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Encinitas Resident Brings Dream of Community Garden into Reality; Cultivating Plants and Community Spirit

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Submitted by Reparata Mazzola, Encinitas Community Garden

More than 15 years ago, Gordon Smith started his journey to bring a community garden to Encinitas, the first of its kind in the city. Through a partnership with the **Encinitas Union School District** and a dedicated, all-volunteer work force, the **Encinitas Community Garden** became a reality back in 2009 after working to prepare the land, bring in all organic soil, and, as a community, build the 120 raised garden bed plots that are now leased annually for a small fee.

As president of the garden, Smith still plays a pivotal role in nurturing this green oasis alongside a board of dedicated, volunteer members. Their passion for cultivating both plants and community spirit is evident in their efforts. The garden is a place where learning blossoms alongside the crops and helps its members grow environmentally sustainable food. The community garden values transparency, honesty, diversity, and mutual respect in its operation.

Garden members value water conservation, sustainability, and waste reduction. Each plot is equipped with

irrigation timers and rainwater is captured on-site for members' use. Synthetic pesticides and fertilizer use are prohibited. A large compost area is available for plant material to help minimize and reuse organic waste. Surplus vegetables are collected and picked up by the nonprofit **Healthy Day Partners** which distributes them to food insecure populations.

As a bonus, all members have access to the eighty-plus fruit trees on the property and an on-site greenhouse is available to start plants from seed until they are hearty enough to grow in the ground.

The most important part of the nonprofit's mission is the supportive community it has created where neighbors can share tools, skills, and inspiration.



“During the pandemic,” Smith said, “the garden was a refuge from COVID isolation. We maintained the distancing protocol, but it was a welcome safe-haven for our members.”

In the garden, no matter the season, there are always diverse fruits and vegetables in abundance. As the members connect with the land, growing their own food not only helps them economically, but they also become hopeful, confident, and healthy.

Learn more at **encintascommunitygarden.org**.



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