



The Junior Master Gardener Program uses hands-on activities to teach horticultural and environmental science concepts.

Junior Master Gardener_{sm} Program

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Introduction

There is a need to educate youth about the environment, to interest and involve them in agriculture, and to encourage their participation in activities that improve their communities. Here in Ventura County, through the University of California Cooperative Extension and the **UC Hansen Trust** programs such as “Uncle Nick’s Garden”, “The Growing Academy”, and 4-H, we have attempted to do just that.

In an effort to continue our work and to present our youth with the highest quality educational programs, we piloted the Junior Master Gardener_{sm} Program, a new and innovative youth gardening project developed by the **Texas A&M Agricultural Extension Service**. Modeled after the successful and popular Master Gardener program for adults, this exciting national program cultivates leadership and volunteerism. The **JMG_{sm} Program** offers horticultural and environmental science concepts through fun, hands-on garden-related activities. JMG_{sm} is flexible with regards to its use, and is suitable for many different groups including public/private/home schools, after-school programs and youth clubs. Activities incorporate interdisciplinary content, including basic concepts of science, math, language arts, and social studies in support of state and national guidelines.



Junior Master Gardeners made floral arrangements for the JMG celebration.

With the generosity of the **Elvenia J. Slossen Endowment Fund**, we were given the opportunity to involve many youth, and adult extenders, in the Junior Master Gardener_{sm} Program.

Goals/Objectives

1. Deliver the Junior Master Gardener_{sm} Program, with UC staff and volunteer Master Gardeners as program leaders, at a school, an after school program, and at a farm worker housing cooperative.
2. Train and support adult extenders to deliver the Junior Master Gardener_{sm} Program to the youth with whom they work.
3. Develop a relationship between junior and adult Master Gardeners.

Results/Outcomes

We planned to use the first delivery method, involving UCCE staff and trained Master Gardener volunteers, to offer the Junior Master Gardener_{sm} Program at three sites. Sites included Limoneira Ranch (a farm labor house cooperative), Pleasant Valley Historical Museum and Botanical Garden (an after school program), and Casa Pacifica Classroom (a county school within a jointly administered shelter program for abused and neglected children). Programs at all three sites were highly successful.

The Limoneira group doubled in size over the first few meetings, and ended with 30 participants. We were just short of achieving Golden Ray Certification for Chapter One with this group in the 8-week pilot program. The site resumed the program in the spring,



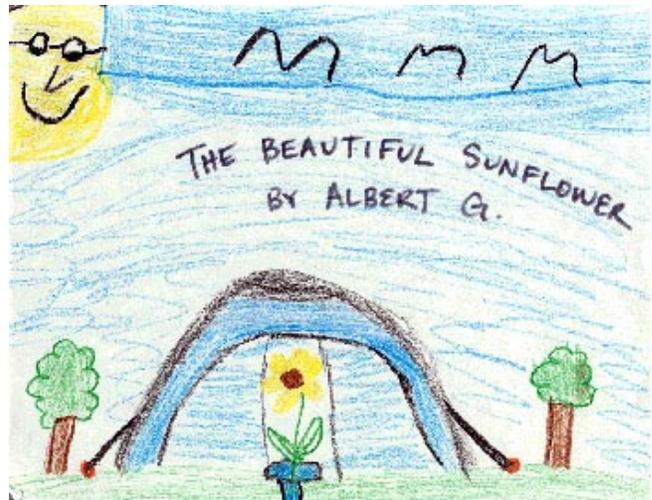
Cross-generational education is encouraged in the JMG Program. Here, a JMG member shares what she has learned with younger children on a tour of the garden.

continuing their work towards certification. The program was fortunate to have the assistance of two Hispanic teen extenders to assist with recruitment and communication.

The Pleasant Valley Historical Museum and Botanical Garden in Camarillo hosted the “Grow’em and Eat’em” JMG_{sm} group, consisting of members of the Las Posas 4-H community club. Sixteen children from age 7 to 14 were involved in both an active gardening program and the JMG_{sm} lessons. The program is scheduled to start up again in the fall.

Casa Pacifica Classroom 4 is a JMG_{sm} site within a county school, which is a jointly administered shelter program for abused and neglected children. JMG_{sm} lessons were integrated into an existing indoor/outdoor gardening program and provided direction in garden-based learning for both the instructor and the participants. Certification was not a goal at this site because of the lack of consistent attendance. However, the program was well received by both youth and staff.

To meet our second goal of training extenders, a major youth gardening training event was held in September 2000, with the emphasis on the JMG_{sm} Program. More than 120 people participated in the conference. The Texas A&M JMG_{sm} staff attended the conference, delivering both keynote address and a half-day training session. Through this training, five new local JMG_{sm} sites were established immediately, including sites at schools, after school programs (at both schools and youth organizations), and at a botanic garden. Several



Junior Master Gardeners enjoy learning how to grow plants for food and for their beauty.

other sites are scheduled to begin in September.

We coordinated and provided assistance to the new extender programs throughout the year. Equipment boxes were assembled that contain the supplies needed to conduct numerous JMG_{sm} activities. These boxes gave extenders the “jump start” on their programs. We were available to answer questions, give advice, and provide contacts (Master Gardeners, grant-givers, experienced JMG_{sm} program leaders) to help in their programs.

In addition to the major training held at the beginning of the grant cycle, four additional training sessions were conducted. Many of those who attended these trainings indicated that they would begin their programs in the fall of 2001 after the new school year begins. We anticipate a large number of new programs beginning later this year.

It was important for us to learn if this program met the needs of our clientele. Staff who conducted the JMG_{sm} Program found that the program was very flexible, easy to present, and that the curriculum, although developed in Texas, was universal. The few suggestions that they had that would make the program easier for use in California were noted and the information made available to those presenting the program. Suggestions were made to the Texas A&M JMG_{sm} development staff, and they have since made additions to the program to make it possible for youth to receive recognition quicker, and makes it easier for leaders to track youth participation.

Extenders and youth participants were also contacted to get their views of the program. We found that they were very pleased with the JMG_{sm} program, and were looking forward to continuing with the program. The youth participants enjoyed learning about gardening, nutrition, and environmental science through the activities. Many participated in community service activities related to their JMG_{sm} activities. At our end of the year celebration, two groups were recognized for their excellent community service projects.

Our final goal was to develop a relationship between Junior and Adult Master Gardeners in our county. Master Gardeners and youth participants in the JMG_{sm} Program worked together to create two wonderful gardening projects for the UC Hansen Trust Farm Fest 2001. Working side by side, they planted and cared for a radish spiral garden and a rainbow-like garden for the enjoyment of all who attended Farm Fest. Both groups gathered a few weeks later to celebrate their accomplishments. A special award was given to one Master Gardener volunteer for his work with the youth in the program.

The JMG_{sm} Program celebration gave the youth participants an opportunity to show what they had learned over the course of the program, as each group was invited to bring posters and/or displays showing their work. They were also asked to share what they had learned by leading hands-on activities at the celebration. All youth enrolled in the JMG_{sm} Program received a certificate of participation and all leaders were recognized for their contributions.

Probably the most amazing part of the event oc-

curred at the dinner, which was a salad buffet. The adults who attended the event were astounded to see the amount and the variety of vegetables that the JMG_{sm} kids were eating! The nutritional attitudes of the youth had definitely improved through the JMG_{sm} Program.

Several state and local dignitaries were invited to the celebration, as well as all youth who participated during the year, their program leaders, parents, and Master Gardeners. The dignitaries, including representatives from the California Department of Education, Ventura County Board of Supervisors, UC Hansen Trust, and the State 4-H Office, were given the opportunity to see examples of the youth work in the program, interact with the youth and leaders, and learn about the program in general. The response was wonderful, including invitations to present information about the JMG_{sm} Program at various local and state meetings and conferences.

Conclusion

This has been an exciting year for the JMG_{sm} Program in Ventura County. Through the JMG_{sm} Program, we have been able to educate youth about agriculture and the environment. We have seen youth grow to become active participants in their communities through community service projects. We have seen kids learn to eat new foods and improve their diets. We have seen kids and adults work together in a gardening project. We have seen their interest in gardening grow.

Thanks to the opportunity that we were given through the Elvenia J. Slossen Endowment Fund, we were able to receive additional funding from the UC



Junior Master Gardeners, JMG leaders, volunteers, parents and dignitaries attended the "hose cutting" ceremony for the JMG Garden at the Hansen Agricultural Learning Center



Bug-collecting and observation was an educational activity that the deaf students truly enjoyed.



Deaf students learned about plants and insects while participating in the JMG Program.

Hansen Trust to continue JMG_{sm} programming. More adult extenders will be trained; new JMG_{sm} curriculum will be introduced, including a Spanish edition, a special curriculum devoted to garden-related health and nutrition, and a curriculum for 6-8 grade youth; and new JMG_{sm} groups will be started.

Slosson funding has also allowed Ventura County to participate as one of four counties in California to review and critique the JMG_{sm} Program; to pilot a variety of sites with various populations; and be a lead county in the statewide 4-H JMG_{sm} Program setting an example for other counties in our state.

This final report of work performed on the Junior Master Gardener_{sm} Program is submitted with sincere appreciation on behalf of the staff, and more importantly, the youth who participated in this program. We all look forward to continuing this program in Ventura County and helping it grow.



Junior Master Gardeners made fresh-squeezed orange juice for a nutritious snack.

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