

Community garden thrives in Keyport

BY [JIM MCCONVILLE](#) • STAFF WRITER • JUNE 4, 2009



Located at the northern end of Kearney Street, the Keyport Garden Club's community vegetable garden measures 57 feet by 42 feet. It will produce 300 pounds of organic vegetables that will be donated to the Keyport Food Ministerium. (PHOTO COURTESY OF SUSIE SEFCIK)

KEYPORT — A vegetable grows in Keyport. In fact, several vegetables do, along with a smattering of fruit crops to boot. It's the fruits of the labors of the Keyport Garden Club, whose new community vegetable garden is set to launch its first official season at 10 a.m. Saturday.

The garden will produce organic vegetables that, when harvested, will be donated to the Keyport Food Ministerium. Located at the northern end of Kearney Street, the garden has been expanded to

measure 57 feet by 42 feet. The garden is divided into nine sections, with volunteer gardeners planting and tending their own crops. The plot formerly was a field of weeds that served as a parking lot. Keyport's new vegetable garden is the brainchild of master gardener Dennis McNamara, who spearheaded the project last year after he completed the Monmouth County Master Gardeners program. For the program's community service requirement, McNamara, along with fellow

gardeners, last year built a smaller vegetable garden measuring 26 feet by 26 feet.

"It produced over 300 pounds of vegetables," McNamara said. Meanwhile, the Keyport Garden Club grew. It now boasts four master gardeners along with 12 local gardening buffs.

Patting themselves on the back for a job well done, members of Keyport's nascent garden club decided to expand their agricultural horizons by planting an even larger garden this year. Money to build the garden was obtained by Garden Club members through membership fees and fund raising. Garden materials were donated by the Home Depot in Hazlet, while the Borough Council provided a dedicated water line to irrigate the crops. Approximately 25 volunteers rolled up their sleeves to build the garden. Initial work required tilling of soil and constructing a fence. Home Depot donated both soil and a garden shed to the club.

The garden is divided into nine plots, with each containing a specific crop. Two gardeners will tend to each plot. This year's crop will include broccoli, peas, brussels sprouts, bok choy, tomatoes, eggplant, leek, carrots, Swiss chard, potatoes, pole beans, green leaf lettuce, red leaf lettuce, kale, peppers, strawberries and assorted herbs. This year's vegetable garden also has spawned some friendly agricultural competition.

"Within the garden shed we have a (weight) scale and a (weighing) log," McNamara said. "We have a little inside competition happening." Gardeners will weigh the harvested produce, and a tally will be kept on the Garden Club's Web site: <http://keyportgardenclub.com>.

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