

EDUCATION

Local Teachers Go to School at Fairchild

Fairchild educators reach not only thousands of school-age children in Miami-Dade—but their teachers, via workshops and courses throughout the year.

How best to inspire students to develop a sense of awe, excitement and appreciation for plants? One way is by getting their teachers excited through classes and workshops.

Fairchild's Education Department—The Center for Teaching and Learning—is expanding its reach beyond the younger generation to their educators by offering a selection of professional development courses for teachers. Their goal is to bringing the principles of environmental education and inquiry-based learning into the classroom.

In one recent course, teachers learned how to plan, design and plant a garden at their schools. Education staffers Alison Walker, April Dominguez and Theresa Chormanski co-taught a workshop on School Gardening for teachers participating in the School Garden/Habitat Restoration option of the Fairchild Challenge.

The six-hour workshop gave participants a step-by-step overview of setting up a garden and integrating garden activities into the school curriculum, and combined classroom presentation and discussion, a hands-on landscape design activity, and several outdoor components including curriculum activities, planting and propagation lessons. Workshop participants left with design sketches, plant material, resources and inspiration to go forth and plant. This workshop will be offered again in February.

In another course, Chormanski and Nicole Gérard taught the first of four classes in the Botany and Ethnobotany Green Treasures series. Teachers attending this course gained an in-depth look at the historical and cultural uses of plants, plant morphology and function, and plant adaptations.



Teachers get hands-on experience in environmental education and botany at professional development classes held throughout the year at Fairchild.

Teacher reaction to the workshops has been positive. "It is one thing to know botany but another to explain it to adolescents who may not be reading on grade level or learning in a second language," said one participant. "This class has demonstrated to me ways that I can share my knowledge of botany with my students in meaningful hands-on lessons."

Another wrote: "Thank you for finding exciting ways to help the teachers build interest in conservation, trees and the whole gamut of environmental issues."

The Education Department works

closely with the Miami-Dade County Public School system to make these Professional Development courses available, as well as to ensure that teachers receive stipends and TEC credits for most courses offered. This year, a generous grant from Washington Mutual Bank allowed Fairchild to fund some of their teacher training needs, and additional grants are being sought.

"We are always in the process of looking for additional funding as we expand the number of courses that we offer," said Walker.

Upcoming Teacher Training

- > **School Garden Workshop (Feb. 3)** One-day workshop for middle and high school teachers participating in the School Garden/Habitat Restoration option of the Fairchild Challenge.
- > **Botany and Ethnobotany (Feb. 10, March 10)** Four-day workshop for middle school teachers.
- > **Basic Botany (March 17)** One-day course for elementary teachers, offered in conjunction with Jack Fisher, Ph.D., from the CTPC.
- > **Tropical Botany (June 18-June 29)** Two-week intensive summer course, affectionately called Botany Bootcamp, offered in conjunction with Miami-Dade College.

For information on Teacher Training Initiatives at Fairchild, contact Alison Walker at awalker@fairchildgarden.org or 305.667.1651 x3325.