

# firstbloom

## **What is First Bloom?**

First Bloom is a national conservation education program from the National Park Foundation that reaches out to urban youth in their communities to teach them the science of native plants, encouraging them to protect the environment in America's celebrated national parks and in their own backyards.

## **Who is behind the program?**

First Bloom was created by the National Park Foundation to honor the conservation legacy of Lady Bird Johnson and connect it with the legacy of another First Lady, Mrs. Laura Bush, the first Honorary Chair of the National Park Foundation, and a passionate champion of America's national parks. Partners in the initiative include the National Park Service, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and several local Boys and Girls Clubs. The program was launched with an initial \$1million contribution secured by ARAMARK through the Yawkey Foundation.

## **What are the program's goals?**

- To connect children – particularly urban youth – to the natural world
- To restore natural habitats in national parks and kids' own communities
- To instill the values of national park and environmental stewardship

Announced by Mrs. Bush in October 2007, First Bloom plants the seeds for a stronger conservation ethic in our country, beginning with America's youngest citizens.

## **How does First Bloom work?**

The National Park Foundation has enlisted the expertise of the National Park Service, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and community organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs as educators and mentors to create transformational outdoor experiences for America's youth. Stakeholders identify and gather a core group of youth, grades 4 - 6 who are interested in learning more about parks and conservation, teach them the science of native plants and removal of invasive species and help them design and tend to gardens that they will plant in the parks and their own communities.

## **Who benefits from First Bloom?**

- Participating children, especially those who may not have regular access to the outdoors, can experience nature in a fun, educational setting while connecting to national parks near them – likely for the first time;
- Community partners and the communities they serve benefit through the First Bloom instructional programming they receive and the end results of children's efforts;
- The National Park Service fulfills its mission to preserve the parks, educate the public, and engage future stewards of these important places;
- The national parks themselves – frequently besieged by invasive species and lacking adequate native species – benefit from the additional attention to their fragile ecosystems, a job which each year requires thousands of hours of staff and volunteer efforts to sustain.

### **Why 'native' plants?**

Native plants are indigenous to a particular region or ecosystem. National parks are home to complex ecosystems that represent our natural heritage. Native plants help form that heritage and foster healthy communities of plants, animals and other organisms.

Invasive, non-native plants, on the other hand, are one of the greatest threats to the natural ecosystems of the U.S. and are destroying America's natural history and identity. National parks are constantly threatened by the invasion of such species as well as by human-caused disturbances that foster the existence of non-native species.

### **What are the plans to grow the First Bloom program?**

First Bloom launched programs in five cities in 2008: New York, Austin, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. Thanks to a powerful and positive response from children and communities across the country, the National Park Foundation will expand the program to serve 16 U.S. parks in its second year.

### **First Bloom Program Calendar and Key Dates**

October 14, 2007	First Bloom announced by First Lady Mrs. Laura Bush (Austin, TX)
January 17, 2008	Program partners convene for training and program development at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (Austin, TX)
February 6	First Bloom Program and planting event (Everglades National Park, FL)
April 10	First Bloom Program at Williams Preparatory School (Dallas, TX)
April 12/13	First Bloom invited to take part in White House Garden Tours (Washington, DC)
April 21	First Bloom Garden Planting (New York, NY)
April 22	First Bloom Electronic Field Trip (Everglades National Park, FL)
April 26	First Bloom Garden Planting (Santa Monica, CA) First Bloom Garden Planting (Austin, TX)
May 20	First Bloom Garden Planting (Philadelphia, PA)
June 7	First Bloom Garden Planting (Washington, DC)
June 14	First Bloom invited to take part in White House Garden Tours (Washington, DC)
June 22	First Bloom Garden Planting (Boston, MA)
July 12	First Bloom invited to take part in White House Garden Tours (Washington, DC)
July 31	First Bloom Garden Planting at the World War II Memorial (Washington, DC)
August 9	First Bloom invited to take part in White House Garden Tours (Washington DC)
September 24	First Bloom Program and Planting at Hamilton Grange National Memorial (New York, NY)
October 18	First Bloom Program and Planting at Adams National Historical Park (Boston, MA) First Bloom invited to take part in White House Garden Tours (Washington, DC)
November 2	First Bloom Program at Trinity River Audubon Center (Dallas, TX)