



—Daily—Tom Gottlieb

FOOD EXPERIMENT

'U' establishes organic garden

By BETH OBERFELDER

Organic gardening—producing food without synthetic chemicals such as pesticides, artificial fertilizers and preservatives—received a boost at the University recently with the establishment of the Organic Community Garden on North Campus.

The new garden, located at Beale St. and Glacier Way, may provide the leadership for research and experimentation in developing practical new ways of living, according to John Remsburg, a former botany-natural resources graduate student who manages the project.

The land for the Organic Community Garden was donated by the University. Funding has come from the University's Institute for Environmental Quality, and is co-sponsored by the Ann Arbor Ecology Center.

Remsburg is at the garden daily to direct the day's activities, welcomes newcomers and guides the growth of the garden. Over 200 people of various backgrounds have already come to work, and Remsburg says all types will be needed—to do research, plant and work with the soil, and study all that goes on in the garden.

Remsburg plans to make collections of all that is in the garden. An insect collection of all specimens found there will enable the growers to know if a particular insect is beneficial, or harmful, and then learn



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how to encourage or discourage it—without the use of poisons.

There are "natural insecticides" that may be resorted to if need be, Remsburg says. Companion planting may also help guard against plant-eaters, and birds that eat insects can be attracted to the garden.

Remsburg also plans to take pictures of all the birds that enter the garden, "just so people can learn." Weed specimens will be collected as well. In addition, he plans to get together a collection of recipes, while using the garden as a focal point.

The storage cellar which re-

mains on the property from a past estate, presents an opportunity to experiment in keeping goods over the winter. Remsburg plans to line the cellar with trays and sand to store a percentage of the garden's produce.

The rest of the garden's yield will be given to all the people who have helped in some way—including the University's grounds crew and garbage-truck drivers.

There is a lot of physical work to be done, says Remsburg. First, a compost, or natural fertilizer must be produced. Composting, or returning humus to the soil is unlike the methods of chemical fertilization which unbalances the soil's supply of nutrients. Rather than working against the soil, Remsburg explains, by composting and returning humus to the soil man cooperates with nature.

A compost is a mixture of rough weeds, cropwastes, high nitrogen manure and a little soil. Organic and biodegradable garbage may also be used. This mixture will heat up to 150 degrees in a few days or weeks as a result of the multiplication of bacteria and fungi.

The gardeners at the "Community" have also spent much time spreading mulch on the soil. Mulch is a layer of material, preferably organic, that is placed on soil surface to conserve moisture, hold down weeds, guard plants against extreme weather extremes and ultimately improve soil structure and fertility as the mulch itself decomposes and becomes part of the soil.

Originally, the group at the North Campus farm planned to reap and thresh the entire garden by hand. But after one week of hand-work, Remsburg says they realized that it would take until August merely to prepare the land for planting. Then they decided to use power tools, "at least for this summer."

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THE CHASE

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