



## APRIL 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](#)

### SGA's webinar makes the case for reusable foodware



SGA's Zero Waste Schools program hosted more than 90 attendees from around the country for its March 16 webinar, "**School cafeterias reimagined: The case for reusable foodware.**"

The webinar was designed to help schools envision how they can create a better dining experience while protecting student health, cutting costs, and reducing waste by switching to reusable foodware. We learned about the potential health hazards of disposable foodware and how two large

urban school districts are making the change.

A [recording](#) of the webinar is available on SGA's YouTube Channel. A [PDF](#) of the presentation contains links to many of the resources mentioned during the webinar.

Click [HERE](#) for a quick recap.

### International Compost Awareness Week

May 2 – 8

**International Compost Awareness Week** is the largest education initiative of the compost industry and is celebrated nationwide with a poster contest, tours of compost facilities, school gardening programs, compost workshops, and more. This year's theme, **Grow, Eat...COMPOST...Repeat**, empowers us to recognize and promote the importance of composting and the use

of compost in growing healthier food, supporting healthier soils and, ultimately, creating a more just and sustainable world.

Join the [Illinois Food Scrap Coalition](#) for a week of lunchtime [webinars](#) to learn about the composting cycle. Be sure to join us on May 4, when Zero Waste Schools will do a presentation on composting in schools.



## National Bike to School Day

May 5



[Registration](#) is now open for [National Bike to School Day](#) and is open to families, neighborhoods, and schools this year to encourage greater participation. For ways to take part during the pandemic, check out this list of [event ideas](#) created specifically for 2021.

Bike to School Day allows participants to enjoy active commuting while building community and school spirit. The event also brings attention to the importance of creating safe routes to school and often leads to lasting positive changes in school and community practices and policies.

While the official Walk & Bike to School Day is on May 5, participation can happen any time in May.

## Growing Deep Roots: The 2021 Illinois Farm to School Institute

[Registration is now open](#) for the virtual Illinois Farm to School Institute happening June 1 - Aug. 15.

This **free, virtual learning event** is open to child feeding, garden, and education sites across Illinois. Participants can discover tools, review resources, and receive training on the topics they need to move their programming forward.

The Institute will share resources, webinars, videos and podcasts on 15 farm to school topics including fundraising, gardening, early childcare planning, season extenders, wasted food, community connections, long-term program planning, and connecting to farms, markets and hubs, and community partners.



## Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2021

On March 25, the [Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2021](#) was officially reintroduced in Congress.

This bill will reduce plastic pollution and reform our broken waste and recycling system by:

- Requiring big corporations to take responsibility for their pollution



- Spurring innovation and incentivizing big corporations to make reusable products and items that can actually be recycled
- Creating a nationwide beverage container refund program
- Reducing and banning certain single-use plastic products that are not recyclable.
- Establishing minimum recycled content requirements for beverage containers, packaging, and food-service products
- Spurring massive investments in U.S. domestic recycling and composting infrastructure

The time is now to [contact your U.S. senators and representative](#) and ask them to co-sponsor the most comprehensive plastic legislation ever introduced in Congress. Current co-sponsors: [House co-sponsors](#), [Senate co-sponsors](#).

[Beyond Plastics](#) offers more information and resources.

Check out the [Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act Fact Sheet](#) to learn more.

## Earth Day is April 22

Celebrate our one and only Earth by attending one of the many events happening around the Chicagoland area. Here are just a few ideas:

### [Earth Day Celebration in McHenry County](#)

(Prairieview Education Center, Crystal Lake, IL)

**April 17, 12-4 pm**

Exhibitors, habitat restoration project, guided hikes, activities, and crafts ongoing throughout the day.

### [Earth Day Celebration](#)

(Forest Preserves of Cook County - LaBagh Woods Picnic Grove #1, Chicago)

**April 22, 12-5 pm**

Staff-led hikes will take place at noon & 4 pm.

### [Community Compost Collection](#)

(University of Illinois Extension & Plant Chicago)

**April 24, 9 am-2 pm**

U of I Extension Cook County and Plant Chicago have teamed up for Earth Week to keep compostables out of the landfill. Households are invited to drop off your yard/garden/kitchen waste to be composted and pick up a bucket of finished compost for your garden.

### [Rotary Great Lakes Watershed Cleanup for Earth Day at Grant Park](#)

(Rotary Club of Chicago Citywide Service - Grant Park, Chicago)

**April 24, 10 am-12 pm**

Rotary Districts around the Great Lakes will conduct cleanup projects. Rotary Club of Chicago will be spending the morning cleaning up the front yard for the City of Chicago, Grant Park.

### [Earth Day Celebration with the BackYard Nature Center](#)

(Forest Preserves of Cook County - Tower Road Boat Launch, Northfield, IL)

**April 24, 9 am-12 pm**

Celebrate with a morning of service, learning, and exploration. Activities include nature play, fishing clinic, guided hike, litter cleanup, monitoring and stewardship exhibits, and a demonstration on how to repurpose buckthorn.

### [Eat the Parks Foraging Walk: Humboldt Park Mother Earth Edition](#)

(Boathouse Cafe in Humboldt Park, Chicago)

**May 8, 10 am & 1 pm tours**

Join Chicago's only full-time professional forager Dave Odd for a walk around the park to see all the wild and wonderful edible plants (and possibly mushrooms too!) that grow right in the heart of the city. Guaranteed to learn about at least 50 edible plants.

**One Earth Film Festival Earth Day Mini Film Fest**

**April 19-25**



Celebrate Earth Day with One Earth Film Festival's **Earth Day Mini Film Fest**. Watch top films and engaging discussions that will help you understand the issues and take concrete action to solve climate change, work toward environmental justice, and other related topics.

Hosted by One Earth Film Festival and the City of Chicago, in partnership with [Rheaply](#).

## April is Citizen Science Month

Citizen science allows the public to be a part of scientific research and helps everyone to make a difference.

- **Volunteer with FrogWatch USA**

Individuals and families are invited to become a FrogWatch USA

volunteer to learn about wetlands in their communities and conserve amphibians by reporting the calls of local frogs and toads. **Virtual training April 23, 6-8 pm**

- **City Nature Challenge** Help document biodiversity in your city as part of the annual City Nature Challenge. Find wildlife, take a picture to document what you've found, and share your observations through the iNaturalist app. **April 30-May 3**

Find more ideas [here](#).



## The 2021 Green Schools Conference

June 28-29



### GREEN SCHOOLS CONFERENCE

This year's virtual **Green Schools Conference** brings together everyone who makes green schools a reality, including the people who lead, operate, build, and teach in schools. Over the two half-days of

programming, featuring keynotes, interactive education sessions, and peer group networking opportunities, participants will strive to make visible, measurable and lasting progress toward the three pillars of green schools: environmental impact, health impact and environmental and sustainability literacy.

The green schools community will come together to share success stories, adaptations, and strategies for continuing to empower our students and create healthy, sustainable places to learn as we navigate the new landscape created by the pandemic.

**Early-bird pricing available through May 14.**

## Chicagoland Environmental Network

Get outside this Earth Day with the **Chicagoland Environmental Network**



**Chicagoland Environmental Network**  
*Where green things happen!*

(CEN). This group of more than 240 environmental and natural resource organizations is a resource for anyone interested in nature or conservation-related activities in northeastern Illinois and surrounding areas. CEN organizations are involved in wetland, prairie, and

watershed projects, in addition to urban gardening, energy conservation, composting, wildlife conservation, and recycling. Their [calendar](#) highlights environmental events and programs sponsored by CEN members that are fun for all ages.

## Grants and other opportunities

### Nominations are open for the Presidential Environmental Youth & Educator Awards

- The [Presidential Environmental Youth Awards](#) recognizes outstanding environmental projects by K-12 youth that promote environmental awareness and encourage community involvement.
- The [Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators](#) recognizes outstanding K-12 teachers who employ innovative approaches to environmental education and use the environment as a context for learning for their students. Teachers will receive a Presidential plaque and an award of up to \$2,500 will be provided to the teacher and their local education agency to fund further environmental education development and programming.

**Deadline Apr. 30.**

### [Science First & College First Programs for Chicago Public School students](#)

The Chicago Botanic Garden's Science First and College First program applications are now open. Science First is a free summer science program for CPS students in grades 6-9 that strives to increase students' knowledge and appreciation of the environment and how scientists study the environment. College First, for current CPS sophomores and juniors, offers a paid internship consisting of career mentorship, field ecology and conservation science, and college prep and assistance. **Deadline Apr. 30.**

## Events



### [Going Green Matters Webinar Series](#)

**Now through the end of April**

Hosted by Go Green Wilmette, these locally-relevant webinars focus on a variety of topics ranging from soil health to gardening to demystifying recycling. Presentations by local experts will be followed by a discussion of how the issues impact us and how we can take action.



### [IOF Youth-led Conversations](#)

**April 14, 6:30 pm**

Youth and adults are invited to join the conversation with Daniela Raik, Conservation International Amazon Rain Forest Protection and Policy Expert, and Suzy Schlosberg, Youth Climate Activist and former Co-Director of the Chicago Youth Alliance for Climate Action. Zoom [link](#) to join the event.



### [Illinois State Board of Education School Wellness Conference](#)

**April 14-15**

Join ISBE for live webinars, recorded trainings, and exhibitor resources. School nutrition professionals, PE teachers, school nurses, school social workers, and others dedicated to student well-being are encouraged to attend. Be sure to look for SGA's ZWS and Farm to School resources at the exhibitor tables.



### [Virtual Lobby Day with Illinois Environmental Council](#)

**April 26**

Join hundreds of environmentalists for Environmental Justice Lobby Day. This year we'll be lobbying not only for the Clean Energy Jobs Act-- which would be the nation's most progressive energy policy-- but for Lead Service Line Replacement and Environmental Justice in Permitting as well. It will take all of our voices joining together in support of CEJA to make sure Springfield hears us. Once you register, you'll be added to a lobby team, and your team guide will

reach out closer to the event with your meeting time.



**Growin' Green Garden Market**

**May 1, 9 am-1 pm, Addison, IL**

Kick off your gardening season at SCARCE. Visit their market for eco-friendly garden supplies and advice to help you grow green! Highlights include organic seedlings, native plants, compost, and rain barrels for purchase, mini-workshops, and craft projects.



**Chicago River Day**

**May 8**

Join Friends of the Chicago River and sign up to help create a [Litter Free Chicago River](#). Individual registration is required.



**Go Green Illinois May Meeting**

**May 11, 1-3 pm**

Attend to learn about waste reduction and diversion efforts in Illinois, with a special focus on food scraps and composting. There will also be an opportunity to hear about the recently-introduced 2021 Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act. Click [here](#) to receive a link to register.

Seven Generations Ahead | [Email](#) | [Website](#)



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**Food:Land:Opportunity**  
Localizing the Chicago Foodshed

