

Harpers Ferry Middle



Science and VoAg Students Create an Outdoor Space for Insects

Jen Lowe's 6th grade science classes participated in Grow-a-Garden this spring. Students spent four educational hours with Cacapon Institute's watershed education specialist learning about their local watershed, impacts of non-point source pollution on the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay, and the benefits of urban and rural best management practices. They even designing their own raised bed gardens.



The school had a very underutilized courtyard space and that began the transformation into an outdoor learning lab. A partnership between the school and the Jefferson County Transit Station resulted in benches composed of recycled tires and

composite decking materials. Tires were also decorated and used as planters around the space. The Grow-a-

Garden program allowed Harpers Ferry Middle School to add two raised beds and a cistern to the area. One hundred students and five adults participated in the projects. Raised beds were constructed by Jim Lawson and his VoAg class who were learning about landscape design. Two beds were constructed, a long rectangular bed running the distance of the windows, and a triangular bed located near the cistern. The two raised beds resulted in 104 square feet of planting space in which 84 native plants were installed. The native plants were selected based off their wildlife value to attract butterflies, bees, and other pollinators.

Since the completion of the initial



planting, students have added butterfly bushes and bee balm to the area, painted the raised bed timbers, and selected student decorative design for the cistern.

Future plans for the space include using it for science and the accelerated reading classes. It is also proposed that students will be able to use it as a picnic space during school hours. Either way, an underused space is now a home for pollinators and learning.

