



FortWhyte Alive  
HUMAN. NATURE.

# Naturescape for Educators

bringing biodiversity into the schoolyard



Biodiversity is the wonderful and amazing variety of life on Earth. This includes where every species lives and how they interact with their environment. A biodiverse landscape should include food, air, water, shelter, and space.

## Food

Providing a variety of food is perhaps the easiest way to enhance the biodiversity of your yard.

- Plant a diverse mix of native trees, shrubs, flowers and/or grasses, to provide food for a variety of species.
- Leave seed heads on plants for the winter landscape
- Feed the birds black oil sunflower seeds, niger seed, and millet. Attract hummingbirds and orioles with nectar feeders.
- Decomposing leaves retain water, return organic matter to the soil, and contain beneficial insects such as the lady beetle (lady bug). Litter also contains fallen seeds and berries for birds.

## Air

With climate change being our greatest environmental challenge, Naturescape encourages the planting of trees not only for biodiversity but also as natural carbon sinks that produce oxygen for you, your community and wildlife.

**Fun Fact:** The average urban tree removes 200 kg of carbon over its lifetime.

- Plant: native trees such as: elm, ash, Manitoba maple, white spruce, oak, trembling aspen, balsam poplar

## Water

Water is essential for life, but is often difficult for urban wildlife to access because much of the standing water in cities is contaminated from street run-off and pesticides.

- Choose a bird bath with gently sloped sides and a rough surface to provide good traction for tiny feet. Remember to clean and change the water on a weekly basis to prevent mosquito larvae from developing.
- Create a soggy spot for butterflies (permanent puddle) where they can obtain important minerals from damp soil. Simply dig a hole in a sheltered corner of your yard and bury a container of sand up to its rim. Wet the sand thoroughly with water. Add some stones in and around the permanent puddle to provide a landing pad.

## Shelter

All animals need places to hide from predators, raise their young and take cover from harsh weather.

It's easy to build natural shelter into your schoolyard landscape.

- Include trees of various heights, lower bushes, shrubs, tall grasses, and flowers.
- Put up nest and roosting boxes. Annual cleaning will ensure they are attractive for rearing young.
- Leave a fallen log as habitat for insects, salamanders, snails, and decomposers

## Space

Every creature needs a little space to call their own. This space, or territory, needs to provide them with food, water, and shelter.

- Leave a modest, bright, open, sunny spot for your pesticide-free field.



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Certifying your piece of the planet is as simple as completing this checklist. Encouraging biodiversity at school helps support the environment and the future of our world.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Clean, Fresh Water

Provide at least two sources listed below:

- Birdbath
- Schoolyard pond
- Drippers, spitters, or decorative pots and barrel containing water
- Damp spot for butterflies

## 2. Food for all Seasons

Provide at least five sources of food from the list below:

**Spring / Summer:**

- Nectar feeder for hummingbirds, orioles or butterflies
- 3 types of nectar plants (tree sap or wildflowers)
- Flowering trees, shrubs or perennials for pollinators
- Rotting fruit feeder for birds or butterflies
- Organic vegetable garden

**Fall/Winter:**

- Birdfeeder
- Nut or suet feeder
- Seed or nut bearing trees and shrubs
- Seed bearing perennials left through the winter
- Tree, shrub or vine that retains its fruit/berries into the winter months

**Year-round:**

- Compost bin
- An area of undisturbed leaf litter under trees or shrubs

## 3. Shelter, A Place to Call Home

Allow for one of the following:

- Plant a native tree or two
- Layered planting (Tree layer, shrub layer, ground layer)
- Thicket (tangled cluster of tall and medium height shrubs)

PLUS 2 additional sources of shelter from the list below:

- Evergreen tree
- Hedge
- Nesting cavity in a tree
- Wood or brush pile
- Rock pile or open stone wall
- Nest box or nesting platform
- Old log or snag (standing dead tree)
- Winter roosting box for birds
- Bat roosting box

## 4. Open Space

- Open, pesticide-free space

## 5. Size

What is the approximate size of your habitat?

\_\_\_\_\_ft X \_\_\_\_\_ft

Please mail, fax or e-mail your checklist with a minimum of 5 photos to:

Attention: Naturescape for Educators  
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Certification Checklist

