



# Gardening and Kids

## Activities

Can be done indoors, outdoors, and during any season. Encourage kids to keep a journal of what they notice.

**Sprouting a Bean.** Place a bean seed on a wet cotton ball and tuck inside a small zip-lock baggie. When seed sprouts in a few days, plant it in a pot or outdoors and continue to watch it flourish.

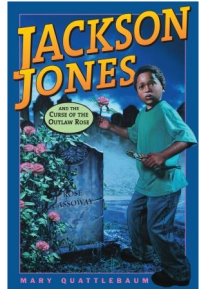
**Going from Purple to Green.** Choose an organic yam with small buds (or eyes), cut two inches off its rounded end, and place cut side down in a plastic container filled with small stones (can be purchased from an aquarium store). Fill with water and ensure over the next weeks that the cut side is always under water. Place in a sunny spot by a window. Purple leaf nubs should appear in seven to ten days. When do they start to turn green?

**Playing with Herbs.** Herbs have distinct smells and tastes. Sniff mint, rosemary, sage, and lavender. Make mint tea or add a bit of rosemary to chicken or beef soups. Stuff baggies or small cloth bags with dried sage and lavender. In earlier times, herbs and flowers were associated with certain traits. If you gave these things, you were sending a message: lavender: devotion, mint: virtue, rosemary: remembrance, and sage: wisdom. You had to be careful, though, not to send the wrong message. Dead leaves signified sadness, nuts stood for stupidity, and a green rose meant I am from Mars!

**Planting for Birds and Butterflies.** Want to bring wildlife to you? Try planting coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, or asters. All you need are a couple of pots or a bit of land. Even a few flowers can help feed and shelter native birds and bugs (spring and summer activity).

## Books by Mary Quattlebaum

*Jackson Jones and the Puddle of Thorns*, *Jackson Jones and Mission Greentop*, and *Jackson Jones and the Curse of the Outlaw Rose* by Mary Quattlebaum (Random House, ages 7 to 11). Given a plot in the city's community garden (once a World War II victory garden), Jackson involves his friends in schemes to make money by selling the flowers (*Puddle*), save the historic garden from being bulldozed by developers (*Mission Greentop*), and foil the trouble-causing ghost of an antique rose bush (*Outlaw Rose*). Fast-paced and funny, these chapter books highlight urban children's awareness and care of the natural world and explore ways to deal with a bully.



## Writing Fun

Strengthen connections between the natural world and literature through writing.

**The Power of Place.** In *Puddle* (pages 106-107), Jackson describes the garden using many of his senses. How does he feel about it? Using your senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, write a description of a place special to you. How does being in that place make you feel?

**Kids Creating Change.** In *Mission Greentop*, Jackson and friends organize a protest because they want to increase awareness of something

they consider wrong or unfair—the destruction of their community garden by developers. Is there something you want to draw attention to (for example, an endangered animal) or protest (for example, a school sports policy)?

(Writing Fun, continued)



Figure out a plan for action. What do you hope to accomplish or change?

What people might you write letters to or talk with? How might you get other kids and grown-ups involved?

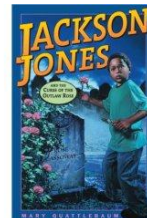
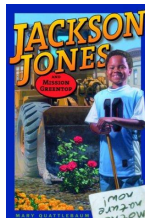
**Write a Ghost Story.** In *Curse of the Outlaw Rose*, the rose clipping Jackson takes from a cemetery seems haunted. Poison ivy, broken bones, and stinging bees afflict those who touch it. Try creating your own ghost story. Although we usually associate ghosts with old houses, have your ghost haunt something unusual—for example, a tree, playground, or school cafeteria. Why has your ghost chosen that spot? What funny or scary things does he or she do and how do people react? Finally, how is your ghost laid to rest?



### About the Author



Mary Quattlebaum grew up in rural Virginia with three brothers, three sisters, lots of pets, and many opportunities to help with the family's vegetable and flower gardens. As an adult, Mary tended a plot for years in a historic community garden and now cares for a small wildlife garden in her backyard. Mary has worked as an 18th century costumed waitress for Colonial Williamsburg, directed a poetry and family folklore program for the elderly, and been a medical writer for a children's hospital. The author of 15 award-winning children's books, Mary now lives with her family in Washington, D.C., where she writes frequently for the *Washington Post* and teaches creative writing.



### Books, Organizations, and Websites

*Roots, Shoots, Buckets & Boots* by Sharon Lovejoy (Workman, all ages). Kid-centered activities range from sowing seeds to making jewelry with produce.

*Grow It Again* by Elizabeth MacLeod (Kids Can, all ages). How to start an indoor garden with vegetable tops rather than seeds. Recipes and craft ideas.

American Community Gardening Association ([www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org)). Tips on gardening with kids and information on the educational Garden Mosaic program.

Green Teacher ([www.greenteacher.com](http://www.greenteacher.com)). Gardening and ecology activities great for classroom and home.

Junior Master Gardener Program ([www.jmgkids.us](http://www.jmgkids.us)). With the American Horticultural Society, awards annual "Growing Good Kids" awards for children's books with "green themes" and lists classics of children's garden fiction for past 100 years.

National Gardening Association ([www.kidsgardening.com](http://www.kidsgardening.com)). Activities and resources for families and schools.

National Wildlife Federation ([www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat](http://www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat)). Create a backyard habitat for native birds and beneficial insects.

School Garden Wizard ([www.schoolgardenwizard.org](http://www.schoolgardenwizard.org)). The United States Botanic Garden and the Chicago Botanic Garden show how to start and learn from a school garden.

Visit [www.maryquattlebaum.com](http://www.maryquattlebaum.com) for information on presentations and writing workshops.