

PLANS *from A1*

that's where we will do a lot of our outreach."

The nonprofit's Organic Garden Program provides families with individual plots in community gardens managed by Huerto de la Familia. Families also receive supplies, one-on-one assistance from staff and access to educational and social events.

Families are encouraged

to exercise autonomy in deciding how to use their plot and use the support system to create their own space.

Currently more than 160 families are growing their own organic food on six community gardens managed by the group. Cottage Grove will be its seventh.

"And we're very excited for that," said Zarate. "We're looking forward to this new partnership with South Lane School District

and for the opportunity to build what is going to be one of our largest community gardens to date."

The garden is anticipated to be able to serve about 50 families in the area.

Along with raised garden beds, the design features a central, covered community space for outdoor cultural events and education.

The project proposes to include learning opportunities such as workshops on organic agriculture practices, environmental stewardship and food preservation.

The Coast Fork Willamette Watershed Council has also partnered with the project to conduct restoration of native plants and wetland habitats in the garden.

"So we will have to work with the soil to get it ready to grow food, but everything we do is still in alignment with sustainability of the natural state of that space," said Zarate.

One of the goals of the

Organic Garden Program is sustainability. Families not only receive assistance in gardening, but are also given knowledge and skills which will ensure they can continue to grow food for the rest of their lives.

In addition, there is a strong intergenerational aspect to the work.

"Parents who participate in the program, regardless of where they're from, they care a lot about sharing a love of gardening with their kids and also helping their kids understand how food comes to end up on the table," said Zarate. "They want to really make sure that their children are learning how food is grown and get to be part of that process with them."

The food itself, too, contributes to healthier families and relieves some financial burden depending on the volume of a plot.

A plot's yield will depend to some extent on a family's expertise, said Zarate.

"We see that folks as

they grow for more and more years, they're able to grow more volume," she said.

Zarate estimates that most families can meet almost all of their produce demands from their garden plot, particularly in summer months.

In addition to making a substantial impact on a family's food budget, members can receive food preservation classes - canning, drying and freezing - to help figure out how to make food last through the winter.

The gardens also provide opportunities for those with restrictive barriers to growing. Zarate pointed to the limited access many people have to starting a garden, especially renters.

"Most landlords are not going to want a tenant to dig up the grass or whatever landscaping to put in a food garden, so it can be very limiting," she said. "If people don't have a home they own with a yard to start a garden, then often

people don't have the opportunity to grow their own food. And we're trying to overcome that barrier and provide access to more folks."

The garden has been a multi-year project and is slated to be ready for families to dig into their own garden plots by next spring.

The current timeline puts irrigation, fencing and a shed due to be finished by the end of this summer with soil work and other preparation done as spring approaches.

As construction moves forward, Huerto de la Familia is welcoming of local volunteers who would like to contribute.

The City of Cottage Grove has already thrown its support behind the project.

During a May 11 Cottage Grove Budget Committee meeting, Huerto de la Familia was approved to receive a \$5,000 line item on the budget, money which will go toward the costs of developing the garden.

In all, the project is expected to cost a little more than \$73,000. More than \$35,000 of in-kind donations have been committed to the project already, the nonprofit reported.

"Huerto de la Familia is especially thankful to these community partners and Cottage Grove for helping make it possible," said Zarate of the financial and network of support.

In the meantime, Zarate is eager to connect with more Cottage Grove community groups and gather local momentum for the project.

"We look forward to working to find more local support in the community to help make the garden possible," she said. "And we feel very confident that folks will want to help bring this to fruition and get this ready to go."

More information about donating and volunteering can be found on the nonprofit's website at huertodelafamilia.org under the "Get Involved" tab.

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Notice is hereby given that property owners or persons in control of property are required in the City of Cottage Grove to cut or remove tall grass, hazardous vegetation and combustible materials during the fire season from **June 15th to November 1st** (CGMC 8.12 Nuisances).

Tall grass and hazardous vegetation includes: wild blackberry bushes, weeds & grass more than 12 inches tall anywhere on your property, including public lands out to the street. Vegetation that is likely to endanger buildings or other property should it catch on fire must also be cut or removed.

During the fire season inspections will be made and property owners notified that they must cut or remove the hazardous vegetation. Failure to cut or remove the grass or vegetation will result in the City having to abate the problem. The cost of abatement will be charged to the property and if unpaid will become a lien against the property.

Property owners are reminded that they must keep hazardous vegetation and tall grass cut less than 12 inches until **November 1st**. Questions can be answered by the Public Works & Development Department at City Hall, by calling 541-942-3340 or by email: planning@cottagegrove.org.

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We Are Better Together

As we look to a new year, we're celebrating what connects us as a community, and what we can do to bridge our divides. From virtual events and local perspectives to cultural insights and conversation starters, we invite you to join us in making our community better, together.

Help rebuild our economy by supporting these and other local businesses!

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