



THE HERALD-SUN | PHOTOS BY REBECCA YAN

Laura Jones-Hodge (left), a volunteer and gardener at the Briggs Avenue Community Garden, helps Angela Williams, owner of a new raised-bed plot, sow seeds at the season opening Saturday of the public garden. The opening was hosted by the Durham County Cooperative Extension.

'As ye sow, so shall ye reap'

Briggs Avenue Community Garden welcomes new year's green thumbs



BY MELODY GUYTON
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DURHAM — With gardening gloves doubling as hand-warmers and pruning shears serving as ribbon-cutters, government officials and gardeners declared the Briggs Avenue Community Garden officially open for digging Saturday.

Although the morning air was chilly with a misting rain, it was "good gardening weather," proclaimed Delphine Sellars, director of the Durham County Cooperative Extension.

Durham native Laura Jones-Hodge said

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For the second year in a row, most of the free-use planting beds are already taken, but an email or phone call and small fee can get you into the planting spirit as well.

LOCAL



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Pictured (clockwise from top left photo) Rita Goebel (center), owner of the sugar-snap pea plot and trellis pictured talks with Karen Untz; Barbara Hughes picks out some young plants at the Briggs Avenue Community Garden grand opening on Saturday; Tiffany Griffin, a food blogger at comowater.com, provides vegetarian wraps and curry cous-cous for visitors to the garden; and Cathy Lambe (left) and Christine Chamberlain (center), master gardener volunteers, talked to Lilton Evans Jr. about how to use a live trap as a critter prevention technique.

Garden

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she's thankful for her community garden plots because she doesn't have space to plant at her home.

"My mother always had a garden when I was growing up," she said. "She always told me that if you grow



A self-described "just older youth," Jones-Hodge said she has some physical limitations that might prevent her from gardening in a traditional setting. She enjoys getting a little exercise by planting in the raised plots filled with rich soil and few weeds.

She has planted butterbeans, string beans, tomatoes, cucumbers, cabbage, squash, peas, cilantro, onions, collards, turnip greens and mustard greens.

Fresh vegetables always taste better than those from cans or the freezer, she said. "When you can grow your own, it's just a joy."

Master gardeners were on hand Saturday to offer advice to budding gardeners, a personal trainer demonstrated garden calisthenic exercises, and food writer Tiffany Griffin offered a sampling of vegan dishes prepared with seasonal produce.

"I think food is life," said Griffin, also a psychologist, "so by having a garden right in the community here, you're eliminating or reducing health disparities."

Sellers said the gar-

den — which will bear a bounty of fresh vegetables and increased physical activity by gardeners — represents the county's focus on "the quality of life for our citizens."

Michelle Wallace, consumer horticulture agent for Durham Cooperative Extension, agreed.

"A community garden is not just about gardening," she said. "It's about health and wellness, too."

Santos Flores, coordinator of the community garden, said he's been pleased to see a real sense of community among the gardeners.

"You start to find that people want to grow together, and that growth together from different cultures or generations is what is going to be valuable to Durham."

Master gardener Kat Causey said she also sees the garden as a way to bring Durhamites together, pointing out that community gardeners often trade vegetables, as well as advice and kind words.

"Too often in the city, we're so busy that we don't really have time to get to

know our neighbors," she said.

Flores said the community's response to the garden, which first opened to planting in May 2010, has been phenomenal, with just eight of the 62 plots remaining. Each plot is 40 square feet, and each gardener gets two plots.

He meets with gardeners once a month, and the garden hosts a community work day monthly. There is a sliding scale of \$20-\$25 dollars each year

to plant, which covers water and soil costs. To reserve a plot, call or email Flores at (919) 560-0525 or briggsgarden@gmail.com.

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thankful for community garden plots because she doesn't have space to grow at her home.

"My mother always had a garden when I was growing up," she said. "She always told me that if you grow your own, you'll always have food to eat."

The self-described "older youth," Hodge said she has some physical limitations that might prevent her from gardening in a traditional way. She enjoys getting a little exercise by working in the raised



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