



Master Gardener Volunteers of Cobb County Junior Master Gardeners at Midway School



Project Location: 4635 Dallas Highway, Powder Springs, GA 30127
Project Workday: Tuesday, 3:00 p.m.—4:30 p.m. (Time may vary during winter months.)
Project Chair: Becky Blades (770-943-5335) **Co-Chair:** Jerry Blades (678-6296)

When the school bell rings on Tuesday afternoons at Midway Covenant School, a group of enthusiastic young gardeners races to the raised beds behind the gym to see how their garden is growing before dashing inside for the week's lesson.

Using the Junior Master Garden book, Project Chair Becky Blades leads the active third and fourth graders through the day's curriculum. Each week a hands-on activity reinforces the lesson. The children study everything from soil to insects to vegetable, fruit and nut gardening to ecology. They also go on a field trip every year.

The raised beds are numerous but manageable for the age group. During the school year they plant cool season crops. Becky encourages the children to use their handbooks to do gardening activities at home when school is not in session. They do meet once during the summer to dig the potatoes planted in old tires and to plant peanuts, popcorn, pumpkins and sunflowers that will greet them when they return to school in the late summer.

Recently the children added more native plants to their certified pollinator habitat on the banks of the campus retention pond. The arbor is planted with hops and passion vine, host plants for butterflies. The seeds from the bright poppies are harvested for poppy seed muffins. The annual end of the school year harvest and feast when the students eat what they've grown is greatly anticipated. This year the menu included potatoes and broccoli with spring

onions and parmesan, sugar snap peas, mixed lettuce salad and those poppy seed muffins. Needless to say, the prospect of eating fresh food from the garden is a highlight of the program.

The Junior Master Gardener program 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 encourages youths to be of service to others through service learning and leadership development.

Although the handbook covers all-important MG topics, such as insects, diseases and landscaping, it also reinforces the existing school curriculum since participants must employ math, science, literature, and teamwork skills in practical situations.

Training is required to be a certified Master Gardener but Becky and Jerry offer on the job training for those interested in raising up the next generation of gardeners.



The mission of the MGVOCC is to advance the horticultural education and practices of its members and to promote the knowledge of and interest in gardening to the members and to the public.

For more information contact Carolyn Gentry, Master Gardener Coordinator at the Cobb Extension. Phone: 770-528-4070