



# Mississippi 4-H Junior Master Gardener<sup>sm</sup> Program



## Guidelines for *Extension Agents*

### Overview

The Mississippi 4-H Junior Master Gardener<sup>sm</sup> Program is a 4-H youth gardening project that offers horticulture and environmental science education as well as life-skills development through fun and creative activities.

It is modeled after the highly successful Master Gardener program and is committed to helping young people become good gardeners and good citizens so they can make positive contributions to their communities, schools, and families.

As participants in the Junior Master Gardener<sup>sm</sup> Program, some youths may be new to 4-H. Encourage these participants to take advantage of other, related 4-H programs. The motto of the 4-H program is "To Make the Best Better." Through the 4-H JMG<sup>sm</sup> Program, horticulture is used as a tool to cultivate youths and communities.

Level 1 of the 4-H JMG<sup>sm</sup> Program is for children in grades 3 to 5. The first module, Plant Growth and Development of Level 2 (grades 6-8) is available, with other modules in development. Level 3 (grades 9-12) is also in development.

Level 1 curriculum incorporates group and individual activities and is supported by a 4-H JMG<sup>sm</sup> Youth Handbook and a Teacher/Leader Guide. Level 2 curriculum combines the Teacher/Leader Guide and reproducible pages of the independent student handbook activities into a single book. Group activities can be conducted with school classes, after-school programs, home schools, or other groups of interested young gardeners.

Individual activities allow youth gardeners to pursue self-directed learning at home. Flexibility is a key component of the 4-H JMG<sup>sm</sup> Program. Most of the activities allow 4-H JMG<sup>sm</sup> leaders and young gardeners to customize the program to meet their needs and interests.

Although not required, young people can become certified 4-H Junior Master Gardeners<sup>sm</sup> by completing a specified number of activities from the curriculum.

Another way to participate in the program is to complete a Golden Ray Series<sup>sm</sup>, which requires a shorter time for completion. Program leaders also may choose to use the curriculum to supplement existing youth educational programs or classes. Through the 4-H JMG<sup>sm</sup> Program and its guidelines, children share common experiences in gardening and community service.

### History

The 4-H JMG<sup>sm</sup> Program began in Texas in 1995 as a dream of a few avid Master Gardeners, teachers, children, and Texas Agricultural Extension Service faculty. These people planted the seed that has now germinated into a premiere children's gardening program. A team of more than 600 children and adults contributed to the planning, writing, layout, art, and pilot phase of this curriculum.

Educators developed a Teacher/Leader Guide and Youth Handbook for children in grades 3-5 and designated it as Level 1. The first module in Level 2, targeting grades 6-8, is available now. Other modules will be released at a later date. Level 3, for grades 9-12, is under development and likely will be several years before it is available.

Level 1 made its debut in August 1999. Fifteen months later, the program had 137 registered groups representing 4,400 youths in 22 states and in New Zealand.

Extension introduced the Junior Master Gardener<sup>sm</sup> Program into Mississippi in the fall of 2000. A pilot program in north Mississippi determined the program's impact, and it identified and evaluated Mississippi's specific Junior Master Gardener<sup>sm</sup> needs. The JMG<sup>sm</sup> Program has become an integral part of the Mississippi 4-H program and is making a positive influence on Mississippi's youth.

### Purpose

Because many youth are removed from simpler, agrarian lifestyles of past generations and live in an increasingly urbanized, technological society, this Extension youth development and education program exposes them to traditional, agricultural opportunities.

The 4-H JMG<sup>sm</sup> Program incorporates learn-by-doing activities involving plants and gardening, which increase the children's awareness and understanding of the importance of agriculture and the environment.

Studies show the following situations put youth at risk:

- Lack of relevant curriculum
- Lack of community support services or response
- Poor school attendance
- Low self-esteem/self-efficacy
- No parental involvement

Recent studies show that school gardening:

- Increases self-esteem.
- Helps students develop a sense of ownership and responsibility.
- Helps foster relationships with family members.
- Increases parental involvement.

Texas A&M University research indicates the following:

- Gardening as a group activity can be used as a socialization tool to learn leadership and volunteerism.
- Students who participated in this program developed responsibility in caring for living things.
- Youth in this program increased compassion for people.

The Mississippi 4-H JMG<sup>sm</sup> Program provides a tremendous opportunity for the state's youth to do the following:

- Enrich and expand their minds through agriculture-based learning activities.
- Broaden their horizons by building character and knowledge.
- Relate to their agrarian roots through “get your hands dirty” activities.

The program has enormous potential to make a positive impact on the following:

- Environmental awareness
- Nutritional habits
- Horticultural knowledge
- Leadership skills
- Volunteerism
- Community involvement

Under the guidance and support of Extension agents, 4-H volunteer leaders use horticulture and gardening as a tool to teach youth how to do these things:

- Develop leadership, teamwork, and other life skills.
- Identify community needs/volunteer opportunities.
- Promote peer and cross-generational mentoring.
- Foster personal pride and responsibility.
- Increase knowledge in horticulture and environmental education.

## Administration

### NATIONAL:

Junior Master Gardener<sub>sm</sub> Program Headquarters  
225 Horticulture/Forestry Science Building  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX 77843-2134  
Phone: (409) 845-8906 or Toll free (888) JMGKIDS  
Fax: (409) 845-8906  
E-mail: [jmg@jmgkids.com](mailto:jmg@jmgkids.com)

*To order JMG<sub>sm</sub> curriculum:*  
order online at [jmgkids.com](http://jmgkids.com) or mail order  
JMG Kids<sub>sm</sub>  
4066 State Highway 6 South  
College Station, TX 77845  
Fax order:  
(979) 690-7547

### STATE:

In Mississippi the program is administered through MSU-ES and is a 4-H program.

### Contact:

Lelia Scott Kelly, Ph.D.  
4-H JMG<sub>sm</sub> Coordinator/Assistant Extension Professor  
North Mississippi Research and Extension Center  
P.O. Box 1690  
Verona, MS 38879  
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Fax: (662) 566-2257  
E-mail: [leliak@ext.msstate.edu](mailto:leliak@ext.msstate.edu)

### DISTRICT:

The area horticulturist coordinates the programs in his/her district and assists county agents in training all adults in the program. He/she also assists the county Extension agents in implementing and evaluating the program and serves as a resource person for the program.

### COUNTY:

The county Extension agent with 4-H responsibility manages the program on the county level and serves as the county 4-H JMG<sub>sm</sub> coordinator, playing a key role in determining the success of the program. (See the next section for the county 4-H JMG<sub>sm</sub> coordinator's responsibilities.)

### CLUB:

A teacher, scout leader, Master Gardener, or other volunteer leader is directly responsible for managing and instructing the youth in his/her group. (Specific responsibilities are listed in Information Sheet 1626 *Guidelines for Volunteer Leaders*.)

## County 4-H Junior Master Gardener<sub>sm</sub> Coordinator's Responsibilities

These guidelines provide the flexibility to customize the 4-H JMG<sub>sm</sub> Program at the county level. The county 4-H JMG<sub>sm</sub> coordinator is responsible for the following:

- Ensures that all volunteer leaders and youth are properly registered in the 4-H organization.
- Provides leadership and management of the county program.
- Serves as the first contact and as a resource person for the program's volunteer leaders.
- Assists in training volunteer leaders.
- Distributes and manages the use of the county 4-H JMG<sub>sm</sub> manuals and materials.
- Is responsible for distributing and collecting evaluations/survey forms.
- Reports all requested information through the state 4-H system.
- Provides volunteer leaders with Information Sheet 1626 *Guidelines for Volunteer Leaders*.
- Provides volunteer leaders with Form 1041 *Leader/Teacher Registration Form*, Form 1042 *Member Group Enrollment Form*, and Form 1043 *Registration Agreement Form*, and returns completed registration forms to Dr. Lelia Scott Kelly, P.O. Box 1690, Verona, MS 38879.
- Encourages youth to participate in other, related 4-H activities.
- Notifies the area horticulture agent of any new 4-H JMG<sub>sm</sub> groups in the county.
- Assists volunteer leaders obtain local sponsorships for the program. Provides Information Sheet 1551 *Information for Prospective Sponsors* to volunteer leaders.
- Assists volunteer leaders in recognizing participants and providing publicity for the program.

[msucares.com/lawn/garden/youth/junior](http://msucares.com/lawn/garden/youth/junior)

[www.jmgkids.com](http://www.jmgkids.com)

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