

Burlingame High School San Mateo Union High School District



Green Buildings & Grounds

Level: Entry

Pathway: Community &
Culture, Campus



Over the last couple of months of Spring 2022, BHS sophomores Olivia Johnson, Emma Gubbels and Zoe Tsai, worked on implementing their Community Impact Project at BHS as part of the Youth Climate Ambassadors program. For their project, the group replaced a 270 square-foot grass patch with a native plant and succulent garden. The purpose of their project was both to bolster biodiversity in their community and to make better use of the school's water resources. Olivia, Emma, and Zoe chose this project because it was of relevance to the school community, especially for administrators, who were concerned about the amount of water being used to help maintain lawns and grass on the BHS campus. Though gaining administrative approval for this project was difficult, once approved, implementation was quick. Physically constructing the garden required a full day's worth of work; Olivia, Emma, Zoe, two parent volunteers, the two YCA staff, and nine student volunteers worked from 10am-5pm digging up grass and replacing it with native plants. By planting natives, they helped to make our campus more beneficially biodiverse. All the natives and succulents planted are drought-resistant, and will use around 1/3 of the water needed by the grass patch that was replaced. Finally, the garden itself is highly noticeable on campus, making BHS more appealing, more water efficient, and started a conversation in the school community about taking further action on campus sustainability.

Olivia, Emma, and Zoe worked with BHS administrators to form a plan that would ensure the garden's maintenance going forward. The BHS Environmental Club will assist Olivia, Emma, Zoe in taking care of the garden, and will pass down that responsibility after their graduation. They also plan to stay in communication with staff about the goings-on of our garden and any further efforts towards creating a more sustainable campus. They're planning to plant more succulents and natives throughout the summer and during the next school year, along with creating plant name tags and informative posters about the importance of creating a more biodiverse campus.