Creating a Wildlife Habitat

This project can be done by the students themselves, by transforming an unutilized area of the schoolyard into a wildlife habitat. Preferably, this is done in a courtyard that is protected from outside influences, in an area that can be controlled that can effectively attract beneficial insects and wildlife.

If established according to the National Wildlife Federation guidelines, the garden can become a certified National Wildlife Schoolyard Habitat that will benefit all students in every grade level. Suppose your school consists of grades K-5. The oldest students in the fifth grade could start the garden and build upon it year after year. If incorporated into the curriculum, the fifth graders can become the "master gardeners" of their school, teaching younger students about what they’ve learned throughout the project by introducing them to their garden experiences. The fifth graders could also be responsible for the next generation of fifth graders who will become the caretakers of the garden when they enter the fifth grade.

Get help!

Invite a local expert- a resident environmentalist, landscape or gardening professional can act as your garden consultant, giving students opportunities to learn in the same way the experts do, by following the same procedures they do when starting new garden projects. Study and visit a model garden!

Students will learn from a visit to another school or park with established wildlife habitats.

Recruit youth groups (scouts, 4-H) who can help fund the project and be partners in the beginning phase of the project.

Planning the Garden: Brainstorm

What wildlife do we want to attract (butterflies, birds, beneficial insects)? What suitable plant material and handmade items (bird houses, water feature) will we need to attract them? Where do we get materials and when will we build the habitat? How will we keep the garden growing?

Survey the site- using a site assessment checklist, students will record physical and environmental factors of the proposed site to be sure it fulfills all the criterion of a certified habitat.
Keeping the Garden Growing: Ask the Experts

Students will work with local experts and Master Gardeners to design the garden, build bluebird houses, select plants, schedule planting days and design a maintenance plan for ongoing student involvement.

For more information on starting a wildlife habitat, visit the National Wildlife Federation at http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Outdoor-Activities/Garden-for-Wildlife/Schoolyard-Habitats.aspx

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