



## Riparian Corridor Project Profile



# Edison Elementary School Grow Zone and Schoolyard Habitat

### Background

Edison Elementary School in Westland, Michigan is surrounded by a large area of mowed fields and playgrounds. In early 2007, Judith Muller and Tim Sullivan, fourth grade teachers at the school, wanted to build on the successful 'Rooting for the Rouge' tree planting program. Wayne County Department of Environment (WCDOE) agreed with the idea and suggested changing some of the mowed lawn into a garden of native wildflowers and grasses. The garden would be a place that the students would create and maintain on their own, using it as an outdoor classroom. The staff at the school along with Wayne Westland Community School District administration supported the project. Funding was provided from Wayne County through a Clean Michigan Initiative Grant. On May 15, 2007, as part of Friends of the Rouge's (FOTR) Rouge Rescue 2007, 59 fourth graders converted an area of turf grass at their school into a native plant grow zone which included two birdhouses.



The Edison Elementary Grow Zone Installation  
(Picture—M. Best)

### Project Overview

The site was expertly prepared over three weeks by Edison Elementary School's Building Manager, John Harmon, through the use of herbicide and tilling. Once the turf grass and existing vegetation was eliminated, fifty nine fourth grade students, along with staff from Wayne County Department of Environment, installed the grow zone on May 15, 2007. Students raked the soil, leveling the area. Post holes were dug and the signage and house wren bird houses were installed. Students then seeded the approximately 200 square foot area with two pounds of native wildflower and grass seed. Students planted 190 native plants. The student installation took approximately 45 minutes. The students water the site each day and a summer watering schedule has been established so the effort can continue while school is out. This area will become a focal point at the school for outdoor education opportunities that meet or exceed State of Michigan education curriculum benchmarks. The site will provide new habitat for wildlife to use as well as be visually attractive, with all year round color from the diverse plant life. Visitors to the Edison Elementary School Grow Zone can see a project that improves water quality, functions as wildlife habitat and serves as an outdoor classroom.



The Edison Elementary Grow Zone  
Sign (Picture—M. Best)



## Methods Used

Wildlife Habitat Creation  
Grow Zone—Native Planting

## Materials Used

**Site Prep:** herbicide and tilling

**Grow Zone:** Post hole digger, trowels, rakes, two house wren boxes, 2—2X4s and one 4X4,

**Signage:** 1 large grow zone sign w/ logo decal and 4 small grow zone boundary signs.

**Plants:** 190 native plant plugs, 2 lbs of native wildflower and grass seed.

**Recognition:** FOTR Rouge Rescue 2007 T-shirts, and WCDOE Certificates of Appreciation for the students.

## Permits

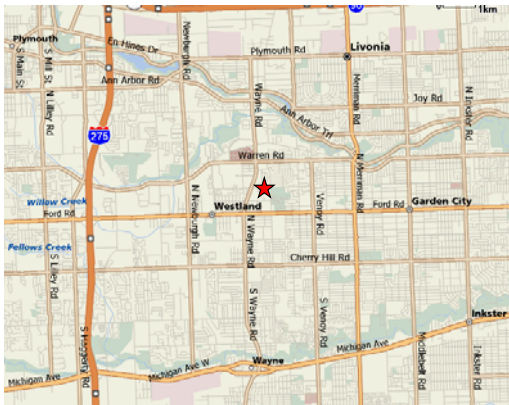
None



School yard before work was done. (Picture - M. Best)



Students who worked on the project at the end of the grow zone installation. (Picture - M. Best)



## Cost

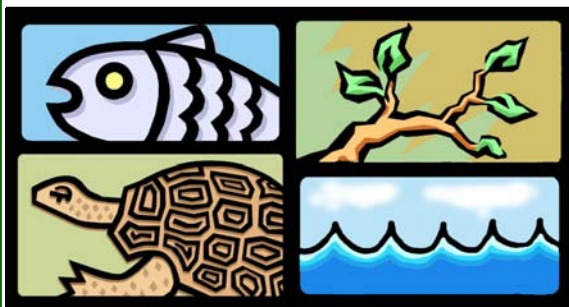
The total cash cost of the project was \$405. This cost covered the plant material, seed, signage, posts for bird boxes and herbicide. The site benefited by having the School and the School District donate in-kind service for the physical preparation of the planting area. As a Rouge Rescue event, FOTR provided T-shirts for all participants.



Schoolyard habitat area three months after the fourth grade Students installed the Grow Zone. (Picture - M. Best)

## Partners

Students, teachers and staff at the Edison Elementary School. Wayne Westland Community School District, Friends of the Rouge, Osenbaugh Seed, JF New Plant Nursery and Wayne County Department of Environment.



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Text and photographs supplied by Matthew R. Best. For more information on this project, please contact Matthew R. Best at Wayne County's Department of Environment - (734) 326-3936 or Mrs. Judith Muller at Edison Elementary - (734) 419-2600

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