



*Sacramento  
County Gardening  
With Youth  
Resource Guide  
cover design.*

## **Gardening With Youth Educational Program**

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### **Introduction**

Youth garden programs are a challenge to develop for both the experienced horticulturist and particularly for non-gardening school teachers and youth program instructors. The Sacramento County UC Master Gardeners created the Gardening With Youth program to aide instructors of youth garden projects with horticultural support. This program unites skilled gardeners with non-gardening educators. School districts, individual schools and youth groups receive verbal and written University research-based information and on site visits from Master Gardeners. The State Department of Education's School Garden Project (CA Dept. of Educ. 1997) has prioritized "A garden in every school." As a result, over 100 schools and youth programs have contacted our office requesting horticulture information. During this past school year, sixty-five Master Gardeners provided assistance to youth garden projects. Even though a high number of Master Gardeners are participating, our program is unable to adequately respond to all requests from the community.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The goal of the Gardening With Youth Educational Program is to expand our methods for providing instructors with information. The ability to assist with the advancement of youth garden projects has increased with the development of a resource guide, the expansion of educational display materials and the distribution of the *Garden Adventures* newsletter. The easy to use *Gardening With Youth Resource Guide* emphasizes practical information, providing answers to questions routinely encountered when working with youth gardens. In the absence of adequate numbers of Master Gardeners to meet the requests, the Resource Guide will assure that garden instructors still receive comprehensive and reliable information. The visual displays are a major component in our efforts to educate the public on the valuable contributions youth gardens make to children and the community as a whole. The *Garden Adventures* newsletter addresses the current concerns of instructors, parent volunteers and administrators on subjects such as garden site management and seasonal pest problems.

### **Discussion**

Thirteen Master Gardeners have contributed to the development of the Resource Guide. The contents for the Resource Guide were developed by information

collected from school garden project coordinators during the past two years. Most notably from the twenty-one Master Gardeners who shared their experiences on working with youth garden projects during a four-hour workshop and from instructors who attend quarterly garden meetings in the San Juan School District. The Resource Guide includes chapters on the University of California and community resources, Integrated Pest Management, and garden site safety. The garden development chapters provide information on administrative guidelines, educational publications and local field trip destinations. Upon completion, we will distribute the Resource Guide to those school garden program leaders that have contacted our office during the past two years. We will make contact with the remaining elementary schools in Sacramento County to determine distribution sites. The guide will be routinely updated and distributed as requests are received. The GWYRG will appear on the Web site: [www.cesacramento.edu](http://www.cesacramento.edu).

Our educational exhibits were expanded with the addition of a portable tabletop display, posters and photograph enlargements. Over 500 children interacted with a vermicompost bin and viewed the educational display at the May Sacramento County Fair. The worm bin and a compost demonstration at the January 2000 Home Show was observed by over 1100 parents, instructors and children. The expanded visual and interactive displays have resulted in increased hands-on participation by children. Parents are now exposed to horticulture information in an informal family setting. Master Gardeners reported that many parents are surprised at the interest and depth of knowledge the chil-

dren have for worms, beneficial insects and in growing vegetables.

An expanded Youth Garden resource library now includes the Jr. Master Gardener and the 4-H TWIGS curriculum, along with numerous youth orientated books, videos and catalogs. The University of California, *Natural Enemies Handbook* slide set was purchased for use in classroom settings.

The availability of postage and printing funds assisted in the distribution of the third edition of the *Garden Adventures* newsletter. The Spring 2000 printing featured grant funding sources, articles on mulch, springtime flowering plants and Mother's Day gift ideas from the garden.

As expected, the ability of the Sacramento County Master Gardeners to assist with the development of youth garden projects has advanced substantially with the creation of a resource guide, the expansion of education display materials and the distribution the *Garden Adventures* newsletter. The Gardening With Youth Educational Program will continue to expand to meet the horticulture needs of our local youth garden projects.

#### ***Literature Cited***

California Department of Education. 1997 Nutrition Education and Training Section. School Garden Project.

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