

## **Welcome to the Grove Community Forest Trail**

Evansville Community School District has a registered school forest that includes a trail and prairies that encircles much of the High School and Theodore Robinson campus.



**“Teaching children about the natural world should be treated as one of the most important events in their lives.” -- Thomas Berry- *Dreams of the Earth***



## What is a school forest?

A school forest is wooded land registered through the state school forest program and owned or controlled by a school and used for environmental and interdisciplinary education and recreation.

## Why have a school forest?

Research has shown that children do not go outdoors as much as they used to. Our connection to the natural world is diminishing. A school forest is one way to help students understand nature by doing outdoor lessons and it gives teachers one more tool to meet their educational goals in any discipline.

## Research has shown that consistently getting children outdoors for learning can:

- Increase academic achievement
- Heighten enthusiasm for learning (motivation)
- Decrease discipline
- Improve creativity
- Increase writing expression
- Increase attention
- Relieve symptoms of ADD
- Relieve stress
- Improve reading and math scores on standardized tests
- Increase social skills
- Increase confidence and self-concept
- Increase health
- Improve teacher/student relationships
- Increase interest and concern for the environment



## Benefits of a School Forest

### Benefits to Students

- Able to see connections between academic studies and real-life experiences
- Hands-on learning experiences
- Develops skills such as research, communication, problem solving, group work and leadership
- New ways of learning including cooperative, active and service that may be a better way to learn for some
- Stimulates learning
- Develop observational knowledge of a complex natural environment including natural relationships and environmental issues
- Develop an interest in the natural world
- Recreation and physical activity in the great outdoors

## **Benefits to Teachers**

- Addresses state and national academic standards
- Able to explore creative teaching methods and techniques
- Observe students in a different context
- Potential for challenging or at-risk students to blossom
- Network of teachers and advisors available to enhance lessons
- Promotes interdisciplinary studies that infuses new life into core academic subjects
- Able to work outdoors

## **Benefits to School District**

- Enhances opportunities for positive interactions with the community
- Offers a space for community recreation and learning
- Offers more educational opportunities for students

Adapted from “How to Grow a School Forest: A Handbook for Wisconsin Educators” produced by LEAF, Wisconsin Forest Resources Education Alliance and Wisconsin Environmental Education Board.

## **History of Grove Community Forest Trail**

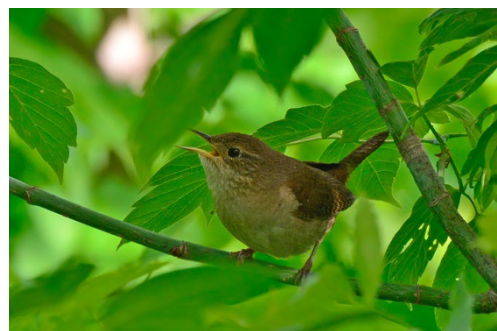
In the fall of 2007, a group of school district staff met to move forward a plan by the administration to establish a school and community forest trail that would serve as a naturally diverse outdoor classroom and a walking trail for students, staff and the Evansville community. With the help of staff, a DNR forester, and an ecological landscape designer, a plan was developed that would take an underutilized area of boxelders and choke cherry trees near the site of CCC encampment and turn it into a viable woods complete with typical native Wisconsin trees and shrubs. The concept was expanded to encircle the entire campus of the new high school, creating 3 small prairies, wetland plantings at the retention pond and a trail that could be used by classrooms and the community.



Over 2,300 native Wisconsin trees and shrubs were planted by staff, community volunteers, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the Lion’s Club. The Lion’s Club and Scouts faithfully watered the plantings for several summers.

Now, a small woods flourishes and beautiful prairies bloom. Birds and animals

have returned. Bluebirds can be spotted in the houses put up by the scouts. Wrens and warblers sing. Classes can be seen reading under the trees, exploring the woods and prairie for their lessons. The school forest spawned the creation of the Nature Center and the popular Outdoor Days.





View toward TRIS parking lot in 2008



Same view in 2022



Planting school forest in 2008 looking south



Same view south in 2022



Planting berm near High School in 2008



View of berm in 2022

### Native Wisconsin Trees Planted

Butternut  
Black Cherry  
Sugar Maple  
Red Oak  
White Oak  
Swamp White Oak  
Bur Oak  
Shagbark Hickory  
Basswood  
Black Walnut  
Ironwood  
American Hazelnut



### Native Wisconsin Shrubs Planted

Serviceberry  
Red Osier Dogwood  
American Plum  
Prairie Crab  
Silky Dogwood  
Hawthorn  
Ninebark



### Native Wisconsin Prairie Plants Established

<b>Showy Goldenrod</b>	<i>Solidago speciosa</i>
<b>Stiff Goldenrod</b>	<i>Solidago rigida</i>
<b>Missouri Goldenrod</b>	<i>Solidago missouriensis</i>
<b>Giant Yellow Hyssop</b>	<i>Agastache nepetoides</i>
<b>Compassplant</b>	<i>Silphium laciniatum</i>
<b>Rosinweed</b>	<i>Silphium integrifolium</i>
<b>Prairie Dock</b>	<i>Silphium terebinthinaceum</i>
<b>Cupplant</b>	<i>Silphium perfoliatum</i>
<b>False Boneset</b>	<i>Kuhnia eupatorioides</i>

**Rattlesnake Master**  
**Showy Sunflower**  
**Sawtooth Sunflower**  
**Hoary Vervain**  
**Evening Primrose**  
**Prairie Cinquefoil**  
**Pale Purple Coneflower**  
**Smooth Penstemon**  
**White Wild Indigo**  
**Mountain Mint**  
**Yarrow**  
**Thimbleweed**  
**Culvers Root**  
**Heath Aster**  
**Indian Plantain**  
**Yellow Coneflower**  
**Ironweed**  
**Spiderwort**  
**Golden Alexanders**  
**Common Milkweed**

*Eryngium yuccifolium*  
*Helianthus laetiflorus*  
*Helianthus grosseratus*  
*Verbena stricta*  
*Oenothera biennis*  
*Potentilla arguta*  
*Echinacea pallida*  
*Penstemon digitalis*  
*Baptisia leucantha*  
*Pycnanthemum virginianum*  
*Achillea millefolium*  
*Anemone cylindrica*  
*Veronicastrum virginicum*  
*Aster ericoides*  
*Cacalia tuberosa*  
*Ratibida pinnata*  
*Vernonia fasciculata*  
*Tradescantia ohiensis*  
*Zizia aurea*  
*Asclepias syriaca*



**Native Wisconsin Prairie Grasses Planted**

**Little Bluestem**  
**Big Bluestem**  
**Indiangrass**  
**Canada Wild rye**

*Andropogon scoparius*  
*Andropogon gerardi*  
*Sorghastrum nutans*  
*Elymus canadensis*



**Kindergarteners throwing mudballs they made filled with forbs to help plant the prairie.**

**Eagle Scout Projects completed at School Forest Site:**



### **Improvement Goals-A work in progress:**

To improve the current outdoor space by:

- creating definable trails.
- maintain boy scout projects.
- better interpretive, educational and historical signs.
- eliminate invasive and undesirable plant species.
- improve prairies with proper burns and planting.

An improved trail has been expanded with the help of a grant by Extreme Terrain Clean Trail Project. Local businesses like Formecology, Pleasant Prairie Greenhouses, Agrecol, and Mallon Tree Service have been essential to the completion of the project over the years.



### **Teacher Resources:**

LEAF (UW-Stevens Point, download free curriculums) <https://www3.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/leaf/Pages/default.aspx>

Project Learning Tree <https://www.plt.org/>

School Forest Lessons (UW-Stevens Point) <https://www3.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/leaf/school-forests/Pages/School-Forest-Lessons.aspx>

Environmental monitoring ideas (UW-Stevens Point) <https://www3.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/leaf/school-forests/Pages/Environmental-Monitoring.aspx>

Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education <https://www3.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/wcee/Pages/default.aspx>

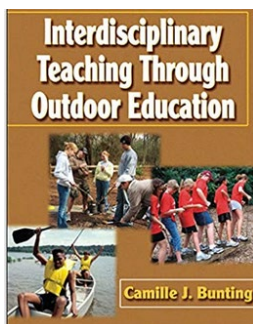
Lesson Plans K-5 (Penn State) <https://ecosystems.psu.edu/outreach/youth/sftrc/lesson-plans/forestry/k-5>

School Forest Activities and Lesson Plans (Alberta Teachers' Association) <https://teachers-ab.libguides.com/c.php?g=712400&p=5078151>

Finding My Forest: Teacher's Guide to Discovering the Forest For Grades 3 through 8 [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5201734.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5201734.pdf)

Resource ideas US Forest Service <https://www.fs.fed.us/naturewatch/teach-and-learn/>

Forest/outdoor Lessons Multigrade compiled by Michigan DNR <https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/education/public/natureathome/lessons>



Book Available at Nature Center or upon request (beedle4@att.net)

*“For in the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.”*

- Baba Dioum, conservationist, Senegal



*“The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity.”*  
- Dorothy Parker

