

## 10 Ways to Use Junior Master Gardener: Thinking Outside the Box

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Junior Master Gardener is an international youth gardening program delivered through the university cooperative Extension network. It is comprised of 7 programs:

### Level 1 (elementary children)

*Junior Master Gardener Handbook*  
*(Junior Master Gardener Teacher/Leader Guide)*  
*Health & Nutrition Guide from the Garden*  
*Wildlife Gardener*  
*Literature in the Garden*  
*Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! (LGEG)*

### Level 2 (middle/jr. high students)

*Operation Thistle*  
*Operation Water*

Using a framework of hands-on activities combined with horticulture information, the Junior Master Gardener (JMG) programs and curriculum seek to “promote a love of gardening, develop an appreciation for the environment, and cultivate the mind” using both individual and group activities. Because the JMG materials are creative, well-researched, horticulturally robust and readily available, they have been used by a wide range of people and organizations. Considered a treasure trove of experiential gardening activities, its applications seem limitless.

### **Are there other ways to utilize JMG resources in addition to the intended target group of school-aged children in classroom and after-school settings?**

1. **Special Events**-- JMG provides many ideas for special events for any type group that wants a hands-on nature-based fun activity: fundraisers, parties, summer camp activities.
  - ❖ *Health & Nutrition Guide from the Garden*- build a bean teepee at birthday party (p.36)
  - ❖ *Operation Thistle*- make a soothing aloe jelly recipe for a spa night (<http://jmgkids.us/soothing-aloe-jelly>)
2. **Garden-based Learning**-- not just for children or teens in classrooms. Many groups are seeking intellectual stimulation -- opportunities to learn new things. Senior citizens, community garden participants, active aging populations, and teachers can find learning opportunities indoors and outside, integrating literature, nutrition and more into gardening.
  - ❖ *Literature in the Garden*- *Miss Rumphius* beautifies a seaside community with lupines
  - ❖ *Health & Nutrition Guide*- boost nutrition knowledge with apple surprise (p.88)
3. **Therapeutic Horticulture Programming**-- Registered horticultural therapists source out plant and gardening activities that will engage the special populations they work with. JMG activities are fun for all ages and abilities!
  - ❖ *Junior Master Gardener Handbook*- sombrero (p.4) & mud pies (p.26)
  - ❖ *Health & Nutrition Guide from the Garden*- paper towel gardening (p.26)

4. **Garden Installations**-- instructions for planning and installing many types of gardens are suggested in the 7 JMG programs. The ideas have inspired home gardeners of all ages as well as gardens at community centers, churches, schools and therapeutic gardens.
  - ❖ *Learn, Grow, Eat & GO!*- solarizing a garden (<http://jmgkids.us/solarizingyourgarden/>)
  - ❖ *Wildlife Gardener*- mini meadow (p.122) & design a [garden] deterrent (p.63)
  
5. **Using JMG Chapter Themes**-- useful when planning or developing curriculum or projects that require sequential or themed sessions for camps, boy/girl scouts, community service projects, the JMG materials thoroughly cover plant topics using science fiction, games, eco-art and more. Chapter themes can guide the selection of (JMG) Golden Ray Certificate unit.
  - ❖ *Operation Water*- chapters on soils & water with related activities
  - ❖ *Junior Master Gardener Handbook*- chapter themes of plant growth, soils, ecology & environmental horticulture, insects & diseases, fruits & nuts and more
  
6. **Source of Horticulture Information**— for concise, user friendly information on plant and related topics, JMG materials can be a quick “go to” resource for basic and more advanced concepts.
  - ❖ *Operation Water*- aquifers, watersheds & wetlands (Ch. 6)
  - ❖ *Wildlife Gardener*- definitions for nectarivore, omnivore & crepuscular animal (p.27)
  
7. **Used by Many Populations**— individuals and groups find JMG hands-on activities easy to follow, with clear step by step directions. Educators and health care professionals have commented that accommodating/modifying JMG activities for populations with mental, physical or behavioral challenges promotes inclusion, self-esteem and positive leisure activity.



8. **Improving School Culture**-- *Learn, Grow, Eat & GO!* was specifically developed to improve school culture by combining 10 weeks of plant-based lessons with programmed physical activity. It is described as an “ interdisciplinary program combining academic achievement, gardening, nutrient-dense food experiences, physical activity, and school & family engagement” (<http://jmgkids.us/lgeg/>). Other examples:
  - ❖ *Operation Thistle*- memory quilt garden: career awareness (p.127)
  - ❖ *Wildlife Gardener*- all people are special career exploration (p.101)
  
9. **Strengthening Master Gardener Skills**—JMG is one of many programs master gardeners deliver. Familiarity with it broadens their skill set and knowledge base while also providing potential applications for other groups in the community. JMG’s concise, evidence-based information is easy to understand and articulate, helpful for interactions with the public.
  - ❖ *Junior Master Gardener Handbook*- insect orders (p.72-73 with photos)
  - ❖ *Literature in the Garden*- *Westlandia* book’s earth clock
  
10. **Strengthening Collaborations**— between Extension programs 4H, AgVenture, Ag in the Classroom & master gardener, JMG can also promote collaborations with community groups including environmental agencies, Farm Bureau, schools, ecology groups. Already in place:
  - ❖ *Wildlife Gardener* and the National Wildlife Federation’s schoolyard habitat program
  - ❖ *Operation Thistle*’s career exploration unit and National Research Council on Science (p.117)
  - ❖ *Learn, Grow, Eat & GO!*- program modeled after Walk Across Texas and Junior Master Gardener collaborative initiative which included a controlled trial research study designed by Texas A&M University, TAMU, and University of Texas Schools of Public Health (<http://jmgkids.us/lgeg/usdaresearch/>).

The Junior Master Gardener Program offers hundreds of interesting, creative and scientifically sound concepts, activities and programming options for a wide array of groups and individuals. The breadth of its programming with its trademark hands-on activities makes it appealing to many, not limited to educators or Extension staff and volunteers. It is multi-functional as an educational tool, primer for horticulture enthusiasts, platform for collaborations and research, garden instruction guide, and repository for creative nature-based ideas.

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