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Illinois Farm to School Network News

Northern Illinois Boot Camp Training Announced!

Join us for a FREE half day of learning, hands-on practice and collaboration in a professional demonstration kitchen and learning space. Teams of food service, administration and garden managers are encouraged to register! ISBE Continuing Education Credits are available for food service staff. Morning coffee and catered lunch provided.

May 17, 2019
8:30 AM – 2:30 PM
Northern IL Food Bank
RSVP BY MAY 9

First come first serve! RSVP at:
bit.ly/F2SBootCamp

**BOOT
CAMP**

Local Focus: Illinois Farm to School Taste Test Toolkit

Have you tried utilizing taste tests to introduce your young eaters to new foods? Whether you're new to taste tests or are looking for tips for future tastings, check out our new Harvest of the Month Taste Test Toolkit! It's full of Illinois-specific tasting ideas and tips for incorporating the results into your menu planning.

Explore and download the toolkit [here](#).





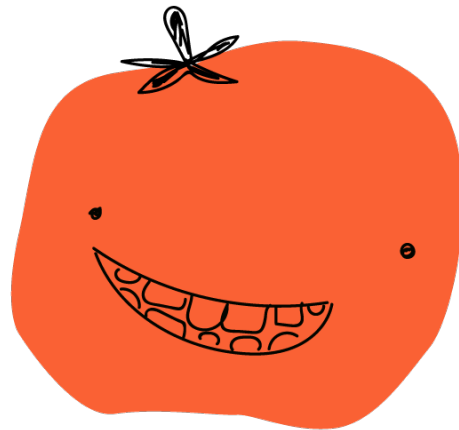
Statewide Map of Illinois Gardens

We've created a statewide map of gardens in Illinois. [Check it out on our website!](#) In addition to our new garden case studies, use this map as a resource to connect to other garden programs across Illinois to help you grow your own.

Don't see your garden on the map? Luckily you can add it! Just follow the link to submit your garden information on the map [page](#).

Food for Thought: It's Spring! Do you have your "Garden" on?

Big Green – Grow the Movement: Plant a Seed Day!
Plant a Seed Day is a national campaign to get students, teachers, and families to take a simple action – plant a seed. To plant a seed is to plant hope, to make an investment in the future, and to show kids that growing healthy, real food is a powerful act. On March 20th, 2019 we're challenging you (yes, YOU!) to grab some seeds and get growing on the first annual Plant a Seed Day.



We're going to plant 1 million seeds across all 50 states and we can't do it without you. We've made celebrating easy at plantaseeday.org.
Get Your Seeds:

No matter your planting prowess, this day is for you! We've gathered a list of incredible seed partners that cater to your unique gardening style. Check them out and [get your seeds](#) today.

Check out #plantaseeday [activities](#) and join the movement!

Resources for Schools & Feeding Sites

Fruit and Veggie Grants are still available

Grant Deadline: Available until funding is depleted.

Eligibility: Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program. Schools with greater than 50% free and reduced eligible enrollment encouraged to apply.

Funding: \$2,500 per school.

The Information: This grant program awards school projects that help kids learn about and eat more fruits and vegetables. The grant is sponsored by Skoop and the Chef Ann Foundation. Learn more [here](#).

Farm to Early Care and Education webinar series resource available

This webinar series is designed for early childhood program staff including food service directors, cook staff, administration, teachers, and family day care home providers, and can also be beneficial for those seeking to support farm to ECE efforts. There are twelve webinars in all. Check out the resource [here](#).

Grow It, Try It, Like It!

Grow It, Try It, Like It! Nutrition Education Kit Featuring MyPlate is a garden-themed nutrition education kit for child care center staff that introduces children to: three fruits – peaches, strawberries, and cantaloupe, and three vegetables – spinach, sweet potatoes, and crookneck squash.

Read about the full resource [here](#).

CAFCP Sponsors Child Nutrition Conference

April 23–25, 2019 | Hyatt Regency Chicago, IL

Learn Listen Do! The 33rd National Conference will be held in Chicago, IL. The National Child and Adult Care Food Program Sponsors Association (NCA) hosts the three day event.

Read more and register [here](#).

News Across the Nation

An inside look at the business of school food service



Growing Up Fresh

The United Fresh Start Foundation recently held FreshStart Tour: Palm Springs Unified School District at FreshStart 2019, providing the produce industry with a behind-the-scenes look at school foodservice operations.

Attendees started the tour in the kitchen, as staff worked feverishly to prepare a school-favorite — pasta with homemade tomato sauce and meatballs. As attendees entered the bakery,

the aroma of cinnamon filled the air as racks of applesauce muffins baked in giant ovens.

All of the district's school meals are served fresh, challenging the staff to prepare and transport the meals efficiently for optimal consumption. Bruce noted the importance of collaborating with the produce industry for greater insights on fresh produce procurement, including info on pricing and markets.

Read more [here](#).

Resources for School Gardens

Carton 2 Carton Contest from Kids Gardening

Grant Deadline: March 25, 2019

Eligibility: Carton 2 Garden is open to all K–12 public and private schools in the United States. Your school does not need a garden to participate. Pre–K classes located at schools serving additional elementary, middle and or high school grade levels may also enter the contest.

Funding: 15 prizes will be awarded a grand prize valued at \$5000.

The Information: Show your students' creativity by repurposing milk and juice cartons from your school cafeteria to enhance your school garden. Educators can engage students in a hands-on experience creating teachable moments on environmental stewardship, sustainable packaging, and healthy living. Read more [here](#).

Free Seeds for Your Learning Garden!!

Seeds for everyone! Every year seed companies across the country gather their seeds from the past year and donate them to school gardens. Through these donations, schools can receive a variety of FREE seeds as well as grow and learn about new and unique varieties! Here are two companies that are ready to donate

seeds to your school! Read more [here](#).

Harvest for Healthy Kids Garden Lessons toolkit

Harvest for Healthy Kids helps children develop healthy eating habits. The program connects young children with fresh food grown close to home through activity kits that teach science, math and literacy. Each kit is developed and tested by teachers and childcare providers, and includes hands-on activities with different fruits and vegetables, colorful picture cards, newsletters for families and background information for adults. All Harvest for Healthy Kids activities are aligned with early learning standards and have been rigorously evaluated.

Access the toolkit [here](#).

Check out Big Green's Video Library [here](#).

Check out more resource [here](#).

Summer Programs at School Gardens and Farms Webinar

SGSO Network Webinar: **March 26, 2019** 1 pm–2pm PST

Looking for ideas to keep your school gardens tended and active during the summer? Are you thinking of new ways to bring garden-based learning to a community garden or farm site? Join us for a webinar on the ins and outs of running kids day camp programs on educational gardens. Erin Jackson, Education Director at Gallatin Valley Farm to School, and Amy Carlson, Garden Education Director at Life Lab, will share their years of experience and resources for creating day camp programs. From promotions to post assessments and everything in between, this hour long webinar will provide you with inspiration and ideas to create or enhance summer programming on your educational garden or farm. This webinar is a part of the School Garden Support Organization (SGSO) Network. Register [here](#).

Garden News Across the Nation

Can't be Beet

Harvest of the Month gets down and dirty with colorful pasta

ENNIS MT

The Harvest of the Month program continued in February at Ennis Schools when fifth graders tackled a complex recipe, making ravioli that left their cutting boards looking something like a murder scene.

But nobody was harmed in the making of Heart Beet Ravioli aside from a few unfortunate root vegetables, which left students' fingers stained pink. The experiment even converted a few sworn beet-haters, said culinary science teacher Jamie Diehl.

Each month, Diehl leads a different class of students in learning about one of Montana's crops and getting their hands dirty—literally, in this case—cooking and eating the bounty that comes from Big Sky Country.

Beets have been cultivated for thousands of years, initially used for animal feed. A member of the same family as Swiss chard and notable for their characteristic dark purple color, their distinct sweet flavor comes from the highest sugar content of any vegetable. But not all beets are purple: some are white or yellow, or even red and white striped like the Chioggia beet, which earned the nickname “candy cane beet.”

Read more [here](#).

Woodland Park students enjoy salad bar with their school-grown produce

WOODLAND PARK NJ

Memorial School 7th and 8th graders who are part of the STRIVE Gifted and Talented Program on Feb. 8 enjoyed pizza and a salad bar which utilized the first cut growths off their Tower Garden, a vertical, aeroponic growing system which enables the growing of up to 20 items in less than three square feet, indoors or out, at a time.

Under the direction of Miss Ament, STRIVE teacher, the students planted seeds to grow bibb lettuce sprouts, rainbow chard, marketmore cucumbers, and bok choy. The lettuces harvested allowed the students to sample the fresh produce that will be utilized in the school cafeteria as it continues to grow and produce.

Read more [here](#).

Resources for Producers

ReGenerate Illinois Summit: Small Grains + Agroforestry + Markets

March 14, 2019 | Bloomington, IL

Join ReGenerate Illinois and our partner organizations for the ReGenerate Illinois Summit: Small Grains + Agroforestry + Markets on Thursday, March 14, from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. at the Epiphany Farms Restaurant in Bloomington, Illinois. Farmers in the Middle Mackinaw Watershed and the IDEA Farm Network are encouraged to come together with value supply chain representatives and invest in a day of conversations and collaboration that look to the future of Illinois sustainable food resources. Low commodity prices are driving many farmers to look for out-of-the-box solutions and crops like oats, wheat, rye, peas, and dry beans can be an excellent addition to an existing production system. Read more and register [here](#).

Good Food Fest 2019

March 22 & 23, 2019 | Chicago, IL

This event is focused on the fast-growing Good Food movement — and we are proud to host the outstanding collection of expert speakers, chefs, farmers, entrepreneurs, investors, buyers, sellers, DIY enthusiasts and consumers who are accelerating the rise of a better food system. Read more and register [here](#).

ILFMA Annual Conference

April 4, 2019 | Allerton Mansion, Monticello, IL

Do you manage or sell at a farmers market? Or maybe you're interested in the local food movement? Then save the date of Thursday, April 4, 2019 for the Illinois Farmers Market Association (ILFMA) annual conference at Allerton Park & Retreat Center in Monticello, Illinois. This full-day conference will be packed with informative and inspiring speakers, 3 educational tracks (Market Managers, Market Vendors, and Market Presentations), targeted break-out sessions at all experience levels, networking opportunities, and a fabulous winter market and vendor fair.

2019 Small Farms Winter Webinar Series

Ongoing through April 4, 2019

The University of Illinois Extension presents a weekly educational series for the small farm community. This series will provide practical knowledge on emerging topics which advance local food production in Illinois. These online presentations will give small farm producers a look at how leading practices in production, management, and marketing enable operations to improve profitability and sustainability. Webinars will be held from noon – 1:00 pm on Thursdays and are free. You can find the complete list of topics and speakers [here](#).

The Land Connection Webinars

Ongoing

Did you know The Land Connection offers a treasure-trove of informational webinars online, and at no cost? Check out the many topics offered from Mastering the Farmers Market to Post-Harvest Handling [here](#).

Producer News

Large to small growers move crops with Farm-to-School movement



VEGETABLE GROWERS NEWS

A national farm-to-school movement represents a growing opportunity for sales for small-to-medium specialty crop growers.

A wide variety of local programs and nonprofit groups use the Farm-to-Table idea or name, and a wide variety of purchases are made. A USDA survey once found that schools purchased nearly \$780 million a year in local

food from farmers, ranchers, fishermen, food processors and manufacturers. The United States Department of Agriculture estimated the expenditures have only risen since the survey was conducted in 2015.

Read more [here](#).

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