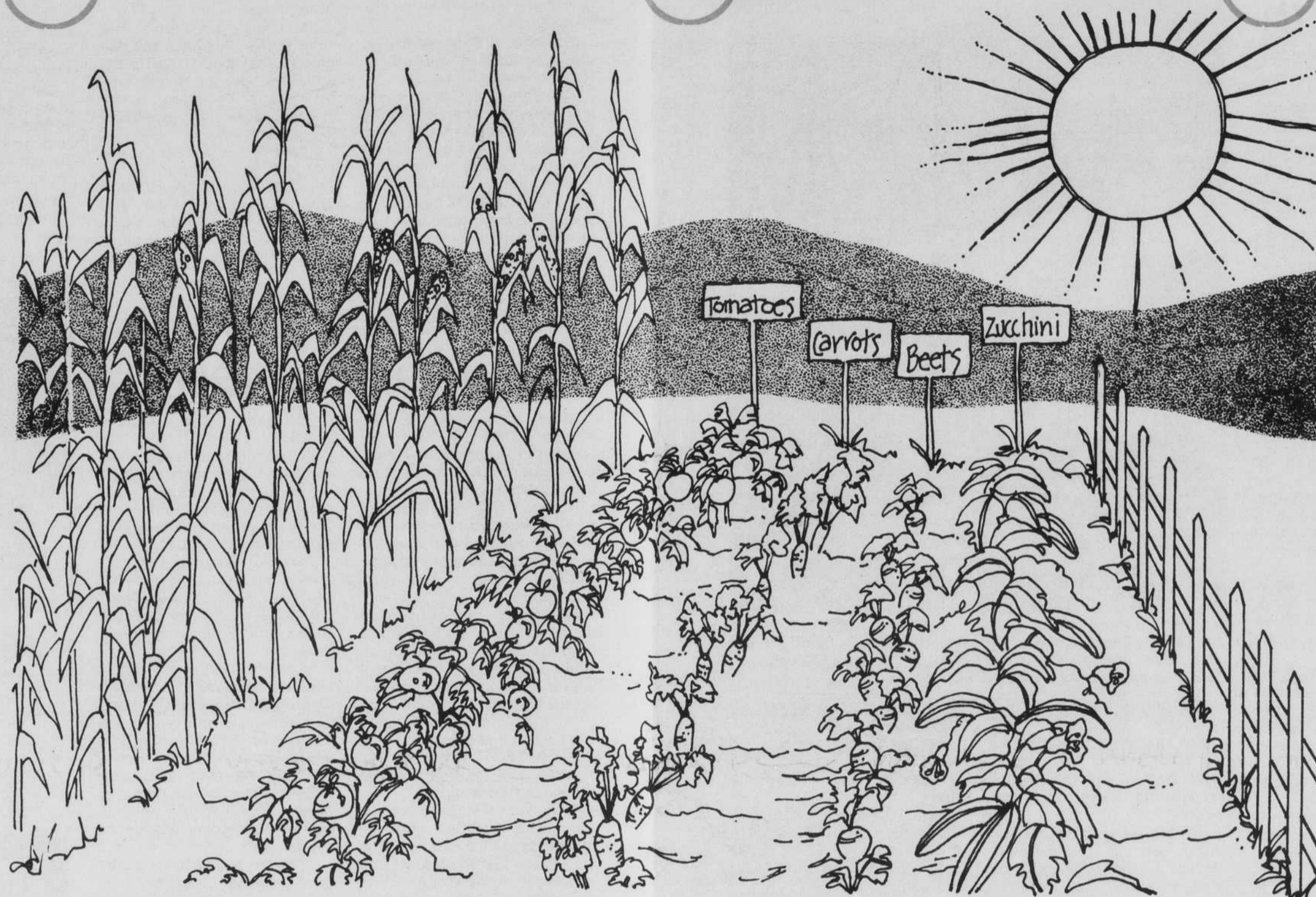
Fees fund most of the community gardens program, including the courses offered.

For the neophyte, the program offers a structured, supervised beginning gardening course for 10 people.

Brewster says she would like to see the program, which sprouted in 1974, expand soon.

"As population density increases in the city, I think we'll see an increase in demand for community gardens. Eugene has a very self-reliant orientation."

Other organizations operate community gardens in the city. Two community schools rent garden plots at 12th Avenue and Jefferson Street and at 15th Avenue and Chambers Street. Lane County operates a garden at Alton Baker Park, and the West University Neighborhood Association has one along 13th Avenue between Mill and High Streets.



Graphic by Sioux Anderson

Gain agricultural savvy through 'Urban Farming'

By DAWN GARCIA
Of the Emerald

Students who enjoy "getting into their work" will get a chance this spring with a unique class called Urban Farming.

Started five years ago through the landscape architecture department, the class is open to anyone interested in learning about urban farms and willing to work on one.

The "classroom" is an urban farm located on Franklin Boulevard across the Millrace.

The farm is a 1/2-acre plot of land divided into 150 raised beds. It includes a greenhouse, a woodshop, ceramic workshop, a farmhouse, a wind-water pump and wooden benches for basking in the spring sun.

The firm's faculty adviser, Richard Britz says the program was organized in hopes students will apply what they learn in their home environments.

"People don't understand the land," Britz says. "I'm interested in helping people develop eco-systems they can live with, rebuilding the cities in healthy ways."

The size of the urban farm — about a city block — aids students in envisioning the size and proportions of such a farm if it were placed in an urban city block in Eugene, Britz says.

"A lot of Eugene is built on first-class gardening soil. Urban gardens are a nice community builder and allow people to face their gardens instead of the street."

In the urban farm program, students are taught to work together to grow their own food by making the most of solar energy, waste recycling, composting and utilization of other natural resources. Crop rotation, planting meth-

ods, instructions on maintenance, harvesting and preserving food all are included in the course.

Changes in seasons bring changes in farming plans, so each term sees a different set of goals for the program, Britz says. At this stage of winter term, students are taking care of winter cover crops, finishing winter maintenance chores and preparing the farm for spring.

To work their gardens effectively, students are encouraged to take advantage of one of the seven tool libraries in the area. These locations can provide a wide variety of tools too expensive for most students to rent or purchase.

The library at the Urban Farm and the Action Now tool library at 1555 Agate St. are the ones located closest to campus.

The educational and material benefits from such a program are great, Britz says.

"It shows you how well people can work together and introduces them to the economic priorities of this area. And we sure get a lot of food out of the farm."

Britz estimates the Urban Farm can provide 40 percent of a person's food supply.

"If you have sun, soil and a good water supply, you're in fat city," Britz says grinning.

The philosophy of the program and specifics for setting up an urban farm can be found in the book "The Edible City," which will be available in the bookstore in a few weeks.

Urban Farm is a 2-4 credit course offered through the landscape architecture department Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 2:30 to 4:30. For more information, contact the landscape architecture office at 686-3634.

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