

## **Hartsfield Gardens Information for Volunteers**

Thank you for your interest in helping with Hartsfield's gardens. Please read this information carefully to better understand the needs of our gardens and how you can be part of the process.

### **Before volunteering:**

- 1) Please contact Ms. Pratt - she'll be in touch with the garden committee to let them know you are interested in volunteering.
- 2) Complete the LCS volunteer form: <https://volunteers.leonschools.net/>
- 3) Have a idea of how and when you would like to help

A member of the Garden Committee will be in touch to schedule a time to meet with you to work in the gardens.

### **Volunteer opportunities in the gardens:**

At Hartsfield we have vegetable gardens and a pollinator garden. The tasks vary for each garden and for each season.

The vegetable gardens are typically dormant in July and August, as activity decreases during those months at the school. In September and October, we plan and plant the Fall/Winter garden. This is a time when we often need volunteer help. During the months of November through February, we mostly work on maintenance, with some occasional harvesting. The harvest is offered to members of the Hartsfield community through an online sign-up process. As the weather warms up, some additional "warm weather" plants are added and will grow through to the end of the school year. After our last harvest, we plan on a few days to clean up the garden beds and cover them for the summer.

The pollinator garden is a certified Schoolyard Habitat and part of Hartsfield's Eco-School Project. The garden was designed and is maintained to support native wildlife - our local pollinators, birds and other small wildlife. The garden has many native plants which provide food and shelter for its wildlife inhabitants.

The pollinator garden needs little maintenance. Once the plants are established they only need watering in very dry periods and they don't need fertilizer. To help keep the garden low-maintenance, the right plants provide food for the pollinators and feeders, which need regular cleaning and filling, aren't used. During the warmer months the garden needs weeding and occasional pruning and we can use volunteer help. The garden committee knows which plants are weeds, which are native groundcovers and plants that support the pollinators. The committee can work with volunteers interested in helping with garden cleanups.

## **Pollinator garden in winter and early spring - what's going on?**

Many garden plants “die back” in the winter. They lose flowers and often leaves, but their root system is alive underground.

We had a very cold snap in December, with a hard freeze. Many of our native perennials will survive but a few will die and need to be replaced. We will have to wait and see.

You might notice lots of stems still standing. We leave these for cover for insects. Some tiny insects even live in the hollow stems.

The big oak tree has dropped most of its leaves. This provides good mulch for the soil, and winter cover for many insects. Some of these insects will be food for birds and other creatures in the garden area.

As early as January, we started to see tiny green shoots coming up at the base of plants. By March more plants had leaves and some even had flowers. In the next couple months, watch the Hartsfield garden grow green and continue to bloom. Look closely for insects, birds and other wildlife to visit the garden.