

SATURDAY June 18, 2011

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CABRILLO COLLEGE

Getting your garden into shape

Home Gardening Boot Camp aims to help gardeners

By JOEL HERSCH

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APTOS — Expect to see some shovels and rakes at this boot camp, not in-your-face drill sergeants.

The Home Gardening Boot Camp, organized by the Monterey Bay Master Gardeners program and the Cabrillo College Horticulture Department, is set for June 25 at Cabrillo. Organizers will provide a variety of classes on everything green thumbs need to know to create thriving gardens. The all-day program will teach basic to advanced techniques on setting up healthy, food-producing gardens.

The all-day intensive also aims to mobilize county residents to start community gardens, said master gardener Cynthia Jordan. She will speak at the event about what's required to set up community gardens and will collect names and contact information from people who want to get involved.

"People have got to come back to ground zero, their own community, and start growing their own food," said Jordan, a Santa Cruz resident. "It's about sustainability, and we're in a spot where if we aren't careful, the same thing that's happened to our energy in this country will happen to our food, that is, be taken over by cor-



SHMUEL THALER/SENTINEL

Master gardener volunteers gather at Cabrillo College last Saturday to plan the logistics for the Home Gardening Boot Camp on June 25.

porate entities."

The event is meant to create some excitement and initiative for people to educate themselves on how to reduce their dependence on expensive imported produce.

The way to take back that control over food, Jordan said, is through community gardens. The county has fewer than 10 right now, and most have long

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California Cooperative Extension to take university research and provide it to the community, Jordan said.

The boot camp will include four sessions of gardening classes taught by experts within the UC and Cabrillo staffs, Jordan said. Topics include landscape design; organic gardening; water conservation; integrated pest management; biology of healthy and productive soil; garden tree care and pruning; bees and chickens in the urban garden; plants that attract beneficial insects; landscaping; tools; and aquaponics.

"The classes will be for people with all levels of gardening knowledge," she said. "This is for the novice to the experienced gardener."

Cynthia Sandberg, co-owner of Love Apple Farms in Santa Cruz, will be the event's keynote speaker and share her story of going from attorney to farmer to home-gardening expert, she said. Sandberg, who turned her backyard into a sustainable, money-making organic farm, went through the Cabrillo horticulture classes. She began growing tomatoes on her Santa Cruz Mountains property that were

so delicious, she was eventually asked by chef David Kinch to grow veggies for his renowned Los Gatos restaurant, Manresa.

"I think that a lot of people can do this in their own backyards," Sandberg said. "I want to inspire people to try it out and show them that there's even the possibility to create a small income."

Sandberg said she didn't

have any gardening experience when she first started, but knew she wanted to learn. Now, Sandberg's Love Apple Farm is the exclusive provider to Manresa of 300 kinds of vegetables, fruits, herbs and edible flowers.

Sandberg also now teaches gardening and cooking classes at her Vine Hill Road farm.

"In this tough economy people are turning to their back-

yards to save money on their grocery bills, but I'm also trying to inspire them to learn how to earn a couple bucks off of it, too," Sandberg said.

The whole idea, Jordan said, is to show people how to garden effectively and resourcefully in a county where food can be grown year-round.

Boot camp attendance will be capped at 120 people and is filling up, Jordan said.

IF YOU GO

HOME GARDENING BOOT CAMP

WHAT: A one-day intensive from home gardeners on setting up healthy, food-producing gardens. Participants must register in advance.

WHERE: Cabrillo College Horticulture Department 6500 Soquel Drive, Aptos

WHEN: Saturday, June 25, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

COST: \$35

DETAILS: www.montereybaymastergardeners.org, 427-2255

LOVE APPLE FARMS CLASSES: www.growbetterveggies.com

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waiting lists.

"People can learn from each other, share, and it's definitely a conduit for not just food, but community relations," she said. "This is about people helping each other."

This boot camp will plant the seed for what Jordan hopes will be "a community garden movement," she said.

Master Gardeners is a national program chartered under the University of Cali-