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Spring HOME & GARDEN

Garden Club's first project heralds spring season

■ Avid gardeners want to add vegetable garden to their community.

MARPLE — As the season's first buds burst through the ground, promising warmer days to come, members of the Gardening Club at Martins Run Senior Living Community have initiated their first project of the year — the Martins Run vegetable garden.

In keeping with the latest trend of sustainable eating, the Martins Run gardeners decided that a vegetable garden would be a great addition to their community.

With support from Martins Run Executive Chef Dennis Fisher, a major supporter of growing and eating local, the residents have selected a variety of plants to be grown and used in many of the dishes served in the dining rooms, beginning with heirloom tomatoes and herbs.

Earlier this month, the residents chose several strains of seeds to experiment with. One is called Cherokee Purple, which produces a purple-tinted tomato, and another is the Sun Gold, the size of a cherry tomato.

They planted seeds in tiny one-inch pots kept in an apartment at Martins Run and monitored the room's temperature, allowing it to double as a nursery. Once the seedlings come up, they will pick the healthiest ones to repot and grow in larger containers.

To locavores' delight, the residents are planning to sell the heirloom tomato plants to the public sometime before Mother's Day.

Families, friends and the general public are welcome to purchase the tomato plants to grow in their own gardens. Tomatoes should begin to appear in mid-to-late July. Profits from the fundraiser will go toward helping the residents expand their garden.

"We are happy to contribute to

the rise of sustainable agriculture through this project. It is rewarding for the residents to plant a garden which grows food they can eventually enjoy eating with their friends and family or sell, with proceeds being ploughed back into the garden," said Linda Sterthous, CEO of Martins Run. "The fruits of their labor will be showcased throughout the community — from the decorative plants, to the tomatoes at the salad bar, to the herbs that give flavor to many of the dishes highlighting the dining menus."

The Gardening Club consists of ten dedicated residents, plus activities coordinator Vicki Conner, who tend to a space off of one of the apartment corridors. With wooden benches, hanging plants and flowerpots, they have worked hard to make this place feel and look like home.

For more information about Martins Run, please contact Lorraine Dellafranco at 610-353-7660 ext. 226 or ldellafranco@martins-run.org.



From Left, Ruth Mirsky, Esther Brom, and Muriel Kornspan all avid gardeners, plant tomato seeds in tiny 1-inch pots made of recyclable cardboard. Once the seedlings grow larger, they will go on sale to the public. In addition to heirloom tomatoes, the Martins Run Gardening Club plans to grow more than 100 plants that can be used for local consumption, both within the senior community and beyond its doors.