

HCTF Education **Wild School program** is a community of students, teachers and supporters who undertake initiatives to engage in environmental learning, hands-on experiences and stewardship activities to connect students to nature. Blewett Elementary School is one of our Wild Schools and together with Wildsight's "EcoStewards" program, the Blewett School PAC and many community supporters transformed a section of their schoolyard into an outdoor learning classroom with a greenspace for native plants, shrubs and trees, a butterfly garden, and forest laboratory. This past spring many classes were able to use their new outdoor classroom.

Here are some examples of the schoolyard activities Blewett teachers were able to do:

Greening Project Signage/ Mapping and Peer Teaching About Plants

Jill Gingrich and her grade 4/5 class used their leadership skills to implement several schoolyard garden projects including an inventory of the plants, both planted and wild, in the area. They worked in small groups to become "experts" about one plant in particular, doing research and making drawings of their species. On the "garden celebration day" the students hosted "tours" for all the other classes in the school, teaching the rest of the school about the plants. Although some temporary signs were made, the planned permanent signage remains as a project idea to be completed next year. Students also became stewards of their schoolyard garden by taking care of the weeding and plant care.



“ The Blewett School transformed a section of their schoolyard into an outdoor learning classroom. ”

Garden Scavenger Hunt

As part of an appreciation of their new backyard garden, students in James Wheeler's grade 3/4 class shared a scavenger hunt activity and with Wendy West's Kindergarten class. Students from the K class were divided into groups, along with their older buddies from the grade 3/4 class. They participated in activities for them to get to know their newly "rewilded" backyard! These activities were based on a "treasure map" that was created for the class and that included some of the key natural features of the yard. The map has been copied and laminated for use with other activities and classes. Station activities included a variety of sensory activities, emphasizing the plants and animals of the backyard such as: tree cone id, tree ring counting, bark rubbings, tree "stories", "sniff-it" and "touch and feel" activities to get to know some of the plants and shrubs, and a "mouse-food" finding activity to look at wildlife and habitat.



Experimental Garden

"What is a seed?" began the inquiry in Barb Brogan's grade ½ class. The inquiry lead to the class collecting "wild plant seeds" in the schoolyard green space. Students were thrilled to explore the various trees, shrubs and other plants in the green space, and to compare and contrast different seed shapes, sizes and "strategies". Students grew bean or lettuce plants inside the classroom from seed, developing their own experiments by manipulating environmental variables such as water, light, temperature and nutrients. to learn about the needs of seeds and plants.

Buttery Garden

How do adult butterflies meet their needs? What kinds of plants would benefit Painted Lady butterflies? What can we do in our Schoolyard Garden to help butterflies? These were some of the questions Liana Horkoff and her grade 2/3 class inquired about. So using their new schoolyard garden, the students researched the different types of native plants that butterflies are attracted to, selected plants to plant in their butterfly garden, studied the life cycle of butterflies from larva to adult and raised butterfly larvae for release in their garden. On planting day, the class worked in groups, with several activity stations: a planting station, an insect collection and inventory station, a "lifecycle matching game" station, and a journaling/recording station. All activities took place outdoors, using the great 'living laboratory' that had been created in their schoolyard.



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