Living & Moving Green - Support Package

School Compost

Composting has many benefits for schools and for the environment. Students can learn about taking care of their environment while discovering how to turn waste into a rich soil amendment for the garden. Food scraps and other organic materials are transformed into rich humus, also known as the living matter in soil, which can help grow more food. In a landfill these organics decompose anaerobically and that produces methane, a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. Rather than sending organic waste to the landfill, we can compost it to create new life!

There are a variety of ways a school can compost organic materials. If your municipality provides organic waste collection, you could start a school-wide composting program with green bins around the school. However, many municipalities do not pick up organic waste at schools, so a possible solution would be to start a vermicompost system in your classroom, or an outdoor compost system. Composting, and the direct benefits, can be tied into many lesson plans. To name a few: soil; producers, consumers and decomposers; nutrients; animals and habitats; food and life cycles. No matter which method you choose, Green Schools NS has a lot of resources to help you get started.

Action Plan

Educate. Contact your local Waste Reduction Educator at Divert NS (formerly known as RRFB Nova Scotia). Waste Reduction Educators can visit your school and show students how to properly sort waste, including compost, and help you obtaining compost bins and proper signage.

Vermicompost. If you are going to start a vermicompost system you will need worms. Worms, most commonly red wigglers, break down food and turn it into castings, or worm waste, which are a fantastic fertilizer for gardens and potted plants. Vermicomposting worms are easy to maintain, and they can be shipped right to your school. One place to get worms is through Maritime Worm. Plastic Rubbermaid containers make perfect vermicomposting bins with the addition of air holes. You will need to prepare your bin by adding bedding (newspaper, straw or sawdust) before you add your worms. Check out our step-by-step Green Schools NS Vermicomposting Guide to get set up.

Compost pile. If you are building a compost pile in your school yard you do not need worms, but a bin will help contain the compost in one area. You will need to alternate between green and brown materials. For a complete step-by-step guide to creating a compost pile, refer to How to Start a School Composting Program by Green Mountain School.

Signage. Make sure students know what materials are acceptable in in your particular school compost system. You can find printable signs on the Divert NS website or you may want to create your own. You could make signage a fun and creative project for students. Laminate the signs and post them on the compost bins in your classroom or around the school.

A vermicompost bin at École Beaubassin

outdoor compost pile

Resources

Green Schools NS Seed Paper directions
Green Mountain School Compost Guide
Compost Council of Canada School Compost Guide
Royal Botanical Gardens Vermicompost Guide
PBS Kids Vermicomposting Guide
Green for Life Environmental (GFL)

Videos
How worms reduce our waste
Peppa the Pig composts
How to start your own compost outside

Dates
Earth Hour-March
Earth Day-April 22
Canadian Environment Week-June
World Environment Day-June
Organic Week-September
Open Farm Day-September
World Food Day-October
Waste Reduction Week- October