

The Gardens of Southeastern North Carolina:

Johnson Family Farm Holdings currently owns and leases approximately 193 acres of land to Johnson Nursery and The Garden Center at Johnson Nursery. The Gardens of Southeastern North Carolina were established in November of 2018 and were recognized as a 501-C3 non-profit organization in January of 2020. The Gardens intend on entering into a lease agreement with Johnson Family Farm Holdings for 29.34 acres which consist of all of parcel 3313-39-0835-0000 (21.69 acres) and 7.65 acres of parcel 3314-00-7982-0000. This property is adjacent to Johnson Nursery and off of 985 Johnson Nursery Road in Willard, NC.

The Gardens will have parking for approximately 150 cars on pervious material. They will also need a drop off zone for buses with the understanding that the buses may park across the street from The Gardens. We anticipate the capacity of The Gardens will be 750 guests and it will be years before this number is reached. The Gardens will most likely be opened 7 days a week from 9 AM until dusk. During events, The Gardens will be opened longer

The Garden Center at Johnson Nursery shares the entrance of The Gardens. The Garden Center sells trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, topicals, grasses as well as patio furniture, cheremic containers, fertilizer, chemicals and other products that are sold at a typical garden center. There might a be a small gift shop to the Garden Cafe which could offer a small selection of the same items plus items that are specific to The Gardens such as clothing, books, and memorabilia. The Garden Center may mirror the hours of The Gardens except being closed during most of the after-hour events.

Activities:

1. The primary purpose of The Gardens will be to display and evaluate plant material for Southeastern North Carolina. Johnson Nursery, which is adjacent to The Gardens, grows over 1,500 varieties of ornamental shrubs, hedges, perennials, annuals, ornamental grasses, ground covers, tress, and tropicals. The Gardens will be used as a show case for this huge diversity. The Gardens will hire a horticulturalist/ground supervisor, six full time workers, and numerous seasonal workers.
2. In addition to the huge diversity of plant material, Johnson Nursery also represents most of the major brands of plant material such as Proven Winners, The Southern Living Plant Collection, Ball Horticultural, The Wave Series, First Editions, Encore Azaleas, Knock Out Roses, Drift Roses, Gardener's Confidence, and Gardens Debut. We anticipate having each of these brands represented in The Gardens with designated space to display their plant material.
3. We have set aside 15 of the 29 acres for a natural wooded area. Here there are already beautiful mature Beech Trees and other native hardwoods exiting on land that overlooks Washington Creek. On this property, we will focus on natives, plants that attract and feed birds, as well as pollinator plants. We hope to staff a bee keeper who can support this area with active bee hives that can produce honey to be sold at our gift shop. We will also reach out to The Audubon Society to see if they will assist us in the design of this property as well as a connection with their local chapter for an area to observe many of our local bird species There could be as much as 4,000 feet (3/4 mile) of walking trails. These trails could also serve as a bike path. Bike riding will be limited to these 15 acres. Dogs on leashes will be allowed in these gardens only.
4. **Cutting Garden:** Part of our garden will be devoted to displaying plants that are useful for arrangements. Seasonally, we will have classes with approximately 50 people where we will teach the basics of arrangements, allow them access to The Cutting Garden where they may select their own cuttings, and then assist them in making arrangements that they will take with them.
5. **Saving and Documenting Trees:** We will purchase a computer program designed for botanical gardens. A GPS devise will locate each tree at which point it will be documented in the program. Each tree will have a label placed in clear visibility of guests. There will be a queue on each label that will communicate with the computer. With a guest's mobile device, they can identify each tree as well as log onto The Gardens' website giving a description of each tree. This information will also be used to inventory and locate each tree in The Gardens. The same program will be used to locate and document the shrubs, annuals and perennials, as well as all plantings.
6. **Reservoir:** Washington Creek runs in the middle of the 29 acres. We would like to dig 800 feet of Washington Creek to a depth of four feet. At the southern border of The Gardens, we would like to enlarge Washington Creek to an

approximate $\frac{1}{4}$ acre pond with the greatest depth of 6 feet. Near the northern end of the property, we will build a dam to the height of the creek banks. This 800 foot stretch will hold approximately 500,000 gallons of water which will be needed for irrigation and to feed the various "rivers" and waterfalls which will be on the property. We will also stock this reservoir with Koi which could be sold as the numbers increase. This stretch of the creek will be traversed with several bridges making this a nice creek side walkway. We estimate that digging out the reservoir will involve moving 3,500 cubic yards of material. This material will be used in various places of The Gardens. Material from the creek bed will be used to build up the areas surrounding the creek.

7. **River of Endless Possibilities:** Only in Willard are we able to transform a ditch into "The River of Endless Possibilities." The "River" will flow into the reservoir. Near the reservoir will be a 10 horse-power pump and filtration system. The pump will pump filtered water from the reservoir into an 8 inch PVC water line and then 1,300 feet up to the mouth of the river which is located near the property beside Johnson Nursery Road. This water will continuously flow during open hours down The River to the reservoir. The water will flow over various rocks and waterfalls. Several bridges will also traverse The River. The entire 1,300 foot run will be heavily landscaped with annuals and perennials. The path will actually transition from full sun to shade allowing a huge diversity of plant material.
8. **Lake Marian:** Halfway down The River, we plan on digging out an approximate $\frac{1}{4}$ acre area which will be 6 feet at the deepest point. This will be a nice focal point for The Gardens. A lot of activities will happen around the lake. The River will flow into Lake Marian on one end. At the opposite end, it will cascade over an approximate 4 foot waterfall. I am hoping to name this Lake Marian, after my mother, Marian Ritchie Johnson.
9. **Christmas/Winter Light Display:** One of the largest attractions at other gardens is their winter light shows. Brookgreen Gardens, south of Myrtle Beach, SC has their Night of Ten Thousand Candles where they attract several thousand over a three week period. Airlie Gardens has a similar event each year and they sell out quickly. The most attractive winter light display area for The Gardens could be the 15 acre wooded area. Here the native Beech trees could be beautifully displayed with proper lighting. We have thought about having each of the "Twelve Days of Christmas" displayed throughout The Gardens in a unique and fun way. My family saw this at The Carolina Inn in Chapel Hill and is considering ways to bring this creativity outdoors. I am not sure where we can find a partridge in a pear tree but we will try. Seven swans will be swimming in Lake Marian. During the Christmas season, we will have a large living Christmas tree and each night that we are open we will celebrate the lighting of The Christmas Tree with a few Christmas carols and perhaps a local celebrity actually flipping the switch. The River could also be brought into focus. Here we would offer (sell) guests small floating candles. They would take the candles to the top of The River, light them, and place in the river which would be moving at a slow pace. They could then follow their drifting candle while walking along The River Bank which would be planted with annual winter color (pansies, violas, snap dragons, etc.). Ultimately their candle slips into Lake Marian where it joins the others candles all of which would fill Lake Marian with hundreds of floating candles.
10. **The Rubber Duck Race:** Participants will go to the Quack House where they select (rent) one of 200 uniquely colored and numbered rubber ducks. They will then carry these to the mouth of The River. Moments earlier, The River will be temporarily dammed which will raise the water behind the dam to a height of three feet. Participants will toss their ducks into the trapped water which will be swirling to prevent any duck from having an advantage. Once all ducks are in place, a "one eyed wooden-legged pirate" will appear, inspect the premises, and yell "release the quackin." At this point, the dam will be opened and the ducks will be off to a race to Lake Marian. Along the way they will encounter several obstacles that could sidetrack or even blast them out of the competition. At the mouth of Lake Marian there will be a small opening only allowing one duck at a time to enter. The first three ducks through will win a prize and be invited back to the quarterly competitions. Winner of the quarterly's will be invited to the championship where there will be substantial rewards given to the first, second, and third place finishers.
11. **The Garden Café:** This approximately 4,000 square foot facility will be a full-service restaurant open from 10 AM until 8 PM and will serve lunch and supper as well as drinks and snacks throughout the day. We anticipate this seating 100 guests. Seating will be inside as well as on a screened porch overlooking Lake Marian. The Garden Café will be owned and operated separately from The Gardens. It is possible that the café could have a small service area at The Garden Center and delivery throughout The Gardens.
12. **The Event Center:** This facility will be approximately 7,500 sq. feet, and will seat approximately 250 guests for a meal. It will seat around 600 in auditorium style seating for lectures and performances. The Event Center will serve many purposes such as weddings, corporate events, horticultural classes and events, industry events, periodic community praise and worship services, lectures, etc. The event center will be owned and operated separately from

The Gardens. In planning for this space, we will need to consider a dedicated septic system and well. Engineers and an architect will be hired to design this facility and be certain it adheres to all of Pender County building codes and environmental considerations. One concern will be the neighbors whose house is potentially within 200 feet of the event center. Regardless of where the event center is located, we will build a wall that is a minimum of 6 feet high. In front of the wall will be several hedges. This will be constructed to exceed the minimum requirements for noise reduction. Events will need to be completed by 11 PM each evening with another hour needed for departure and cleanup.

13. **Outdoor stage/Amphitheater:** Adjacent to Lake Marian will be a small stage built with a sound system projecting away from The Garden Café. Occasionally there will be small performances held here. The audience will sit on the lawn surrounding the lake. This space should hold approximately 200 guests. These events will conclude by 11 PM with an hour for departure and cleanup.
14. **Praise and Worship:** We would like to have an occasional praise and worship event at The Gardens. Here we will invite various ministers to deliver a message and various Christian bands to lead Praise and Worship Services. The thought is to open this up to the entire community and cross racial as well as religious boundaries. Sunday from 10 AM to noon is one of the most segregated times of each week and we would like to change this in our area.
15. **Event Tent:** In the next few years, as we are planning and fundraising for everything above, we would like to construct a tent to hold approximately 150 guests for a seated meal. This tent will be used for many of the purposes listed above. The meals will be catered.
16. **Bathroom Facility:** In the near future we would like to build bathrooms in this area. The women's bathroom will have four stalls; the men's room will have two stalls and two urinals. In planning for this space, we will need to consider a dedicated septic system and well. Engineers and an architect will be hired to design this facility and be certain it meets all of Pender County building codes and environmental considerations.

Timing: 2020 has been set aside as the year for planning. Our goal is to have preliminary plans made for everything above. In 2021, we will begin the process of obtaining architectural plans and permits. We understand that we will need to obtain the NCDEQ State Stormwater permit and NCDENR soil and erosion control permit. I will attend the Technical Review Committee meeting on July 1st to determine other necessary permits. 2021 will also be the year that we begin raising funds and applying for grants for The Gardens. In 2021, we will also look for a partner or partners for The Garden Café and The Event Center. If all goes well, 2022 could be the year that we begin construction. This will most likely get pushed out to 2023. It will take over one year to construct The Gardens. It is our hope that The Gardens will be open in 2024.

With regard to the approval standards set forth by The Pender County Commissioners, I believe the use of this property will adhere to the desired characteristics for such a development in Pender County. This area will be used for education, evaluation of horticultural materials and experiences, community development, employment opportunities, community worship, entertainment, and simply an area to relax. I believe this development will enhance the character of western Pender County and will have a positive effect on our health, morals, and welfare. We will be very diligent in making this a safe environment and intend on making this property handicapped accessible. The Gardens will not constitute a hazard or nuisance. Our designs and events will consider our neighbors. Where beneficial, we will build walls and/or plant vegetative screens for sound barriers. Once we have obtained our special use permit, we will hire engineers, soil scientists, and architects to make certain we conform to the Pender County Land Use Plan and other plans or policies adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. This same group of professionals will be certain that we have taken adequate measures to provide ingress and egress to minimize traffic congestion. The use of this property will conform to the applicable regulations of Pender County and will not adversely affect surrounding uses. The 29 acres will be full of activity and it is sufficient for the intended use.

Thanks and God Bless,



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