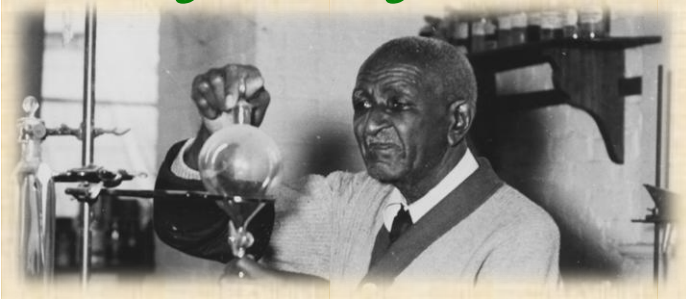


Making Knowledge Accessible



Carver believed that knowledge should be widely and freely accessible:

"The Lord charges nothing for knowledge, and I will charge you the same."

To extend knowledge as broadly as possible, he built a horse-drawn mobile classroom that he took to farms and public spaces, to demonstrate farming, composting, and homemaking techniques.



Carver's sketch of his mobile classroom (left) suggests a humble precursor to the mobile classrooms, processing units, and other extension facilities used by KSU today (below).



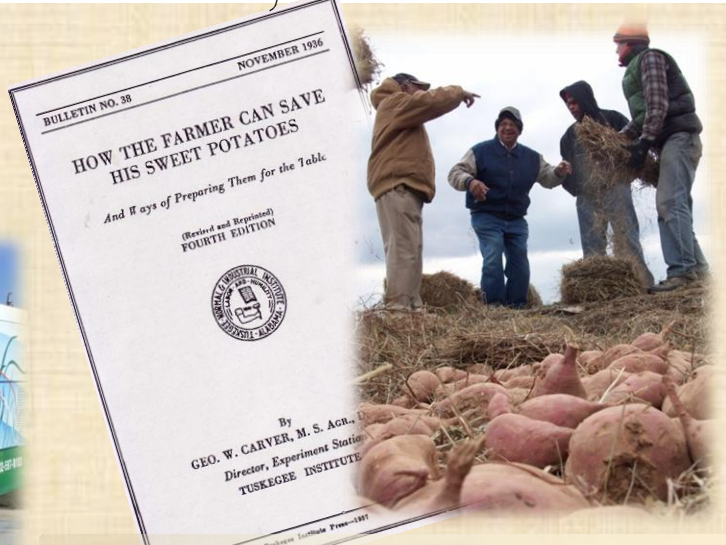
Bioproducts and Conservation

Carver recognized that fossil fuels would run out, and believed that biofuels and bio-based products offered a solution.

"I believe the Great Creator has put oil and ores on this Earth to give us a breathing spell ... As we exhaust them, we must be prepared to fall back on our farms ... for we can learn to synthesize materials for every human need from the things that grow."

But his enthusiasm was tempered with awareness of the need for conservation and simple living:

"We have become ninety-nine percent money mad. The method of living at home modestly and within our income, laying a little by systematically for the proverbial rainy day which is due to come, can almost be listed among the lost arts."



Farmers attending a workshop at the KSU farm reminisce about low energy food preservation techniques while building a sweet potato storage pit. Carver recognized the potential of sweet potato as a low input, multi-function crop. KSU continues work in this area today.

Pamphlet text and design by Dr. Michael Bomford, Kentucky State University Land Grant Program. Kentucky State University is an equal-opportunity educational institution and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, creed, disability, age, or national origin.



Kentucky State University Land Grant Program: Building on George Washington Carver's Legacy



Be a Part of Carver's Legacy With KSU

Resources online:

- KSU website – www.kysu.edu
- KSU Masters in Environmental Studies Program – mes.kysu.edu
- KSU Organic Agriculture Working Group – organic.kysu.edu
- KSU Aquaculture Program – www.ksuaquaculture.org
- KSU Pawpaw Program – pawpaw.kysu.edu
- KSU Environmental Education Center – www.ksuenvironmental.org





George Washington Carver, age 13

Mariah Watkins, midwife and mentor

Carver's early years

George Washington Carver (1864-1943) was born into slavery on a Missouri farm shortly before abolition. He was raised an orphan. At age 13 he left the only home he knew to attend a distant African-American school. He rented a room from his 'aunt' Mariah Watkins, the midwife who had delivered him. She inspired him with a challenge:

"You must learn all you can, then go back out into the world and give your learning back to the people."

ENTER TO LEARN · GO OUT TO SERVE

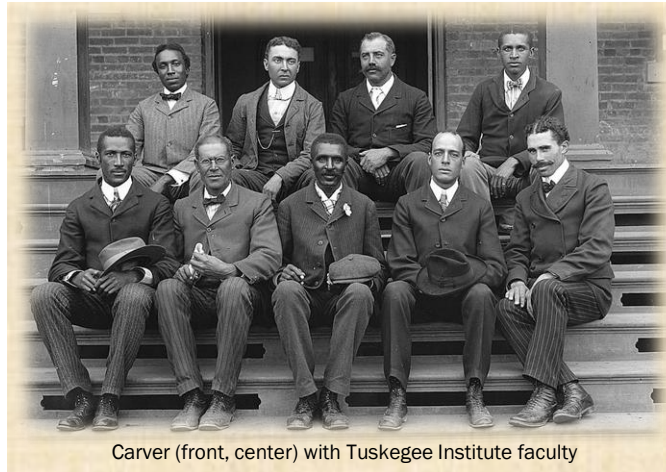
KSU students meet with this charge each day as they pass through the doors of Carver Hall, the campus science building.

Organic products from KSU's farm



Soil and People

In 1896 Carver graduated from Iowa State with a Masters degree in Agriculture. He accepted a job offer from Booker T. Washington at Alabama's Tuskegee Institute.



Carver (front, center) with Tuskegee Institute faculty

On arriving in Alabama, Carver was horrified by the state of the soil, damaged by years of continuous cotton monoculture. He decried the

"exhaustive system of cultivation, the destruction of forest, the rapid and almost constant decomposition of organic matter..."

Carver saw a direct link between the well-being of soil and people:

"Wherever the soil is rich the people flourish, physically and economically. Wherever the soil is wasted the people are wasted. A poor soil produces only a poor people - poor economically, poor spiritually and intellectually, poor physically."



High school student interns learn about soil health in a KSU summer apprenticeship program.

Learning from Nature

Much like later thinkers widely recognized for ideas that led to the development of organic agriculture, Carver taught the importance of learning to farm by listening to nature.

"Reading about nature is fine, but if a person walks in the woods and listens carefully, he can learn more than what is in books, for they speak with the voice of God."

He recognized the importance of building soil organic matter to reduce dependence on synthetic fertilizer.

"Commercial fertilizers will stimulate and for a while produce good results ... but by and by a collapse will come, as the soil will be reduced to practically clay and sand."

"The crying need of nearly every foot of land we have in cultivation is vegetable matter (humus), and every possible means at our command should be exercised to supply this need."



KSU students discuss nitrogen fixing plants while working on the university's organic land.

"I found that ... little germs known as bacteria ... had the power of drawing that expensive fertilizer, nitrogen, from the air, storing it away in these little swellings and afterward giving it to the soil... free of charge to the farmer..."