



MAY NEWSLETTER

The Zero Waste Schools newsletter will help you get your school on a path toward generating zero waste through waste prevention, recycling, composting, and food recovery. You'll also find resources that connect zero waste to healthy eating, school gardens, and environmental education and action.

Feel free to share the newsletter with friends, colleagues, and students who are interested in zero waste.

[Sign up for ZWS news](#)

Composting is climate action

In celebration of International Compost Awareness Week, composting is the special focus of this edition of ZWS news.

International Compost Awareness Week: May 3–9



It's International Compost Awareness Week (ICAW), the largest and most comprehensive education initiative of the compost industry. The goal of ICAW is to increase public awareness of the benefits of compost and organics recycling.

The theme for this year is *Soil Loves Compost*.

Here are just a few benefits of compost and organics recycling:

- Increased soil health
- Reduced pesticide and chemical use
- Reduction in soil-borne and other plant diseases
- Reduced methane emissions from landfills
- Compost offers a significant answer to climate change mitigation

Click [HERE](#) for ideas on how to celebrate.

Each year, the Composting Council Research and Education Foundation holds a poster contest and selects a winner for ICAW. These beautiful and informative posters are a wonderful way to decorate your walls and educate others about the benefits of composting.

The 2020 ICAW poster (shown above) and posters from previous years are available for [purchase](#). Get a set for your school lunchroom, classroom, or home.

Compost education resources from Kiss the Ground

[The Compost Story](#) (6:46 min. video)

Find out what would happen if we diverted the 60 billion pounds of mineral-rich food materials that go to landfills each year in the U.S. alone and turned them into compost.



[The Soil Story](#) with Pashon Murrery (3:19 min. video)

Pashon Murrery of Detroit narrates this story of soil and how it could save our planet and reverse climate change.

[The Soil Story Curriculum](#)

This 5-lesson curriculum connects composting to soil regeneration and the vital role that soil can have in reversing climate change.

The Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools

Want to start composting at your school?

The **Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools** is loaded with strategies for addressing food waste in K-12 schools, including a section devoted to composting.

Learn about the benefits of composting, the main methods of composting available for schools, and how to start composting at your school.

The Toolkit is a comprehensive resource for reducing school food waste. Here's a rundown of all the sections you will find inside:

- Measuring Food Waste
- Preventing Food Waste
- Food Recovery & Redistribution
- Composting Food Scraps
- Education & Engagement
- Communicating & Celebrating Success



To learn more and download a PDF of the Toolkit, click [HERE](#).

The Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools is a project of the [Wasted Food Action Alliance](#) and was developed by SGA in collaboration with partners from the Wasted Food Action Alliance.

Start composting at home

Eager to try composting while you're stuck at home?

There are a number of ways to compost at home including backyard composting, vermicomposting (composting with worms), and commercial composting.

Learn more with the following resources:

[Composting at Home: An Introduction to the Basics Webinar](#)

Thursday, May 7, 12:00-1:30 p.m. CST

Protect the planet and improve your soil while practicing safe physical distancing. Join this webinar from the Institute for Local Self-Reliance to learn how to



successfully compost at home. This webinar will cover the basics of hot composting outside and vermicomposting inside.

[Home Composting: Its Time Has Come](#)

Find loads of helpful information and resources about composting at home on the Institute for Local Self-Reliance's website.

[Illinois Food Scrap Coalition](#)

- Check out the IFSC's [Composting Food Scraps at Home](#) to learn the basics about food scrap composting and how to get started indoors and outdoors.
- Some cities offer curbside compost pick-up service. Another option is to subscribe to an independent compost hauling service that provides a bucket exchange service weekly or every other week. Visit the IFSC website to find a [commercial compost hauler](#) near you.

We Compost Recognition Program

We Compost is a recognition program of the Illinois Food Scrap Coalition that can promote your school compost program across a broad network. If your school is composting food scraps (either commercially or onsite), become a We Compost partner with the following benefits:



- Trademark We Compost window decal
- Digital We Compost icon for your website
- Your logo and weblink on the We Compost partner category page
- Location pin on We Compost Google map
- Welcome on Instagram and Facebook
- Outreach access to meeting and event planners
- Community newsletter

Click [HERE](#) to learn more and join.

Click [HERE](#) to see a list of schools and institutions that have already joined the We Compost community.

Microplastic Madness

Microplastic Madness is an inspiring feature length documentary not to be missed.

Microplastic Madness "is the story of 56 fifth graders from P.S. 15 in Red Hook, Brooklyn – living on the frontline of the climate crisis – whose actions on plastic pollution morph into extraordinary leadership and scalable victories." The award-winning film was produced by Cafeteria Culture.

Click [HERE](#) to watch the trailer.

TEACHERS are invited to host a remote learning screening throughout May.

- Click [HERE](#) to see options for screening dates and to register.
- Guided questions for grades 3, 4–5, and 6–8 for post-film discussion and writing are available with additional educational resources coming soon.



Curriculum connections for healthy eating & gardening



[Pilot Light](#) connects chefs with teachers to create food-based classroom lessons and also has curriculum and videos for your home enjoyment. Adults and children can make this a time of learning and deeper connection through the act of sharing and preparing food. You can sign up to receive notification of these free resources from Pilot Light each week.

[Big Green](#) has been building school learning gardens to connect kids to real food since 2011. The Learning Garden curriculum focuses on food literacy and real food education for K-8. They are adapting programs and resources in the wake of the widespread school closures to provide what kids, teachers, and caregivers need at this time. You can find out more about the Big Green at Home curriculum by clicking [HERE](#).

Opportunities

[West Cook Wild Ones Native Plant Sale](#)

Order online through **May 23**. Choose from 90 species of native flowering plants, ferns, grasses, and sedges. Plant pick-up is June 6, 10 am-2 pm, from two locations.

[Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant](#)

Projects must emphasize student/youth involvement with planning, development and maintenance and increase the educational and wildlife habitat values of the site. The project must be implemented on school grounds or another public place and use native Illinois plants in their wildlife habitat area.

Eligible Applicants: Teachers, nature center personnel and adults who are youth group leaders (grades pre-kindergarten through 12) in Illinois may apply.

Application Deadline: Nov. 30.

Events



[Composting at Home: An Introduction to the Basics](#)

Thu, May 7, 12-1:30 p.m. CST

By composting at home, you can protect the planet and improve your soil while practicing safe physical distancing. Join this webinar from the Institute or Local Self-Reliance to learn how to successfully compost at home. This webinar will cover the basics of hot composting outside and worm composting or vermicomposting inside.

[Virtual Closed Loop Labs with Plant Chicago](#)

Every Thursday in May, 1-2 p.m.

Plant Chicago will be hosting Virtual Closed Loop Labs for K-12 every Thursday in May. See their upcoming schedule [HERE](#).

Introductory materials, full slide decks, and workshop recordings of past virtual workshops are available [HERE](#).



**PLANT
CHICAGO**

[My Chicago River Day Summer Challenge Kick-off and Litter Free Toolkit Training](#)

Sat, May 9, 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

Join Friends of the Chicago River for a virtual celebration of the 28th annual Chicago River Day. Congressman Mike Quigley (IL-5th) and other elected officials will join Friends' Executive Director Margaret



Frisbie to announce the My Chicago River Day Summer Challenge, where all summer long volunteers will work together, but safely apart, to make the river and our communities litter free.

Creative Solutions in Our Time of Crisis

Wed, May 20, 12-1 p.m. CST

Green Teacher

Join this Green Teacher webinar to hear a panel of environmental educators spanning several contexts — elementary, secondary, college, and non-traditional (parks, nature centers, etc.) — share their stories and adaptive solutions before taking your questions as we work together to persevere through this unprecedented period of interruption.

SGA is participating in the Target Circle Program

You can vote for us and help direct Target's giving to benefit **Seven Generations Ahead** and **Zero Waste Schools**.

Vote by June 30. Every vote counts.
For full program details and restrictions, click [HERE](#).



Do you have feedback for Zero Waste Schools?

Contact us with feedback, recommendations, stories to include, and more at zerowaste@sevengenerationsahead.org.

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