

EXPLAINING

New Sites Poised to Take on the Fairchild Challenge

Text and photos by Education Department Staff



The Fairchild Challenge is a school program that promotes, provokes and celebrates teenagers' engagement in environmental issues. Through point-earning competitions in research, art, writing, performance, debate, design, technology, gardening and advocacy, the Fairchild Challenge is clearly leading a green movement in schools everywhere.

The program, developed at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, is currently in its seventh year locally, and engages more than 45,000 students and 2,200 teachers from 141 middle and high schools.

Interest in offering the Fairchild Challenge at sites nationally and internationally is also growing rapidly. Thus far, educators from 46 gardens, zoos and museums have been trained to replicate the program in their respective cities. To date, Fairchild Challenge Satellite programs have been launched in north Florida, Illinois, Arizona, Washington, D.C., Utah, Pennsylvania, Costa Rica and Venezuela.

In early February, our most recent trainees visited the garden for our annual Fairchild Challenge Satellite Partners training workshop. This new group included educators from Pasadena (CA), Vail (CO), Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Orlando (FL). Held over two and a half days, the comprehensive workshop provided participants with a thorough understanding of how to initiate and run the Fairchild Challenge at their sites.

The momentum is building for a coordinated Fairchild Challenge movement. Folks from diverse organizations such as the American Horticultural Society, National Environmental Education Foundation, Discovery Education and American Public Garden Association, among others, have indicated they want to play a part in the program's growth and success. Additionally, others in the field of nature deficit, environmental education and innovative education are self-identifying as ready to help serve on a national and international Task Force for the Fairchild Challenge.

For more information about the Fairchild Challenge, please visit our Web site at www.fairchildgarden.org. 



Above: New trainees attended the annual Fairchild Challenge Satellite Partners training workshop at the garden in February.



YOUTHCAN MIAMI CONFERENCE

On Tuesday, March 31, environmentally-minded elementary students gathered at Miami Country Day School for the 2009 YouthCaN Miami Conference. Hosted by the Abess Center for Environmental Studies, YouthCaN brought together participants in the Fairchild Challenge Pilot Program for Elementary Schools with students from Miami Country Day School and other local elementary schools.

YouthCaN, a youth run organization, unites environmentally active youth to exchange ideas about the environment and empower others to make a difference in their own communities. Fairchild Challenge schools presented interactive workshops with topics ranging from energy efficiency to the history of pizza gardens. Each school received palm tree seedlings, made herbal vinegars and salad and pizza container gardens. At the end of the inspirational day, all students left with the realization that students do have the power to make a difference.