



# SOW, HOE AND REAP

*a happy harvest*

by Valerie Reinhardt, HORTICULTURE EDUCATION SPECIALIST

THE RECENT HOME GARDEN MOVEMENT is introducing gardening to many people who have never gardened before and is inspiring others to expand their home gardens beyond a few tomatoes and a handful of herbs. The concern about the quality of the food we eat and how it is grown has many returning to the old days when many people had small garden plots in their backyards.

Unfortunately, many people do not have the space or conditions to grow fresh vegetables. For many years, Lake Metroparks has rented garden plots at Parson's Gardens in Willoughby for those frustrated gardeners looking for a place to grow produce. With the current movement gaining speed, Lake Metroparks is exploring ways to offer more garden space to the public.

This past year, Farmpark decided to enhance our garden exhibit by offering space to those dedicated to growing their own vegetables. Farmpark had two applicants during the summer of 2009 that produced an abundance of fresh vegetables. In exchange for a small fee and commitment to

maintaining their gardens, they received a 20 x 15 foot space for planting. Farmpark's gardeners have easily accessible water, fresh compost and resources to gardening information from our horticulture staff. Both participants had great success with their gardens and expressed interest in returning in the spring.

Surplus seedling plants and seeds were made available to the community gardeners. In exchange, they were asked to work in their gardens at least twice a week—keeping them weeded and well maintained. This was an educational experience for all involved as it gave Farmpark visitors a chance to see what can be achieved in a small garden plot, while the gardeners had the benefits of having prime garden space for growing vegetables. It also offered members a way to introduce gardening to their children, teach them to value nature, engage them in healthy lifestyle activities and provide them with an enjoyable outing all at the same time. Gardening is a fun, relaxing pastime—plus the reward of harvesting your own vegetables brings joy to the heart and table.

Due to the nature of Farmpark and its operational hours, plots are currently offered only to Farmpark members. If you are not a member and you wish to garden, this is a great opportunity to discover the benefits of a Farmpark membership. A number of garden plots will be made available from April 15 to October 15 for those interested. For more information contact Valerie Reinhardt or Skip Dugan at 440-256-2122.

