

USFS community garden idea taking root

By Kathryn Reed

Two or three 4 foot by 10 foot raised beds won't grow enough food to feed many people, but it's the first start to having a community garden on the South Shore.

Dubbed the People's Garden by the Interior Department, the initiative comes out of first lady Michelle Obama's desire to get the country eating healthier. If the White House can create a vegetable garden, why not the Forest Service office in South Lake Tahoe?

A meeting of gardening types on Monday brought forth a ton of ideas about how best to accomplish this.

"There was quite a bit of good local gardening expertise in the room," USFS spokeswoman Cheva Heck said of the June 20 meeting. "We expect the garden to be pretty small scale. This summer we will obtain the resources to build it and maybe next year we will see produce."

Money needs to be secured to build or buy the beds. Volunteers – not just Forest Service employees – will provide the man/womanpower.

It's likely a charity will partner with the Forest Service and then become the beneficiary of the bulk of the produce. Bread & Broth representatives were at the meeting this week.

With the Forest Service office being on leased property from Lake Tahoe Community College, permission had to be granted to do this. At first there was talk of putting the veggie garden by the college's demonstration garden, but that wasn't going to work – especially with the lack of sun at that location.

As the garden takes off, it may grow in terms of size and function. The Tahoe Resource Conservation District envisions it being an education tool for how to garden in high altitude locations.