



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM CASE STUDY #24 BEACHWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Phase One of this project (in 1996) was the transformation of the courtyard into a multi-purpose outdoor classroom: one area to attract, feed and house particular species of birds, another area designated as a nursery for growing new plants for later transplanting to other areas of the school yard, and the third area was designed as a butterfly garden.

In 2000, the detention basin of the school was converted into a wildlife habitat and rain garden. It was planted with native species of tree and shrubs. The screening of white pine across the back of the basin provides nesting sites for birds as well as a wind break and cover for both birds and other species of wildlife.

The \$ Thing:

- Beachwood Elementary School was the recipient of 2 Outdoor Classrooms grants from OCSCD: the first in 1996 for \$500; and the second in 2000, also for \$500.

A Barren Basin turned Rain Garden by adding:

9 Sweet Gum, 9 Pin Oak, 15 Pitch Pine, 15 Atlantic White Cedar, 12 Bayberry, 6 Sweet Pepperbush, 12 Highbush Blueberry, 10 Inkberry Holly, 9 Redtwig Dogwood, 5 Shadbush, 8 Chokeberry, 6 15 Gamma Grass and mulch, mulch and more mulch!



The “Bearadise” Project involved the entire school and well as the community. Each grade was given “ownership” of a quadrant of the Rain Garden. They acted as stewards in developing and maintaining their particular section. Incorporation of technology was utilized by researching native plants on the web and linking to the Beachwood Municipality website.

The courtyard at the school was already to be transformed. An existing pond, pathways and some trees were in need of additional plantings to provide wildlife cover and food sources.

Enclosed areas such as courtyards typically found in schools are often appropriate places for outdoor classrooms. They are secure, are an integral part of the school building, and are generally accessible from multiple locations.

Courtyards also present some unique challenges: they have microclimatic conditions due to extreme heat and seasonal variations, more often than not, they do not have utilities such as electric or water, both working in the courtyard and future utilization of the outdoor classroom can be disruptive to the surrounding classrooms. Despite these challenges, courtyards are often very successful projects because their size is manageable.



The Beachwood Bear Project— “Bearadise”

A Rain Garden is an area specifically landscaped with native vegetation that soak up rainwater. They allow water to soak into the ground and be filtered by the plants.

Rain Gardens help alleviate some of the negative impacts of stormwater. In a basin, planting appropriate trees, shrubs and wildflowers can greatly increase its ability to function.

Newsletter Spotlight

- The grant in 1996 was written and submitted by Ms. Koropatnick, the Health Educator at the school to transform their courtyard.
- The grant in 2000 was submitted and overseen by Ms. Seiler, the school's Environmental Coordinator.