

Pleasant Valley Elementary



Students Decrease Runoff by Planting Trees



The 4th grade classes at Pleasant Valley Elementary School, Knoxville, Maryland, planted eight trees at their school. Students spent four classroom education hours on Growing Native lessons about their local watershed and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, stormwater runoff pollution, and the important role trees play in reducing runoff for cleaner streams. Student lessons were lead by Suzi Taylor, Potomac Valley Audubon Society.



The school planted a rain garden in the spring of 2014 to begin addressing the issue of runoff from a steep hill near the playground.

The new trees were strategically placed to assist in capturing the excess water. Five of the eight trees were placed uphill of the rain garden and will additionally provide shade to the kickball area. Two river birch were placed in a low laying where the rooftop water is deposited into a grassy swale. These trees will absorb this water allowing the area to be safer for mowing, reduce the amount of polluted water that travels downhill to the stream, and provide wildlife habitat along the edge of the property. A pin oak was planted at the overflow location of the rain garden to capture excess water after a heavy rain event.

Forty students and two teachers planted the eight trees. Classes were broken into smaller groups and planted two trees each. The first tree planting was lead by Cacapon Institute staff and allowed students to learn the proper procedure and importance of planting trees at the proper depth— “too high won’t die, too low won’t grow” is the motto used. The second tree was student lead under the supervision of CI staff. Students took leadership roles and worked together as a team to properly plant their tree. Students

developed an appreciation for their trees and assigned names their trees following the planting.



These trees will provide needed stormwater runoff control for the school, increase habitat, shade, and a learning resource for the school. Students will monitor tree growth through science and math classes.



Growing Native is a program of the Potomac Watershed Partnership funded by the USDA Forest Service.

