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Community garden to make its debut

by Aaron Burgin ⓘ October 1, 2015 👁 387

ENCINITAS — The parcel of land along Quail Gardens Drive that lay fallow for years is now lined with 63 rectangular planter boxes built out of sturdy cedar, and the aroma of relatively fresh compost is thick.

This is the scene at the Encinitas Communit

Garden on Wednesday morning. On Saturday, the garden — the first of its kind in Encinitas — will be filled with local dignitaries, farmers and the half dozen people who fought for more than six years to see the dream of a space for the community to gather around agriculture become a reality.

Gordon Smith, president of the Encinitas Community Garden's nonprofit board, is one of them.

"This has been a labor of love for all of us involved," Smith said on Wednesday. "Saturday is an opportunity for all of us to celebrate all the work that it has taken to get here, and the excitement moving forward."



Smith was among the original group of people in 2009 that wanted to create the city's first community garden, a staple in many communities across the country but not in Encinitas due to a number of factors, including lack of space and a city code that did not specifically mention community gardens.

The city's planning staff believed it should be treated as a roadside stand, because the permitting process would allow it to vet the impacts the garden could have, such as traffic, odor and event noise. A minor use permit, which would be required for a roadside stand, costs \$1,600 and would take four to five months to process.

Supporters of the garden, however, believed the garden should be treated as an agricultural use, the definition of which, in the city code, includes other similar uses such as 4-H operations and local farms.

In 2014, the City Council approved a path for the garden to be approved through the planning commission, which later that year voted that the community garden was allowed by right in the Encinitas Ranch Specific Plan, and waived the permit fee.





The committee then had to secure a coastal development permit, which it received in late May when the city approved an amendment to the Encinitas Union School District's permit for its farm lab, on which the community garden is located.

"It was incredibly frustrating," Smith said. "It didn't make sense to me, but the city didn't have a garden, so precedent had to be made. We had to go through the hoops to get here, and it should be much easier for the next garden to come along."

Along the way, however, many organizations supported the cause, both in word and financially.

The County Board of Supervisors, Cardiff-based Patagonia, the Mizel Family Foundation and several other private donors contributed

thousands to get the project off the ground.

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The garden

Designed by Doug Long of Bert's Plumbing, the farm currently consists of 63 planter boxes lined with cardboard, hay and chicken wire and filled with a mix of local dirt and compost. Each box also has a drip irrigation system already set up.

Smith said that he doesn't know of many gardens with such a set up.

"At a lot of gardens, a person would have to build their box themselves, which is really time consuming and costs money," he said. "I believe it is going to be one of the most unique and beautiful gardens in the country."

The cost to lease a box is \$120 per year, and Smith said that 42 of the boxes have already been claimed.

Only Encinitas residents can rent a box, and no

person can rent more than one at a time, which was meant to keep commercial businesses from co-opting large swaths of the garden, Smith said.

Farmers must agree to only use organic methods in their farming, which means no chemical pesticides or herbicides.

In addition to farming, Smith said that master farmers and composters will hold classes at the site to educate residents on how proper farming and composting techniques.

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“We want to give the community a full-service garden,” he said.

The ceremony

The grand opening ceremony is scheduled for 1 p.m. Saturday at the garden, located at 441 Quail Gardens Drive, across the street from the EUSD Farm Lab.

City officials — including Mayor Kristin Gaspar —

Encinitas Union School District board members and County Supervisor Dave Roberts are among the officials expected to attend.

For people interested in attending or applying for a plot, visit the website at encinitascommunitygarden.org



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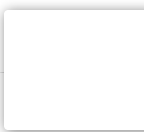
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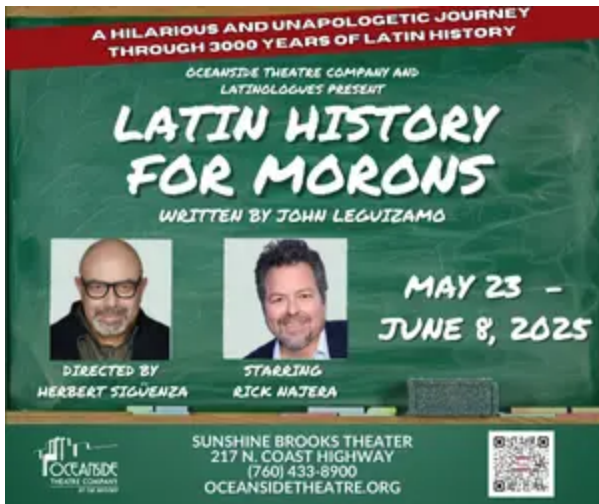
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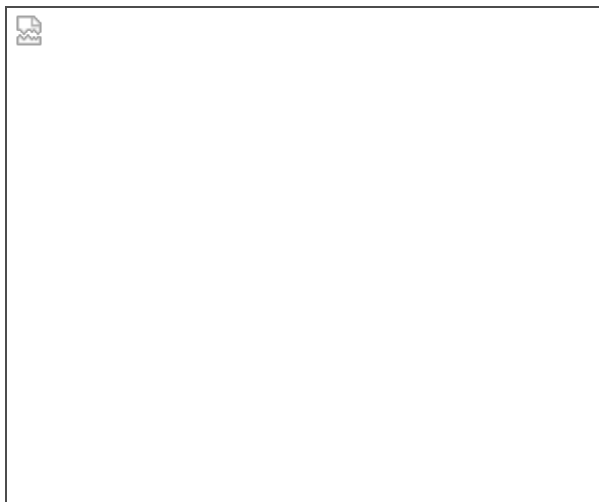


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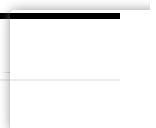
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