

# Butterfly Meadow

## Washington State University

within the campus on the north and west side of Mill Creek, seven miles northeast of Vancouver city center



### BEFORE

*Exotic plant species  
choke out native species*

The Washington State University Vancouver campus overlooks the valley of westward flowing Salmon Creek. The rolling terrain varies between 5 and 15 degree slopes. Mill Creek, which originates in Battle Ground, flows through the campus. Restoration projects have been done on the campus portions of Mill Creek.

Many species of butterfly and their habitats are rapidly disappearing. A 1-acre field, overgrown with Himalayan blackberry, Canada thistle and a variety of non-native grass species, was chosen as an appropriate place to create a butterfly meadow. The first step of the project was to identify what butterflies were found in southern Clark County and more specifically this portion of the Mill Creek watershed. Once species were identified, research was done on the specific habitat requirements and plant species required by each butterfly species.

Before native plant species could be reintroduced, the exotics had to be removed. The field was rototilled after placing black plastic sheeting over the grass. AmeriCorps workers removed blackberries from around the edge of the meadow and especially near the stream. Students from

WSU planted willow along the stream and native rose bushes slightly above the willows. Other appropriate butterfly attractors will be planted in the near future.

### Benefits

- Creating habitat for butterflies, whose population is drastically decreasing.
- Plant and habitat diversity on the site have been added, which in turn will improve wildlife habitat.
- Model site for citizens to learn how to create a butterfly meadow.
- Creation of a living restoration ecology laboratory.

### Budget

Proposed – \$20,400

Actual – \$22,242

Metro/US Fish and Wildlife grant award – \$5,500

## Timeline and tasks

- March 1994 ..... Site surveys and assessments, development of preliminary design.
- September 1995 ..... AmeriCorps volunteers spent four days on site removing blackberries. Thirty volunteers spent one day removing blackberries.
- October 1995 ..... Volunteer planting days, planted *rosa rigosa* and several willow species. With removal of blackberries, some native plant species already in the seed bank were able to re-establish.
- February 1996 ..... High waters and flooding scoured the site, washing away many of the new plants and depositing large sediment loads.
- February -
- April 1996 ..... Monitored the site to see what had survived and what seed sources and plants had established as a result of the high waters and increased sediments. Decided to start a propagation effort (cuttings and seeds) to grow native plant materials to replant the site next year.
- April - July 1996 ..... Cutting and seed collection and propagation.
- September 1996 ..... Students from WSU restoration ecology class will take over implementation, monitoring and maintenance of the original design.

## Helpful hints – what worked, what didn't

- It is important to have a volunteer coordinator who understands all the project components.
- Paperwork at the college took longer than expected. Always assume there will be some delays in beginning a project.
- It is difficult to manage a project from off site.
- Nature is unpredictable and may change or influence your project design and timeline at any time.

## Partners

Washington State University students and faculty  
Friends of Salmon Creek  
AmeriCorps  
Interested citizens

## Contact

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### AFTER

*Meadow is ready to be planted*

