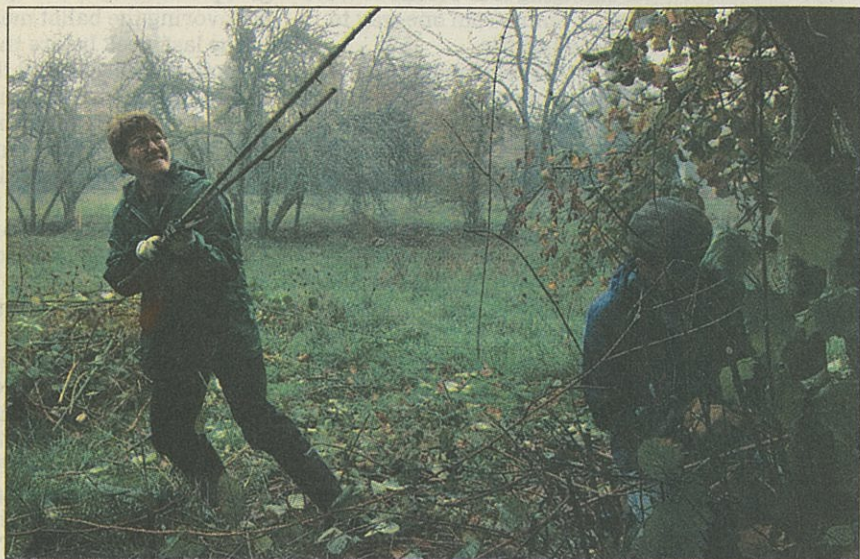


# Nurturing their bit of nature



BRIAN DAVIES / The Register-Guard

**Mare Sippel** pulls blackberries from a filbert tree in Madison Meadow on Saturday. Residents are trying to buy the neighborhood green spot.

*Friends of Madison Meadow have cleared a major hurdle in buying their beloved park*

By JACK MORAN  
The Register-Guard

It's a place to roam and a place to play. It's a place to breathe deeply and to forget temporarily you're in the middle of a busy city.

It's Madison Meadow, a grassy, two-acre parcel south of West 22nd Avenue at Madison Street. To many people living nearby, it's perfect. And they're working hard to keep it that way.

"It's a hidden island of green," said Susan Jerde, a longtime Monroe Street resident who in 2003 helped organize a grassroots campaign to spare the vacant orchard remnant from development.

"We saw a 'For Sale' sign and were like, 'What are we going to do?'" she recalled. "We had to figure out something, because we love this place."

After a series of neighborhood meetings, supporters gave the property its name — Madison Meadow — and began a monumental fundraising effort to purchase the land.

In the meantime, Paul Niedermeyer, a contractor who lives nearby, bought it and agreed to give the loose-knit organization a year to come up with a \$220,000 down payment.

That's \$220,000. In one year.

So the Madison Meadow group hired a lawyer, gained nonprofit status and had members start knocking on doors, asking for help. They got a table at Saturday Market. They placed collection jars at several

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## Meadow: Another \$250,000 still needed

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Eugene businesses. They even set up a Web site, which resulted in donations from people as far away as Germany and Holland.

But \$220,000 is a lot of money, and there came a point in late 2004 when it seemed unlikely they could raise the needed cash in time.

Then came unbelievable news. An anonymous donor was ready to give \$100,000 to the effort.

"That was it. We were done," Jerde said.

Done with part one, that is.

Group members are now moving full-steam ahead with their second and final fundraising push. Another \$250,000, and the property is theirs. They have until December 2007 to come up with the balance.

"We're still going door-to-door," said Doug Yook, a member of the Madison Meadow board of directors.

On Saturday, Yook, Jerde and about 15 others found a way to beat the morning chill. They met at the property and went to work clearing brush and



BRIAN DAVIES / The Register-Guard

**Debbie Summers** plants bulbs at Madison Meadow on Saturday in a cleanup effort at the urban open space.

blackberry bushes.

"It's great — like a bunch of busy beavers out there," said board member Robert Noel, who was quickly reminded to watch his words just hours before the Civil War football kickoff.

"More like diligent ducks," Yook said.

Fruit trees dot the land, a corridor for butterflies and

several species of birds during migration. Supporters say the property also is a benefit to city dwellers and children, who find Madison Meadow an alternative to the more familiar swing sets and monkey bars at other playgrounds.

"It's kind of special," said 5-year-old Eloise Mueller, who helped out during Saturday's cleanup by sharing cookies

with some of the older workers. Eloise said it's "the trees" that set Madison Meadow apart from other parks she visits.

"It's not like the other places," she said. "Here, I can just kind of play around."

The Madison Meadow group hopes to preserve and enhance the little spot of urban open space so it can be enjoyed for years by people who want to get away without leaving their own neighborhood.

"(Mount) Pisgah is great, but you've got to get in your car to get there," Noel said. "To get to nature, that's what most people have to do. We're lucky enough to have a little piece of it right here."

To make a donation or learn more about Madison Meadow, call 683-3430 or visit [www.madisonmeadow.org](http://www.madisonmeadow.org).