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Valley News — Jennifer Hauck

Jean Hotaling picks some of her zinnias and asters yesterday on a plot she shares with a friend at the Hanover Community Gardens.

Hotaling has kept a plot there for several years, and grows an even mix of vegetables and flowers.

Community Gardens Flourish

By KATHRYN NIEMELA
Valley News Correspondent

HANOVER — The tomatoes are still green, the cosmos are just beginning to flower, and the carrots are just starting to peek out of the dirt — all signs of early August at the one-acre Hanover Community Gardens on Reservoir Road.

This year is the gardens' 30th on Reservoir Road.

The history of the gardens goes back even further, however. During World War II, a Dartmouth College biology professor, Jim Poole, managed the initial "Victory Gardens" — an effort to help the war effort by growing food. The gardens have been used continuously since then and at their peak, held 60 plots.

Today there are 20 plots — each about 20-by-20 feet — on two 50-foot-wide terraces. Residents

pay \$20 for use of a plot for the gardening season.

This year is a bountiful one, says garden manager Marjorie Boley. "Freezers often receive enough produce from these mini-farms to last till the next year's harvest," she said.

This year's bountiful harvest was by no means a given.

Three years ago, Dartmouth acquired rights to Elm Street from the town, and in return built the Garipay playing fields on Reservoir Road where the gardens had been located. In response to the laments from gardeners, the college relocated the gardens further back along the hillside. "What wasn't really suitable for playing fields turned out to be possible for gardens," Boley said.

But the troubles weren't over. When the first crop was planted in the new area, the ground

underneath the topsoil was hard and clay-like — difficult to work with and discouraging for the gardeners.

Undaunted, the gardeners vigorously fertilized and rototilled before planting the next year, and a better crop resulted. This year, Boley says, everything from cabbage to zucchini and asters to zinnias are flourishing. "I think it is a good feeling to get something from the ground, to produce things and have fresh things," she said.

Everybody seems to like the new location. Joanna Long, a 40-year Hanover resident who lives nearby and can walk to them, said "It looked like we weren't going to get any gardens and then the college said we could have this spot. Maybe this spot is nicer," she said. "It's a little

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— GARDENS



Valley News - Medora Hebert

Marjorie Boley is the manager of the Hanover Community Gardens, which are doing well this year.

Gardens

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farther from the road."

Joanne Pomeroy, whose plot is full of cosmos, likes the valley location. "It's such a joy, and there is usually a breeze out here," she said. "So... you can come out here and work even if it is too hot to work in your own garden at home. The location is fine."

But it's not only the vegetables, flowers, and cool summer breezes that attract gardeners. "There are people that have gardens out here that I wouldn't see ... so it's fun to see different people," Pomeroy said.

"But it also gives you a great satisfaction to dig and pull out some weeds and see what difference it makes with the things that grow." And, she added, "it's an excuse to just be outside not doing the cleaning or those things that you should be."

Most gardeners visit their plots every day. If they don't, Long says, they may be surprised when they return. "You might come and look in the cucumbers and find one that's too big."

Susan Wood said she went on vacation for one week and returned to find

five huge zucchinis in her garden. "I've been trying to give them away," she said.

The gardens are a resource for more than just the gardeners themselves, says Pomeroy. "Every once in a while, children in the day care center will be taken out for a walk, and the first-graders in the fall and spring when they come, they walk over and see how things are growing and thoroughly enjoy it," she said. "And it makes it awfully nice getting the children interested in seeing things grow."