

MY OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

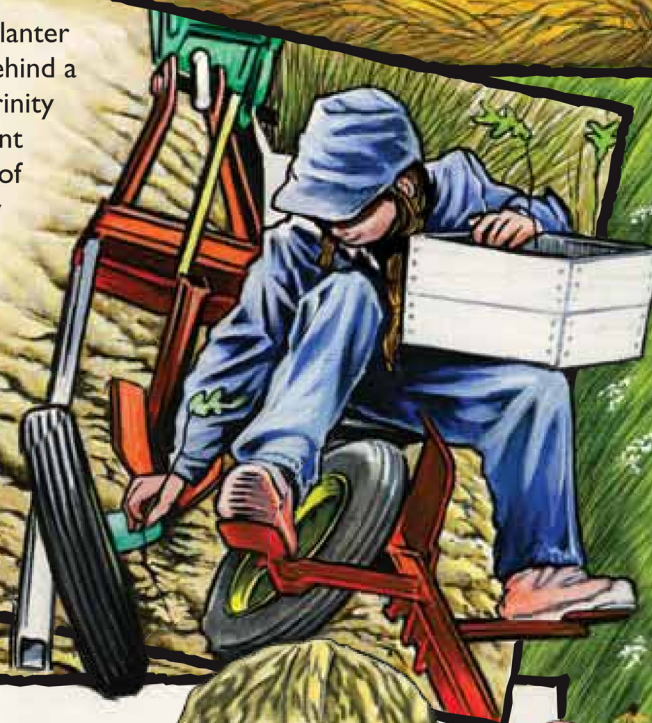
BY TRISTON AND TRINITY
GILBERT, AGES 12 AND 8

"This place needs help," Triston said on the first visit to his family's new farm. Cattle had grazed the woods bare of plants. Everywhere else, a kind of grass called fescue grew so thick no animal could move through it. Erosion had turned the livestock trails into deep ditches, and the pond leaked like the drain on a bathtub. That spring, the Gilbert family sprang to work to turn their beat-up farm into a paradise for wildlife.

They burned the fields and sprayed herbicide over the fescue. Triston used a **hand seeder** to sow wildlife-friendly grasses and wildflowers in the bare soil. He stuck willow cuttings in the ditches, hoping they would take root to stop the erosion.



Using a tree planter pulled behind a tractor, Trinity helped plant thousands of oak, hickory and pecan seedlings.



The kids picked up trash where the farm's former owner had used a ditch for a dump. By summer's end, their efforts were starting to pay off. Rabbits, deer and other wildlife began to return.



The kids were rewarded for their work. Trinity giggered a frog at the pond, and Triston bagged a dove in a field he had planted.

Want to learn how your family can create habitat for wildlife? Visit www.mdc.mo.gov/landwater-care.