Revitalize, Restore, Replant
Revitalize, Restore, Replant

**Due to the popularity of this program, the earliest available slot for R3 plantings may be a year or two out.**

What is R3?

The Revitalize, Restore, Replant! (R3) program transforms existing stormwater facilities (like bioretentions, dry ponds, and yard inlets) or areas of need around stormdrain inlets on Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) campuses into outdoor classrooms. At no cost to schools, county ecologists introduce students to stormwater and watershed ecosystem management and lead a hands-on native plant installation. Plant species are chosen to complement existing programs of study, allowing plantings to be used as outdoor teaching tools for all grade levels.

**Grades:** 4th-12th  **Time:** ~30 min/class

Department of Public Works and Environmental Services
Is my site a good candidate for R3?

Do you have a stormwater management facility on your school campus?

**Stormwater Management Facilities** are structural elements added to our landscape to capture and treat stormwater runoff before it reaches our streams. There are a variety of facility types, everything from cisterns and rain barrels, dry or wet ponds, to underground storage and bioretention facilities. This program focuses on bioretentions, dry ponds, and yard inlet facilities. R3 is a great way to promote infiltration in areas where the soil has been compressed for years and can help drainage in problem areas that always remain wet and soggy after it rains.

If you do not have one of the facilities listed above or the facility is already well-planted, the R3 program may not be right for your school. Not sure if you have one of these facilities? Use the county’s online mapping system Jade to look up your school. Search for your school name or address and then select Layers/Infrastructure & Environment/Stormwater Infrastructure to see if you have any stormwater facilities on your campus. Or contact us at watersheds@fairfaxcounty.gov!

You can learn more about each type of facility through the Stormwater Facility Fact Sheets found online at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/stormwater.

Will your site's location work for the program?

Your site needs to be accessible not only to county staff, school staff, and students, but also to transport plants and other equipment.

- Can you get the plants to the site? While we can plant internal courtyards, we will need a way to cart in hundreds of plants through the school. It will be messy!
- A water hook-up must be available for regular watering after the planting

*Site may also require heavy equipment/large tilling machine access if soil is especially compacted and needs to be broken up before planting.
Is my site a good candidate for R3?

Can your school meet the maintenance and upkeep requirements?

- The plants MUST be watered two to three times a week for at least the first two months (depending on the weather). While we use native plants that generally require little maintenance, you will still need to give them a little love when they are first installed.

- Regular weeding MUST be done to keep the site in good shape. This is a great activity for eco/green clubs, science classes, or kids who need to spend some time working with their hands.

- Please work with your custodians and grounds keepers to ensure that the garden is not mowed or cleared during routine maintenance. While we will install some temporary fencing after the R3 is complete, we recommend for you to keep the fence up until everyone understands that this is a garden and should not be mowed.

- At the end of winter/early spring, dead growth should be cut back to allow for new growth.

While we can provide supplementary plants if a section doesn’t take, we are not responsible for supplying new plants due to lack of maintenance or mowing.

Do you have someone who can commit to “championing” the program at the school?

For your facility to be a candidate for the R3 program, a teacher or other member of school staff must help manage students and teachers during and after the planting has been installed.

The champion will be the main liaison between county staff and the school. The liaison is responsible for creating and distributing the planting schedule for the school. Staff needs at least 20 minutes between classes to dig more holes and distribute plants. We will need a lunch break – this is a busy program, and we need to make sure our staff stays hydrated. The champion will also help coordinate drop off locations for plants, ensure the school admin is aware of the planting, and carry out other functions as needed.

Depending on where the planting area is in your school, please ensure that all the teachers with classrooms that overlook the area are aware of the event. It can be noisy and distracting for students in the classroom. **We do not recommend R3 plantings during SOLs**
Let’s Plant!

Think your site is a good candidate and want to schedule a planting day?

Great! Please contact us at watersheds@fairfaxcounty.gov to schedule a time for stormwater staff to meet with you ahead of time to walk your site and go over the program.

Things you will need to do prior to planting day:

• Receive administrative approval for the program. Please forward a copy of the approval to staff for our records.

• Mow the area that is to be planted to the lowest level possible (unless the facility is not grass-covered).

• You can also try to kill the grass by putting newspaper or plastic tarp over the proposed area. This will give the plants the best opportunity to grow and not be taken over by grass. This is something that other classes can be involved in.

• Help organize a plant delivery location (usually on a Monday).

• Help organize a mulch delivery location (if needed).

• Ensure that the school knows about the event.

• Ensure an alternate activity is available if needed (elementary school only).

• Provide final schedule with information about participating classes including teacher name, number of students, grade, and class schedule. Please inform staff if there are any language, learning, or mobility constraints that we should be aware of.

Things you will need to do on planting day:

• Ensure students and teachers adhere to the schedule as much as possible. Staff needs uninterrupted time in between classes to dig new holes and lay out new plants.

• Have hoses ready for use immediately after the planting. The county does not provide hoses for watering.
Frequently Asked Questions

What grades do you work with?
We recommend 4th grade and higher for the plant installation component of the program. Once planted, the facility can be used as a teaching tool for all grade levels.

What materials does the county provide?
There is no cost incurred by the school for this program. The county provides all materials for the event including gloves, trowels, shovels, and plants. We also provide plant identification signage and a planting plan. We will put up temporary fencing (snow stakes and orange tree save fencing) to help staff and students recognize that this is now a garden. We can also provide mulch if requested and if it is available through Fairfax County Solid Waste.

How do we install the plants?
When Fairfax County staff meet you onsite to finalize the location of the planting, we will look at the soil. If the soil is heavily compacted, we may schedule heavy equipment to break up the soil a few days prior to the planting. This ensures that the soil isn’t too compacted for the plants to take root and grow. The school champion will need to coordinate with admin as needed to ensure this does not disrupt classes.

Staff will also pre-drill holes on the day of the planting. This saves time and allows the students to concentrate on installing plants rather than digging holes. Students will be taught how to properly install plants.

How many students can participate at a time?
The number of students actively planting at a time is dependent on the size of the planting area, the size of classes, and grade level. We will work with you based on your specific situation to determine what will work for your school. For smaller planting areas, larger classes sizes, or elementary schools we often recommend splitting classes into two sections and have half of them plant for 15 minutes and then switch. Please note that county staff can only manage those students planting. We recommend an alternate activity be prepared for the group not currently planting. We can help find an alternate activity if requested.

Please note that county staff are not FCPS teachers. In order to ensure our students have a safe event, a teacher must remain at the planting site. This is also a great day to ask if any parents want to volunteer. We will train them how to install plants!
Frequently Asked Questions

How many plants does each student install?

This is incredibly dependent on the number of students and the size of the planting area. On average, each student typically installs anywhere from 3 to 5 one-gallon sized plants.

How large of an area can we plant?

It depends on your facility and how many students you have participating in the program. Because we cannot pre-dig all the holes before the event starts, we need to constantly dig holes and move plants between classes; this is another a factor in determining how large of an area you can plant.

What types of plants will we install?

County staff will choose the best plants for each individual site. Plant species may depend on availability. Typically, students will install around four different species of plants. We generally include milkweed in all planting events to allow for monarch life cycle education. Plant identification signs will be provided after the event.

Planting is done, now what?

The plants will need to be watered thoroughly two to three times a week for at least the first two months (depending on the weather). Please work with your custodial staff and grounds keepers to ensure they do not mow down your new garden. Sometimes the plants start off very small and can be mistaken for weeds. We cannot replace plants that are damaged due to mowing or lack of maintenance.

However, if an entire section of plants do not take because they just didn’t want to, please contact us! We can provide additional plants at the next growing cycle that your students can install on their own time.

Feel free to contact us with any questions you have at watersheds@fairfaxcounty.gov!