

# Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

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## Community Gardens & Greenspace Program Overview

### Community Gardens Bloom in 20 Counties

Through the Community Gardens & Greenspace Program, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy partners each year with 12,000 volunteers and dozens of community organizations and businesses to plant, maintain and support 140 gardens and greening projects in 20 western Pennsylvania counties. More than half of the program volunteers are children and youth.

WPC's community gardens have become a signature image of the western Pennsylvania landscape. Appearing in many varied locations with many different configurations, the gardens provide a backdrop and enhancement for other cultural and civic assets. The gardens also serve as a hallmark of the region's beautiful landscape and quality of life.

Using PennDOT statistics, an estimated 3.5 million people traveling in vehicles view WPC's community gardens daily. Each year, more than 200,000 flowers are planted by volunteers—enough to make a flowerbed stretching from Pittsburgh to the West Virginia border.

### Helping Communities Connect Green Spaces

In addition to the very visible community gardens program, WPC is involved in "greening" projects.

### School Greening

Children, no matter where they live, deserve the opportunity to be surrounded by nature and greenery. They need to know that they do not need permission to enjoy the outdoors that so many people find restorative and inspiring. Recent research is beginning to show that greenery--even views from a classroom window--can help to:

- Engage, lengthen, and sharpen attention span;
- Reduce agitation and disengaged behavior;
- Ignite a child's curiosity and overall sense of wonderment;
- Promote an understanding of the way natural systems work.

In order to bring these benefits to the Pittsburgh Public School students, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy has launched a new School Grounds Greening initiative. Since 1996, the Conservancy has worked with The Grable Foundation on school greening projects, and it is with their extraordinary support that the new School Grounds Greening Initiative came into being. Inspired by the work of Richard Louv, the Conservancy approached the Pittsburgh School Board with a new concept that would include working directly with school grounds caretaking staff to add sustainable, low-maintenance greenery to school properties, to enhance the experience of students and the adjacent neighborhoods. In 2007, Superintendent Mark Roosevelt endorsed the proposed project and The Grable Foundation awarded a \$1.5 million grant to the Conservancy to support a four-year effort that will increase the green components of 65 school grounds.

### TreeVitalize

Working in partnership with community groups, non-profits, and municipal agencies, TreeVitalize Pittsburgh will plant 20,000 trees by 2012 throughout the Pittsburgh region in order to improve quality of life and the environment. TreeVitalize Pittsburgh is a joint project of Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, Tree Pittsburgh, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

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