

**Town of Montgomery Conservation Advisory Council
Community Garden at Benedict Farm Park
2009 Action Award**

During the winter of 2008-2009, the Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) of the Town of Montgomery convinced the Montgomery Town Board to allow the inclusion of a community garden into the master plan design of the new 101-acre Town Park at Benedict Farm. The New York State Department of Parks (a contributor to the purchase of the parkland) agreed that developing a community garden would be an acceptable use of parkland. A sign-up sheet at various CAC functions indicated a base interest group of at least thirty gardeners.

The garden occupies two acres of high ground with good soil and magnificent views. Within the parcel, a grid of 48 individual 20'x20' plots are laid out in blocks of four with four foot walkways surrounding each block. One row of six oversized 20'x30' plots were constructed on the south end of the garden for community projects like the Food Pantry Plot, whose produce is being donated to the local food pantry.

On the north end, a common area (The Common) was set aside for community plantings of apple trees, blueberry bushes, and other berries. A large lawn area within the remaining plots became available to the public for a nominal contribution of \$25.00 and two hours of community garden service. They are free to grow whatever they wish.

The mission of the Community Garden Project, which is organized by Richard Phelps, is to allow citizens - individuals and families, young and old, either working alone or in groups - the opportunity to experience the great outdoors in a productive and congenial fashion. The Project's intent is to foster self-reliance within a framework of community spirit, to allow people to grow their own vegetables and flowers with a sense of satisfaction and generosity. The CAC believes this Project is an important hands-on link to their agricultural past. Not only does it connect them with the farming life of Edith and Eddie Benedict, whose generous largess made the park a reality, but also that they celebrate and honor the fact that they are gardening within feet of Native American agricultural fields which may go back 4000 years and hunting camps which may date to 7000 B.C.

For further information, visit their website at www.tomcomgarden.org or contact Patricia Henighan at pheinighan@yahoo.com.