

Arboretum at Frederick County's Earth and Space Science Laboratory

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As part of Frederick County Board of Education's commitment to providing quality educational experiences Jeff Grill, Co-Director of the Earth and Space Science Laboratory initiated the development of an Arboretum on the campus of South Frederick Elementary School during the fall of 2003. Numerous organizations and individuals partnered with Jeff to develop this area, including the Teachers and Students at South Frederick Elementary School, Frederick County Forestry Board, Frederick County Bd. Of Education, Frederick County Government, Frederick City Government, MD Forest Service, Master Gardner's, Community Commons, Local Garden Clubs, The Marquess Family, and the Frederick County Vo-Ag Department. Funding for this project was received from the Frederick County Government, Frederick County Board of Education, Frederick City Government, The Chesapeake Bay Trust, Maryland Urban Forestry Commission, MD Department of Natural Resources, and the Frederick County Forestry Board.

The arboretum is set up to represent Frederick County in miniature and it contains nearly 100 species of trees and shrubs native to the county. The lower section of the planting has lowland varieties while the upper area contains those species one might observe in the mountains. Rock formations are also distributed around the site corresponding to where they would be found in the natural landscape.

The arboretum sprang to life in 2004 when the initial tree planting occurred during an Earth Day program where students, teachers, and volunteers from the surrounding area were on hand to plant nearly 200 trees. Jeff Grills dedicated the arboretum and many local officials were on hand for this program and to help plant trees. Soon after the tree planting, members of Frederick County Board of Education constructed the walkways that run through the arboretum. Landscape cloth was placed on the trails then covered by wood chips donated by local tree care crews.

Additional plantings and maintenance work has been completed in the autumn of 2004, and the spring, summer, and fall of 2005. During these maintenance sessions we plant additional trees, spread mulch, weed around trees, prune trees, water the plants, and clean up the surrounding area. Jeff Grills also raised money to have some of the overhanging trees near the property line pruned back to allow more sun to reach the young plantings.

Additional developments in the arboretum include, developing an interpretive brochure, developing and constructing signage, and building an entranceway that will hold various brochures relating to the arboretum. Aluminum signs are being made by the Vo-Ag Department to be used to identify trees and rock formations. So far we have been able to place signs on all the rocks and some of the trees. The entrance way was designed and

built by Shauna Marquess with the help of her mother Lynne (Frederick County Forestry Board), father Steve, Darrell McCartney (Frederick County Forestry Board) and Jeff Grills. Shauna is doing this as part of her in-service project for high school graduation.

So far we have planted about 95% of the native trees found in the county. We're always looking for shortleaf pine if you happen to know where we can find some.

Teachers at South Frederick Elementary School routinely utilize this area for environmental education. An environmental brochure has already been adopted for the area and soon we will have each species identified along with unmarked trees, which will serve as a test for those visiting the site. Future plans are to incorporate the arboretum into the curriculum of the Earth and Space Science Lab so that every 5th grade student in the county will be exposed to the arboretum. The arboretum will also be set up so that private individuals and groups can tour the site.