

Grow Labs - Junior Master Gardener Program

Issue: Recent research has indicated that youth are suffering from "nature deficit" and not spending adequate time outdoors experiencing nature nor gardening. This may be directly applicable to youth living in metro-Indianapolis and even to an extent to suburbia Indianapolis youth. From past programming experience in the urban setting, in order to have an effective Junior Master Gardener program, youth need to experience directly the growth of plants from seeds. Without space for a garden, a Grow Lab is crucial for the youth to experience a plant's growth cycle.

Extension response : With funding from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., we purchased nine Grow Labs and the needed supplies for the Purdue Extension - Marion County Junior Master Gardener (JMG) program. During the 2007-2008 school year, we placed eight grow labs in seven after school programs: Edna Martin Center and IPS 51, IPS Center for Inquiry #84, Pike YMCA, Indian Creek Elementary, Kaleidoscope Youth Center, Garfield Park Conservatory and Hasten Hebrew Academy. A total of 376 youth participated in the eight JMG programs.

Impact: Evaluation was conducted at the Edna Martin Center (IPS 51). Seventeen youth and young adults, ages 9 - 21, participated in the JMG program after school. The youth planted marigolds in January/February and they bloomed on time for Mother's Day in May. The youth created cards and gave their mothers a potted plant (marigolds) and card! The youth also planted beans, tomatoes, peppers, pumpkins, squash, radishes, lettuce, broccoli, and cauliflower. Many plants were transplanted to the school garden and tended to by the youth. Seventeen youth who participated in JMG completed pre- and post-program evaluations. The average pre-program score was 17% (2/12 correct) while the average post-program score was a 58% (7/12 correct). This is a 42% increase in score and a 70% increase in knowledge! A majority of youth improved in knowledge of which parts of plants are edible. There was a 43% increase in score from pre- to post- test and a 75% increase in knowledge with the average pretest score was 14% while the average post-test score was a 57% (Only 6/17 answered the pre-evaluation question while 15/17 answered the post-evaluation question and 5 got it completely correct!).

Partners:

IPS Schools – 51 and 84
Pike YMCA
Indian Creek Elementary
Edna Martin Center
Hasten Hebrew Academy
Kaleidoscope Youth Center
Garfield Park Conservatory

Contact:

Christina Ferroli, Ph.D., RD
Purdue Extension - Marion County
6640 Intech Blvd., Ste 120
Indianapolis, IN 46278
Ferroli@purdue.edu

It is the policy of the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service that all persons have equal opportunity and access to its educational programs, services, activities, and facilities without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability or status as a veteran. Purdue University is an Affirmative Action institution. This material may be available in alternative formats.