

## How a garden grows

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Shatara and Shatonia Oliver go together like peas and carrots, like funnel cake and powdered sugar and like eggs and bacon.

The two sisters, ages 10 and 12 respectively, sat next to each other at Thursday's reading of "You are the Pea and I am the Carrot" at the Wayne County Public Library on Ash Street.

Assistant children's librarian Kate Rains read the book to kick off the first Junior Master Gardeners meeting.



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Danielle Roberts, CEFS volunteers, points out to Chevis Singleton, 9, left, Nyquan Smith, 9, and Jayvon White, 9, a tomato that has rotted and been taken over by bugs during a junior master gardeners program at the library.

Each food duo she read aloud was followed by a chorus of "yums" by more than 40 children, kindergarten through fifth grade.

Parents brought their children to learn about gardening. The Parks and Recreation camp stopped by to learn about plant growth.

"I have a nickel word for you... it's germination," Ms. Rains said.

She explained the process from seed to plate how vegetables and fruits are grown.

"We let it grow, that's what makes our earth better, and we always try to eat better," she said.

The Oliver sisters are big fans of healthy eating.

"I love cucumbers," Shatara said. "I put them in vinegar, which makes them juicy and better, and then a little bit of pepper."

In their garden at home, they grow cucumbers, blueberries, apples and tomatoes. They say the key to gardening is water, but admit that their mom helps out a lot.

At the W.A. Foster Center, they helped pick collards.

"We're going to cook them up soon," Shatonia said, rubbing her stomach.

In the meeting, Ms. Rains and volunteers from CEFS, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, helped the children make greenhouses to grow peas.

"This is going to be your best friend," Ms. Rains said. "It is the pea, so you have to be the carrot."

The children placed a wet coffee filter and pea seed in a baggy. They are going to take them home to put in sunlight.

Shatonia said she is going to put hers in a window, but Shatara plans to put hers outside.

"I like peas, I eat them with corn and green beans," Shatara said.

After assembling the greenhouses, the children went outside to the community garden where CEFS employee Justin Brills pointed out various fruits and vegetables, and advised which ones were safe to pick.

He explained what tomato blossom rot was -- the plant got too hot during last week's heat and the fruit did not get enough calcium.

"You can't eat it now, but we're going to fix it," he said.

At the pepper plants, Shatonia balked.

"Are they spicy?" she asked Brill. "I don't like hot food. The only hot foods I eat are Takis or Hot Cheetos."

Shatara headed straight to the cucumber plants, pointing out the spikes along the vine.

"Those keep bugs away, so they don't eat it," she explained.

It did not keep her away from the ripe plants.

"I just really like cucumbers," she said.

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