

## Full-Moon Party at Moraga Gardens

By Sophie Braccini



Full Moon over Saint Mary's Hills, Moraga

The phrase "Full Moon Party" brings many images to mind; of Selene chanteys, Pagan dancing in the moonlight, or perhaps game day fraternity pranks. Actually, nothing of the kind happened on Sunday June 30th, at the Moraga Gardens. During the monthly gathering of the Friends of the Moraga Gardens (every 28 days in keeping with the cycle of the full moon), about 50 local residents gathered at the garden for a vegetarian pot luck festivity.

Tables were set under the garden's pergola with a comfy fire blazing to keep the cool Moraga evening at bay. Nearby, a large clay oven, built by volunteers, cooked a wide variety of pizzas to perfection. The locally made wine perfectly complimented the salads, stews, cheeses, breads and desserts. Volunteer Bill Durkin poetically described the welcoming atmosphere: "Tickle the earth with a hoe and it will laugh with a harvest, come and be warmed by our communal fireplace."

The Garden's story began in 1985. Deva Rajan, founder of Canyon Construction, was renting a walnut processing shed from Russell Bruzzone, prominent Moraga developer. Rajan had barely noticed the acre of flat land littered with construction debris that led behind the shed. One day, it struck him that this was an ideal place for a garden. Russell Bruzzone loved the idea; the plot had been a garden in the heyday of farming in Moraga, growing the vegetables to feed the hands who resided on the premises. The two men collaborated in cleaning up, fencing and installing the water lines. A Sharecropper Agreement was signed and as a result, the Bruzzone family gets a portion of everything that is sold by the Garden.

Rajan's vision for the Moraga Garden is one of abundance: "Grow more than you need, so you can share the bounty." Everything planted in the Garden starts from seeds. Crops include tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, lettuces, onions, fruits trees and more. The prime organic vegetables are sold to restaurants and markets in the area: Star Grocery on Claremont Ave., Monterey Market in Berkeley, Chez Panisse, Oliveto, and Postino. The money collected serves to buy next year's seeds, organic amendments and to pay the rent. The rest of the harvest is donated to non-profit organizations such as Redwood Gardens retirement home or the Berkeley Food Pantry. The volunteers share in the abundance as well.

The regular 10 to 12 helpers who come two or three times a



Robin Flowers, Deva Rajan and Bill Durkin working in Moraga Garden Photo by Sophie Braccini

week to immerse themselves in this oasis of peace and beauty are from all walks of life. Alice Maisel is a photographer and yoga teacher; she is "chief irrigation assistant" and has been working in the garden for seven years. Bill Durkin, a solar engineering consultant, has spent countless hours in the garden since he discovered it two years ago. Attorney Kathryn Lyddan believes that the garden has changed her life. She brings her two daughters to the garden; there they meet other young people such as Rajan's children. That's how the love of gardening and respect of the Earth is transmitted to the next generation.

The parties are held every full moon. They are attended by the garden volunteers, their families and friends. If you want to get your hands dirty, contact Rajan at [Deva.Rajan@earthlink.net](mailto:Deva.Rajan@earthlink.net) (serious inquiries only, please).



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