



Composting in Schools

Composting is nature's process of recycling. By composting your organic waste you are returning nutrients back into the soil in order for the cycle of life to continue. There are several types of

composting including backyard (or on-site) composting and vermicomposting (composting with worms).

Did you know?

- 🌍 Organic waste including food scraps, grass clippings, yard waste account for [32% of a schools waste-stream](#).
- 🌍 The average student creates [67 lbs. of lunch waste](#) each school year.
- 🌍 Food and paper easily [biodegrade](#) in nature but not in landfills! That's because [a landfill is not a natural environment](#). Instead, a landfill is more like a tightly sealed storage container. While landfills are not designed to inhibit degradation, they are designed with a liner to protect the environment from harmful contamination. Deprived of air and water, even organic wastes – like paper and grass clippings – degrade very slowly in a landfill and can be “preserved” (samples from [NHC landfill](#) show that 20 year old newspapers are perfectly legible) for many years. The only real decomposition is anaerobic (lacking oxygen) which produces [methane gas](#).

Benefits of School-wide Composting

- 🌍 Provides a hands-on learning experience; compost is part of the 3rd grade NC Standard Course of Study.
- 🌍 Provides cost savings through decreased garbage collection by diverting organic waste.
- 🌍 Provides a soil amendment for school gardening projects or for sale as a fundraiser.
- 🌍 Schools take responsibility for their waste by recycling natural resources.
- 🌍 Instills an environmental ethic, conserves natural resources and builds school community.
- 🌍 Empowers students! Composting gives students a specific action they can take to help the earth.



Composting Resources

[NC Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance](#) Organics Recycling & Composting

Composting set-up

An in-depth [Composting Manual](#) for schools including: Day to Day tasks, how to construct a compost bin, composting activities, etc.

Vermicomposting set-up

[Recycling With Worms in Schools](#) An overview by NC DENR, DPPEA Organic Recycling Specialist

[Worm Away Your Cafeteria Food Scraps](#) NC Cooperative Extension: Water Quality & Waste Management

[Progressive Gardens](#) strives to be a resource for anyone interested in broadening their perspective regarding the human role in Earth and incorporating sustainable practices into their everyday lives.

Educational Component

[Understanding Composting](#) Waste in Place lesson plan for Elementary through 8th grade

Vermicomposting lesson: [What do red worms like to eat?](#)

[Worm Compost Lesson \(pdf\)](#)

[Composting: Why Bother?](#)

[Discovering Composting Organisms](#) Lesson Plan for grades K-3

[What is Biodegradable?](#) Lesson Plan for grades 4-6

[Composting: A Great Rotten Idea](#) Lesson Plan for grades 7-8

[De"compost"ition](#) Lesson plan for grades 9-12

Related Events

[International Compost Awareness Week](#) - May

Compost Sale: Sell your school's compost as a school fundraiser