Growing a WILD NYC!

Engaging K-12 students in pollinator education, gardening, and habitat restoration in their schools and local parks

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Pollinators — including the beloved monarch butterfly — are in peril. Their numbers are plummeting due to a range of factors, and without healthy pollinator populations our plants, ecosystems, and food sources are threatened. The National Wildlife Federation (NWF), the National Park Service (NPS), and partners are leading an exciting program — **Growing a Wild NYC** — that enlists the help of schoolchildren to restore pollinator habitat in New York City while teaching kids about their environment.

"**Growing a Wild NYC**" is a collaboration between the National Wildlife Federation's Eco-Schools USA, the National Park Service/Gateway National Recreation Area, the Student Conservation Association (SCA), Greenbelt Native Plant Center, Community Greenways Collaborative, Cornell University, the NYC Department of Education, and parents and grandparents.

Using their local schools, gardens, and parks — specifically the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge — as real-life learning laboratories, the "Wild" program teaches kids about local pollinators, their habitats, and the causes of their decline. Students also learn basic gardening techniques and use

their newfound knowledge to grow the native plant species that pollinators need to survive. With the help of their teachers, parents, grandparents, and community members, students plant thousands of native plants in their schools and at Jamaica Bay, creating dozens of new pollinator-friendly school gardens while restoring important habitat in their closest national park. These actions support the goals of the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge, a campaign of the National Pollinator Garden Network, supported by both NWF and NPS.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

As seen on NBC Nightly News, News 12 Brooklyn TV

Step 1

NPS Rangers and SCA interns visit classrooms in the fall to teach kids about plant-pollinator relationships, seed collection and germination, and phenology — the study of plant and animal lifecycle events and how these are influenced by climatic conditions.

Step 2

Classes take autumn field trips to the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, part of Gateway National Recreation Area, to collect seeds from native plants, monitor native pollinators, learn how to clean seeds for germination, and test soil pH and quality. Seeds are over-wintered by the NYC Parks Department's Greenbelt Native Plant Center.

Step 3

NPS Rangers and SCA interns visit students again during the winter, this time to teach them about seed germination and planting. They begin germinating their seeds in the classroom under grow lights.

Step 4

Students create pollinator-friendly gardens at school using their newly-sprouted seedlings.

Step 5

Classes return to Jamaica Bay in the spring to plant hundreds of native plants there, thereby restoring critical pollinator habitat in their local national park.

The program concludes with an end-of-year exhibit and celebration including photo documentation of the program and student work. Throughout the year, classes can take on additional projects to study plant-pollinator interactions, how climate change impacts their schools and communities, and other environmental topics that affect pollinators, habitat, and biodiversity.

ABOUT MONARCHS

Steve Byland

The monarch butterfly is an iconic species. The annual migration of North America's monarch butterfly to Mexico is a unique and amazing phenomenon. One of their important rest-stops along the way is Great Kills Park on Staten Island, within Gateway National Recreation Area.

The North American monarch population has declined by more than 90 percent in the past two decades. This is happening for a number of reasons, including:

- **Loss of habitat:** Without healthy habitats where monarchs can breed and spend winters, their numbers can plummet.
- **Climate change:** Models suggest monarchs have been forced to change their migratory patterns due to climate change.
- **Pesticides:** Used in agriculture and backyard gardens, pesticides can kill beneficial insects like monarchs.

For more information, visit **http://www.nwf.org/Pollinators.aspx**

The North American monarch population has declined by more than 90 percent in the past two decades.

Photo courtesy of USFWS

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If you are a NYC teacher interested in participating in the "Wild" program, or are a sponsor or volunteer interested in supporting the program, please contact:

Emily A. Fano
National Wildlife Federation
NYC Eco-Schools
(646) 502-7096
FanoE@nwf.org

Jeanette Parker
National Park Service
Gateway National Recreation Area
(718) 354.4643
jeanette_parker@nps.gov

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