



Riparian Corridor Project Profile



Buchanan Elementary School Riparian Buffer and Schoolyard Habitat

Background

Buchanan Elementary School in Livonia, Michigan is surrounded by a large area of mowed fields and playgrounds, with one side adjoining a forested floodplain along the Bell Creek. In early 2000, Laura Jannika-Rust and Lisa Sellinger, parents of students at the school, shared a vision of changing some of the mowed lawn into a garden of trees, bushes and flowers. The garden would be a place of beauty and a place of learning about our natural environment. Support and funding were easily achieved and this allowed ground breaking on April 7th, 2000. A typical traditional landscape plan was developed and installed that incorporated trees, shrubs, a brick patio and a wood chip trail.

Project Overview

After the implementation of the landscape plan, which included trees, shrubs, brick patio and wood chip trail, the project's goals were significantly modified. A National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Habitat Steward joined the team. Following suggestions in the NWF Schoolyard Habitats guide, ideas from local native plant growers and information from area water quality restoration programs, the project's goal went from creating attractive landscaping to creating habitat. The soggy wood chip trail became a dry creek bed of stone and sand. The sides of the creek bed became a riparian buffer consisting of native plants. The miniature creek reduced the site's drainage problem by directing the stormwater runoff through the native plantings and eventually to a storm drain. Much of the site's runoff water is absorbed by the soil and buffer plants. The plants also filter sediment and other pollutants out the water. The water quality is improved and the flow to the Bell Creek is reduced. Over time this site has evolved into an outdoor classroom. This project easily met all the requirement for and has been designated NWF Schoolyard Habitat # 1470. Visitors to Buchanan Oasis Garden can see a project that improves water quality and functions as a riparian corridor, wildlife habitat and outdoor classroom. A worthy vision has been fulfilled.



Two Buchanan Elementary students standing on a bridge over the created "creek" (Picture - J. Asquini)

Methods Used

Wildlife Habitat Creation
Riparian Buffers

Materials Used

Creek: small stones, sand, shovels, trowels, rakes, wheelbarrows

Buffer: native plants, mulch, shovels, trowels, rakes, wheelbarrows, sign and sign posts

Bridges: 4x6x8 Timbers

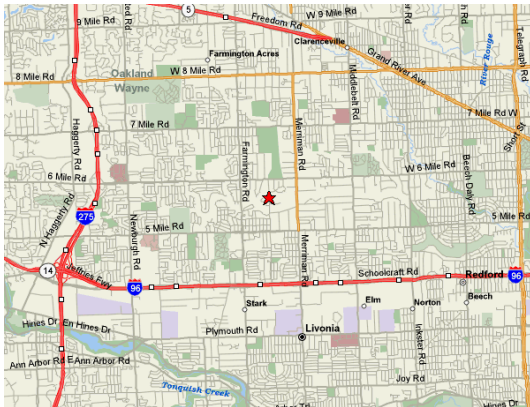
Plants: 20 native trees, 600 Native plants

Permits

None



Students present their project to others students at "Gardenfest". (Picture - J. Asquini)



Partners

Students, teachers, staff, parents, family and friends in the Buchanan Elementary School community, Wild Ones, National Wildlife Federation, Livonia Public Schools and Steinkopf Nursery.



School yard before work was done. (Picture - W. Craig)

Cost

The original landscape plan was over \$2000. The trees and the patio were the expensive elements. The site benefited by having donors who provided the plants at a low cost. The modifications to the plan added about \$500 for stone, sand, timbers and additional native plants. A \$200 yearly budget provides for seed and other garden needs.



Schoolyard habitat area in the Fall with native species in full bloom. (Picture - William Craig)



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Text and photographs supplied by William Craig. For more information on this project, please contact William Craig at (248) 476-5127, 20050 Milburn, Livonia, Michigan 48152

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