

Our Mission: To assist residents with and provide leadership in the conservation, management, and wise use of natural resources in Washtenaw County. The Washtenaw County Conservation District (WCCD), a local government agency, assists Washtenaw County residents through countywide resource assessments, conservation resource distributions, conservation education, one-on-one technical assistance, and resource programs including this grant.

Grant Purpose: The WCCD School and Community Habitat Grant is designed to assist schools and community organizations with accessing plants and establishing wildlife habitat. Restoring native plants provides benefits to residents (human or otherwise) including purpose and connection to local ecology, greater biodiversity, air and water filtration, carbon sequestration, aesthetic beauty, and many more ecological services. Grant fund availability is dependent on donations made to the WCCD for this purpose and grant selections and awards will be made based on the amount donated.

Eligibility: Applicants must represent or be affiliated with a local school, nonprofit organization, or community group. The proposed site location must be a public or semi-public space in Washtenaw County. The applicant must be able to demonstrate ownership or permission in perpetuity at the proposed location. The application must demonstrate a benefit to local communities, natural and human. Applicants need not be experts in ecology but demonstrate a willingness to learn!

Application Submission & Deadlines: All grant applications must be submitted by the deadline and requirements outlined on the application.

Grant Annual Timeline:

October 2023 – September 2024: Donations accepted online and at WCCD resource distributions.

January 2024: Grant application period opens.

June 10, 2024: Grant application period closes.

July/August 2024: Grant Recipients selected & notified.

Aug-Nov 2024: Recipients schedule site assessments / design planning support visits as necessary.

Spring (April-May) OR Fall (Sept-Oct) **2025**: Recipients receive plant materials and installation support.

Habitat Grant Application Criteria:

The following list outlines the requirements of an application to be considered by the selection committee (see “Evaluation Criteria Rubric” attached):

1. Complete application submitted by deadline.
2. Project’s site location:

- a. Site must be contained within land owned by the applicant's organization, or applicant must demonstrate a written contract of agreement with the landowner.
 - b. The proposed area for the project must be clearly defined and dedicated for the project. The site should have adequate protection from (or resilience to) potential damage (vandalism, deer browse, etc.).
 - c. Site is in a high use and/or visible area accessible by the public or community are preferred.
 - d. Locations without existing natural areas or habitat projects, or projects that are part of a larger vision or initial phased plan of conservation projects, are preferred.
3. Project must have a long-term plan for support to maintain the site, including summer months.
- a. Project must include a dedicated person to coordinate and ensure maintenance.
 - b. Project must include secondary contact to assist and assume coordination/contact if the primary person leaves.
4. Demonstrate Benefits
- a. Plan must demonstrate how the project will benefit the school or community.
 - i. This should include a community engagement plan which could include permanent educational signage, annual educational engagements in the space, etc.
 - b. Must demonstrate in detail how the plan will provide wildlife or natural system benefits.
 - i. Plants native to Michigan are preferred.
See "What is considered Native?" and the WCCD distribution plant lists below.
 - ii. May also include other habitat structures (e.g. duck boxes, blue bird boxes, bat boxes, bee tubes) that the organization plans to install.
 - iii. May also include how restoration of an area will provide benefits (e.g. installing native plants will reduce erosion and stormwater runoff which will reduce sedimentation and pollutants entering waterways).

GRANT AWARD:

Grant awards may be used to obtain plant materials, expert design plans, and contractor site-prep and/or installation assistance. Details on what is provided and the awardees responsibilities are below.

The WCCD staff and our partnering contractors, as requested by the project and within the award budget, may provide any combination of the following:

- Site visit for assessment & consultation: Consultation to develop a site-prep and design plan.
- Site design plan & maintenance plan: A consultant will work with recipient to finalize plant order per design plan.
- Site materials: Provide native plants, trees, and/or shrubs and planting aids (tree shelters, etc.) for the project. (Total value limited to grant award budget.) Requested materials will be available to pick up at a WCCD plant distribution event. Some materials may be directly available through the contractor. Additional materials (e.g. landscape timbers, mulch, signage, etc.) may be provided if funding allows.
- Site installation: Assist with installation day by providing tools and volunteer outreach. Contractor may lead install if funds available.

Grant Awardee Responsibilities:

1. Follow the Grant timeline to meet recipient's requirements and complete the installation.
2. **Pre-installation:**
 - a. Submit to WCCD requested tree, shrub, and native plant species and quantities OR provide documentation for sourcing necessary materials.
 - b. Schedule a site visit for assessment, soil test, and planning.
 - c. Schedule the project installation date according to the Grant Timeline.
3. **Post-installation:**
 - a. Install the provided WCCD Habitat sign at the site location.
 - b. Document project (including photos) and submit a Final Project Report. See "Reporting" below.
4. **Ongoing:**
 - a. Follow the final maintenance plan for the site.
 - b. Update the WCCD if the site coordinator changes or if contact information changes.
 - c. Provide a follow up report 1 year after the installation (see "Reporting" below).

Reporting & Documentation

Completed Project Report – Post installation

Upon completion, a final report including pictures, is required of all grant recipients. The report should outline the project's installation, challenges, and plan for the first year. **This report should be submitted within one month of the project install date.** The report should have at least 3 high quality photos that the WCCD may use on our website and in publications to display and share the grant projects. The report and photos should be submitted digitally to the WCCD Community Forester at summer@washtenawcd.org.

One Year Follow-Up Project Report

Grant awardees will also submit a report one year from the date of the initial installation. This should include photos and an update of how the organization engaged with and maintained the space, and any significant successes/challenges. The goal is to ensure continue success for the project, inform future cycles of the grant, and provide another opportunity for partners or individual volunteers in the community to provide support.

What is considered Native?

We use the Ann Arbor Natural Areas Preservation description of native plants as "plants that were here before Europeans settled in Michigan in the 1700s". For more information about what is considered a native species, please visit the Michigan Natural Features Inventory at <https://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/>

WCCD Program Contact

Please email the application form and all other supporting documents or questions to the WCCD Community Forester, Summer Roberts: summer@washtenawcd.org (734) 302-8716.

For more information and resources, visit:

<https://www.washtenawcd.org/schg>

Evaluation Criteria Rubric

The table below lists the evaluation criteria considered by the selection committee. Additional criteria may be added and the weight of each criterion is determined by the individual committee member. Members then discuss the projects and come to a consensus on grant awardees.

| | Criteria: <i>For each criterion below, rank the importance by choosing a weight ranging from 1 to 5.</i> <i>Leave Blank = if you find believe a criterion is unnecessary, don't assign a weight</i> <i>1 = least important</i> <i>5 = most important</i> <i>* If desired, add your own criterion row(s), so we can evolve the process!</i> | Step 1: Weight Criteria <i>(See Instructions in the cell to the left)</i> |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Project Site Location | Site must be contained within land owned by the applicant's organization, or applicant must demonstrate a written contract of agreement with the landowner . | |
| | The proposed area for the project must be clearly defined and dedicated for the project . The site should have adequate protection from (or resilience to) potential damage (human traffic, deer, etc.). | |
| | Consideration for site location in a high use and visibility area accessible by the public or community . | |
| | Extra consideration for locations without existing natural areas or habitat projects , or for projects that are part of a larger vision or initial phased plan of conservation projects. | |
| | Consideration for site location in an underserved/under-resourced area of Washtenaw County and/or unserved by the 2021 grant awards: https://www.washtenawcd.org/2021-awardees.html (see map) | |
| Project Plan | Project must demonstrate ongoing plan and leadership to coordinate and maintain the site , including summer months. Plan includes dedicated person, and secondary contact, to coordinate and conduct or delegate maintenance. | |
| | Scale of the proposed project is realistic for the group to implement and maintain . Community skills and resources are adequate for project to be successful long-term | |
| | Coordinators / Applications demonstrate long term continued community involvement and support in the project. Multiple community members showing support as well permanency in the space, or plan demonstrates group commitment through transitions / leadership turnover | |
| Benefits/Impacts | Plan must demonstrate detail on how the project will benefit the school or community group | |
| | Plan should include a community engagement plan that could be through permanent educational signage, regular educational engagements in the space, planting / weeding days, etc. | |
| | Must demonstrate in detail how the plan will provide natural and wildlife benefits . | |
| | Plant selection / design focus to be primarily plants native to Michigan . | |