

The Nature Center Garden Project @ Havana Junior High School, Havana, IL

In the beginning ... Spring 1999



Parents, students, and local green thumbs joined forces to turn a grassy area in the front of our school into a [garden](#). Our first job was to remove the sod from the garden spot. Thanks to the strong muscles of several volunteers and a sod cutter we were able to finish the job in one morning! We added lots of peat moss and manure to prepare the soil! Chuck Kellogg, our master gardener, assisted us in working all the good stuff into the soil.

During the next weekend, students and staff members assisted us in adding plants to the garden. Thanks to the Mason County Soil & Water Conservation District for their donation of plants as well as Mason County FS for providing a discount to help us make our garden dollars stretch!



With a little help from our 3rd grade buddies, the Nature Center had a variety of plants provide lots of color to attract some local critters to the garden. Ms. McGrew and her class started zinnia seeds for the garden. They had a blast playing in the dirt to add their plants to the garden.

The Nature Center garden along with an assortment of [educational resources](#) will provide endless opportunities for Havana students to explore the world around them!



Mrs. Tracy (Trimpe) Tomm (left) and Ms. Cindy McGrew (right) after a morning of sod cutting and manure spreading!

Exploring the Garden ... Fall 1999



The [Adopt-An-Insect](#) unit, a schoolwide insect project, was a big hit with students and teachers! From bitty bugs to beautiful butterflies, students investigated the new garden to explore the world of the mini-beasts.

The Nature Center pond provided the resources for the [Pond Water Survey](#), an annual 7th grade project that challenges students to identify the many creatures found in a pond environment and to estimate their populations. Students utilize a video camera and microscope to document their finds for seasonal comparisons.



Preparing for Another Season Earth Day 2000

Students and community members joined forces to celebrate Earth Day by working on garden improvements. Several students and parents worked together to create a new rock walkway. Mrs. (Trimpe) Tomm and her husband Dave hauled gravel and larger stones from a local quarry to use for the walkway. Mrs. Range and her husband Lance helped the students add a new liner for the pond. Ms. (Trimpe) Tomm, parent volunteers, and her students used their green thumbs to add several new varieties of plants.



Volunteers spent the following weekend adding a new layer of mulch and newspaper to the garden to help prevent an abundance of weeds! In addition, Marc (Trimpe) Tomm, a local Boy Scout working on his Eagle Scout project, organized his troop members and added over 30 new trees to the schoolyard for the Living Tree Collection! Thanks to the Nature Conservancy for the donation of trees for this project!

Questions? Contact [Tracy \(Trimpe\) Tomm](#), Project Coordinator.



Thanks to the Emiquon Audubon Society for their donation of money and materials for our *For The Birds* program. We built bluebird houses and purchased bird feeders! We hope to add more bird houses to the schoolyard in the future!

More Money = More Garden Space ... Spring 2001

The Nature Center garden was expanded in 2001 to include a larger pond, new planting areas, and a picket fence thanks to a Schoolyard Habitat grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and generous donations from the school and community. Students, staff, and community members pitched in their green thumbs throughout the month of May and early June to make our garden bigger and better than ever!

Water Wonderland

Josh Irons, an Eagle Scout candidate, and his fellow Boy Scouts created a large water garden to replace the small one from our first year. The new pond is four times the size of the old one and will be home to a wide variety of aquatic plants and animals.



Step 1: After removing the fish and plants from the old pond, the Boy Scouts used a bit of muscle power to clear the area and dig a bigger pond!

Step 2: A layer of old carpeting was added to help protect the liner.

Step 3: Once the liner was in place, Josh started adding water to fill the pond and check for leaks.

Step 4: Two weeks later, rock, plants, and a few fish were added to complete the pond. Thanks to Kevin Irons for his additions of new plants and fish!



Garden Expansion

HJHS Science Club members and their parents volunteered their time and muscles to expand the garden around the patio area to provide more room for new plants. The area around the patio was targeted for our new garden space - almost doubling the planting area! Due to rain on our first work day, we had to delay cutting the sod and focused our efforts on weeding the old garden area and adding new plants.

During our second and third work days, Chuck Kellogg, a local

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Master Gardener, worked with the students to remove the sod from the new garden area and add manure and peat moss to the soil. After the initial preparations were done and new plants were added, the garden welcomed a layer of mulch and newspaper to prevent an overabundance of weeds.

While the Potts family fixed us hamburgers and hot dogs donated by Oney's Food Store in Havana, the helping hands added rock to finish the walkway areas of the garden and a few boys went "fishing" in the tank to find our fish and put them in the new pond.

After the work in the garden was done, our fearless fence builders, Sandy Showalter, David Trimpe, and Tony Trimpe, donated their time and expertise to add the picket fence to the Nature Center. Thanks to Jim and Brock Brooks and Stelter-Hofreiter for their help in putting in all the posts



Year after year ... Blooming in 2002 & beyond

During each spring junior high Science Club members and parents prepare the garden for another season of blooms! Students pull weeds and volunteer plants that seemed to spread like crazy before adding annuals and new varieties of perennials. The planting areas are covered with another layer of newspaper and mulch to prevent those nasty weeds! Special thanks to Richardson Tree Service for the donation of wood mulch!

During the spring of 2004, junior high and elementary students will have the opportunity to grow plants for local refuges and nature preserves as well as the Nature Center garden thanks to an Illinois Department of Natural Resources ENTICE grant funded by the Illinois Conservation Foundation through a generous gift from the Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Foundation. Grant funds will be used to purchase two classroom growlabs and to support a series field trips to local nature areas to monitor seasonal changes and investigate the diversity of our local community.

Questions? Contact [Tracy \(Trimpe\) Tomm](#), Project Coordinator.

Eagle Scout Project - Garden Pergola ... Spring 2007

Robert Stockham, one of my former students, developed his eagle scout project to add a pergola to our garden. The new addition provides much-needed shade for the students when they are in the garden plus we now have a place to grow vining plants to attract hummingbirds and insects.



Check out our newest project, the [Interactive Math Garden](#), developed in the Spring of 2010!

Questions? Contact [Tracy \(Trimpe\) Tomm](#), Project Coordinator.

A special thank you to all of our **HELPING HANDS** who made the Nature Center a "blooming" success during its first 8 years ...

Logan-Mason-Menard ROE
Mason County SWCD
Cass Cable
The Nature Conservancy
Emiquon Audubon Society
Mason County Extension Office
Fulton County Extension Office
Natural History Survey Havana Station
Tim Kelley & the Illinois DNR
Havana Optimist Club
Oney's Food Stores & Victor Oney
Mason County Democrat
Duck Creek Sand & Gravel
LaCrosse Lumber
FS Country Plaza
Astoria Ready Mix
Hodgson Lumber Yard
Homestead Gardens
Alco
Ace Hardware
Americorp
Emiquon Audubon Society
Havana Junior High Staff
Havana Junior High Science Club Members
Havana Junior High Student Council
Havana CUSD #126 Board of Education
Mrs. McGrew's 3rd Grade class (1998-1999)
Mrs. Downs' 6th Grade class (1998-1999)
Mrs. Bahl's 5th Grade students(1998-1999)
Mr. Koke & the High School Industrial Arts Class
(1998-1999)
Mrs. R. Emme's 5th/6th Class (2000-2001)
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Julie Richardson
Therran Hobson
Robert Stockham & Family
Eden & Debbie Yetter

I would like to thank Dr. Chuck Waggoner, Dist.
#126 Superintendent,
for allowing the dream of an Outdoor Classroom to
become a reality!

If you would like to make a donation or be one of
our Helping Hands, contact:
[Mrs. Tracy \(Trimpe\) Tomm](#), Nature Center
Coordinator