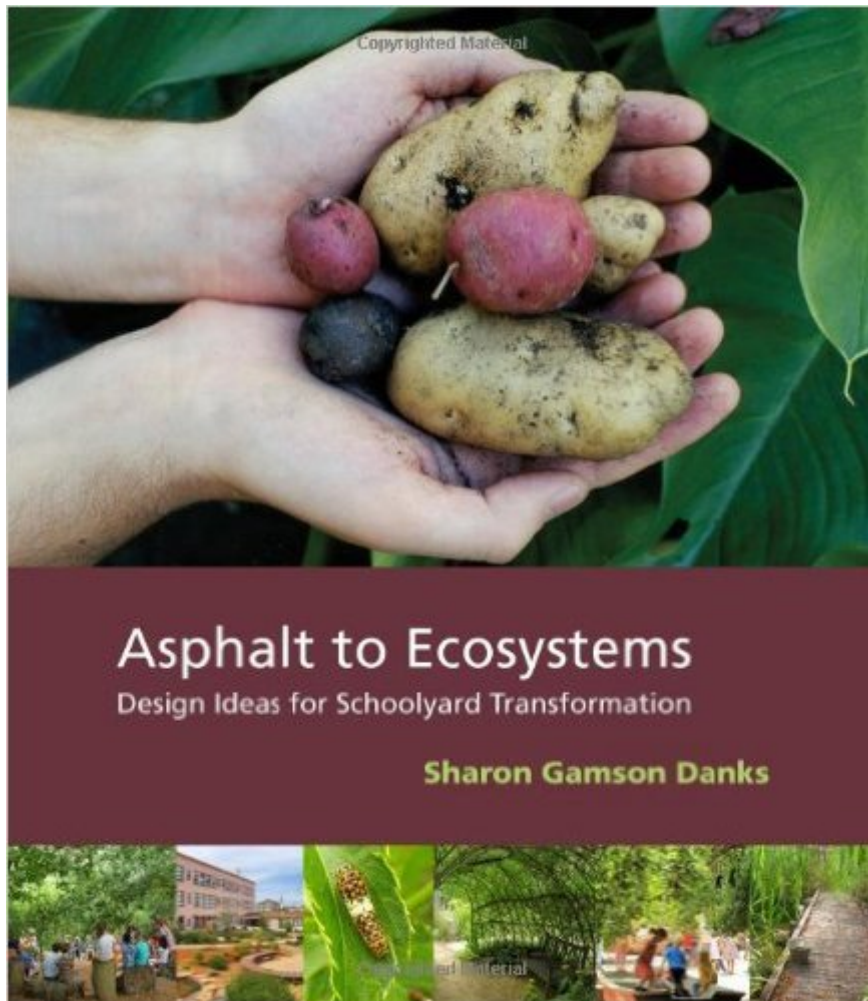


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# Asphalt To Ecosystems: Design Ideas For Schoolyard Transformation



## Synopsis

Asphalt to Ecosystems is a compelling color guidebook for designing and building natural schoolyard environments that enhance childhood learning and play experiences while providing connection with the natural world. Intended for parents, teachers, school administrators, designers, environmentalists, and community volunteers, this book is a fantastic resource that will inspire readers to transform their own school grounds. With this book, Danks broadens our notion of what a well-designed schoolyard should be, taking readers on a journey from traditional, ordinary grassy fields and asphalt, to explore the vibrant and growing movement to "green" school grounds in the United States and around the world. This book documents exciting green schoolyard examples from almost 150 schools in 11 countries, illustrating that a great many things are possible on school grounds when they are envisioned as outdoor classrooms for hands-on learning and play. The book's 500 vivid, color photographs showcase some of the world's most innovative green schoolyards including: edible gardens with fruit trees, vegetables, chickens, honey bees, and outdoor cooking facilities; wildlife habitats with prairie grasses and ponds, or forest and desert ecosystems; schoolyard watershed models, rainwater catchment systems and waste-water treatment wetlands; renewable energy systems that power landscape features, or the whole school; waste-as-a-resource projects that give new life to old materials in beautiful ways; K-12 curriculum connections for a wide range of disciplines from science and math to art and social studies; creative play opportunities that diversify school ground recreational options and encourage children to run, hop, skip, jump, balance, slide, and twirl, as well as explore the natural world first hand.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am a landscape architect and have been involved in transforming many asphalt schoolyards into green, sustainable, diverse community playgrounds in NYC for years. I bought this book because of my interest in environmental education in schoolyards and because it was highly recommended by a friend (and reviewed in Landscape Architecture Magazine). As I read it, I was so inspired by the ideas, elements of different types of ecological schoolyards and how to implement environmental education for schools. Even though I have implemented many similar or the same ideas found in this book, I still found it interesting and thought-provoking. This book is really packed with resources as well for further reading and internet investigation and are also tied to the Asphalt 2 Ecosystems website:[...]I highly recommend this book for all landscape architects, urban planners/designers, teachers, environmental educators, students, school PTA members, community group leaders and anyone interested or involved in children's outdoor environments. It is more than worth the modest price on .com!

Great job documenting a good number of effective looking playgrounds. This is a nice book for the lay person who wishes that their school site was more than turf and asphalt. There are many photos, a strong thesis, and some implementation ideas. I can see the influence of *The Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv, *The Inclusive City* by the firm M.I.G. and, of course Clare Cooper Marcus' many years of work studying healing gardens. My only argument with this book is that after teaching for 35 years and also having earned a certificate in landscape architecture from the author's university, I would have liked to see more curriculum tie-ins to entice teachers to use the space on a regular basis. If a space is not well-used, it is more difficult to get people to take care of it (as volunteers), teachers are swamped with demands on their time, and we all know that schools can't afford enough garden and playground stewards. Furthermore, in the state of California (and perhaps in other states as well) science is not tested till 5th grade and social studies is not tested in the elementary school. So teachers are even less inclined to use spaces where the curricular connections deal primarily with those two subjects. It is sad, but true. Using the many resources in the appendix, one is compelled to explore further and will perhaps find more strategies that will help their particular schools overcome the barriers and make great sites for children. And as the general public becomes more aware of the need for nature and choice out on our playgrounds, perhaps individual schools will take this book to heart and help create a groundswell of change.

This is a gorgeous book, with wonderful practical and inspirational advice for making our children's play environments sustainable and nourishing on every level. It's packed with thoughtful guidance and ideas for ways to enrich children's learning and experience through nature - just outside the window. A must have for every school and community, and for every teacher who looks for ways to open the horizons of their classroom.

If you want to bring the advantages of children being out of doors to learn to your child's school, this is the best book to read. It will give you the tools, and information needed to bring Environmental Stewardship to any city, town or state. Our children need to be outdoors learning how to care for their surroundings. I am so impressed with Ms. Sharon Gamson Danks, I wished I could work for her.

*Asphalt to Ecosystems: Design Ideas for Schoolyard Transformation* provides a fine guidebook for designing and building ecologically diverse schoolyards, then blending nature activities into the areas for K-12. Over 500 color photos packs an illustrated guide for transforming traditional asphalt playgrounds into edible gardens, wildlife habitats and more, using examples from over 150 schools in 11 countries with varying climates. An inspirational, absorbing, unique read for any contemplating the transformation of either an entire schoolyard or a section of ground.

Practical, well researched and well cited guide for campus greening and the creation of outdoor play spaces as well as outdoor classrooms. *Asphalt and Ecosystems* offers beautiful and inspiring examples of school campus transformations that suit all regions, sizes and school needs. (I especially admired Danks inclusion of European outdoor spaces.) In this book you will find inspiration and examples of innovative and transformative spaces as well as how schools and community have designed outdoor spaces for specific needs and curriculum. There is a wonderful resource section and index as well.

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