

## Junior Master Gardener Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- 1) **How do I go about getting grants to support my JMG program?**
  - a. You can go to <http://67.59.137.247/index.cfm?did=2631&sectionID=2015> which is the link to the JMG website for grant opportunities. Also, go to your local garden centers, Wal-Marts, Home Depot, Lowes, etc. We have been very successful getting small grants from these organizations.
- 2) **Do I have to purchase books for every youth in Level 1?**
  - a. When the program first began it was a requirement for those conducting Level 1 programs to purchase a youth book for each student. That has since been dropped as a requirement although if you have the money, they are really good resources for the youth. My suggestion is to purchase the instructor manual and work from it if finances are a consideration.
- 3) **The activities are great but don't exactly fit my environment, am I allowed to adapt them for my situation?**
  - a. Yes! An example is that I have a JMG group at 9500' so we have to use a greenhouse and adapt the materials to fit our situation. The manuals provide great activities but you are by no means shackled to doing them exactly as described.
- 4) **Do we have to complete every activity in every section to have our youth "complete" and be certified as a Junior Master Gardener?**
  - a. While some groups choose to complete every activity and work through the book over the entire year, most groups don't have the resources to do this. What is required by the JMG program is to conduct one individual, one group and one service/learning activity per chapter. I have found that all three can be completed in a 1 ½ to 2 hour time frame. Again, adjust this to meet your schedule and situation. The goal is for your youth to learn and have fun and depending on their age, it may be better to do several short sessions than one long one.
- 5) **Why do we have to do service/learning projects?**
  - a. The JMG program is an extension of the National 4-H program and one of our core elements is service, or giving back to the community. Again, please don't make these any more difficult than your group is able to complete. It is not meant as a punitive activity but as another opportunity for the youth to grow as citizens.
- 6) **Do the youth receive some sort of certificate or recognition for completing?**
  - a. Yes! After you have entered your group online at <https://jmg.4honline.com> and have been approved by me, you will be able

to input the student's names and print the certificates directly. Please let me know if you have any problems with this and I will help you.

**7) Do we have to have a garden to have a JMG program?**

- a. Interestingly enough, no! There are situations where it makes sense to have a garden because you have all the components and resources available. I actually prefer this because it gives the youth a deeper understanding of growing produce. The Golden Ray Series may not lend itself to creating a garden. The Wildlife Gardener is about creating a wildlife habitat. Literature in the Garden is used to connect youth and get them to think in different ways and appreciate reading. Nutrition in the Garden can be used to help youth eat more healthily. Even the Level 1 and Level 2 can be done without a garden by conducting the various activities in the classroom without the need of a garden. You might even consider doing container gardening as an option:

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/07238.html> So, the key is to make the materials work for you to create a successful learning environment for the students and teachers.

**8) Do you have to first do the Level 1, then the Level 2, and then the Golden Ray Series?**

- a. No, the Level 1 is designed for grades 3-5 and Level 2 for 6-8 grades. But if you had a group with learning challenges who are in the 6-8 grade, you may want to have them work out of the Level 1 materials. Conversely, if you have a group of 5<sup>th</sup> graders who went really in depth with the Level 1 materials in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and who are high functioning, it may make sense to go into the Level 2 materials. You can do the Golden Ray materials as stand-alone components without ever having gone through the Level 1 or 2 materials. They are designed more towards the 3-5 grade levels.

**9) Does it have to happen during the school year?**

- a. No, it really depends on your situation. I have programs that start after CSAPs in the spring and run for 8-10 weeks. I also have programs that are in the summer and run from 7-12 weeks. The key here is flexibility and fitting the program to your situation.

**10) Does it have to be set up to a specific age group or grade level?**

- a. It makes sense to work with a single grade or age of youth for a variety of reasons, from understanding, or being able to sustain the program by having it be the course that is taught each year in a particular grade. That said, one of my most successful programs is connected with the Cripple Creek Park and Recreation program in the summer. The age range is 6-14 and I set the older youth up as mentors, which has really worked well.

There are some obvious challenges with differentiating the material to keep everyone involved, but we have made it work.

**11) Is it coordinated with the Colorado State Educational standards?**

- a. The materials are currently not correlated to the CO educational standards but we are working on it.

**12) I have heard about awards for my program. Where would I find out about entering?**

- a. The first place is the JMG website where you can enter your group for monthly <http://www.jmgkids.us/index.cfm?did=2480&sectionID=2018>

**13) What about other questions that are not answered here?**

- a. Here is a link to the national FAQ  
<http://www.jmgkids.us/index.cfm?did=2022&sectionID=2019>

**14) What are some concerns I should keep in mind when creating a youth garden?**

- a. Here are the questions I generally ask those who are looking at starting a youth garden:
  - i. Do you have water to your site and who is paying for it?
  - ii. Will you need medical forms, photo release forms, and what happens if parents don't show to pick up their kids?
  - iii. If it is being constructed at a school, how do you maintain or access it during the summer months or break times?
  - iv. What financial resources do you have available since there will constantly be upkeep and expenditures.
  - v. Is there a plan for sustainability? In other words, is the program dependent on one passionate volunteer who moves up to the next grades as her kids move up and the project fails? Or is it set up as part of a program or school curriculum where every "x" grade will participate in the program when they hit "x" year? The latter is a more sustainable model.
  - vi. Is it occurring as an in school, after school, or summer program? Each of these have unique requirements.
  - vii. How are you going to get your kids? Park and Rec., School, Home School, 4-H, Scouts, etc.? It is critical that you think about what group and age range you are looking towards. One of the problems with my Park and Rec. group is that I have youth who have been there for four years so I have to completely re-design the program each year.
  - viii. Do you have the support of administration or the community if not at a school?
  - ix. Who is responsible for watering, weeding, and harvesting?

- x. Who gets the produce?
- xi. Who will maintain the beds or gardens in the off season, or on season if it continues over summer break? This can be a real obstacle for many groups and leads to frustration for those who feel like they're responsible for everything while others reap the benefits.
- xii. How will you handle insect or disease issues? Will you use only natural products or are you alright with chemicals?

**15) Who do I contact if I have questions?**

- a. Me, Mark Platten at [mark.platten@colostate.edu](mailto:mark.platten@colostate.edu) or 719-686-7961.