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Homeless Harvesting a Garden of Hope

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GREG PIO

APRIL 16 WAS THE FIRST market "pickup day" of 1993 for a dozen homeless Santa Cruz County gardeners enrolled in an innovative Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project on the west side.

Now in its second year, the Homeless Garden Project supplies 29 weeks worth of fresh organic produce, herbs and flowers to 100 families who buy "shares" in the garden, says CSA coordinator Jered Lawson.

"The farmers get a commitment from the community to support their livelihood," he says. "In return, the shareholder receives a significant quantity of fresh organic produce throughout the growing season." A share, which can feed one vegetarian or two omnivores, is \$11.38 per week.

The project has 70 shareholders, with room for 30 more.

Jered says shareholders save 50 percent on produce bills by signing up with CSA, while also doing the environment a favor. "By having people come directly to the farm to pick up produce, the costs and wastes associated with packaging and distribution are eliminated." The 2.5-acre farm is at 300 Pelton Ave., near Lighthouse Field.

Shares also can be bought for donation to needy families, project director Lynne Basehore says, adding that Santa Cruz resident Mary Turner has donated \$330 worth of shares, and UCSC has funded three seasonal shares. For more information, call the garden at 426-3609.

— Tom Stevens



Bob and Amos Joseph and Michael Walla assemble veggies at the Homeless Garden Project.