



Ideas for Supporting Biodiversity on School Grounds



Biological diversity—or ‘biodiversity’—refers to the variety of all life on Earth

Biodiversity supports healthy and resilient ecosystems and the natural systems and processes that are essential to life on Earth, including the air we breathe, water we drink, and food we eat.

School grounds can play an important role in supporting and enhancing biodiversity and provide wonderful opportunities for student learning.

Remember that smaller ‘wins’ are contagious; celebration, awareness, or monitoring projects can easily turn into a wider school action project and small garden plots can blossom into a larger garden plan. Don’t forget to connect with community-based environmental organizations in your area and work together on projects whether large or small.



Getting Started

When it comes to transforming school grounds to support biodiversity and environmental learning, no project is too small. Build on student interests and start with your own class projects. Or consider working together with multiple classes or even the whole school for greater impact and collaboration.

Here are some ideas to inspire you and your class, school, or community to support biodiversity on school grounds and beyond.

Creating Wild Spaces: Improving Wildlife and Terrestrial Habitat

With Your Class

- **Grow native plants** to use in a garden or sell at a plant sale, donate profits to local conservation group.
- **Create a pollinator class tub** or planter box gardens.

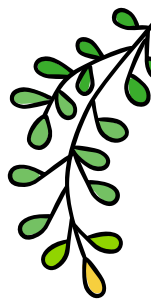


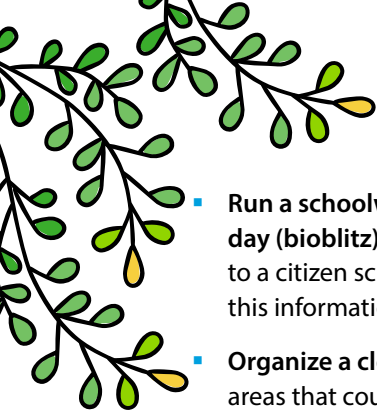


- **Adopt a tree!** Check out local organizations, like Tree Canada, and get involved.
- **Celebrate special days!** Make a list of environmental days throughout the year and celebrate them, such as National Tree Day in September, and International Day for Biological Diversity in May.
- **Monitor and record bloom** times of native plants in the spring and if available send your results into a citizen science program.
- **Build insect hotels** from natural materials to take home or install in the schoolyard.
- **Make a model size shoebox habitat;** consider if habitat can be created on the school grounds.
- **Build a biodiversity observation tool kit,** items such as:
 - Bug collectors
 - Mirror sticks to explore underneath rocks or logs
 - Homemade microscope
 - Binoculars made from toilet paper tubes
- **Build a bird feeder** and find a space to install it where it can be cleaned and monitored.
- **Create toad homes** in appropriate areas on the school grounds or in a nearby park.
- **Create a field guide for biodiversity** in your schoolyard or nearby habitats, including information about things people can do to help each species you include.
- **Monitor biodiversity** such as bird, plant, or pollinator surveys of your schoolyard or local park.
- **Design a school walking map** that highlights the biodiversity and different habitats (e.g. forest, stream, shoreline) found within walking distance of your school. Include seasonal changes.
- **Construct native bird, squirrel or bat boxes** for nesting habitat and raffle them off.

With Your School

- **Build a log pile** for the bugs! Use wood pallets or woody debris.
- **Grow native plants.** Plant in your school garden beds or run a native plant sale as a fundraiser.
- **Start a compost area.** Do some soil surveys and see what living things students can find.
- **Become a no-spray school.** School does not use any chemicals harmful to wildlife on the school grounds.
- **Create a wildflower garden** or patch.
- **Let some grass grow!** Set aside an area of grass to let grow. Try cutting every six weeks or try growing a meadow that is cut once per year. Monitor what plants grow and what other species are found.
- **Leave edges wild!** Create some natural areas along the borders of school property or enhance boulevards.
- **Create leaf piles in the fall.** Mulch leaves for adding to garden beds or bag up in compost bags to use for future planting projects.





- **Run a schoolwide biodiversity monitoring day (bioblitz)** in different seasons. Share results to a citizen science organization that collects this information.
- **Organize a clean up day** and identify problem areas that could be enhanced for wildlife habitat.
- **Plant hedgerows to support birds and other wildlife.** Have a school-wide planting day to celebrate.
- **Create a green roof or wall.** Try making a green wall out of pallets or other repurposed materials.
- **Create a school mural that depicts local biodiversity** and actions people can do to help environmental concerns.
- **Map and collect natural materials** to create a free play space in an appropriate place of the schoolyard.
- **Design a natural outdoor classroom space:**
 - Use tree log rounds or rocks for spaces to sit
 - Make a schedule for using the space
 - Set up use guidelines to keep the area natural
 - Consider ways to incorporate without removing natural vegetation
- **Design and plant a water garden** or stormwater filtration planting for wet areas around the school.
- **Build an outdoor learning garden** with students. Ideas and themes include pollinators and butterflies, native plants, xeriscaping, traditional medicine or food plants, virtue gardens, medicine wheel gardens, ceremonial plantings, or circular gardens that can have different grades assigned a pie slice to design.
- **Plan and hold a schoolwide event** that brings together local nature groups such as NatureKids BC, Streamkeepers, and other environmental organizations, to help celebrate and build connections for future stewardship project collaborations.

Creating Wet Spaces: Improving Water Quality and Aquatic Habitats

With Your Class

- **Locate the drains** that collect run-off water from your school on a watershed map. Find out what happens to your wastewater and come up with a plan and campaign to help conserve or protect water such as storm drain marking or sprinkling regulation reminders.
- **Conduct a water audit** at school and at home. Design and implement a plan to be more waterwise.
- **Create a water smart garden** box or planter.
- **Celebrate World Rivers Day** (4th Sunday in September) or Oceans Day (June 8th) activities. Participate in a beach clean-up.
- **Test water quality** at your local creek or waterway.
- **Make a bird bath.** Use the top or garbage can lid or something shallow (~5–10 cm) and place a few rocks inside.



- **Raise salmon in your classroom** by participating in Salmonids in the Classroom program. Release fish in the spring.
- **Survey the school grounds** to identify possible places that need restoration or protection such as walking trails, places where litter gets left. Then organize an information and awareness campaign to motivate fellow students and adults to protect, restore, or enhance these areas as they use them.
- **Make an information kiosk** or bulletin board about biodiversity around the school.
- **Create a school perimeter nature-walk pathway**, complete with a map of points of interest, riddles or inquiries to make at stops along the pathway for other classes to learn about biodiversity.
- **Look for invasive plants in the schoolyard.** Find out how they are controlled and obtain support for their removal.



With Your School

- **Create a watershed map** with school location and show routes and distances to closest water bodies, such as streams, rivers and lakes.
- **Identify where water pools** are on the school ground and determine how to manage the problem areas or areas that could support aquatic habitat.
- **Create shade and mini wetland** or riparian garden areas for wet sites on school grounds.
- **Build a rain garden** in an area of where there is lots of runoff, such as a roof or the bottom of a slope.
- **Create an aquatic art mural** on a school wall or fence such as the Stream of Dreams "Fish on Fences" program.
- **Hold a yellow fish day** for the school. Paint yellow fish on storm drains in your community to show where storm drains on roadways empty directly into local streams.
- **Design and plant a water garden** or storm water filtration planting for wet areas around the school
- **Plant drought tolerant plants** in the gardens and beds surrounding the school.