

D.C. School Garden Week teaches youth in outdoor classrooms

By Kathy Jentz

Schoolyard habitats are sprouting up all over the country. The District started its own Schoolyard Green project just a few years ago in 2003. It is modeled after California's School Garden Network and its goal is to increase and improve schoolyard green spaces to promote ecological literacy and environmental stewardship among students, teachers, parents and the surrounding community.

Mayor Adrian Fenty has declared Oct. 15-20 School Garden Week, a celebration of activities throughout the District promoting gardens as sources of learning, improved nutrition, and environmental stewardship. All are welcome to attend any of the week's events and

Initiated by the D.C. Schoolyard Greening organization, School Garden Week encourages teachers and school administrators to engage the city's youth in activities that demonstrate the role gardens can play in the health and education of school children.

The week kicks off Oct. 15 at La Salle Elementary School at 501 Riggs Road NE, where Mayor Fenty and school officials have been invited to join students and faculty in a wetland planting and to tour the



Photo by Drena Galarza, Washington Gardener Magazine

school's new green roof and solar panels. As part of School Garden Week, Washington schoolchildren across the city were encouraged to participate in a garden photo contest, with prizes offered to students and their teachers. Deadline for submission was Oct. 1 and the winners will be announced at the week's kick-off event.

Schoolyard Greening will hold a panel discussion the evening of Oct. 16 on how to start a school garden, with experts taking up questions of funding, garden design, maintenance, and integrating gardens into school curricula. This is a great opportunity for parents and teachers

from all over the region to attend and find out how to get a garden installed at their own school. It will also cover what grants are available to schools for these garden projects. For instance, Lowe's Home Improvement stores will give up to \$20,000 for major outdoor classroom proposals by K-12 public schools throughout the United States.

A great place to start learning about schoolyard habitats is the School Garden Curricula page on the National Environmental Education Week web site, www.eeweek.org's resources section. From creating an herb garden to tracking the life cycle of Monarch butterflies,

there are literally hundreds of ways to get kids involved in the outdoors and learning while doing.

The Casey Trees foundation will host a "tree walk" at Murch Elementary School at 4810 96th St. NW on Oct. 18, where the foundation and its volunteers have been working with parents and school staff to plant more than 100 trees.

Oct. 19 has been designated as "volunteer work day" at D.C. school gardens, an opportunity for parents and neighborhood residents to support their local schoolyard green spaces. Several schools are looking for volunteers to help them maintain their gardens. This workday will cel-

brate school gardens by making sure that they look their best!

And on Oct. 20, Schoolyard Greening will sponsor a bus tour of successful school gardens in the city, while the Women's Garden Cycles project will mount a separate bicycle tour of school gardens. On the tour are several exemplary school gardens in the district including Watkins ES, Sharpe Health School, Lowell School, and Cesar Chavez Public Charter School for Public Policy, Parkside Campus. Visitors to the sites will learn how these outdoor spaces can easily be integrated into the teaching curriculum and get ideas for how to start their own schoolyard habitat projects.

Partners in D.C. School Garden week include the 21st Century School Fund, Casey Trees, D.C. Department of the Environment, Watershed Protection Division, the National Environmental Education Foundation, Project Learning Tree, Potomac Conservancy, the Washington Youth Garden, Washington Gardener Magazine, and many others.

More information about School Garden Week events is available at the D.C. Schoolyard Greening web site, www.dcschoolyardgreening.org.

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