



Getting Ready to Grow

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SOME RESOURCES FOR EXPANDING THE WAY YOU THINK ABOUT TEACHING OUTSIDE

Texas Parks and Wildlife Wildscape certification

(<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/wildscapes/>)

Texas Wildscapes is a habitat restoration and conservation plan for rural and urban areas. It enables Texans to contribute to wildlife conservation by developing wildlife habitats where they live, work and play. The website offers a free interactive DVD based on the book Texas Wildscapes: Gardening for Wildlife along with many other on-line resources.

National Wildlife Federation Habitat (<http://www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife/>)

For more than 35 years, NWF's Certified Wildlife Habitat™ program has shown people the benefits of gardening for wildlife. From backyards and apartment balconies to schools, businesses and farms, no garden is too big or small to turn into a wildlife-friendly habitat.

Monarch Watch (<http://www.monarchwatch.org/>)

Monarch Watch is an educational outreach program based at the University of Kansas that engages citizen scientists in large-scale research projects. This program produces real data that relate to a serious conservation issue. Monarch Watch gets children of all ages involved in science.

FeederWatch (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/index.html>)

FeederWatch is the joint research and science education project of the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada. Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance. Anyone interested in birds can participate.

Great Backyard Bird Count Sponsored by Audubon (<http://www.audubon.org/gbbc/>)

Occurring once a year, the Great Backyard Bird Count is the perfect activity to get families and classrooms outside in nature and is a great way to nurture your "citizen scientists."

Junior Master Gardener (<http://www.jmgkids.us/>)

Junior Master Gardener is an international youth gardening program of the University Extension network, based out of the Texas A&M University. The mission of the organization is to grow good kids by igniting a passion for learning, success and service through a unique gardening education. One of the strengths of the organization is in their curriculum and publications.

Project WET (<http://projectwet.org/>)

The mission of Project WET is to reach children, parents, educators, and communities of the world with water education. We invite you to join us in educating children about the most precious resource on the planet — water. Project WET's website hosts publications, training workshops and community events amongst many other valuable resources for educators.

Project WILD (<http://www.projectwild.org/>)

Project WILD is one of the most widely-used conservation and environmental education programs among educators of students in kindergarten through high school. It is based on the premise that young people and educators have a vital interest in learning about our natural world. A national network of State Wildlife Agency Sponsors ensures that Project WILD is available nationwide --training educators in the many facets of the program. Emphasizing wildlife because of its intrinsic value, Project WILD addresses the need for human beings to develop as responsible citizens of our planet.



“It Takes a Community to Raise a Garden”

*MOST IMPORTANT: Don't be afraid to ASK!!

*Use every opportunity to share about your garden!

*Personally visit garden related events in your neighborhood.

*At every school event have a table publicizing the garden. Have a sheet available for parents to get on the Garden Email List.

EXAMPLES:

Fall Festival:

Have carnival events in the garden. Sell “leaves” to buy a tree and have grade levels compete. Have a decorated table that has lists of items needed for families to donate. Give tours of the garden during appropriate events (great to have a Garden Club who have been trained to give tours!)

We made Bookmarks with pressed flowers and sold flower seeds. Plant sales are always good. Use plants from your garden that need to be divided or reduced. Dig up volunteer plants and put in small containers from your own plantings.

Open House:

Have Garden Club or classes stage a “Push Button Museum”. Students prepare a poster with a large push button that spotlights or explores certain elements of the garden. In past years, we have done garden plant animal relationships, butterflies with larval and adult plants, and the blackland prairie ecosystem. This is a great activity to share what you have taught in the garden and to help foster leadership with your students.

Provide programs for PTA:

Include in each PTA night a “Garden Update” and have sign up sheet for parents to get on the Garden Email List.

Informational PowerPoint

Speakers: Master Gardeners

Always ask for volunteers

Family Planting Days:

Set up areas that need to be planted and have trained students and parents to help. It was best for us to do these right after school instead of on a Saturday. Students drag parents out when they get out to the car!

Best way to advertise these is by walking around and inviting parents face to face at dismissal times. Students can make sandwich board posters to advertise and walk around yelling it out or making up cheers.

Teaching garden classes to families:

Making birdfeeders in winter and composting at home (try partnering with other schools to pump up participation!)

Display table:

Have a looping PowerPoint and display photos on backboard with a sign up email list. Good to have a volunteers and students to meet parents face to face.

Math/Reading/Science Nights:

Include activities that spotlight the garden during these events to keep the garden on everyone's mind.

Giveaways from the Garden:

Raffle off produce and/or plants from the garden for school events.

School Sponsored Radio Program:

Every morning students act as radio personalities asking garden related questions, sponsoring contests, teaching science facts etc. This is a great opportunity for students to be creative in planning, implementing and critiquing their work. If you have a Garden Club this can help to publicize what the Club did each week and pass on announcements for the club. Ours was called F.I.T.Z Radio!

Find your Leeann!:

Leeann Rosenthal is Fitzgerald's Master Gardener/Naturalist. With her help our garden has become a showplace! I got her name by attending a community workday at a prairie restoration project very close to our school. You never know who you can find if you just ASK! Having someone who is not a teacher helps to involve other groups from the community such as Master Gardeners. You could look at garden clubs in your area.

Establish relationships with Garden Shops in your area:

Ask to put up flyers asking for volunteers at their shops. (Remember to follow your school rules on volunteer background checks) We use all volunteers as long as children are not present.

Set up an Garden Email List:

Ask parents, and other volunteers for their emails to send out announcements for workdays and things needed. It's best to use a form with small boxes for each letter in email address to make them legible. Use the email list to get help with garden workdays and to send out updates.

Start a Garden Newsletter/Website that can be linked to your school website:

Have teachers, students and volunteers contribute. The Fitzgerald newsletter can be found at <http://sites.google.com/site/fitzgeraldgarden/>

For help contact David Thurston at fitzgeraldgcnewsletter@gmail.com

Start a Family Garden Club:

Our Family Garden Club started last year. We started with parents of our Garden Club students and then branched out to the entire school. We have a core group of 5-6 families that have participated in workdays, family learning classes, contests, barbeques, planting, and mentoring. Next year we hope to add more families and get more involvement. We also want to plan Family Garden Nights where other schools with gardens come and participate with our families. Once the club was started the officers were selected and duties divided up. This group of families is helping to keep our garden watered and alive this summer!

Garden Open House:

We are opening up our garden every Thursday evening for the neighborhood to come and visit. We have had some vandalism problems and hope that this will help to get the neighborhood looking out for us as well as involve the community in the school garden. We plan to send out flyers to the neighborhood to publicize and have it on our marquee.

Neighborhood Watch Meetings:

Invite your local watch meeting group to meet in the garden. Great time to get the neighbors "watching"!

Invite or Rent out the Garden for other public events:

Boy/Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, Churches, Birthday Parties, Garden Clubs, Athletic Group Parties, Scavenger Hunts, Political Rallies, Gas Lease Meetings etc.

Involve Local Nursing or Retirement Homes: Request seniors who would like to help out by working in the garden or mentoring students or even talking to students about farming.

Canvas Local Businesses:

Look for a local business to sponsor your garden. Ask for donations and put a sign up in the garden.

Food Banks:

Have students take excess produce to local food banks.

Garden T-Shirts

selling Garden Club TShirts to publicize the garden and make money!!

Other Ideas?:

