



**Master Gardener
Volunteers
of Cobb County**

**Children's Garden at
Open Gate
Project**



Project Location: 2221 Austell Road, Marietta, GA 30008

Project Workday: Thursday (Time varies with children's schedules.)

Project Chair: Maureen Lok (770-649-6315)

Co-chair: Toni Moore (770-456-9384)

The Center for Children and Young Adults is one of three private facilities in the state that provides services for resident children. It is licensed to do long-term care from birth to 21 years. For the young adults 17 to 21 it is a transition to school or work. Because the ages range from two to eleven, the MGVOCCs have to plan a variety of age-appropriate projects.

The original planting was installed in just one weekend in 2001 by MGVOCCs. Now a group of MGVOCCs work hard to both maintain the existing plants and add more. Project Chair Maureen Lok also works with the head of volunteers at the Center as well as church groups, service organizations and Boy Scouts when extra help is needed. The volunteers also plant and maintain a shade garden, bog garden, butterfly garden as well as beds of perennials, flowering shrubs and trees. Everything is done to improve and enhance the lives of the children.

Maureen writes a grant proposal every three or four months, asking for \$750 to \$1000 per grant. "I realize I can ask for more, but it's a matter of coming up with a good plan, something that's lasting." The United Way, the Georgia Master Gardener Association (GMGA), the National Garden Association, Kiwanis and even Dutch Bulbs who provided 250 bulbs, have funded the various gardening projects. Grant money pays for care of the large lawn as well as the butterfly garden on the bank. Separated by a fence and grass berm from busy Austell Road, these cultivars were especially chosen to attract butterflies and withstand drought and auto emission fumes.

Plans are in the works to add more attractors and hosts to the butterfly garden as well as planting shade trees and evergreens on the bank where a dry creek will be established to divert any rainwater run-off.

Vegetables and herbs are grown in semi-raised beds. The herbs are selected for fragrance. "The kids love to smell the mint and sage" says Maureen. The volunteers enjoy helping the children plant vegetables. Toni Moore says, "Some don't know that vegetables come from the ground but they all love to dig in the dirt." More beds are being planned. All the volunteers agree that the work is worth it when they see the happiness it brings to the children.

Along the fence and a big favorite with the children are blueberry bushes and blackberry vines. Any fruit they missed eating is used by the Center staff to garnish their plates at dinner.

The children work twice a month in the garden. Funding from the GMGA purchased enough child-size tools, hats and gloves for all the little gardeners. In between workdays, the implements are hung neatly on pegs inside the big yellow shed decorated with colorful flowers and butterflies, thanks to Nancy Steele's artistic brushwork.



The mission of the MGVOCC is to advance the horticultural education and practices of its members and to promote the knowledge of and interest in gardening to the members and to the public.

For more information contact Carolyn Gentry, Master Gardener Coordinator at the Cobb Extension. Phone: 770-528-4070