

How does a garden grow?

One Street Roots vendor digs in and helps a community project spring to life

BY CASSANDRA KOSLEN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

At first glance, the recently-planted community garden at Peace Lutheran Church, 2201 N. Rosa Parks Way, is nothing special. The two long beds of dirt with plotted sprouts could be anywhere in Portland.

But this small start has its seeds from throughout the city, beginning with Street Roots vendor Rick Buck.

Every Wednesday at 6 p.m., Peace Lutheran hosts a dinner open to the community. Joined by a new congregation who will be sharing their church, on June 15 the meal is full of renewed energy. Jerrie Johnston, church organizer, cook and council member, is beside herself.

"This is wonderful," she says, cleaning up. "I have to see."

Outside on the church's lawn, there are children playing. Neighbors have wandered over to look at two long rows of elevated beds, almost completely planted. Mothers discuss which of the extra flats to take home and the best place to put them in their gardens.

Standing to the side, Street Roots vendor Rick Buck is slurping biscuits and gravy off of a paper plate, pointing out a dilapidated greenhouse he means to fix, telling the ladies which plants need what amount of sun.

"What's what?" newcomers ask him about the extras.



PHOTO BY CASSANDRA KOSLEN

Above, plants are taking off in the recently arrived warm weather at the Peace Lutheran community garden. At right, vendor Rick Buck, center, stands with Rhoda Moore, Jerrie Johnston, Sonja Hoffman and Kris Johnston.

Rick points, "Squash, cucumber, hot peppers, broccoli."

"Where are the cucumbers?" asks one excited woman, running outside. "I heard there were cucumbers."

When she is directed to a six-inch start, she falls over herself laughing. "Oh, I thought they were already grown! I was going to take one home for my salad!"

"We talked about (starting a community garden) for a long time," says Jerrie Johnston. "Last year we even talked to the city, but it never came together. Rick is the one who pushed it along."

"This is really exciting," says her daughter, Kris. "We've been throwing the idea around ... but didn't have the manpower to follow up on it."

With a small congregation of roughly 100 people on the rolls and no minister, building a garden to feed the community seemed an almost unachievable task. But sometimes saviors come in strange



PHOTO BY ALL SEASONS ROLLING SHUTTERS STAFF

costumes, from where we least expect.

Buck, who has 20 years of landscaping experience and says he's grown record-sized squash in four states, got to know the church through its Wednesday night dinners.

"I just had to get in the middle of it," he says, shrugging.

He looks upon the garden with a contented smile, and due pride. It is his physical labor and mental dedication that

propelled the planned garden into being.

In mid-May he approached Jerrie and the church about making the garden a reality.

"We said, okay, this is a great idea, but we don't have any money and most of the people in the church are older, in their 70s," says Kris Johnston, Jerrie's daughter and point person for the garden.

Determined, Buck began talking. Through his connections at Street Roots and the

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