

COMMUNITY LIFE

Seeds of tradition are carefully planted

Two Farmington Hills brothers learn many lessons from their yearly gardening hobby that began when each was 3.

By DIANE HANSON
SPECIAL WRITER



The kids are growing like weeds at the Hoffman house in Farmington Hills. Well, it's not really the kids' rate of growth, but what they're growing — and what they're growing is definitely not weeds.

Watermelon, cucumbers, two kinds of tomatoes, peppers, basil, radishes and pea pods fill the garden patch behind the home of brothers Eric, 8, and Brent, 6.

The boys, sons of Sue and Jeff Hoffman, both germinated an interest in gardening when they were 3. That interest grew down through the generations. Sue Hoffman said her grandfather was instrumental in cultivating her interest in gardening.

"I remember that he would come up every single summer at the beginning of summer and watch my brothers and I plant the garden," she said. "He never went home until the first things broke through the ground."

The hoe has now been passed to the Hoffmans' children. Giving credit to his parents' contribution for the initial fertilization, Brent said, "They just kind of started it and now we do all of it. We're the only ones that water it."

The boys are also responsible for picking the produce to bring to the dinner table. They assume the responsibility for the garden, Sue said, just like they do for the dishes and for their rooms.



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Fruits of labor: Eric and Brent Hoffman have something to show when they return to school and tell what they did on their summer vacations.

"It teaches you a lot of responsibility," admitted Brent. "If you don't pick things at the right time, they rot."

Added Eric, "You have to make sure that when you pick them that you only pick that vegetable or fruit and you don't pick any other parts of the plant. Also, make sure you don't step on them."

Brent noted, "You have to have real small feet."

The boys have learned a fair share about how things grow and proper growing conditions. A lot of watering is required during hot days to develop those honeydew watermelons into their sweet, juicy best. Radishes left growing will develop into large plants that produce

pretty little flowers and seed pods to be harvested for next year's crunchy hot roots.

"It's kind of amazing that this tiny seed can grow into a 10-foot plant," Brent marveled.

The brothers have also received some good advice from the folks at

See SEEDS, 15A



NANCY SCHULLIST

Exchange student visits sites

For the second time, we decided to host a foreign exchange student from Europe through the Nacel Cultural Program. This summer, our guest was Ivan Canalejo from Madrid, Spain. He quickly and easily adapted himself to our family and truly became part of the clan.

Ivan is 15 years old and spent most of his time as a companion to my two sons. They truly enjoyed sharing their daily lives with him, showing him what American teens like to do and helping him to improve his English.

Some of his local favorite things included Marvin's Mechanical Museum, the 12 Oaks Mall, watching the Lions practice at the Silverdome, Surpees at 7-Eleven, meeting area teens, enjoying the famous American movies, and visiting the many interesting places in the Farmington area.

Ivan also adored Northern Michigan with its many lakes and trees. He improved his water skiing and learned what "tubing" is. As a matter of fact, he purchased his own tube to take back to Spain with him.

His favorite place to visit in Michigan was Mackinac Island. He easily managed to bike the eight miles around the island with us and found the sites to be fascinating. As many Europeans are, he was very interested in the Great Lakes. Climbing the Sleeping Bear Sand Dunes was also a highlight for Ivan.

As this was our second time in hosting a stu-

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