

# CHEARS Gardeners Prepare for Spring Plantings

by Barbara Hopkins

Greenbelt homeowners aren't the only people in town inspired by the recent warm weather to get out to the garden. The Chesapeake Education, Arts and Research Society's (CHEARS) Three Sisters Demonstration Project in Greenbelt, funded by the Greenbelt Community Foundation, is making progress in establishing three gardens in different sections of the city.

Margaret Cahalan of CHEARS reports that four garden boxes were constructed at a workshop held on Sunday, March 28. Plans are to establish raised beds in three areas of the city: near the flagpole by the Community Center, at Schrom Hills Park and near the Springhill Lake Community Building.

### Native Roots

The project's concept is based on the historical gardening style of some Native Americans, who planted beans, corn and squash together in the same bed with the knowledge that each plant type contributed to the success of the whole garden. Such practices are continued by some gardeners to this day. The corn provides support for the climbing beans, which feed the soil through nitrogen-fixing bacteria associated with their roots. The squash provides shade that keeps the soil cool and moist and its spreading habit helps deter weeds. Cahalan uses the Three Sisters Garden concept as a metaphor for different neighborhoods of Greenbelt each contributing something to the city. She said the idea is to plant the beds with vegetables, which may include beans, squash and corn. While the area has cer-



Maggie Cahalan speaking and Kim Walsh to the left in audience at square foot garden workshop in Community Center.



Kim Walsh throws dirt into square foot garden on Community Center lawn.

tainly had a preview of summer lately, the chance for frost still exists, making it risky to plant vegetables yet. Meanwhile, the group has planted four fruit trees near the Community Center.

Cahalan plans also to draw on the principles of square foot gardening, where planting is done in blocks rather than rows and gardeners usually reach into the raised beds to garden, rather than walking on and, thus, compacting the soil.

Three more workshops are planned with the next one being held on Sunday, April 25 at the Springhill Lake Recreation Center. More information about that workshop will be available within the next two weeks. Most likely, a pot luck meal will be part of it. All are invited.



Bob Cahalan and Konrad Herling dig a hole to plant fruit trees on the Community Center lawn.

PHOTOS BY STEVEN R. KANE

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