

## Case Study “Tees Valley Growing Wild Schools” – Myton Park Primary School

### Background

Tees Valley Wildlife Trust offers a service level agreement which allows schools to buy in support for a range of environmental educational work. “Growing Wild Schools” includes schools membership of the Wildlife Trust with an associated package of benefits including Wildlife Watch magazines, a certificate and access to [www.wildlifewatch.org](http://www.wildlifewatch.org) and other resources. The support can be used to enable schools to work towards their:

- **Eco Schools Award**
- **RHS Campaign for School Gardening Benchmark Scheme**
- **Learning Outside the Classroom Mark**
- **Sustainable Schools Framework**

The Trust will provide specialist advice and support in various aspects of sustainability including school grounds development, sustainable resource management to cut costs, curriculum development for **Learning Outside the Classroom** (e.g. Forest Schools) and local wellbeing.



### Take-up

2014 saw 7 schools become “**Growing Wild Schools**” with 8 signing up in 2015. Growing Wild Schools is flexible not only in content but also in level of support, fitting in with school budget restraints and priorities. The time allocated for support depends on the level of buy-in.

### Myton Park

In 2014, Myton Park Primary School was considering school grounds improvements as part of its 10<sup>th</sup> Year celebrations as well as trying to encourage teachers to use the outdoor area for curriculum work. They decided to become a “**Growing Wild School**” and signed up for the Gold level of support – 6 days and also had a budget to fund some of the school grounds developments.

## Approach

After an initial meeting with the Head teacher Elisabeth Lee, the following activities were delivered by the Wildlife Trust as part of Growing Wild Schools:

- A new fenced off pond with a gate and pond dipping platform was installed
- New raised bed installed
- Pupils worked with Trust staff to tidy up some existing raised beds
- Bird Box workshops
- Insect Box Workshops
- Wildflower planting
- Building minibeasts hotel
- CPD on pond dipping
- Chilli growing workshop
- Tomato growing workshop
- Poly tunnel workshop
- Session with parents about how to work with children – growing food
- Pond dipping for Y4



## Benefits

The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust has as part of its aims to:

- create a better future for wildlife and people,
- undertake a variety of projects to protect and enhance the natural environment,
- inspire people through the natural world.

One of the ways it achieves this is by promoting lifelong learning in environmental matters through a programme of education and training.

This is just one of the strands that this project helps to achieve. The Trust also aims to influence schools to improve their school grounds for biodiversity.

Myton Park Primary School's new pond and wildflower planting will make a small but valuable contribution to the Tees Valley biodiversity.

During the CPD session with the teachers a Broad Bodied Chaser Dragonfly was seen and later a Small Red Damselfly was recorded. (See picture below.)



After installation of the pond Elisabeth said

*“We had the Evening Gazette in yesterday to take photos. The children have all been asking if we are going to put frogs in the pond, but I have been telling them that the wildlife will find their own way. They haven't believed me, but when we went to have our photo taken at the pond with the school council, there was a frog by the gate, which they saw jump into the pond. They were so excited and gave off a great cheer! The children really are so enthusiastic about it.”*

The School became a **“Growing Wild School”** for 2 years and since has continued with confidence to develop its schools grounds and environmental work including applying for the Learning Through Landscapes Polli:Nation programme about which they should hear soon.

Elisabeth also said

“Since this CPD we have developed the growing and landscape areas considerably and there is benefit community wide. We now have a band of volunteers who come into school to work with the children to garden and care for the grounds.

We have also secured Lottery Funding to have a polytunnel built.

Gardening activities over this last year have included:

- Bulb planting around the grounds (We hope to continue this over several years)
- Willow circle being planted with funds raised by parents
- Round year growing of vegetables with food that is grown going to the school kitchen
- Pumpkin growing competition
- Sunflower growing
- Plans by the school council to develop gardening further with a mind to encourage natural pollination by encouraging flowers around the grounds

- Successful bid to the local council for funding to support pollination project. We have support from local businesses to support this work.”

Growing and use of outdoor grounds is now more integrated into the curriculum. Schools interested in developing a short or long term focus around environmental improvements linked to school ground developments, eco-schools or RHS Campaign for School Gardens and are looking for support to do so should consider becoming a Tees Valley Wildlife Trust Growing Wild School. You can find more information [here](#) or email [sashton@teeswildlife.org](mailto:sashton@teeswildlife.org) or phone 01287 636382.

### **Other activities available from the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust**

The Trust offers a number of environmental opportunities based in school grounds, its nature reserves, local green spaces or at its base – Woodhill Meadows near Guisborough. Activities aim to:

- Be fun and educational.
- Take place outdoors on local green space or Trust Nature Reserves - no matter what the weather!
- Be flexible for age and ability.
- Educate young people as well as parents.
- Improve focus and concentration.
- Enhance cognitive skills.
- Have a positive effect on health and self-esteem.
- Foster a sense of environmental regard.

Some of the activities are available for free as part of funded project these include workshops on Trust reserves and on the River Tees.

Examples of workshops based at Woodhill Meadows include:

- Teddy Bears picnic
- The Gruffalo
- Minibeasts
- Sensational Senses
- All about Birds
- Habitat Detective
- Pond dipping
- Den building
- Orienteering
- Forest Schools

More information can be found [here](#).



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