

Grade 5 Pollinator & Native Plant Garden
Peter Sullivan, Carolina Day School
Spring 2017

In the beginning of the 2016-17 school year, a group of enthusiastic students in Grade 5 at Carolina Day School expressed interest in building a garden near our newly constructed lower school as a way to beautify some of the post-construction landscape near their classrooms. Like many schools, they wanted to plant a vegetable garden and use the fruits of their labor to help supplement some of our school lunches with fresh fruits & vegetables...a “school garden to table” concept. After meeting with this group of students and discussing the pros and cons of a vegetable garden at school during the summer months when no one was here to tend to the garden, they quickly decided to head in a different direction.

As we investigated other types of gardens, we were given the name of Mr. Tom Tribble, president of the board of directors for the Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society here in beautiful Asheville, NC, as a tremendous resource that we needed to tap into. After reaching out to Mr. Tribble, he agreed to come and meet with us to take a look at our possible garden site, and offer any guidance or advice that he sees pertinent. When Mr. Tribble left our campus, he jumped into action and helped our Grade 5 students with a design and plan for a native plant pollinator garden. After all, we wanted to create a serene place on our campus that is bird-friendly, insect-friendly, and human-friendly. The result exceeded all of our expectations.

On Monday, May 22 of this year, our entire Grade 5 (34 students) rolled up their sleeves and got to work on the garden. Working in partnership with our school’s landscape company, Wilde Acre Landscape, they tilled and prepared the soil for our garden, as well as helped us secure a great deal on the plants and bushes we wanted to plant. While we had one group of students that were planting, another group scoured our campus for large rocks that would eventually form the entire border of the garden. It took a team effort to accomplish all of this in one afternoon, but we completed the project before the end of that school day!

The garden was completed at the end of the school year, and although those students who constructed the garden are now in middle school, they visit the garden area often and are continuously amazed at its’ growth and beauty. It has actually transformed into an outdoor classroom, and one of the goals for the garden is to offer cross-curricular opportunities for learning. Later this school year, we are hopeful to have our students in Grade 2 construct blue bird houses in STEM class that will be proudly displayed in the woodlands surrounding the new garden. Our lower school art teacher is also thinking of ways to have students create birdbaths for the garden in an effort to intersect art and nature. And to think...all of this started by following our students’ inquiry.

It is truly authentic learning at its best!

Below you will find some “before and after” pictures of the garden project:

BEFORE:



AFTER:

