

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

This guide provides best practices and suggested activities for engaging youth in forest restoration work. Recommendations are based on reported best practices from youth outdoor education programs, input from Forest Stewards, and published research. **Please note that all youth under 14, not with a parent or guardian, need to have a Youth Waiver signed when they show up to a volunteer event.**



PLANNING YOUTH EVENTS

Consider **safety needs and age-appropriateness** when planning and delegating tasks. A ratio of 1:5 supervisors to youth is recommended. Communicate all safety procedures for tasks and tool use before starting.

Provide **kid-sized equipment** such as small D-ring shovels and gloves. These can be requested from GSP staff with four weeks notice before a work party.

Plan **multiple tasks for a work party**—even if you might not get to them all—and adapt plans to the abilities of participants. For example, moving mulch is better suited for kids under 10 than blackberry removal. Using bucket brigades can also make restoration activities easier on youth.

Teens love free food! Engage local businesses that may be able to sponsor or donate food for events. Bakeries, for example, may donate day-old goods.

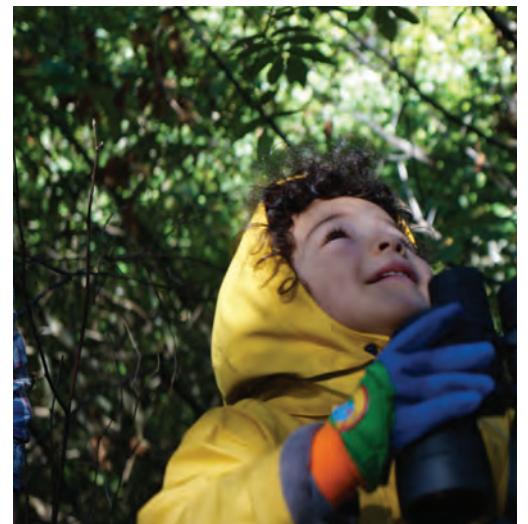
EVENT LOGISTICS

Give older kids a chance to lead! Ask older kids to help train the younger participants on the tasks for the day.

Ask for input throughout the day—how are things going? What are they enjoying most? What did they learn or are they most proud of from the event?

Be mindful of event length! In general, the younger the participants, the shorter the work party should be. No more than one hour is typical for elementary school programs.

Don't forget to celebrate your volunteers! Thank participants and highlight group accomplishments at the end of the day. Snacks are always encouraged!



Recruiting more youth participants? Reach out to schools and community groups based near your project site (we recommend within two miles). You can also promote events through neighborhood-specific social media groups such as NextDoor that are often used by families.

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FUN & GAMES

These are some of our favorite games and activities to use with kids who come to park restoration events.

Play a guessing game.



Ask kids to guess how much mulch the group will move during the day or how big the planted trees will grow. Use creative benchmarks, such as comparing the amount of mulch moved to the weight of an elephant.

Hold a scavenger hunt.



Pick 3-5 leaves, berries, bugs, or other items from your park and encourage youth to find them throughout the day. Teach them about plant and bug identification, and see who can find all items first!

Foster some friendly competition.



Many youth love the chance to earn some bragging rights for the day. Who can remove the largest weeds or move the most mulch?

Ask kids to tell you what they see.



Enclose an area of the park with string or plastic rings and have youth observe and describe everything they see inside. Encourage youth to report their observations back to the larger group.

Organize a bird or nature walk in your park.



Popular among elementary school classrooms, these events can introduce groups to your park and encourage them to join planting events in the future. For example, a Tree Walk is a great way to teach young people about signature trees.

Did you know...?

Sharing fun facts is another easy way to engage youth. Try some of these at your next work party!

- **Herb-Robert**, a pink flower that is actually a weed, gives off a distinct and pungent smell when crushed. It is also known as “**Stinky Bob**”!
- You can eat **stinging nettles** or brew them into an herbal tea.
- **Banana slugs** can drop down from trees using their slime, much like spiders do from webs. They can drop from as high as eight feet!
- **Conifers** (like pine trees) give off pinene, a chemical compound that improves airflow to the lungs and promotes alertness, making people feel more refreshed!

Questions? Comments?

Email info@greenseattle.org or call (206) 905-6943

