



## 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.

Share the newsletter with friends, colleagues, and students interested in zero waste.

[Sign up for ZWS news](#)

### A meaningful way to support youth-focused sustainability

As Earth Day approaches and the effects of climate change become more immediate, you may be eager to find meaningful ways to help.

One way you can help is by supporting the work of Seven Generations Ahead (SGA).

At SGA, we believe in the power of local action as we've worked to build more sustainable communities throughout Chicagoland and northern Illinois for the past 20 years.



We are particularly committed to **youth-focused sustainability initiatives**:

- [Zero Waste Schools](#) helps students get on a path to zero waste through source reduction, recycling, composting, and food recovery.
- [Farm to School](#) connects kids with sustainably-grown, local food through school gardens, curriculum, and healthy, local meals.
- We're working to develop [onsite solar installations](#) at school districts around Chicagoland.
- [It's Our Future](#) helps youth engage in climate advocacy, from local school board meetings to the international stage at the UN climate conferences.

Everything we do is focused on fighting climate change, strengthening communities, and building a more sustainable future for the generations to come.

Please support this work and [DONATE](#) today.

Thank you!

### School activities for Earth Day

Earth Day is April 22! Celebrate our beautiful planet with

## activities to learn about and reduce waste:

- Clean up your schoolyard or neighborhood with Cafeteria Culture's [Data+Action Litter Clean-Up Activity](#).
- Learn more about the problem of plastic pollution by hosting a screening of the film [Microplastic Madness](#).
- Watch Kiss the Ground's [Compost Story](#) (6:46 min) to learn about the benefits of composting and why keeping food scraps out of the landfill is so important.
- Learn about the problem of food waste and conduct a food waste audit in your own home with SGA's [At-Home Food Waste Activity](#).
- Pack a waste-free lunch from home with SGA's [Turn a Wasteful Lunch into a Zero Waste Lunch](#) poster.
- Use SGA's [Green Locker Cleanout Guide](#) to start planning for less wasteful end to the school year.
- Find out why food waste matters, how it impacts biodiversity, and what you can do to reduce it with the World Wildlife Fund's [Food Waste Warrior Toolkit](#).
- Discover how your school can reduce food waste with the [Food Waste Reduction Toolkit for Illinois Schools](#).
- Create a healthier and more sustainable classroom environment with [Tips for a Healthy, Waste Free Classroom](#).



## Earth Day events around town

### [Community Compost Collection](#)

(Plant Chicago, 4459 S. Marshfield Ave, Chicago)

**April 16, 11 am-3 pm**

Residents can drop off kitchen waste to be composted and pick up a bucket of finished compost.



### [Forest Preserves of Cook County - April Events](#)

There are so many opportunities to get out and explore the natural beauty of Cook County. Check out the April calendar to find out about nature walks, birding adventures, scavenger hunts, and more.

### [Alliance for the Great Lakes Adopt-a- Beach Cleanup Spring Kickoff](#)

Join other volunteers to keep our Great Lakes beaches and shorelines clean. Plan your own cleanup or sign up for an existing one.

### [Celebrate Earth Day by cleaning up and beautifying a Chicago park](#)

**April 23**

Join the Chicago Park District and Friends of the Parks for a citywide parks and preserves clean up. Community groups, Park Advisory Councils, families, and residents are encouraged to come out to their local parks and do their part in celebration of Earth Day.

### [Reuse-a-Palooza](#)

(The Plant, 1400 W. 46th Street, Chicago)

**April 24, 11 am – 3 pm**

Opportunities to repair clothing and household items, safely dispose tricky-to-recycle items, donate books, bicycles, and more, and highlight strategies to reduce waste. There will also be a free film screening in partnership with [One Earth Film Festival](#).

## Food Waste Prevention Week



In collaboration with the City of Chicago, the [Wasted Food Action Alliance](#) is partnering with [Save the Food FL](#) to celebrate **Food Waste Prevention Week, April 4-8**.

The goal of Food Waste Prevention Week is to educate the public about reducing food waste at home, at work, and in their communities to support a healthier environment and help families save money.

Here are a few ways you can get involved:

- **Follow the Wasted Food Action Alliance** on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#). They will be posting daily from April 4-8 to celebrate the event.
- **Create a TikTok** to help spread the word about Food Waste Prevention Week. Specific guidelines and examples for creating your TikTok can be found [HERE](#).
- **Register for various webinars** curated by Save the Food FL to broaden your knowledge about food waste prevention. See their list of webinars [HERE](#).

All of this information and more can be found on the Wasted Food Action Alliance's webpage dedicated to Food Waste Prevention Week. Check it out [HERE](#).

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## International Compost Awareness Week



[International Compost Awareness Week](#) (ICAW), **May 1-7**, 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. ICAW's goal is to work together to raise public awareness on why we should all be recycling our organics and using compost.

This year's theme, *Recipe for Regeneration: Compost*, highlights the importance of regenerative agriculture and how compost and organics recycling fit into this system. Employing regenerative agricultural practices, which includes using compost on crops, leads to healthier, more nutrient-rich food and, ultimately, less carbon in the atmosphere through increased carbon sequestration.

Purchase the 2022 ICAW poster (shown above) [HERE](#).

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## UIC's Landfill Waste Reduction Policy

University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) recently released a [Landfill Waste Reduction Policy](#) that outlines the university's waste reduction objectives and will help them become a Zero Waste Campus by 2050. Their goal is to reduce landfill-bound waste by 90% within that timeframe by reducing single-use plastics, paper, bottled water and decreasing food waste.



Reuse and redistribution of unwanted materials from one department to another reduces purchasing expenses and waste collection costs to the university while reducing greenhouse gas emissions from landfilling materials. Adhering to these guidelines will help UIC close the loop by reducing the amount of waste going to landfills and promoting materials containing recycled content, per the [UIC Climate Commitments](#).

While this plan was created for a higher education institution, many of the ideas also apply to K-12 learning environments, and school districts can use it as a basis for creating their own waste reduction plan.

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## City Nature Challenge



It's almost time for the **City Nature Challenge!** Hosted by Chicago Wilderness, this challenge encourages you to share your observations of wild plants and animals from throughout the Chicago metro region **April 29- May 2** to see how many species you can find and show the world how diverse our region is.

Take a picture to document what you find, then share your observations through the iNaturalist app and they'll automatically be included in the project. Your nature sightings become data that helps scientists better understand and protect nature for all of us.

All observations in the following tri-state counties will count for the challenge: Illinois (Cook, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, Will); Indiana (Jasper, Lake, Newton, Porter); and Wisconsin (Kenosha).

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## Become a TRUE Zero Waste trained professional

Looking to help get your school on a path to zero waste? Then consider becoming a TRUE Advisor. The TRUE Advisor certification gives participants an understanding of what it takes to achieve zero waste, helps them identify and implement zero waste programs and operational improvements, and can also guide buildings through the certification process. The program's roadmap includes action steps for conducting thorough waste audits, right sizing service levels, and developing environmentally preferred purchasing guidelines.

TRUE is partnering with the Center for Green Schools to offer all K-12 school staff and volunteers a **50% discount** on the TRUE Advisor Certificate Program registration.

**Register** using a school email address by May 15 to take advantage of the discount. For additional information, tools, or to schedule a presentation for your school, contact Stephanie Barger, [sbarger@usgbc.org](mailto:sbarger@usgbc.org) or [true@gbci.org](mailto:true@gbci.org).



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## Grants and other opportunities

**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 **Chicago Public School (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.**

**Whole Kids Foundation Salad Bar Grant** Any district or independent school participating in the National School Lunch Program can apply. The grant program donates salad bars to U.S. schools to give kids daily access to fresh fruits and vegetables. **Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.**

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## Events

### **Growin' Green Garden Market**

**Apr. 30, 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.

## 30th Annual Chicago River Day

**May 14, at over 70 locations from Lake County to Calumet**

Join Friends of the Chicago River to help create a Litter Free Chicago River. Advanced registration is requested. Volunteers who register before May 6 will receive a commemorative thank you T-Shirt.

## Earth Month "staff picks"

Support the work of SGA with a good book! Throughout April, purchase (in-store or online) any Nature & Ecology title from our local independent bookstore, [The Book Table](#), and **10% of the proceeds will go to SGA!**



Here are SGA's "staff picks" that you can find at The Book Table:

[All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis](#) edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katherine Wilkinson

[Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African-Americans to the Great Outdoors](#) by Carolyn Finney

[Fair Food: Growing a Healthy, Sustainable Food System for All](#) by Oran B Hesterman

[A Life on Our Planet](#) by David Attenborough

[Braiding Sweetgrass](#) by Robin Wall Kimmerer

[Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet](#) by Frances Moore Lappe

[Animal, Vegetable, Miracle](#) by Barbara Kingsolver

[The Hidden Life of Trees](#) by Peter Wohlleben

[Dry](#) by Neal Shusterman and Jarrod Shusterman (Young Adult)

[We Are Water Protectors](#) by Carole Lindstrom (suggested ages 2-8 years)

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



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