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!**

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