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Community garden offers room to grow

*Hanley Farm offers plots with water for \$10 for the year*Photo 1 of 1 | [Zoom Photo +](#)

J.C. Johnston, left, and Kylan Johnston plan to grow cabbages, peppers and watermelons at their community garden plot at Hanley Farm.

Jamie Lusch

May 10, 2010

By Buffy Pollock

for the Mail Tribune

CENTRAL POINT — A new community garden is taking root on some of Jackson County's oldest farmland.

The Hanley Farm Community Garden, a partnership between the city of Central Point and the Southern Oregon Historical Society, is the valley's newest public garden spot.

Garden plots are available for anyone who wants a piece of earth to tend, and 10- by 20-foot plots are just \$10, including water, for the year.

On Friday, Heidi Johnston of Central Point and her sons, Kylan, 8, and J.C., 11, discussed their plans for growing cabbage, watermelon, peppers and zucchini. Kylan carried a small white cabbage seedling he got at school in a contest sponsored by Bonnie Plant Company. If he grows the biggest white cabbage, he'll win a \$1,000 scholarship.

The third grader said hard work would be essential to grow the biggest cabbage, along with "lots of water, lots of sunshine" ... and lots of time.

"We have to come out here a bunch and take care of the stuff to make it grow," Kylan said.

Johnston said the community garden concept was a nice alternative to trying to garden in her own backyard, where a year-old Labrador puppy makes gardening difficult, at best, right now.

She said the plot at the farm will give her and her boys a place for a summer and winter crop. If they start early enough next year, they plan to grow a crop of giant pumpkins with seeds from a local prize-winning squash.

Jennifer Boardman, Central Point's recreation supervisor, said community response to the garden has been positive so far.

"It isn't exactly in the city, but we don't have any property within the city limits that we could offer as a community garden," she said. "We have a close relationship with the historical society so this was a nice partnership.

"Everyone who finds out about it seems to think it's a great idea," she said.

Over the past few years, community gardens have sprung up in Talent, Phoenix, Medford and Ashland, and many plots are spoken for by March or April each year. The Ashland Community Garden at the North Mountain Park Nature Center, for example, hasn't had a vacancy in recent years, even with land-rental fees that can go as high as \$75.

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"All our plots seem to stay filled and we have a waiting list," said Linda Chesney, stewardship coordinator at North Mountain Park,

Chesney said the value in community gardens goes beyond the food people grow.

"Community gardens are a popular idea," she said. "People are really more focused on having good, healthy, wholesome food, plus it's a kind of therapeutic getting into the garden and growing things. There's a sense of community here. People help each other and share ideas and recipes."

Johnston, the Central Point gardener, said she hoped her boys would learn a little about growing food, share ideas with neighboring gardeners from their own community and feel a sense of accomplishment.

"It's going to be a lot of work, but we're looking forward to it," she said.

Kylan figured the garden would take "about a week" to plant and get under way.

As for how long it would take to get food from their piece of ground, he had no misgivings.

"It will probably take the whole rest of the summer," he said.

Buffy Pollock is a freelance writer living in Medford. E-mail her at buffypollock@juno.com.

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