

A Butterfly Garden Teaches Environment Awareness at Druid Hills High School

Last year, Druid Hills High School began a butterfly garden project



Area had crab grass, one maple tree and hard compacted Georgia clay.

with a focus on community effort. Started by three school Master Gardener candidates and a parent, as a result of taking a school Master Gardener program at the Fernbank Science Center, the group took an area of crabgrass, clay, weeds, and trash and turned it into a garden with an educational focus.

The garden team focused their efforts on creating a butterfly garden on the school grounds. The group's purpose was to involve the community in making a pollinator/butterfly garden and raise awareness of the environmental impact of composting, pollinators, and invasive plants with the involvement of the school community (i.e., teachers, students, parents, and other community members.)



The area was tilled and soil was amended with the compost.

A strong focus of the garden was to focus on the life cycle of monarch butterflies. Students in all Spanish classes learned about the life cycle of the butterflies and their remarkable journey to Mexico which for hundreds of years has been a part of the Mexican celebration of Los Dios de los Muertos. They made symbolic paper butterflies with messages in Spanish asking the students in Mexico to help protect the butterflies. These were sent to Mexican school children through the Journey North organization.



Composting or "good garbage" was another focus of the garden. Wooden pallets found near the cafeteria were used to make composting bins. Students in the environmental science classes learned about landfills, pollution associated with landfills, studies on landfills, groundwater



contamination, and measures taken to make them safer. They also learned about the scientific process of composting and helped to fill the compost bins in the

butterfly garden.

Equally important to this project was the use of the garden for educational purposes. The project began the weekend after school opened in August 2008. Fifty parents, students and teachers attended the workday and the garden was launched with repeated workdays throughout the year. Enthusiasm of the numerous student service clubs, teachers, parents, and sports teams was obvious as they helped create the garden vision throughout the year.



The principal supported fundraising by allowing the sponsorship of several "jeans days." Each faculty member who donated \$5 could wear jeans on those days. The gardens received funding from the PTSA and several other grants. Together with funding from GMGA several garden areas were developed.

The vision for the garden included four different areas.

- The first area created was a certified pollinator garden with a variety of plants flowering throughout the year to continually attract various pollinators.
- The second area, a butterfly garden, was planted with mostly milkweed to attract monarch butterflies.
- In a third area, lenten roses, ferns, and hostas were planted to create a shade garden next to an outdoor classroom. Working with the school's Environmental Club, 32 tree stumps were placed in our shade garden under a tree canopy to provide enough seating for a class.
- Erosion control was the goal in the 4th area. Rescued plants were used to hold the soil and divert runoff.

Garden workdays were promoted through several venues including a PTSA listserv, school service clubs, signs, emails, and faculty meetings. Communication efforts began by showing PowerPoint presentations to the PTSA and the faculty to introduce the plan for the garden and explain the environmental importance of pollinator/butterfly gardens.

Various areas of the curriculum also used the garden for activities and lessons. These include:

Environmental Science Classes –Earth Day removal of invasive plants in the woods, landfill/composting lessons, rehabilitation of our pond and waterfall using a student generated rubric.

Spanish – Studying Monarch butterfly migration to Mexico which involved writing to students in Mexico in Spanish and receiving replies.

French – Earth Day invasive plant weeding, Monarch migration narrative in French.

ROTC & Orchestra – Spread mulch around the campus, Plant rescue, Earth Day weeding.

Special Ed – Started flowers from seed, Learned the parts of a plant, Studied birds, Created a bird feeding station outside their classroom window for observation, Watered the plants, Cleaned the bird bath.

Third Grade Students in Mexico – One of the team members, Julie, traveled to Mexico during the school year and gave a lesson about the life cycle of butterflies.



The garden sparked much interest in the community. It beautified the campus by adding colorful flowers and plants, added an awareness of environmental issues, and served as a focus for community service and involvement by clubs, parents, and students. In creating the garden the

students learned more about plants and wildlife and to value and cherish the area that they helped create. School gardening has provided many positive benefits at Druid Hills High School.



We wish to thank the Georgia Master Gardener Association for their generous grant which helped us make our garden a reality. Being involved with the garden has given our students a sense of stewardship, pride, and ownership. Increased understanding of the importance of the garden areas has helped them value the garden not only for aesthetic reasons, but also for the role that a garden can play in supporting our environment.

Submitted by David Goodwin, Julie Jordan, Betsy Razza, and Jane Ayres, DeKalb County Master Gardeners

Students decorated their butterflies in a variety of interesting patterns and wrote their messages in Spanish on the back of each butterfly. Each class also registered on Journey North so they could keep up with the Monarch Migration. We mailed the letters in the fall.



In the spring we received many beautiful butterfly letters from the students in Mexico! The Spanish classes enjoyed reading them.



GOLD STAR PROJECT

Four Georgia Master Gardeners in DeKalb, Mary Evans, Gail Douglas, Helene Hand, and Mary Leight, completed a course in Urban Forestry in 2009. The course was taught by Jule-Lynn Macie, Rockdale County Extension Coordinator. For their course project, they designed and developed a booklet, *Decatur's Remarkable Trees, A Walking Tour*. Gary Peiffer, DeKalb County Extension Agent, provided much historical data and helped guide the project to its fruition.

This Gold-Star project highlights 12 unique and historically worthy trees, all within easy walking distance of the Old Courthouse in Decatur. The booklet guides tourists and residents on a walking tour of downtown Decatur's remarkable trees and includes pictures of the trees and a numbered map. Copies will be available at the Decatur/DeKalb Historical Society, housed within the Old Courthouse, and other designated Decatur/DeKalb County public sites.

Submitted by Mary Leight, DeKalb County Master Gardener



Shown (from left) Mary Evans, Gail Douglas, Helene Hand, Mary Leight; Georgia Master Gardeners in DeKalb - Urban Forestry, 2008-2009

Fayette County Master Gardeners Help Square Foot Ministries

During July and August, with the help of my co-worker Sue Nichols, Master Gardener Angie Mathis and her dutifully digging husband, friends and family of the soon-to-be homeowner Tonisa Head, my husband, Jack, and fellow members of my church, Providence United Methodist in Fayette County, I chaired the landscaping committee for Square Foot Ministries' build in Griffin. Square Foot Ministry is an organization whose mission is similar to Habitat for Humanity but limited to Fayette and surrounding counties. To go from a blank slate to a landscaped yard in a short period of time was daunting, to say the least, since my own garden has evolved over at least a dozen years, including lots of time for mistakes!

But, as a team, we managed to pull it off, coming in under budget (the cumulative effect of my longtime marriage to a CPA) and are satisfied with the outcome. The greatest enjoyment, however, was the wonderful feeling of a community effort in getting a job

