

CSREES 2003

George Washington Carver Researcher, Teacher, 4-H & Extension Pioneer



Hometown: Tuskegee, AL
Year Inducted: 2003

Carver's horticultural talents were recognized at a young age. In 1891, he became the first African American to enroll at Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts. His studies exposed him to the "hands on" and "minds on" methods of teaching youth and farmers, and to his potential for serving his fellow man. He graduated from Iowa State College in 1894 and accepted a position there as a botanist. He quickly gained professional fame and went to Tuskegee Institute in 1896 at the invitation of Booker T. Washington to establish an agriculture school. At Tuskegee, he gained an international reputation in research, teaching, and outreach; his work in agriculture and nutrition is legendary.

Carver taught his students that nature is the greatest teacher and that education should be for betterment of the people in the community. He continued the field days that Booker T. Washington started, showing the results of his student' experiments. Carver applied the Iowa State extension concept and created the 'Jesup Agricultural Wagon' in 1906, bringing practical agricultural knowledge to farmers. As an educator, he used both word pictures and "hands on" examples to illustrate his points to young and old alike. His teaching at the Institute and outreach into farms brought new scientific agricultural principles into a holistic approach for farm life, and formed a foundation for Cooperative Extension and 4-H work.

Despite his many outstanding contributions to agriculture, rural families, and mankind, Carver made the modest statement, "I am no great person. I am no great scientist. I have only been able to point the way in a few things. After me will come those who read and interpret the signs, the great of the world. I am only the trailblazer."



Carver with a student in the woodland at Tuskegee.
(National Portrait Gallery)