

# Resources for Schoolyard Habitat

## Research on Benefits of Teaching Outdoors

In a nutshell, research shows that children who go outside regularly are:

- Smarter
- Healthier
- More cooperative (better behaved)
- And happier

...than children who don't go outside regularly.

(I would add that teachers who go outside regularly are smarter, healthier and happier than those who don't too!)

The best place to find research that supports these claims:

**Children and Nature Network: <http://www.childrenandnature.org/>**

- *Special Report: Children's Contact with the Outdoors and Nature: a focus on Educators & Educational Settings.* This is a synthesis of selected research and studies that relate specifically to education. It is organized into focus areas such as School Performance and Learning, Physical Activity and Weight, etc. <http://www.childrenandnature.org/documents/C118/>
- *Abstracts:* Five volumes of abstracts of research related to children and the outdoors. The abstracts include an executive summary of each research report; full citation; and a PDF if available, or a link to each study in its entirety, or contact information if the study is not available online. Some are reports of individual studies in the form of original research; others are a synthesis of reports of various studies.

*Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill. 2005.

- A must-read for teachers and parents.
- See the "suggested reading" section for resources on research and applications related to schoolyard habitats.

## Field Guides:

### "Finder" Series:

These dichotomous keys are small, cheap (\$4.95), and easy to use. Published by Nature Study Guild in Rochester, useful titles for schoolyards include: *Flower Finder*, *Tree Finder*, and *Winter Tree Finder* by May T. Watts  
*Berry Finder*, *Fern Finder*, *Track Finder* and *Winter Weed Finder* by Dorcas S. Miller.

Tree Finder: [http://www.amazon.com/Tree-Finder-Manual-Identification-Eastern/dp/0912550015/ref=pd\\_bxgy\\_b\\_img\\_y](http://www.amazon.com/Tree-Finder-Manual-Identification-Eastern/dp/0912550015/ref=pd_bxgy_b_img_y)

*Weeds of the Northeast* by Richard H. Uva, J.C. Neal and J.M. DiTomaso. Comstock Publishing Association. 1997.

*Wild Urban Plants of the Northeast: A Field Guide* by Peter Del Tredici. Comstock Publishing Association. 2010.

Common lawn plants can be identified by using **Golden Book's Weeds** guide by A.C. Martin (\$6.95 on Amazon) or wildflower field guides listed below (available at most major booksellers). Most are organized first by flower color and then by plant features; the *Newcomb* guide has a modified dichotomous key format based on flower structure.

*Newcomb's Wildflower Guide* by Lawrence Newcomb

*Peterson Field Guide: Wildflowers*

*Peterson First Guide: First Guide to Wildflowers*

*National Audubon Society Field Guide to Wildflowers*

*Golden Guide: Wildflowers*

*Wildflowers of the Adirondacks* by Anne McGrath is organized by color and season of flowering. It contains most common wildflowers found in Western New York.

*Grasses: An identification guide* by Lauren Brown (Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Houghton Mifflin, 1979) has a nice dichotomous key.

For a winter lesson, try using *Weeds in Winter* by Lauren Brown.

*Birds of New York Field Guide* by Stan Tekiela (\$10.48 on Amazon).

- This book is organized by bird color. Identification pictures are large photographs of birds.

## Books on Teaching Outdoors:

*Access Nature*. National Wildlife Federation. 2004.

<http://www.shopnwf.org/catalog/search.cmd?keyword=access+nature&x=26&y=14>

- \$44.95 Inclusive lesson plans; includes a section on creating schoolyard habitat that has handouts you can copy.

*Inside-Out: Environmental Science in the Classroom and the Field Grades 3-8* by Robert W. Blake et. al. 2010. ISBN: 978-935155-11-9.

*Taking Inquiry Outdoors: Reading, Writing, and Science Beyond the Classroom* by Barbara Bourne, ed. 2000. ISBN: 978-157110-302-4

*No Student Left Indoors: Creating a Field Guide to your Schoolyard* by Jane Kirkland. 2007. [www.takeawalk.com](http://www.takeawalk.com)

- Lots of free downloads: photos, field guide sheets, "Take a Cloud Walk" book, etc.

*Schoolyard Science: 101 Easy and inexpensive Activities* by Thomas Lord and Holly Travis. 2011. (National Science Teachers Association). ISBN: 978-1-936137-16-9.

*Outdoor Science: A Practical Guide* by Steve Rich. 2010. ISBN: 978-1-935155-12-6.

*Learning About Our Place*. Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History. 2002.

*Ten-Minute Field Trips: A Teacher's Guide to Using the Schoolgrounds for Environmental Studies* by Helen Ross Russell, 1998. ISBN: 978-0873550987.

*Childhood and Nature: Design Principles for Educators* by David Sobel. 2008. ISBN: 978-157110-741-1.

*Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities* by David Sobel. 2004. ISBN: 978-0-913098-55-4.

## Web Resources for Schoolyards Teaching In General:

Bird Sleuth Program

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/birdsleuth/about/introduction-to-birdsleuth>

- An inquiry-based science curriculum that engages kids in scientific study through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's citizen science projects.

Children and Nature Network: <http://www.childrenandnature.org/>

- Join the Natural Teachers network, read research, form a nature club, get lots of great resources!

National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) <http://www.neefusa.org/>

- Offers lesson plans, project-based learning, and info on events like National Environmental Education Week.

Native Plant Database

<http://www.wildflower.org/explore/>

Re-Tree Western New York:

<http://www.re-treewny.org>

## Where to Buy Supplies:

Acorn Naturalists 1-800-422-8886

- A good source for naturalist supplies of all kinds, as well as books.  
[www.acornnaturalists.com](http://www.acornnaturalists.com)

Wild Birds Unlimited

3835 McKinley Parkway

Blasdell, NY 14219

Phone: (716) 823-7889

<http://blasdell.wbu.com/>