

**Tennessee Master Gardener Search for Excellence  
2014 Application**

**APPLICATION DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 31, 2014**

**NAME OF PROJECT:** Bradley County Juvenile Court/Junior Master Gardeners' Project

**NAME OF MG GROUP:** Bradley County Master Gardeners Organization

**COUNTY(IES):** Bradley County

**MASTER GARDENER CONTACT:**

**NAME** Deborah Flower

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**MASTER GARDENER COORDINATOR/EXTENSION STAFF:**

**NAME** Kim D. Frady

**TITLE** Extension Agent and County Director

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**CATEGORY---MUST SELECT AND SUBMIT IN ONLY ONE CATEGORY**

- Youth
- Demonstration Garden
- Workshop or Presentation
- Community Service
- Innovative Project
- Research
- Special Needs Audience

**COMMENCEMENT DATE OF PROJECT:** July 2011- on going

**LIST THE NAMES OF MASTER GARDENERS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT.** Do not include their roles or any other individuals in this listing. *(Place the cursor in the box to type a name.)* You may attach an additional page if necessary.

**Project Leaders' Names:**

Deborah Flower	Dave Flower	Leslie Humberd
Steve Humberd	Ricky Tallent	Dave Hopper
Robin Ramsey	Bev Johnson	Faith Sharp
Linda Merritt	Julie Halsey	Ron Moore
Jim Laub		

**Number of Master Gardeners participating:** 13

**DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT** (include name, location, target audience, goals, and partnerships) 500 words or less.

At the request of the Bradley County Juvenile Justice Center, the Bradley County Master Gardeners' Organization (BCMGO) developed a Junior Master Gardeners' (JMG) program. The program is an alternative sentencing option for youth between the ages of 13 and 17 who find themselves in trouble with the court system. Its purpose is to help juvenile delinquents who have been convicted of serious violations that required extensive community service hours court-ordered by the Juvenile Court Judge. Attendance and participation in the JMG course was in lieu of the community service hours.

The goals of this project were to teach the students many facets of gardening and provide a positive learning and hands on experience. The students would develop leadership skills, responsibility, self esteem and community pride through organized gardening activities.

On the Juvenile Court property, 12 existing raised garden beds were rejuvenated as were existing fruit trees, a grape arbor and a vertical garden apparatus. Gardening equipment was stored in the dilapidated tool shed. A grant is in the process to replace the shed.

Classroom space was supplied by the Juvenile Court with an operating kitchen which was used in food preparation. Students also took home the fruits of their harvest to be enjoyed by their families.

The target audience was pre-screened and diversified by the Judge and Counselors so no out-reach/marketing was required. This project provided an opportunity for the UT Extension Office to reach a community segment through the Master Gardeners, with whom 4H would not usually be involved.

Dealing with the juvenile judicial processes with public awareness is a very delicate situation. Though no names could be mentioned, the local media had several on-going newspaper articles and pictures through-out the 12 week sessions.

Several BCMGs spoke at local organizations describing the JMG program and how it makes a difference in the lives of troubled youth. Other venues used to promote this program were through fairs and festivals, garden centers and radio shows. At the Tennessee Master Gardeners' (TNMG) booths at the fairs and festivals the JMG Program always draws interest, leading to the inevitable question, "How may I help?" They were told that becoming a Tennessee Master Gardener was the first step. We also answered gardening questions on WOOP, the local radio show.

The JMG program is a complex project that requires highly dedicated people and strong support from the court system. While a junior master gardener program could be replicated, one targeted to this specific group requires judges, counselors and volunteers who are willing to donate time and expertise. Contributors, as well as a gardening space, tools and tool shed are also needed. Clearly this target group is unique and the goals surpass the typical Junior Master Gardener Program.

**DESCRIBE THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT. 500 words or less.**

At the end of a presentation to the Bradley County Rotarians about the UT Master Gardener Program, Judge Daniel Swafford, who is the presiding Judge for our Juvenile Court, asked if we could start a gardening program for the troubled teenagers on probation from his Court. Under the guidance of our UT County Agriculture Extension Agent, several interested Master Gardeners met with the 4H Agent and two Juvenile Court Directors to organize the program.

The two Juvenile Court Directors met with each parent and child to inform them what was expected in class; such as attendance, dress code, tardiness, absences and rules.

A leadership team was developed. Two of our Master Gardeners are professional school teachers, one retired, one active, who assumed the responsibilities of developing the syllabus, the curriculum and the scheduling of instructors. Lesson plans were based on the Texas A&M Junior Master Gardening materials, tailoring them to fit the class, the time and the facilities. Pre-and post tests were given and measuring the students' progress was applied by surveys, checklists and observation. Two participating counselors and eight MG

Volunteers helped monitor the classroom progress and when outside taught gardening skills. Two students were responsible for their personal raised beds with a Master Gardener instructor assisting.

Basic aspects of gardening were taught along with some social skills, such as respect for others and listening in class. The students grew vegetables, herbs and flowers. In addition, they created garden art with donated bowling balls painted to look like insects, flower pots were painted and made into bird baths and hummingbird feeders were constructed. All of this required that the juveniles work together to accomplish their goals.

**Examples of Presentation/Lecture Content:**

Basic Botany  
Composting and Vermiculture  
Ecology  
Floral Design and Arrangement  
Fruits and Nuts  
Garden Art  
Goal Planning  
Herbs  
Insects (beneficial and harmful)  
Landscape Design  
Leadership  
Nutrition  
Raised Bed Gardening  
Recycling  
Soil & Water  
Vegetables  
Wildlife in the Garden

**The classes were conducted every Tuesday night for 12 weeks.**

Below is a schedule for a typical night class:

5:30-5:40: Students check in; review questions  
5:40-6:15: Presentation lecture/hands-on activities  
6:15-6:30: Healthy snack  
6:30-7:20: Outside in the gardens  
7:20-7:30: Post test  
7:30: Dismissal

The JMG program combines a unique gardening based curriculum and web based instruction, community service, character education and service based learning into a fun and exciting certification program for youth. This program is designed to incorporate science, math, language arts and geography into

hands-on gardening based activities. The JMG curriculum is correlated to academic standards and has research supporting how the program improves academic success, nutrition, self esteem and leadership development.

**HOW HAS THE PROJECT BEEN FUNDED AND HOW HAVE THOSE FUNDS BEEN SPENT? 500 Words or less.**

The JMG Class is taught twice a year following the Bradley County School System's yearly school schedule. These on-going 12 week Spring and 12 week Fall programs were made possible by funds from the local Master Gardener Organization, grants, charitable donations and personal contributions. A grant was given by Volunteer Electric Cooperative for a small green house which was erected by the students. This program is supported by the Bradley County Juvenile Court, the UT/Bradley County Extension Office, The George R. Johnson Family Foundation, Bradley County 4H, Hardees, and Beaty's Fertilizer Company. Beaty's is a local fertilizer supplier, who has long been a friend of the Master Gardeners' and has donated all the soil amenders, bales of straw and mulch. Lowe's and Ooltewah Nursery donated plants and seeds. The two Master Gardener teachers and eleven assistants donated their time of 520+ total volunteer hours, per session; plus teacher prep time.

**Project Funding and Expenditures:**

**One-time costs:**

- Green House (Volunteer Electric Cooperative Grant) \$910.00
- Student Books & Teacher Editions (G.R. Johnson Foundation) \$300.00
- \$1,210.00

**Juvenile Court System Annual Budget for the JMG Class:**

- Irrigation System \$500.00
- Landscape Soil Mix \$240.00
- Plants and Seeds \$130.00
- Classroom Supplies & Snacks \$85.00
- Graduation/Reception \$350.00
- \$1,305.00

**On-going Costs:**

- Snacks
- Classroom Supplies
- Plants and Seeds (contributed by Ooltewah Nursery, Lowe's, and MG's)

Charitable contributions provided classroom supplies and snacks. The UT Extension Office supplied tri-boards and hand-outs for the Composting and Vermiculture Lessons. With this learned information, the student's made their own "mini" worm bins.

**DESCRIBE THE OUTCOMES OF THIS PROJECT. HOW HAS IT AUGMENTED LEARNING, INCREASED KNOWLEDGE OR CHANGED PRACTICES TO ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE? INCLUDE THE METHODS YOU USED TO MEASURE THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT.** These impacts could be economical, educational, environmental, health or community based. 500 words or less.

The students were required to attend all classes with a maximum of two excused absences. A formal graduation ceremony and reception for the 12 students was conducted at the end of the class. The ceremony and garden tour were attended by many city and county officials, prosecuting and defense attorneys, probation officers, media representatives, and most importantly of all, the students with their families. During the open house, the students stood proudly by their respective growing beds and acted as subject matter experts. They explained the gardening process to the visitors and answered their questions. At the graduation, Judge Swafford presented each graduate with a framed "Junior Master Gardener" certificate, a JMG Handbook and gifts of a trowel and a pair of new gardening gloves.

Surveys, post tests and observations showed marked improvements in the students' knowledge, self esteem, attitudes and participation for those who completed the program. In the past four sessions, 62 students were court-ordered into this program. Three students (5%) were returned offenders and 9 students (15%) didn't complete the class because they were transferred to child custody in another town or state.

The students clearly needed to discover their self-worth and demonstrate that they could accomplish something in life. They each had to over-come a difficult childhood, such as a single parent, no parents and/or poverty. The BCMGO and the Bradley County Juvenile Justice System are convinced that gardening is a great tool to help the students find an alternative to getting into trouble.

Using the phrase, "We reap, what we sow," a work ethic was instilled in the students. We demonstrated that if a juvenile weeded his garden and provided the right ingredients to the soil, he could produce a good crop. But, if neglectful, his crop was poor. This showed the juveniles, that hard work and good choices resulted in a positive outcome.

One parent gave us a testimonial saying, "The program certainly taught my son a great deal about plants and soil, etc, but it was so much more. It taught him self-respect as well as respect for others. Since my son has completed this program, my wife and I have seen several good changes in his perspective and attitudes."

These classes have been such a success that several students, showing interest, appreciation and maturation; have requested to return as mentors for the next in-coming class. As one mentor (14 years old) said, "I expected boringness, sitting in class talking about plants. However, this program was 'completely different' from my expectations. We learned something different each time." This program has provided an opportunity for the students to have positive interactions with adults and their peers.

"There is no task more rewarding than being a positive influence in the lives of our next generation. Giving them knowledge and enhancing the quality of their lives makes the greatest possible impact on all standards of our community. Our Bradley County Master Gardeners' Club sets the standard for excellence!"

---Judge Daniel Swafford