



Bayer Corporation U.S. Headquarters—Pittsburgh, PA

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Sustainability is a concept that is integrated into all facets of the Bayer Corporation’s business, not just added on as an after thought. Before being “green” was mainstream, Bayer was looking at how what they do impacts the environment and human health. According to the company’s North American Sustainability Coordinator, Valerie Patrick, sustainability is a powerful concept that provides a way to take responsibility for your actions and how they impact the natural world.

It was this commitment to sustainable development and the company’s empowerment of their employees that prompted one staff member to contact the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) in 1997 to see how to better utilize their Pittsburgh campus for natural resource protection and environmental education. Bayer’s Pittsburgh campus covers 300 acres; 200 of which are now managed as wildlife habitat in the form of deciduous forests, open meadows, ponds, and two natural wetlands. The WHC helped Bayer create a wildlife management plan to guide the onsite work.



Students look inside one of the many on-site bluebird boxes

One of the highlights of the Pittsburgh campus is the award-winning bluebird nest box program. Throughout the campus and the adjoining Settler’s Cabin Park are 42 nest boxes that are monitored by the Wildlife Sustainability Team (WST) — a group of Bayer employee volunteers—and Boy Scout troops. The WST volunteers meet once a month to plan out their activities. Projects are a reflection of the employees interests, ranging from nature photography to bird watching. Rich Polaski, the manager of the WST, says that using the employees’ expertise and interests has been the key to their success throughout the years.



Students perform a pond study

Schools link up with Bayer through the BASIC program—Bayer Association for Science in Communities. BASIC is the Pittsburgh branch of *Making Science Make Sense®*, a Bayer initiative dedicated to inquiry based, hands-on science learning at elementary schools located near key Bayer sites. Members of BASIC cultivate children’s natural curiosity about science by bringing interactive presentations into approximately 175 local elementary school classrooms, as well as summer camps and museums, reaching nearly 15,000 students in the region.

All photos courtesy of the Bayer Corporation



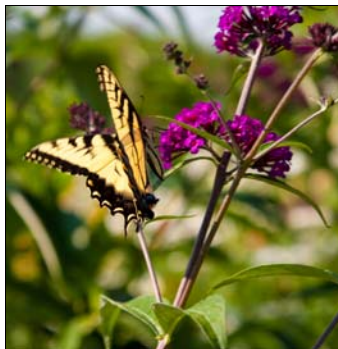
Bayer also sponsors an annual International Summer Sustainability Camp where select high school students from the United States and Germany travel to Pittsburgh to learn from BASIC and WST volunteers about the effects of environmental sustainability and climate change.



Exploring some of the 200 acres of wildlife habitat

Bayer partners with a variety of local organizations for their habitat and environmental education projects. For instance, the WST partnered with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to plant wildlife habitat, using recycled leaf compost mulch, that has the added benefit of erosion control. The team also works with the Pa. Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation to plant blight-resistant hybrid American chestnut trees on-site.

The WST is also involved in maintenance for the site's wildflower mounds and pollinators gardens, which attract a range of hummingbirds, butterflies and other insects. Maintenance includes seasonal weeding, planting and mulching. While native plants are not used exclusively on-site they are promoted whenever possible. In forested areas standing dead trees and brush piles are left in place for wildlife habitat.



Zebra swallowtail

Mowing was halted in many areas that were originally covered by turfgrass, allowing the grasses to grow tall. These grasses now provide wildlife habitat and save the company roughly \$30,000 each year in reduced mowing costs! The reduced mowing has led to a slight increase in the tick population that goes hand-in-hand with the white-tailed deer on-site. The tick threat is minimal, but some blue bird nest boxes had to be moved from no-mow areas to mowed areas along the trails in order to reduce the risk of tick/human interactions.

The Bayer U.S. Headquarters was certified as a WHC *Corporate Lands for Learning* site in 2003 for their public education programs, and they have retained that certification ever since. In 2008, the WHC awarded Bayer's Pittsburgh site with the "Signature of Sustainability Award," a distinction that only 21 of the 400 WHC-certified sites in the United States have been given. The Bayer Pittsburgh campus received this prestigious award due to the many community partnerships, environmental education programs, and wildlife habitat initiatives that they are involved in.

Bayer believes that making their sites as sustainable as possible makes good business sense. Their actions show the public that they are a responsible leader in the region, thereby encouraging their employees to echo the company's values through the volunteer work that they do. Bayer demonstrates a commitment to environmental sustainability by putting into practice new ways to protect the land they share with the animals and plant life that make the Bayer Pittsburgh campus so beautiful and unique.

Bayer staff encourage other companies to take sustainability seriously. Use the expertise of your employees and the resources and buy-in of the corporation to create a successful, sustainable site. As Valerie Patrick says, "Sustainability is a journey. Take a purposeful approach."