

Help Nature Reclaim its Space: Library Facilitation Guide

Activity Time:

45 – 60 minutes; Long duration (*days to months*)

Intended Audience:

Families, All Ages

Type of Program:

Facilitated hands-on experience; Passive program (*if patron guides are available for distribution*)

Overview

Human activities such as urbanization, intensive agriculture and landscaping, and deforestation have destroyed habitats for native plants and animals and threatened biodiversity. When left alone, an area of land will re-establish itself as an ecosystem supporting plant and animal life, eventually becoming a complex community of native plants, pollinators, and habitat for wildlife. This facilitation guide is adapted from <https://wearetheark.org/> to help your library create a space for nature to recover. Many of the “rewilding” steps are passive on your part, and that is important! Allowing land to recover undisturbed allows progressive natural restoration processes to occur.

This activity can be done in an outdoor space at the library or indoors using planter containers.

Materials

Facility needs one of the following:

- * A patch of outdoor space that can be allowed to remain un-landscaped, such as a corner of a lawn or courtyard

OR

- * A windowsill that can hold a container of soil with adequate light for plant growth.

Program Materials:

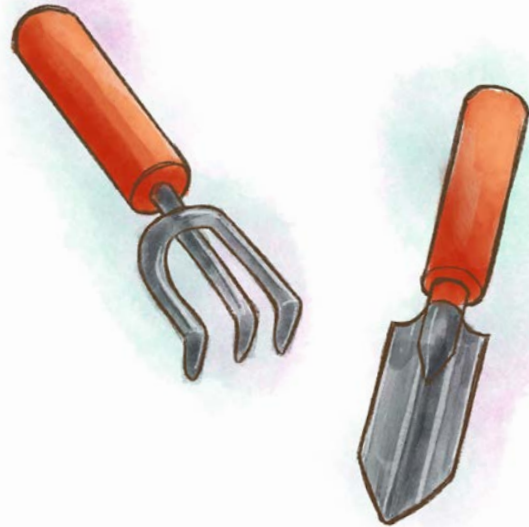
- * Computer with internet access, connected to a projector to show the 6-minute video, **Become a Guardian of Nature! Learn to Rewild with Native Plants**
 - *Spanish version: ¡Sé un guardián de la naturaleza! Aprende a cultivar con plantas nativas*
- * **A Guide to Help Nature Reclaim its Space** (*one copy per participant/family*)

If rewilding an outdoor space:

- * Tools for removing non-native plants, such as gardening gloves, shovels, and other garden tools.
- * If removing sod, you will need flattened cardboard boxes, compost or soil, and native flower seed mix.
- * Identifying non-native, invasive plants in your area and printing pictures of them for patrons to recognize and remove. The following resources can help you identify non-native, invasive plant species:
 - * <https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/invasives/index.shtml>
 - * <https://www.si.edu/stories/escape-invasives>
 - * <https://www.inaturalist.org/>

If rewilding a container of soil:

- * Planter containers (**one for the library OR one for each participant/family**)
- * Hand shovels for filling the containers with the soil from around the library grounds.



Activity

STEP 1.

What does “Rewild” mean?

Begin the program by showing the audience the video, **Become a Guardian of Nature! Learn to Rewild with Native Plants.** After the video, invite the audience to share their thoughts with some discussion prompts:

1. How does the concept of rewilding differ from other conservation efforts?
2. What are some potential benefits of rewilding spaces?
3. What are some potential challenges associated with rewilding projects?

STEP 2.

Review the guide

Distribute the Guide to Help Nature Reclaim its Space to each participant/family. Invite participants to read each step from the guide:

1. Identify a plot of land to rewild

- * Pause to describe the area you will be “rewilding” at your library, whether this is an outdoor space on the library grounds or collecting native soil in a window box to allow native weed seeds to flourish.

2. Display a sign

- * As the facilitator, you can make a sign prior to the program, or include the [Create a Sign for your Rewilding Project](#) activity during this program.

3. Set the seeds free

- * Describe the tools you have provided for tilling the area of land or removing sod/non-native species or collecting soil for the window boxes.
- * Share the photos you have printed of common invasive species in the area to remove.

English Ivy



Cheatgrass



4. Break down barriers

- * Describe any fences or enclosures you will be removing, if applicable. Keep safety in mind: only assign tasks with sharp tools or heavy lifting to adults. Skip this step with public audiences if liability is a risk for your library.

5. Embrace the 'messiness'

- * Remind participants that only invasive plant species will be removed. Dead leaves, branches, and other plant material will eventually breakdown and provide essential nutrients to the soil.

6. Consider the lighting.

- * If applicable, make a plan with your library's maintenance team prior to the program.

7. Sit back and enjoy – and spread the word!

- * Explain that it will take a long time – years, even – for the land to be restored with native plants, butterflies, insects, and animals.
- * Be sure to submit your location to the [We Are the Ark database](#) to show how your efforts are contributing to this global movement.



STEP 3.

Get to work!

It's now time to put the steps in the guide to action. If incorporating the [Create a Sign for your Rewilding Project](#) activity in this program, consider assigning a group of participants to create the sign while the rest of the group goes to work outside or goes to collect soil in the planter boxes.

Extensions

- * Turn this into an annual program where you invite participants to return each year to remove invasive plant species and observe how the land has changed over time.
- * Check out this [collection of ReWilding activities](#) to engage visitors with your space throughout the year.
- * Make a photo display showcasing how the area has changed over time.