

NATIVE FOODS GARDEN

STEAM PUMP RANCH

September 24, 2009



STEAM PUMP RANCH NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE GARDEN

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The Oro Valley Historical Society, in a partnership with the Town of Oro Valley, has donated a demonstration Native American Garden on the site of the historic ranch. The first in a series of educational prehistoric and historic gardens, the Monsoon 2009 Garden is now in its initial phase. Through a generous gift from Bill Adler, Oro Valley citizen, the materials for the startup of the garden have been purchased. The fence is up, the beds have been tilled, and the seeds are growing! This is a "Three Sisters Garden", which is a pattern of which most Native

American tribes had some variation. The combination of the three agricultural mainstay crops, corn, beans and squash, is a companion planting technique that sustained Native peoples for thousands of years, and that is still the foundation for Native Food Gardens. The corn was planted first; then when the corn was six inches high or so, the beans were planted next to the corn so that they had a structure upon which to grow. The squash was planted at the same time as the beans: it would sprawl and keep the ground shaded and moist for the corn and beans...acting as a natural mulch. The beans would fix

nitrogen in the soil for the corn, which needed plenty of nutrients. The corn we planted is the 60-day Tohono O'odham corn. The beans are tepary, which are the most drought-adapted beans in the world, and the squash is the Tohono O'odham squash. All seeds are from Native Seed Search, in Tucson, Arizona.

Floodwater farming and Hohokam style irrigation canals are being utilized in an effort to conserve water...although supplementary watering has been necessary in this dryer than average monsoon.