



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
<http://dnr.state.il.us>

Pat Quinn, Governor
Marc Miller, Director

June 25, 2013

Dr. Jerry Corcoran
Illinois Valley Community College
815 North Orlando Smith Road
Oglesby, IL 61348

Dear Dr. Corcoran:

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Division of Education sponsors the *Earth Day in the Parks* program for students of grades kindergarten through 12. Through this program, students have the opportunity to participate in natural resources stewardship activities at Illinois state parks. Thousands of students have participated in the seven years that *Earth Day in the Parks* events have been held, and their activities have included planting native wildflowers, grasses and trees, building and installing bird nesting boxes, building and installing fish attractors, removing invasive, exotic plant species, building brush piles and constructing vernal pools.

For the past three years, we have worked in partnership with the horticultural programs at Illinois Valley Community College in Oglesby, Kishwaukee College in Malta and Lake Land College in Mattoon. These community colleges along with six correctional centers have raised native wildflowers and grasses for us to use in the *Earth Day in the Parks* events. The IDNR provides seeds, potting medium and plant-growth containers, while the partners raise the plants. The partnerships have been positive in many ways. They lower the main cost for these events (native plants needed). They teach horticultural students the value of native plants and provide these students with the skills needed to raise these plants from seeds. They are increasing native wildlife habitat. They are showing that separate units of state government can work together on a common goal.

Due to the success of the program, we would like to expand it in two ways: 1) we would like to add additional community colleges to the program; and 2) we would like to involve truck-driver training programs at community colleges in the delivery of the plants. Would your college be interested in participating in either of these activities? The seeds and growing materials are provided to the college in the summer. The plants need to be ready for us by April 1 of the following year. If training in raising native plants is needed, it can be provided.

The success of the program has led to problems in delivering the plants to the state parks where they are needed. We do not have the types of vehicles needed to safely move large quantities of seedling

plants. If your truck-driver training program could assist, we could efficiently and quickly move the plants when they are ready. Most likely one or two trips per participating college would be ample to handle the deliveries.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I can be reached at Valerie.keener@illinois.gov or 217-725-9620. Thank you so much for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Valerie Keener". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Valerie Keener,
Administrator, Division of Education