

# GEORGIA MASTER GARDENER EXTENSION VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Learn

Serve

Grow



## Spotlight: Gardening with Youth

In 2005, five new Master Gardener Extension Volunteers (MGEVs) approached the Extension Agent and asked how they could best serve Extension programs. The agent suggested the Junior Master Gardener Program (JMG), knowing that it would be beneficial throughout the county. For two years, some gardening had been done in one school with a parent volunteer, but the endeavor lacked necessary support. This group of new MGEVs formed JMG teams and started with one school in Fall 2005.

Today, there are seventeen different JMG programs led by MGEVs. MGEVs reach students and families all over Houston County, from the poorest to the wealthiest, from the homeschooled to the public school educated, from the youngest to the oldest. Using the JMG Curriculum from Texas A&M (<http://jmgkids.us/>), leaders provide both classroom instruction and hands-on gardening experiences to promote concepts of environmental stewardship, sound gardening principles, sustainability, landscape design, integrated pest management, and teamwork to youth in grades 3 through 8. Activities are both inside and outside of the classroom.

MGEVs work to continue to expand the program, fine-tune it, and discover what works best in the classroom and garden. MGEVs have learned what skills and abilities are appropriate expectations for each grade level. They have also learned the importance of teamwork and communication. As a result of JMG, Extension has seen increased interest in its local Teaching Garden and in homeowner classes that Extension offers. The single best thing MGEVs have experienced is watching some of the children move from primary to elementary to middle school and continue to be involved in JMG, gardening clubs, FFA, or horticulture classes. Beyond that, MGEVs get wonderful gardening successes and family project stories from parents, sometimes years after the child has gone through the program.

MGEVs of Central Georgia (MGCG) have been gracious to include the JMG Program in its annual budget to support program expansion. MGEVs have applied for and received additional grant

### Junior Master Gardener Program Served by MGEVs from Houston County



### 2015 Project Contributions:

**Volunteer Hours: 1,310**

Outreach: 12 elementary schools, 1 primary school, 1 middle school, 1 Boys & Girls Club, 1 church, and 1 library

*Special thanks to MGEVs working with the Houston County JMG program!*

money from MGCG as well as from the Georgia Master Gardener Association. Partnerships with local companies have netted donations of compost, mulch, and even labor for some of the gardens. MGEVs themselves have been extremely generous with donating the "small stuff" needed for craft projects or classroom activities.



The Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Program prepares volunteers to support UGA Cooperative Extension in delivering gardening information to Georgia's citizens and communities. Since 1979, Master Gardeners and UGA Extension have helped Georgians become healthier, more productive, financially independent and environmentally responsible.