

## The Community Garden Is Growing at Sutter Park

By Anne Berner

On September 6, the gardeners at the Carmichael Community Garden at Sutter Park celebrated their first season in the garden with a party to thank all those who helped establish the garden. As garden coordinator, Sharon Doughty, remembers, "Last year at this time, we had just begun meeting with the Carmichael Recreation and Park District to ask if we could use some of the land at Sutter Park for a community garden. In a little over a year, with a lot of hard work by dedicated volunteers, we have a beautiful garden at Sutter Park, tended by terrific people. I am overjoyed that everything has turned out so well."



The garden occupies one acre of Sutter Park and is situated in the sunny, flat area off Sutter Avenue. There are 60 individual plots, each roughly 450 square feet. Gardeners tend their own plots, growing whatever vegetables and flowers they wish. A coordinating board, elected by the gardeners, oversees the garden and works with the Park District to ensure that park and garden guidelines are enforced.

Although there are several community and school gardens in the Sacramento area, Carmichael has not had a community garden until now. After visiting the impressive twenty-year-old Fair Oaks Community Garden and talking with gardeners there, a group of Carmichael neighbors became convinced that a community garden would suit Sutter Park

perfectly. As Richard Humphrey, one of the garden founders and a Carmichael Creek Neighborhood Association board member, recalls, "I joined the community garden group because I wanted to see Sutter Park used for a good purpose. I felt a garden would promote the semi-rural atmosphere of Carmichael and be a great addition to the neighborhood."



The garden group spent last fall holding meetings with neighbors and attending Park Board meetings. With help from UCD master gardeners, plot and irrigation maps were developed. The Carmichael Recreation and Park Board approved the community garden plan in December. The soil was tested in January, the garden plotted in February, and the soil plowed in April. Volunteers installed the irrigation system in May, working three long, hard days. The first garden was planted on May 23, a few days before the deer fence was installed.

The garden could not have been established without the help of so many Carmichael neighbors. According to Ms. Doughty, "Everyone worked together to make the garden happen. Carmichael businesses donated equipment and garden implements. Boy Scouts working on their Eagle Scout projects helped us lay out the garden, chip the walkways and construct gates. They are planning to build a shade structure and make garden signs, also. The Carmichael Creek and Carmichael Colony Neighborhood Associations, as well as many neighbors, made donations so that we could finance our irrigation system and fencing. Ron Cuppy, Park District Administrator; the Park District Board members; and District staff were open to our ideas and ready to help us at every stage. Everything and everyone just seemed to come together at the right time."

For Diana Iriguchi, Garfield-Kenneth Neighborhood Association member and garden coordinator, the most enjoyable part has been the camaraderie between the gardeners and residents of Carmichael. "Folks that didn't necessarily know each other are working together in the garden. Neighbors drop by to walk through the garden and chat with the gardeners. That's the best."

If you are interested in becoming a community gardener, there are still a few plots left. Please call Sharon Doughty (944-3628) or Anne Berner (944-1042) for details.