



pe·ren·ni·al

(n.) a plant that produces flowers and seeds more than one time in its lifespan, and thus lasts for more than one year.

From Latin *perennis* meaning continual: per "through" + annus "year"

The School Grounds Greening Project had many successes in 2010. Here are some numbers that highlight our progress:

19 school projects

328 school volunteers

224 trees planted

2,059 perennials planted



Planting day at Langley High School.

From Grey to Green: Nurturing Urban Schools through Nature



Outdoor classroom at Pittsburgh Linden K-5.

Urban schools tend to get a bad rep when it comes to outer appearance. In movies, books, magazines, city schoolyards are frequently depicted with 'rough around the edges' imagery: rusting chain link fences, weeds peeking out of cracked concrete, litter strewn across patches of barren mud. Unfortunately, these media stereotypes often echo reality. Due to budget cuts, transportation changes, increasing student populations, and other challenges, many urban school grounds have become less green and increasingly more grey.

Yet many school communities here in Pittsburgh are making a valiant effort to transform these landscapes and transcend such negative stereotypes. The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC), a nonprofit organization, is helping schools to do just this. Funded by a \$1.5 million grant from the Grable Foundation and with continued support from the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) district, WPC's School Grounds Greening Project intends to serve each school in the district by 2011. The goal is to involve students,

Continued on Pg 2

teachers, parents and the entire school community in creating healthy and functional landscapes in which students can learn, play, and grow.


By planting native trees and shrubs, installing outdoor classrooms, and incorporating natural play spaces into the scenery of Pittsburgh Public Schools, WPC helps to bring a renewed sense of life to school communities. Green spaces have overwhelming advantages, ranging from simply improving a school's visual appeal, to providing long-term social, psychological, and physical benefits for students who experience these environments. Even the smallest touch of color and growth can do wonders for a child's psyche and attitude.



A group of students enjoy a planting day at Pittsburgh Gifted Center.

ownership in their school's appearance. In addition, students witness directly the results of their diligent work and care. Parents who provide rides to school in the morning and teachers who walk into work each day, can note the rhododendrons and weeping cherry trees that their children or their students planted. Passersby and neighbors can find joy in a schoolyard's blossoming flowers and colorful leaves, which will in turn add immense value to the neighborhood.

WPC intends to help make our schools one of the best places for our children to be in the city. Involving students from the beginning- by inviting them to help dig holes and spread mulch for new plantings- allows them to gain valuable hands-on experience with nature and enables them to take

Ultimately, the vision of the School Grounds Greening Project is to create a thriving landscape that both motivates and inspires; a landscape an entire school community will be proud of for years to come. 



Get Involved, Become a School Tender!

"School Tenders" are volunteers who help care for the new plants provided by WPC at Pittsburgh Public Schools. A School Tender's duties consist of three simple steps:

- 1) **Watering**
- 2) **Weeding**
- 3) **Continued monitoring**

No horticultural experience is necessary! Becoming a School Tender is an easy way to gain volunteer hours and make a significant contribution to the school and surrounding community.

**WPC needs new School Tenders for the spring season!
Interested? Contact:**

David Wilson - 412 586 2416 - dwilson@paconserve.org

School Spotlight: Pittsburgh Pioneer



Interactive water feature at Pittsburgh Pioneer.

raised additional funds through a grant from the Edith L. Trees Foundation. As a result, the garden expanded far beyond plant material; a bubbling water feature, interactive musical benches and play panels, a vine-covered arbor, and outdoor musical instruments are but a few unique features that enhance students' experiences with the garden.

Pittsburgh Pioneer is an ideal example of how a greening project can improve the well being of an entire school community immeasurably. From the dedicated neighbors who watered the school's plants over hot summer months, to the supportive teachers who take their students out to enjoy the garden regularly, the success of the greening project is the result of a community effort. Pittsburgh Pioneer's sensory garden is an innovative, creative model that stands to encourage urban schools everywhere. ♧

Garden Therapy: A Greening Success Story

Strolling through the newly installed sensory garden at Pittsburgh Pioneer is a truly remarkable experience. Lining the pathways are a variety of plant species, all with unique textures, colors, and scents. Students can reach down to stroke velvet-soft Lamb's Ear, listen to tall switch grasses whisper in the breeze, inhale sweet and spicy fragrances of Honeysuckle flowers and Carolina Allspice.

For Pioneer students, this intimate interaction with nature is more than sheer fun; it is also therapeutic. Diagnosed with a range of physical and mental disabilities, Pioneer students all need specialized care and instruction. Therapy is an essential part of a typical school day, and may consist of a series

of speech and language, physical, and occupational sessions. The sensory garden offers an additional layer of therapy. Positioned at wheelchair height, plants are easily accessible to students, allowing them to explore and improve their senses, and learn firsthand about life cycles and growth. Even simply sitting among the plants is a tranquil experience that can soothe and calm students who may face bouts of stress or anxiety.

Launched with funds provided by the Grable Foundation as part of WPC's School Grounds Greening Project, Pioneer's vivid new landscape evolved into a much larger project than initially envisioned. Aware of the vast advantages this new garden could bring, Pittsburgh Pioneer



Groundbreaking ceremony.



Thank You to all of the School Tenders, student volunteers, teachers, and community members who have helped make the School Grounds Greening Project a success in 2010. WPC deeply appreciates your continued help in creating greener play and learning spaces. Know that all of your passion and dedication to greening will benefit generations of children to come.



Langley High School



Carrick High School



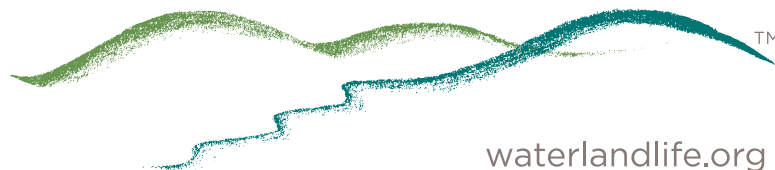
Pittsburgh Gifted Center 1-8

WPC's Mission

The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) enhances the region's quality of life by protecting and restoring exceptional places. A nonprofit conservation organization founded in 1932, WPC helped to establish ten state parks and has conserved almost 229,000 acres of natural lands and waterways. The Conservancy owns and operates Fallingwater, the Frank Lloyd Wright house in Mill Run, Pa. that symbolizes people living in harmony with nature. In addition, WPC enriches our region's cities and towns through 140 community gardens and greenspaces that are planted in 20 counties with the help of 10,000 volunteers. The work of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy is accomplished through the support of more than 11,000 members.

*For more information, visit **WaterLandLife.org***

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy



waterlandlife.org