



The School 5 Teaching Garden

With the help of City Green, a 501(c)3 non-profit community gardening organization, Public School #5 in Paterson, New Jersey, recently broke ground on their new Teaching Garden. The garden is a bird and butterfly habitat garden, interspersed with vegetable patches which include a fall planting of garlic. City Green designed the garden with direct input from the lead teacher on the project Lisa Polzer, as well as all of the third grade teachers who will be using it as a powerful hands-on learning tool for their students. Guidance Counselor Donna Morello, a life-long gardener herself, was the initial motivating force behind bringing such a project to School 5. “Kids are proud to walk by a garden, even when they’re in high school, and know that they were the ones who put it in and cared for it”, stated Morello.

Paterson is one of the oldest industrial cities in the United States, and like many underserved inner city areas, suffers from a lack of green space and opportunities for children to interact with nature. City Green is dedicated to facilitating the establishment of urban community, youth and school gardens in northern New Jersey’s cities to enrich the lives of inner city residents, while cultivating education in public health, nutrition and the environment. City Sprouts is City Green’s youth gardening program, which teaches the City’s children about the importance and wonder of nature, nutrition, how food grows, the joy of cultivating plants, lessons about preserving the natural environment, as well as leadership, collaboration and communication skills.

School 5’s third grade students and teachers, with the help of City Green, has turned a previously underused area into an outdoor learning laboratory with opportunity for investigation and study. Older students from the City Green sponsored School 5 Environmental Club and their club leader Mark Landzert helped their younger schoolmates with the installation of the garden, doing some of the harder digging and helping to plant the larger perennials. City Green has tailored lessons, directly correlated to the NJ third grade curriculum, that will teach the children where food comes from and the importance of eating healthy fresh food; how climate affects living things; the techniques and importance of sustainable growing practices; the important roles insects play in an urban ecosystem; and the cultural history of certain food crops. Besides these lessons, the children will also benefit from engaging in a cooperative project for their school and share in the responsibility of caring for a place of beauty in their community.

Currently City Green facilitates 12 Environmental Clubs in Paterson Public Schools, and is helping seven schools launch garden programs. City Green offers a school garden program that includes an initial consultation, two days of garden

installation, professional development for teachers, and a series of garden lessons developed specifically for the grade and teachers that will be using the garden. Funding is shared with the schools through a matching grant arrangement. “We feel that the benefits of a school garden project, especially in an inner city area, are so great that we want it to be very easy for the teachers to be able to make real learning use of it right from the start. We have worked with so many talented enthusiastic teachers that just don’t have the time to get all the nuts and bolts in place for a project like this. Once City Green facilitates it for them, they run away with it!”, stated Jennifer Papa, Executive Director of City Green.

City Green is celebrating it’s fifth anniversary this year, and has been working primarily in Paterson, New Jersey on community gardens, with after school community organizations, and running summer programs at their City Green Learning Garden. Recently City Green has started working with a school in Jersey City, NJ and has plans to expand their Jersey City programming in the near future.

To learn more about City Green’s work, please visit the City Green website at www.citygreenonline.org, or email to info@city-green.org.



