

BMP #4

Why Should My School Restore Habitat?

Pollinators

Pollinator populations have been declining steadily for the last fifty years. Bees, butterflies, bats, and hummingbirds populations have declined. These losses are associated with diseases, parasites, habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, landscape deterioration, and climate change.

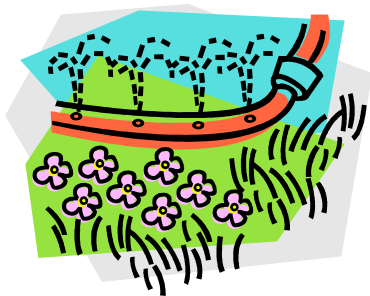


Habitat Restoration

Native plant gardens restore and enhance migratory and breeding bird habitat. They create a more suitable habitat for other wildlife including small mammals, invertebrates and other wildlife. Native songbird populations have declined because of loss of food sources. They can't feed on non-native plants.

Stormwater Management

Since native plants tend to have longer root systems they capture much more water than turf grass. One study found that that surface runoff varied, from 3.6 inches per year in native grassland, to 1.3 inches per year in compact lawn turf. This means that with traditional landscaping more pollutants and a higher volume of water flows into streams and rivers reducing the water quality.



Lower Maintenance

Native plants have evolved and adapted to local conditions over thousands of years. Because they have evolved to live here naturally, indigenous plants are best suited for our local climate. Once established, they require little irrigation or fertilization. They are resistant to most native pests and diseases.

Student Involvement and Learning

Schoolyard habitats offer many teaching and learning opportunities in English, science, mathematics, history, geography, social studies and art. The process of planning, creating and using a habitat provides children with unique hands-on experiences.

If designed and managed properly, schoolyards can provide students with a powerful example of land stewardship. Conversely, it is less likely that students will develop a sense of stewardship if attending a barren, poorly managed schoolyard.



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How Can My School Restore Habitat?



- Start a habitat team
- Plant native trees
- Create small wildlife habitats:
 - Logs: Rotting logs provide habitat for many insects, amphibians and small mammals.
 - Snags: Standing dead trees or snags provide nesting cavities for some birds like woodpeckers and chickadees, while insects living within the snags provide food for a variety of birds. Predatory birds, such as hawks, perch on snags for a better view of their prey.
 - Brush Piles: Brush piles in woodlands and along wooded edges provide excellent cover for rabbits, chipmunks, skunks, small birds and insects. Downed wood or discarded Christmas trees can be used to create brush piles.
 - Nesting Boxes: Nesting boxes for birds, bees, butterflies and bats are artificial structures that attract a greater variety of wildlife for students to observe.
- Establish a schoolyard woodland.
- Create a native plant pollinator garden.
- Establish and maintain a bluebird box trail.
- Restore Wildlife with classroom activities
 - Grow Bay Grasses
 - Raise Horseshoe Crabs
 - Raise Trout in the Classroom
 - Raise Terrapins
- Build Oyster Reef Balls
- Build a Wetland.
- Create a Rain Garden.
- Replace asphalt with pervious pavers.
- Do an invasive weed pull.
- Replace turf grass with native grasses



Steps You Can Take At Home

Replace the plants in your garden with native plants.

For more information: http://www.maeoe.org/resources/ee_resources.php

