

Community garden defines edible landscaping

Livingston's first community garden recently opened in a very urban setting. The 12 plots are located at the side and back yards of a downtown Livingston house occupied by Western Sustainability Exchange (formerly Corporation for the Northern Rockies). "We established this garden here this year while access and design considerations on the original planned site near Mountain View Cemetery are still being resolved. We had a waiting list of people who wanted plots and when WSE offered this space, we saw a great opportunity to demonstrate edible landscaping as well as establish a satellite gardening space," said Linda Mahr, spokesperson for the Livingston Garden and Greenhouse Project. "WSE promotes sustainable practices and it seemed like a natural fit to add edible landscaping at this location."

The group first removed all the lawn areas, used a sod cutter to remove sod, then spaded the ground in preparation for rototilling, since the ground had not been worked up for decades and needed



to be broken up prior to running a tiller over it. Soil amendments were worked in, garden plots outlined with cedar frames, compost bins built, and edible landscaping planted. "Volunteers have provided all the labor," she explained. "Most of the materials were also donated

or provided at cost. This truly is a community project and has drawn support from a wide area surrounding Livingston. We have volunteers and donations from Gallatin as well as Park county."

The garden design was provided by Errol Schumann, New West

Landscapes, Bozeman, who specializes in edible and sustainable landscaping solutions. He chose fruit-bearing plants such as strawberries, rhubarb, golden currants, American cranberry and one dwarf apple for the street-side areas. All varieties were chosen for low water and maintenance, as well as fruit production. The Livingston Community Garden and Greenhouse Project is coordinated by Ciboria, a Livingston non-profit, which has been working for more than two years to make community gar-

dening a reality.

Initial plans include establishing a community greenhouse to grow flowers for the cemetery and city use, and to experiment with food producing plants not normally grown locally, plus garden plots for use by local people who may not

have garden space or who may want to participate in a community garden setting. "Our process has been open to anyone wanting to contribute ideas," said Mahr. "We've had numerous meetings, held several fund-raisers, and have been working with the City of Livingston Public Works. We hope the land access issues can be solved this year and that the larger community garden and greenhouse project can move ahead next spring."

With eating locally grown fresh food becoming more and more popular, more and more community gardens have been established nationwide. They serve those without gardening space and others who simply want additional gardening space or to garden in proximity to others from whom they can learn new techniques. Many towns in Montana already have community gardens, among them Missoula, Helena, Bozeman, and Big Timber. For additional information or to make a donation, please contact Ciboria at PO Box 1918 Livingston MT 59047, email info@ciboria.org or call Linda at 222-7307. •