

# United States: Abe's Garden

Name of the residential care centre	Abe's Garden
Company	Abe's Garden
Address	115 Woodmont Blvd.
City/Town	Nashville
State/Province	Tennessee
ZIP/Postal Code	37205
Country	United States
Email Address	news@abesgarden.org
Contact Person	Donna Coleman, Senior Director of Marketing and Development

Web site or audio-visual material  
[abesgarden.org](http://abesgarden.org)

## Vision

Nationally recognized aging design professionals and lighting industry researchers contributed to the architecture, landscape and interior design. Purpose-built for people with dementia, Abe's Garden features evidence-based lighting, use of colour and furnishings. The design encourages socialization, learning, movement and independence without creating stress or unintentional distraction. It provides easy, secure access to connect with nature and

pets, and is conducive to visits from loved ones of all ages. Each household theme fosters a distinct style of programming: Music & Movement, Connection to Nature, and Arts & Lifelong Learning.

## How well does the design of the building support this vision: self-report

Extremely well.

## What are the most important elements in design

- Safety
- Unobtrusive safety
- Spaces that are of a domestic scale
- Good lines of sight to help people living with dementia to see the key places they want to go to
- Good lines of sight for supervision of people living with dementia
- Easily seen wayfinding cues
- Familiar furnishings
- Easily found and unobstructed access to a garden, courtyard or outside space
- Opportunities to bring in personal items
- Provision of places to be alone
- Being designed with a specific vision of how people living with dementia should be supported

## Plan





*Abe's Garden Central Courtyard – Photo courtesy of Dan Heller*

The centrepiece of Abe's Garden's residential memory care community is a well-planned, secure and stimulating, central courtyard that is easily accessible from each household, providing residents the opportunity to independently interact with nature. The courtyard has several engagement areas, including a walkway, outdoor kitchen, raised garden beds, hummingbird feeders, and a water feature. Weather permitting, residents are invited to engage there daily.



*Abe's Garden The Club – Copyright Sarah Mechling Courtesy Perkins Eastman*

The Club, located between the Welcome Center and screened-in porch sitting area, is designed for multiple uses: group or 1:1 engagement, family visits, small events, and team member training. The secured door to the Welcome Center is purposely placed out of direct line of sight to reduce exit seeking. The floor-to-ceiling windows offer visibility to the easily accessible courtyard, as well as daylighting, which is an essential component of evidence-based lighting.



*Abe's Garden Arts and Lifelong Learning Household – Copyright Sarah Mechling Courtesy Perkins Eastman*

While certain decorative elements are art-themed in this household to promote creativity and help with wayfinding, its core elements are replicated in the other two households: an open kitchen, located in slightly varied, but with close proximity to residential suites to activate sense of smell and cue mealtime; somewhat contemporary, yet familiar homelike environments, including a living room and flexible spaces for dining and other engagement; small, intimate nooks to provide places of respite for residents and visitors; courtyard views; clerestory and floor-to-ceiling windows that provide ample natural light.

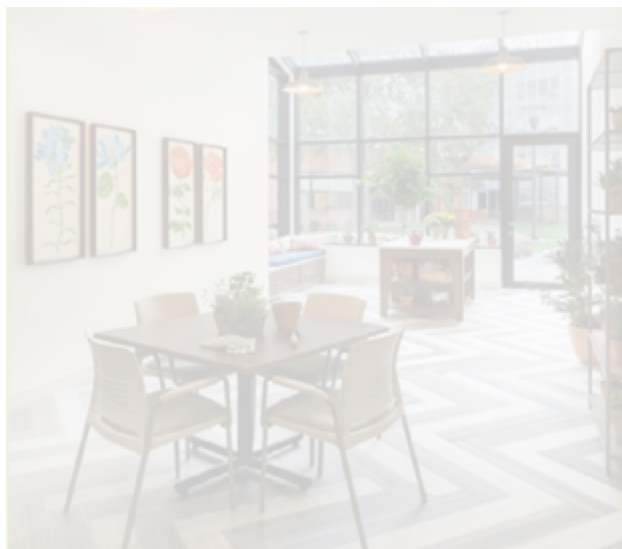


*Abe's Garden Memory Care Residential Suite – Copyright Sarah Mechling Courtesy Perkins Eastman.*

Approximately 300 square feet each, the residential suites are designed to be safe and comfortable. Community provided furniture by Furnished Living was collaboratively designed with Abe's Garden team members to meet the needs of individuals with dementia living in an assisted living licensed residence. Sample Furnished Living pieces include a bed with

supportive side arms, a nightstand with an amber light to reduce late night falls, and a gliding motion chair with a fall prevention element.

The private, zero barrier entry bathroom accommodates the turning radius of wheelchairs and space for care partners to manoeuvre while assisting residents.



*Abe's Garden Conservatory – Copyright Sarah Mechling at Perkins Eastman*

The Conservatory, located in the Connection to Nature household, provides those with dementia with an opportunity to interact with nature independently or in classes and regardless of weather. Arranging flowers for dining tables, studying and planting various plants, and napping (both feline and human) are the most common conservatory pastimes. It is notable that nature, or biophilia, has been shown to reduce stress, mental fatigue and agitation in those with dementia.

## Overview

Abe's Garden opened in 2015 to provide services specifically for people living with dementia. It accommodates 42 residents.

Internal and external trip hazards in the form of uneven surfaces, steps and highly contrasting floor finishes have been almost totally avoided. Safety features such as fences, door locks or other barriers to movement are unnoticeable.

The places that residents often want to go to, such as sitting areas, gardens, a toilet or activity spaces are very easily found as residents can see everything they need to see from where they spend most of their time. Staff can very easily see the residents from where they

spend most of their time making it possible for them to keep a watchful eye on the residents and lend support when needed.

A moderate amount of emphasis has been placed on reducing noise levels and a great deal of emphasis has been placed on reducing clutter. Doors that are not intended to be used by people living with dementia are well hidden while a moderate amount of emphasis has been placed on the use of colour, contrast or lighting to highlight those things that the residents may wish to find.

The way to the outside space is very easily seen and is unobstructed to allow the residents to walk from the inside of the building to the outside and back in again.

A great deal of emphasis has been placed on providing objects and activities for residents to engage with as they move around and on creating engagement destinations at the end of corridors.

The style of furniture is very familiar to the residents and there are also many decorations, ornaments or artworks that are familiar. Residents are allowed to bring in their own, familiar objects.

There are a few areas where residents can choose to be by themselves and many places where they can choose to be with a small number of people.

All rooms are clearly identifiable; their purpose is very clear.

There are one or two easily accessible places where the resident can choose to be with people from the surrounding community.

## Additional information

As part of our mission to study, test and disseminate best practices in dementia care, Abe's Garden is the current site for an applied research study. In partnership with Mariana G. Figueiro, Ph.D., Director of the Lighting Research Center and Professor of Architecture at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and StackCare, we are exploring a lighting strategy to reduce depression and improve sleep-wake cycles in people with advanced dementia.

Abe's Garden's on-site garden that provides seasonal farm-to-table ingredients for independent, assisted living, and memory care resident meals is 100% managed by dedicated volunteers, including independent living residents.