

Brookhaven College Windmill Garden

Grow Native – A Plant and Pollinator Garden Catalyzes Engagement and Learning

Located on 195 acres in NW Dallas County, bounded by wild thickets and a creek, Brookhaven is one of the last large green spaces in the area. This former farm is now surrounded by super highways and high-rise development. Founded in 1978, one of seven Dallas County Community Colleges, Brookhaven serves about 13,000 credit plus 4,000 non-credit students each semester. We earned Tree Campus USA status in 2013.



1. Planting the Idea

Spring 2015 – Proposed to repurpose an abandoned garden project with native plants to attract pollinators and other wildlife and become a multi-purpose learning resource for campus and community. College funded \$38,500 for soil, drip irrigation, outdoor classroom with rain barrels. Garden is 4,000 sq. feet with six large beds shaped as stylized windmill blades.



2. Raising the Funding

Spring 2016 - Committee of 15 (students, employees, community) work with USEED crowdsourcing platform to raise \$7,500 for plants, garden shed and tools for volunteers. Via video, social media pleas, campus connections and community friends, we reach \$9,100! We begin programming and faculty outreach.



3. Digging In

Fall 2016 - Planting begins! Each bed features a color most appealing to pollinators. We cultivate a partnership with North TX Master Naturalists. Students start weeding and working. 150 new plants are installed in early November.



6. Re-seeding for Continued Growth

Fall 2017 – Migrating monarch butterflies are frequent visitors! We teach 3 monarch programs for campus and community. We strengthen our connection with Master Naturalists. We reach out to our Early College High School. Head Start children visit again. Plans for more fundraising are underway.



5. Wild Beauty

Summer 2017 – Our work pays off with vibrant variety and color. Many butterflies, bees, hummingbirds, flies, and wasps are active in the garden. We host Moth Night July 25 for campus and community friends. Amy battles nutsedge!



4. Growing Support

Spring 2017 - Educational outreach begins! Brookhaven College Head Start students learn how butterflies see and visit the garden. Amy presents on campus and at Earth Day TX. Garden is named Monarch Waystation and NWF Wildlife Habitat. Through an email newsletter, we reconnect with our donors.

Challenges and Lessons Learned . . . at a large, public community college

"Garden time" out of sync with college schedules

- Labor-intensive times for garden April to October
- Beginning and end of semester activities occupy volunteer/participant pools
- Summer has lowest campus populations and Texas heat deters volunteers

Volunteers don't come easy

- Student volunteers lack skills and consistent schedules
- Lots of competing obligations; full-time jobs
- Volunteer only for extra credit at semester's end
- No prompt, reliable communication tool for scheduling

Institutional systems conflict with organic, native ecosystems

- Purchasing policies favor large, pre-vetted vendors
- POs are required; timelines run into weeks
- Layers of approvals required for purchasing, hiring, "decisions by committee", etc.
- Conventional landscaping practices encourage and spread weeds
- Our separate DCCCD Foundation account allows for flexibility, fundraising

Garden location

- Completely open, largely unattended, and at a distance from campus, flowers are frequently picked and plants stolen.

CONTACT

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