

**OUR
CITY
FOREST**



**California
Volunteers**

EARTH PROTECTORS (K-3RD) /
EARTH STEWARDS (4TH-5TH)

Learning objectives

1. Ensure students have an understanding of what stewardship means and how to practice environmentalism in their daily life.

2. Engage students in stewardship activities through preventive and reactive activities.

- Preventative - reduce waste, reuse items instead of buying more
- Reactive - picking up waste, caring for trees and the local environment

Time Required

3 class sessions

Materials

- Human Impacts images
- **Breaking It All Down** activity sheet
- **Breaking It All Down** activity board
 - Poster board
 - Images of objects
 - markers
- Optional: poster boards for **What Stewardship Means to You** activity
- for 3rd-5th graders: Photosynthesis element cards
- 3 boxes for compost, recycling, and trash

- Objects to sort into bins for trash game
- **School Stewardship Plan** worksheet
- Small buckets of water to water trees

Day 1: Tree Stewardship

1. Write the word stewardship on the board (or canvas of preference).
2. Explain that stewards are people take care of specific areas or things. So stewardship is the practice of taking action to care for that specific thing. i.e. Our City Forest stewards trees.
3. Challenge students to name some places that they see on a daily basis that need care.
4. Explain that we are all stewards of this planet. Emphasize that we only have one Earth and that this is the home that we all share together.
5. Lead students in a discussion of ways in which they may already be practicing stewardship in their homes, schools, or communities, such as caring for a pet or completing chores that include cleaning their room, washing dishes, and taking out the trash. They may also help keep classrooms clean in school or volunteer for a park-cleanup day in their community.

6. Tell students that our home and school communities aren't the only places that need stewardship. What are some examples of other places? (trees, parks, lakes, rivers, oceans, sidewalks and etc.)

7. Go over the Human Impacts images and ask students to describe what they see in the images. Explain that these types of impacts—deforestation, marked/graffitied trees, smog/air pollution/water pollution, litter—all harm the health of our environment.

8. Talk about the importance of environmental/tree stewardship
 - a. Why does the environment need care?
 - b. Why do trees need care?
 - c. Just as we need care as a child, trees need care and support during the first years.
 - d. Ask students how do we care for trees the way we care for humans.
 - e. They need water, nutrients (food), pruning (haircuts), stakes (friends and family-learning how to walk).
 - f. Once they are established, trees don't need as much care. They can take care of themselves for the most part!

Day 2: Putting it into Practice

1. Take a moment to review what you talked about during Day 1. Ask students what they remember from the previous lesson and what stewardship is.

2. ****Optional**** - Have teams create an imageboard of what stewardship means to them (create from upcycling materials - scratch paper, other 3D objects) - can be an image of students watering or planting trees, picking up litter, protecting animals.

3. Pass out the **Breaking It All Down** activity sheet and challenge students to match the objects with the length of time they think it takes for the object to decompose.

For 4th and 5 graders: After students have completed the activity sheet, divide them into groups to answer the **Think Critically** questions at the bottom of the page with their group members.

4. Have a class discussion about the **Think Critically** worksheet as well as the correct decomposition time periods.

(Answers: plastic beverage bottle, 450 years; newspaper, 6 weeks; paper towel, 2–4 weeks; plastic bag, 10–20 years; glass bottle, 1 million years; apple core, 2 months; aluminum can, 80–200 years; orange or banana peel, 2–5 weeks; - food packaging (snacks), plastic straws, 200 years; nylon clothes, 30-40 years; smartphone/PCs/tablets/TVs - never, Milk and drink packets, 5 years; leaves, 6- 12 months; wood, 13 years)

5. Have students from each team place images on the **Breaking It All Down** activity board and place them in the correct order on the poster board. Make sure students put the objects in the correct order and label the timeline with the correct time periods.

Discussion Time

1. Ask students if they were surprised at how long some items took to decompose.

2. Discuss with students the impact this has on our environment and the issue of landfills. Too much trash can lead to the issue of landfills. You can show an image of what this looks like to give the students a better idea of how much waste we produce.

3. Even though some items take longer than others to break down, sometimes it's better to use items that can be used more than once.

- a. For example, a glass bottle can be used again where as a plastic bottle will end up in a landfill.
- b. Think about how many times you can use an item, not just how long it takes to break down.

Trash Game!

1. Label 3 bins - one compost, one landfill, and the third recycle - have students guess where each product goes.

2. Remind students that although recycling is important, the initial solution is to reuse and reduce our waste! With 4th and 5th graders, you can talk about the difference between prevention and reaction.

3. *Extra Credit Project* - have students bury two objects in their home - one compostable and one not. Writing portion: How different do they look after 1 week? How does this affect our environment? (Make sure to take before and after pictures!)

Day 3: Urban Forestry

1. Review the **Breaking It All Down** activity from Day 2 and ask what students have learned so far.
2. Present the Our City Forest Urban Forestry presentation.
 - a. There is a separate presentation for K-2nd and 3rd-5th.
3. For 3rd-5th graders:
 - a. Ask students to explain what an urban forest is in their own words.
 - b. Ask students how trees play a role in combating climate change.

Taking It Outdoors

1. Take students on a walking tour around their school grounds. Ask student groups to work together to identify areas that need stewardship or care.
2. Encourage students to think creatively about which areas need care and what types of behaviors can help or harm the area.

Wrapping Up

1. When you return to the classroom, discuss with students the way they each can take action to become better stewards and decrease our impact on the environment.
2. What actions will they take to become a steward for their school?
 - a. Help water trees
 - b. Be a voice for trees and speak up if there is harm being done to the tree
 - c. Other ways: taking the bus, walking, saving water when brushing teeth, etc.

3. *For 4th and 5th graders:* Pass out the **Make a School Stewardship Plan** activity sheet. Have students work cooperatively to develop a plan that outlines actions that members of the school can take to contribute to be stewards.

Things to consider:

- a. Who will water the trees and when?
- b. Health assessments? - how are the trees doing? Their leaves? Any carvings or damage to trees?

Optional Taking it further (dependent on grade level):

For homework, have students use their answers from the discussion or their completed **School Stewardship Plan** to write a formal proposal to present to the principal how the entire school can get involved.

Ongoing Stewardship

Create a schedule with other teachers of when your students will water the trees, and which trees they will water. Students will actively engage in long-term stewardship, showing them the importance of tree care and environmental stewardship.

Have them take note of any changes as the tree grows through the seasons. Taking pictures to document the changes can help students see the growth of a tree with proper care.