

Pleasant Valley School, Parma, Ohio

“We are very excited to be a part of this wonderful program,” says Jeannette Dumont of Pleasant Valley School. Forty percent of the 530 students have special needs and benefit greatly from the garden. For two years the school laid plans for its outdoor classroom to be a place that engages students’ senses, where they can learn in the open air, explore real subjects that encourage human and plant diversity, and have a dedicated space for conflict resolution. Throughout this project the community has teemed with enthusiastic volunteers. “When we opened our lab this past October,” says Dumont, “more than 500 members of the community attended. They are thrilled that the kids are exploring nature.”

Students and teachers have worked hard seeking funding to support their outdoor learning environment, affectionately called Growing in Diversity. “Students have taken ownership of our land lab,” says Dumont. As a result of grant writing, hosting chicken dinners, selling harvested sunflower seeds,

directing car washes, holding an annual garage sale, and pulling off the annual community fundraiser (the Cow Plop), they have raised an incredible \$7,000.

With the additional financial support of Smith & Hawken, the school designed and created a sensory area for special needs children near an intact wildlife habitat. It also purchased plants for a circular garden filled with herbs and plants useful for making crafts (recycled botanical papers, holiday wreaths, dry flowers, and herb sachets). The ASG funds also helped to procure wheelbarrows, rakes, shovels, pruners, pitchforks, and flower bulbs. “The tools were such a wonderful

addition to our program,” says Dumont. “I was able to stop toting my personal tools back and forth, and we now have enough for all the children to participate at once.” A Peace Pole with the words *May Peace Prevail On Earth* etched in four languages, including Braille, was purchased for the meditation garden and was a highlight at the dedication ceremony in May 2008.

Teachers are very appreciative of this new outdoor space where they can work with students. They use the lab in many interactive ways to enhance classroom lessons. “Children are experiencing things they would not have been exposed to without this lab. It is truly an amazing part of their learning experience,” notes Dumont. “Just yesterday, my math class had to measure several areas to decide where to put a small picket fence. Real-world knowledge at its best!”



ASG PROGRAM SPONSOR
for Pleasant Valley School



IN THE GARDEN SINCE 1979

“Students have taken ownership of our lab and they love to garden! Many have never touched a plant before. They are amazed that an 8-foot sunflower or a 20-pound pumpkin can grow from just a small seed. Teachers are also appreciative — they enjoy working with their students outside and use the lab in many interactive ways to enhance their lessons.”

— Jeannette Dumont
5th grade teacher

Adopt a School Garden Program



Adopt a School Garden (ASG) is a program of the National Gardening Association, 1100 Dorset St., South Burlington, VT

05403, (800) 538-7476. To learn more about ASG and the nonprofit National Gardening Association, please visit:

www.garden.org/asg

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When we opened our lab this past October, more than 500 people attended. We have outstanding community support from city and school officials, a local garden club, parents, and even grandparents. I really appreciate all the help and cooperation I've received from the ASG program.

— Jeannette Dumont
5th grade teacher

Demographic information

Subjects emphasized in the gardening program:

- Science
- Health and Nutrition
- Arts
- History
- Cultural Studies
- Intra/Interpersonal Relations
- Math
- Interdisciplinary
- Community Service

Program leader's estimate of student improvements due to involvement in the garden program. Scale: 0 (no change) to 10 (dramatic response):

- Attendance.....8
- Community spirit.....8
- Enthusiasm for learning.....8
- Environmental stewardship.....8
- Volunteerism.....8
- Self-confidence.....7
- Leadership skills6
- Social skills6

The National Gardening Association requires recipient schools in the Adopt a School Garden® program to submit a formal evaluation to capture quantitative and qualitative data on the donation's impact. The following is a summary of the responses from the **Pleasant Valley School** in Parma, Ohio.

Hours per week students participated in gardening activities:

Average.....1.5 hours/week
Program duration9 months/year

European American.....75%
Latino, African American
Asian, Other25%

Number of Garden

Club participants:530

Program continuation:yes

Eligible for free or reduced lunch.....40%

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ASG program award utilization:

Pleasant Valley used Smith & Hawken's donation to obtain the following materials and services:

- Shrubs and trees for sensory garden
- wheelbarrows
- shovels
- troughs
- watering cans
- hoes
- pruners
- trowels
- bulbs
- humus
- Peace Pole materials

Obstacles faced:

The biggest challenge for Pleasant Valley is that the garden club is scheduled during recess, and competes with other school-related priorities. After-school programs exist but providing transportation home is a challenge.

Publicity:

Garden activities were promoted in newspaper articles, TV reports, and the school newsletter and Web site.

Financial support for the garden granted in addition to the ASG contribution:

More than \$2,500.

Approximate value of in-kind donations to garden program:

More than \$2,500.

In our land lab, students experience things first-hand that they wouldn't otherwise know about. They've witnessed a tadpole change into a frog, a mother duck nesting, and a killdeer laying an egg. These things are an amazing part of their learning experience. My math class used their perimeter measurement skills to decide where to put a small picket fence. Real-world knowledge at its best!

— Jeannette Dumont, 5th grade teacher



The tools were a wonderful addition to our program. I was able to stop toting my personal tools back and forth, and now we have enough tools for all the children to participate at one time.

— Jeannette Dumont, 5th grade teacher