



# Steps for Creating a Schoolyard Habitat Plan

1. Tour the schoolyard to identify areas where projects can be done. Using an assessment tool, look for:
  - ✓ Areas where unused lawn can be converted into woodlands, meadows, wetlands, gardens
  - ✓ Drainage problems (These can be addressed by bogs, ponds, rainbarrels, raingardens...)
  - ✓ Fences (Great places to hang bluebird boxes!)
  - ✓ Ponds, streams, stormwater/sedimentation ponds, wetlands
  - ✓ Areas where food & shelter could be added to attract wildlife (feeders, logs, rock & brush piles)
  - ✓ Problems: Talk to maintenance about schoolyard problems (water pooling, hard to mow areas)
  - ✓ A water source: you don't want to plant a project then realize you can't water it!
2. Decide on your project(s):
  - ✓ Be realistic in choosing the number, size & type of projects. **Remember: you and your students are responsible for its upkeep.**
  - ✓ Discuss potential projects with your maintenance staff and administration. The goal of schoolyard habitat projects is to restore habitat and address schoolyard problems, **NOT** to add work for your maintenance staff or create an unsustainable habitat that will become an eyesore.
  - ✓ If you have a lot of ideas of potential projects, have students make a case for their favorite project and have a debate to decide which project will offer the most benefits.
3. Draw a scale diagram of your site.
4. Gather data for your planting site:
  - ✓ Light conditions
  - ✓ Moisture
  - ✓ Soil testing
  - ✓ Existing plants
5. Research! Decide which native plants to use and where they should be planted.
  - ✓ Take into consideration what conditions each plant needs
  - ✓ Plant each type of plant in groups to provide the most wildlife benefit
  - ✓ Consider spacing: how tall and wide are the plants going to get?
  - ✓ Consider bloom time: try to have some color in every season
  - ✓ Use the USFW *Native Plant Guide*
6. Don't forget about habitat elements! Adding elements like feeders, rock & brush piles, logs, a water source, etc. will make your habitat more attractive to wildlife.
7. Don't forget the human wildlife! Remember that you want students & staff to visit your project too!
  - ✓ Consider adding paths, benches, a table (outdoor classroom), etc.
  - ✓ Signs are a great way to mark your habitat and to teach others about your project.
8. Make a planting design, incorporating all of the above elements.
  - ✓ Use the USFW *Schoolyard Habitat Guide*.
  - ✓ Remember: This is supposed to be fun! Don't overwhelm yourself. Consider doing your project in smaller phases instead of tackling a huge project all at once
  - ✓ Use transparencies to show future phases you are planning

9. Consult the experts.
  - ✓ Consider having an expert review your plan
  - ✓ Don't forget to turn in required maintenance forms (i.e. major/minors) & Call Miss Utility.
10. Write a maintenance plan for your habitat.
  - ✓ Plan for immediate, seasonal and future maintenance.
  - ✓ Consider forming a group of volunteers to help with maintenance throughout the year.
  - ✓ **Remember: you and your students are responsible for its upkeep.**
11. Design a budget and submit a grant application.
  - ✓ Remember to find out what equipment you can borrow and what you will need to buy
  - ✓ Remember to estimate and include soil and mulch in your budget.
  - ✓ Consider having the students write the grant.
  - ✓ Include your site design & maintenance plan in your application.
  - ✓ Don't just rely on your grant; look for additional funding sources (PTA, community groups)
  - ✓ Consider asking for items like plants, feeders, benches, etc. to be donated by local businesses
12. Set dates for site preparation and planting.
13. Once you know your approved budget & dates, place your plant & supply orders.
14. Let everyone know what you are doing!
  - ✓ Hold an after-school meeting to share your project plans with staff
  - ✓ Hold a meeting for the community to share your plans and ask for volunteers
  - ✓ Write a press release for your local paper (students can write one for the school newspaper)
  - ✓ Ask a local reporter to cover the planting
15. Plan a CELEBRATION!
  - ✓ Plan a Planting Day celebration / dedication ceremony with your students
  - ✓ Create a banner
  - ✓ Contact local businesses to donate treats, like ice cream, water, etc.
16. PREPARATION DAY:
  - ✓ Gather students, equipment and volunteers to help prepare the site for planting.
  - ✓ Parents, local businesses & community members may lend equipment (i.e. rototillers) or services.
  - ✓ If safe, set plants out in spots they will be planted tomorrow. If not, mark spots with spray paint.
  - ✓ Be sure to have plenty of water available
17. PLANTING DAY!
  - ✓ Hang that banner!
  - ✓ Set plants out where they will be planted.
  - ✓ Plant, water & CELEBRATE!

### Remember:

Take pictures and keep a journal/portfolio from Day One!

Look for or create fun activities to utilize your project!

**Most importantly: Have fun!**