



## Top Stories March 2018

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### Errol Heights: Garden to move for road?

In 2012, Brentwood Darlington neighbors celebrated the addition of 45 new community gardening plots at Errol Heights Park, which is tucked behind a small group of unpaved roads near Southeast Johnson Creek Boulevard. Now the city plans to improve neighborhood roads and has suggested relocating deeply rutted Southeast Tenino Court, which currently curves into the park around the existing community garden. One proposal: moving the garden to make way for the road.

The park's 2005 master plan was written with the idea of moving the road to the north. But since then Friends of Portland Community Gardens helped the city and neighborhood found a garden on that spot, partly to replace some of the 155 garden plots lost at Reed College in a dormitory expansion plan.



Some Errol Heights park gardeners say they had not been told of the road plan until a recent city meeting on the project, which will include a new soccer field. Many are literally dug in to the existing garden, with raised beds, hoop houses and sturdy trellises for perennials like grapes and berries. Some plots have benches, chairs, compost bins and even brickwork.

Friends of Portland Community Gardens wants the city to consult the public about the route. Although area roads need fixing, that doesn't mean the garden should be moved, Board co-chairs Michael Wade and Leslie Pohl-Kosbau said. If changes are necessary, they said, the city

should design the road around the existing garden; a narrow street or a different access route closer to 52nd Avenue could be a better solution. The city plans roadwork for 2019.

*Rhubarb returning for spring at Errol Heights Community Garden.*







## Fee hike proposed for nine popular gardens

*Daffodils peak onto the Southeast Taylor Street sidewalk at Col. Summers Community Gardens*

Gardeners in the city's nine most popular gardens could pay 40 percent more for their plots next year in an effort to cut the city parks budget. Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler asked Portland Parks & Recreation to cut its budget by 5 percent this year. Parks believes about \$9,000 of its budget can be offset by "demand pricing" in community gardens, or charging more for plots in the gardens with the longest waiting lists.

The current proposal covers gardens where applicants wait at least three years for a plot to become available - Blair, Clinton, Colonel Summers, Everett, Grant, Ivon, Tabor, Sewallcrest and Sellwood. Almost 475 gardeners are affected, and the increasing fees may

drive some away. "We expect to see an increase in plot turnover when this surcharge takes effect," the community gardens office wrote about the proposal. "By targeting sites with longer waitlists of interested gardeners, we hope to be able to find others willing to pay the increased fees."

Friends of Portland Community Gardens opposes the move. "We were shocked that this is proposed, following a 10% increase in fees imposed in November 2017," the group wrote to Parks Director Mike Abbate. Neighborhoods "with the biggest unmet need for more gardens will be penalized. This amounts to a selective tax." The proposal is part of a larger package that aims to generate more revenue from private use of park lands, like renting Waterfront Park for a festival or a picnic shelter for a birthday party. But Friends argues that the gardens are not simply private rentals.

"These gardens are "outdoor community centers" that bring people together to learn, exercise, grow food to feed their families, and build community," the group wrote. "Additionally, the food donation program to our local pantries exceeds 30,000 pounds of fresh, organic produce given by gardeners each year. These gardening activities involve

people of all incomes, races and ethnic backgrounds, who may not otherwise meet each other, share knowledge, food and friendship .... (T)his is a civic benefit that we want to cultivate to create a more equitable opportunity for all people in Portland.”

The city council discussed a range of potential cuts and fee increases at a work session March 16, from eliminating small community centers to shutting down decorative fountains. After years of cuts to the parks budget, along with ongoing challenges from homelessness and climate change, officials called the proposed choices difficult and distressing. Others suggested that after the revised budget forecast at the end of April, the city may not face the full slate of drastic cuts this year.



*Detail of sign on fence at Colonel Summers Community Garden.*



## Garden Love 2018

*Volunteers plant seeds at Tabor Yard March 6 to create plant starts for Produce 4 People, a program in which community gardeners raise organic produce for local food pantries. Photo by Michelle Shipton Cook.*

Valentines sold by Friends of Portland Community Gardens raised almost \$950 in February for the group's new Mason Bee program. With the help of a community gardener and bee expert, Friends plans to mount new homes for these pollinators in 2018 and 2019.

Other 2018 Friends programs include:

- Garden Manager Fund. Friends will continue to give gift cards to the manager of each garden to help pay for things like work parties or tools.
- Produce for People Starts. Volunteers plant, thin and deliver starts to community gardeners who grow that crop for local food pantries.
- Burlap. Friends continues to coordinate regular burlap deliveries to each garden.



- Advocacy and education. Friends works for the growth and health of all the city's community gardens.

Friends of Portland Community Gardens is an independent organization funded by memberships, donations, Valentine and T-shirt sales and occasional grants. Please join us. If you are not a current member, become one for \$25 at <https://portlandcommunitygardens.org/membership/> and receive perks including free compost and discounts at local garden related businesses. You can also volunteer at seeding or fundraising events, attend a board meeting (the next one is 7 p.m. March 22 at Mt. Tabor Yard, 6437 SE Division Street) or even become part of Friends' hands-on board. For more information about Friends, contact Leslie Pohl-Kosbau at [sharedgardens11@gmail.com](mailto:sharedgardens11@gmail.com), or Michael Wade at [wade.michael@comcast.net](mailto:wade.michael@comcast.net)



*Photo by Leslie Pohl-Kosbau*

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