



## Planting Seeds To A Better Future

The M.E.R.I.T. Program and EBI are a huge focus here at PDC, South Facility. Inmates, who participate in the program, are given many opportunities to better themselves. These opportunities are designed to prepare them for their return to a regular life on the street.

One of their recent projects involved building a garden. They were taught how to build, plant, and maintain the garden. M.E.R.I.T. facilitators and volunteers who were proficient gardeners passed on the information to the M.E.R.I.T. students. The inmates then drew up blueprints for the beds and layout of the garden.

Once the mulch and soil were brought in, the garden was ready to plant. They planted many fruits and vegetables, which included: peppers, tomatoes, pumpkins, lettuce, arugula, artichokes, corn, parsley, onions, garlic, beets, radish, and cabbage. They also planted avocado, peach, and Asian tangerine trees. A month and a half later they continued to maintain the garden by weeding and irrigating.

One inmate described his experience to me. He said he learned the value of teamwork, responsibility, planning, and organization. He also related how spiritual the whole process was. He said he was personally fulfilled by planting life and watching it grow. At one point, as they gathered around one of the trees, they prayed so they would all learn from the experience. He said he got an overwhelming feeling of hope and love.

With this garden, the M.E.R.I.T. Program inmates desire to give back to the program, South Facility, and the inmates who come after them. They are planting the seeds that, if properly nurtured, will produce something better for them and their families.

