2008 Spring Creek Natural Plantings and Learning Opportunities

In 2007 the Spring Creek Neighbors Natural Gardens project started a process of improving one of the community’s most significant natural features – a forest in our backyard. The Spring Creek project was funded August 1, 2007 by Lane County Commissioners using Secure Rural Schools federal funds. Over the past several months Santa Clara neighbors, 4J school staff, community organization members, and city stream team staff have worked on: Awbrey Park site preparation, Spring Creek Elementary curriculum development, preparation of a Spring Creek learning laboratory, and development of information to the public about how to improve Spring Creek. Continuing improvements are planned for 2008 in storm drainage, wildlife attraction, and natural plantings in the drainage corridor, as described below.

Spring Creek is a meandering corridor of forest wetlands that provide storm water drainage through hundreds of backyards, starting a few hundred yards south of Spring Creek Elementary School, through a marsh/wetland area next to Spring Creek School parking lot, north across Irvington Dr, through the filbert orchard and Linnbrook subdivision where it crosses under River Rd at Awbrey Park. A connecting drainage channel begins on the east edge of Awbrey Park Elementary School parking lot and joins Spring Creek at Awbrey Park. Spring Creek continues north, under East Beacon Road, through farm lands east of River Road then to the Willamette River. Many meanders and street storm drains join the creek as a major flood control channel. Telephone book map #2 shows this route, as do many other local maps, including Google map.

Spring Creek Elementary School is creating a Spring Creek multi-year curriculum, including: rocks, minerals, organisms, ecosystems, bugs, butterflies, math, writing, science, visual arts, mapping, and many other subjects. Added to the 2008 educational program are community involvement activities, including: stream side native gardening information, meetings, work parties, water quality improvement, attraction of butterflies, birds, pollinators, and gardening techniques that integrate native forest plants with urban gardening. The following OSU streamside gardening web site is a source of information about natural gardening along waterways: [http://extension.oregonstate.edu/yamhill/pages/gardening_natives.html](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/yamhill/pages/gardening_natives.html)

Residents of the Santa Clara are encouraged to participate in the improvement of the Spring Creek native forest and storm/flood drainage waterway by attending community meetings and information sessions. Information will be provided to residents on how to improve their individual property, increase property value, enhance wildlife, increase native plants and work with neighbors to enhance Spring Creek natural features and increase flood safety. A principal goal of the project in the coming year is to inform residents about watershed stewardship and forest health and natural gardening techniques. Activities are planned every month, including:

- butterfly attraction by Spring Creek first graders,
- removal of invasive plants in Awbrey Park,
- information meetings about how to get native plants and start them in your yard.

Watch the Clarion, local newspapers, and your mail box for specific dates and times. If you are interested in gardening along Spring Creek with native plants, enhancement of native butterflies/birds/wildlife, biology of soil, composting of yard prunings, natural systems, forest health, wetlands, and related subjects, please contact Peter at: thurstop@gmail.com or 688-4664.

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