

The BSI Schoolyard Plant List Rationale

The BSI Schoolyard Plant List was developed with input from Peter Del Tredici, Harvard Arnold Arboretum; Roy Blomquist, formerly with the Boston Parks & Recreation Department; Neil McCarthy, PBS/BSI horticultural consultant; BSI Landscape Architects; BPS principals & teachers; and BSI staff.

Use of plants from the BSI plant list is essential for consistency across BSI Schoolyard and Outdoor Classrooms projects. The plant list is grouped listing trees and shrubs for Schoolyard greenspaces, and for the Outdoor Classroom main areas: sample woodland, urban meadow and also for specialized conditional and design features, based on the following criteria:

- educational value / connection to curriculum / seasonal interest (during school year)
- horticultural diversity / habitat and urban ecosystem support
- low maintenance / appropriate to site

educational value / connection to curriculum: A common set of plants across schoolyards and outdoor classrooms enables BSI staff and teachers to develop instructional guides and plant ID documents to help teachers maximize the educational use of the outdoors. BSI develops specific connections to BPS science, writing and reading curriculums, and provides professional development workshops for teachers. Through BSI's 'Getting to Know Your Schoolyard', teachers are mentored to develop an inquiry-based understanding of the natural environment of the schoolyard and outdoor classroom plantings.

The outdoor classroom **urban meadow**, designed for hands-on sensory exploration, contains only herbaceous meadow plants, as the meadow maintenance plan is to mow everything down to the ground in late winter prior to the new growing season. By contrast the **sample woodland** contains perennial shrubs, understory trees and ferns and is selectively weeded and mulched. The woodland is for student observation, discovery, comparison of plant characteristics, and documentation in text & drawing.

horticultural diversity / habitat support In the schoolyard and the outdoor classroom it is important to choose plants that display primary seasonal interest during months of the regular school year. BSI plant list offers choices to stimulate curiosity by presenting a wide range of plant characteristics - structure and form, seed dispersal mechanism and flower types, growth habit, color, texture, smell, role in providing habitat, and value as a food source. Please see the SY/OC Workbook for more information.

maintenance / sustainability: A common plant pallet for all schoolyards facilitates effective schoolyard maintenance. BSI develops plant identification tools, horticultural workshops and landscape skills trainings for BPS maintenance crews and for youth teams.

Schoolyards and outdoor classrooms are some of the most heavily used public spaces. To ensure viability of border plants and schoolyard tree the planting plan must be detailed with protective fences, guards, or within raised planting beds - to protect plants both at initial installation and during their full life cycle. Ground covers are to be specified only with careful consideration of site usage, and with proper plant protection.

Long term sustainability of the investment in Schoolyards and Outdoor Classrooms is the result of thoughtful design, plant placement and soil specification, attentive construction oversight and consideration for the realities of schoolyard maintenance.