

PROJECT NARRATIVE

Name of the Project: Junior Master Gardener Program

Is this a New Project or Request for Continuation?: Request for a New Project

Geographic Area of the Project: Texas

Name of Principal Investigators:

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County(s) and/or University Department(s), TAEX, or Unit: Extension Horticulture

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Amount of Funding Requested: \$10,000

Project Need, Description and Expected Outcomes

Discuss the situation and need for the project, describe the proposed project and expected outcomes/benefits, and suggest how the proposed project will involve the use of innovation and new technology.

Project Need

Texas faces major water issues related to the amount and quality of water available to meet a growing and thirsty population. Population statistics tell us that the Texas population of just over 20 million will double by 2050¹. In this same report by the Texas Water Development Board, water supplies will not meet projected use in 2050. Even with the development of new water sources and the reallocation of existing water supplies, Texas will fall woefully short of meeting the population demands for water. The Texas Water Development Board emphasizes the need to conserve water and to conserve it now. Therefore, we must prepare our children with the knowledge to conserve Texas' water resources and to use this resource in the most efficient manner as possible. This knowledge can come from experiences provided by the Junior Master Gardener program.

The Junior Master Gardener program is an international 4-H youth gardening program created by Texas Cooperative Extension at Texas A&M University. JMG engages children in novel, "hands-on" group and individual learning experiences that promote a love of gardening, develop an appreciation for the environment, and cultivate the mind. JMG inspires youths to be of service to others through service-learning and leadership development projects and rewards them with certification.

The Level One JMG curriculum consists of eight chapters. Chapter 2: Soil and Water contains the following concepts: Soil Color; Texture and Structure; Nutrients; Soil Improvement; Water Cycle and You; and Water Movement. Each concept is taught to youth through hands-on activities. Throughout the JMG curriculum youth are encouraged to go to the JMG web site to complete on-

line activities. At the current time, only one on-line activity has been created for Chapter 2: Soil and Water.

Description

Funds from this grant will provide the JMG Program with the personnel and resources to further develop and promote youth education in soil and water conservation.

- 1.) Develop ten interactive soil and water e-learning activities with an evaluation component built into each activity.
- 2.) Provide JMG Teachers/Leaders access to soil and water resources and academic support through the JMG web site.
- 3.) Create an annual JMG contest which rewards JMG groups that have completed community service projects that promote soil and water conservation at a community wide level. For example: xeriscape, native plantings, water harvesting, composting, water auditing, etc.
- 4.) Continue the annual JMG / TNLA poster contest. The 2003 theme will promote soil and water conservation. Possible themes: Water Efficient Gardens, Texans saving water, Water Wise Gardening, The Water Cycle.
- 5.) Two of the six writing contests administered through the monthly JMG newsletter will be reflections directly from the e-learning activities. Possible themes: What I can do to conserve water? or Why is water important to me?

Expected Outcomes

The JMG program expects that these five projects will educate our children in sound science with the knowledge and passion to conserve Texas' water resources and know the value of our soil. Providing incentives to JMG groups through contests and rewards will increase their interest in the chapter: Soil and Water.

Currently, 72 Texas counties have registered JMG groups. Creating more soil and water activities supports the county level effort to provide educational awareness in soil and water through the JMG program. In 2001, county Extension agents partnered with the JMG program in training 1782 teachers, consequently involving more than 900 Texas schools. Texas Cooperative Extension and the public school network will have immediate access to the e-learning activities and contests created by the funds from this grant.

Youth engaged in entertaining e-learning soil and water activities will gain knowledge in soil and water conservation issues. As a result youth may change behavior and create community awareness through their community service projects.

Specific Soil and Water Conservation Issues Addressed

Relative to the needs of current conservation projects (listed in Section III, or others), what concern(s) is/are addressed by this project.

The soil and water conservation concerns addressed through this project:

- home landscape irrigation efficiency
- water auditing
- water management and conservation
- soil management
- soil quality / soil health
- mulching
- crop (gardening) water requirements
- land management related to soil and water conservation
- water harvesting
- youth educational programs about water conservation

These issues are “learning concepts” that are already incorporated into the Junior Master Gardener curriculum. Funding will allow for JMG to further develop activities that address these topics of concern. Texas school districts are looking for multiple opportunities to teach science concepts in different contexts. Creating e-learning activities, opportunities for promoting awareness and recognition for their efforts will help teachers incorporate real life applications of science while making an environmental difference in their communities.

Collaboration

What agencies, groups, organizations, or additional TCE/TAES disciplines are included in this project? List all collaborators and their function in the project.

- TAMU Department of Horticulture / Extension Horticulture / Junior Master Gardener program:
 - Serve as the primary facilitator of the project for the JMG program
 - Collaborate with other groups to complete projects
 - Create ten youth e-learning activities
 - Locate, access and make available soil and water on-line resources relevant to teachers
 - Inform JMG groups of contest
- Department of Soil and Crop Sciences
 - Review content in e-learning activities
- Master Gardener Association
 - Assist JMG groups in their efforts to complete community service projects that promote community wide soil and water conservation
 - Serve as a resource to JMG groups in learning more about soil and water conservation
- JMG Kids – Licensed to distribute and market JMG materials
 - Assist in judging writing contest winners
 - Provide writing contest winners with t-shirts
- Keep Texas Beautiful
 - Promote JMG through their network
 - Provide assistance to local JMG groups completing service projects related to water management
- Texas Nursery and Landscape Association
 - Sponsor the annual poster contest
 - Invite JMG soil and water conservation community service project winners to present at the annual TNLA Expo
 - Provide award monies to JMG contest winners
- K2 Share
 - Technology company providing expertise and platform for launching and managing the JMG web site
- TDA
 - Assist in promoting the Junior Master Gardener program through newspaper media, radio interviews and exhibit space at the Texas state fair

¹Water for Texas, A Consensus-based Update to the State Water Plan. Volume 2 Texas Water Development Board. #GP-6-2. Austin, TX. 1997.

Submitted by _____
(P.I. Signature)

Approved for submission _____
(Unit Head signature)