



Sustainable Schoolyards

Beginning a Landscape Project

NEBRASKA STATEWIDE ARBORETUM

Form a Team

Creating a school landscape project requires a diverse group of people. Identifying who needs to be involved and inviting them to join in the planning should be done early on. Helping them feel ownership of the project and including them in planning phase is essential and helps everyone involved feel like part of the team.



Working together, even young students can accomplish big tasks. Landscaping projects can also teach teamwork and mentoring skills.

Who Should Be Involved?

1. Project Champion: has the vision and passion for the project throughout the planning phase. Advocates for the project after completion.
2. Administration/District: approves the beginning of the project and encourages the participation of teacher, maintenance staff and students.
3. Maintenance Staff: it is their job to maintain the school property and should be included in any plan to change it. They are also a valuable resource for information about the property.
4. Teachers: are more likely to use and help maintain a garden they helped create.
5. Parents/Community: are the largest pool of volunteers for planting and maintenance. Keeping them informed and excited throughout the process increases chances of getting help.
6. Students: Ultimately the schoolyard is for the benefit of the students!

Identify the Needs of the School

The needs of every school are unique and the possible uses and benefits of a school landscape are endless. Determine what your school needs from a landscape both for the functionality of the grounds and use by teachers, students and families.

LANDSCAPE FUNCTION

- Low input landscapes reduce maintenance time and cost
- Rain gardens and bioswales improve stormwater management
- Windbreaks protection from winter weather, noise and traffic
- Provides habitat for insects and birds
- Improves the schoolyard's visual appeal

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CLASSROOM USE

- Provides a living laboratory of native plants, habitat and a variety of ecosystems for student observation
- Wide range of learning opportunities in every academic area
- Shade for play areas, gathering spaces and outdoor classrooms
- Greenspace for recreation

Create a Design

In most cases it is best to work with a professional designer and it is important to have determined your goal for the design. Be ready to explain your vision for the project and identify needs versus wants that you are willing to compromise on for the sake of time, price tag and functionality.

Get Students Involved!

- Critical thinking & persuasive writing on what their school needs in a landscape
- Observation and description of the site (wet/dry, sun/shade, flat/hilly etc.)
- Research of plants native to the area and suitable for the site conditions



These sixth graders designed their school rain garden with help from University of Nebraska-Omaha landscape design students