

Carver Peace Garden

There is a special garden near downtown Johnson City at the Carver Recreation Center at 322 W. Watauga Avenue. The Carver Peace Garden was created in 2006 through a project supported by the Johnson City Parks and Recreation Department, the Carver Recreation Center and the Northeast Tennessee Master Gardener Association. For a small fee, individuals, families, or groups can rent garden beds to grow flowers or vegetables, working their garden bed to take their harvests for themselves or donating them. East Tennessee State University Quillen Medical Students also care for a bed and for several years have donated their harvests to the city's One Acre Café. Carver Center Supervisor Herb Greenlee and Master Gardener Nancy Shilling lead the project. The garden can be viewed from the Carver parking lot or the walking path at the center.

In 2020, Greenlee and Shilling conceived the idea of transitioning the way crops were grown from traditional in-ground to raised-bed gardening. A group of like-minded gardeners with various backgrounds came together to develop a site plan and pull the project together. Once a garden with only six in-ground plots, the Carver Peace Garden has grown to more than seventy, four feet by four feet and four feet by eight feet raised-bed gardens.

Many gardeners rent beds at Carver due to conditions at their homes not being suitable for raising plants. This may be due to poor soil conditions and/or limitations of sun or plot size. Gardeners can learn from others at Carver, and when conditions at their homes change, they are better able to grow gardens at home and teach others. Inexperienced gardeners have an opportunity to learn the best ways to maintain their bed and how to plant seeds, plants, and flowers from a Master Gardener or from other experienced gardeners. Sharing successes are important for the beginner as well as the experienced gardener.

Master Gardeners also are working with Carver Recreation Center to provide gardening education to children during Carver's Summer Program and Afterschool Program with the goal of teaching children in effective scientific-based gardening techniques in order to be a lifelong gardener. Children participating in the Carver Peace Garden have opportunities to plant, care for and harvest their own vegetables. They also observe other gardeners' plots to learn about plant care, biodiversity, ecosystems, basic gardening skills and the satisfaction of growing your own plants and vegetables.

Gardening is therapeutic and rewarding for kids and adults alike, as this activity provides the freshest, best-tasting vegetables available. Benefits of gardening generally include boosting your mood, immune system and strength, as well as decreasing stress. The Carver Peace Garden specifically provides participants social connections and plant growing education.

You can help with this impactful community project by donating gardening materials, supplies and monetary donations which are always appreciated. For additional information about Carver Recreation visit johnsoncitytn.org and The Northeast TN Master Gardener Program netmga.net, or call Carver Recreation Center at 423-461-8830.