



# POLLINATOR PARTNERSHIP

Protect their lives. Preserve ours.



Integrate Pollinator and Compost Education  
into Your Classroom in the 2025-2026 School Year

Write your first name, city & state, and organization in the chat!



# Celebrating Earth Month and Food Waste Prevention Week

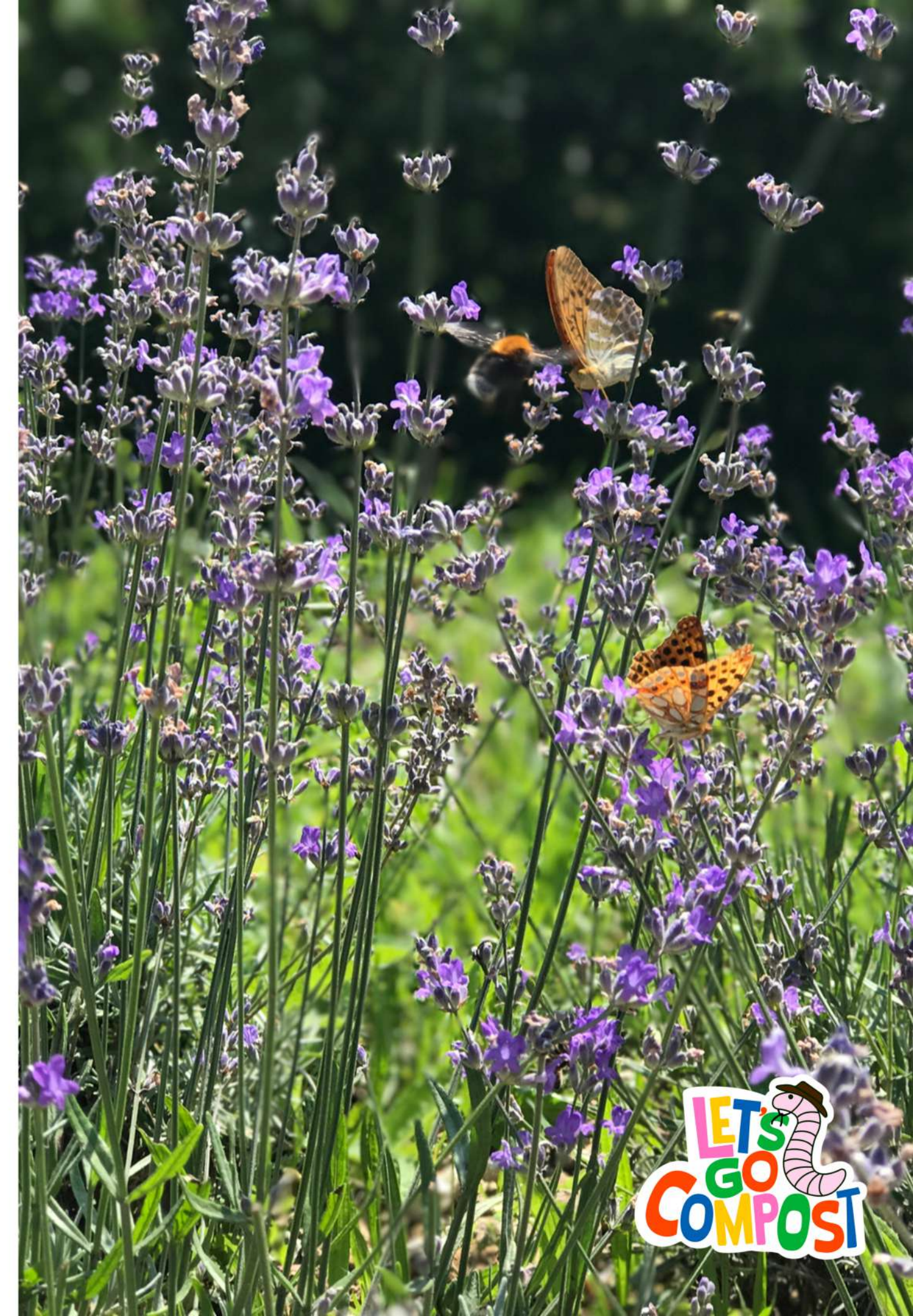
- **Earth Month** (April) is a time to focus on practical solutions for protecting our environment.
- **Food Waste Prevention Week 2025** (April 7–13) and **Earth Day** (April 22) are key opportunities to highlight how composting reduces landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions, while pollinator education strengthens local ecosystems that support food production.
- Additional resources (contests, events, and more) for Food Waste Prevention Week can be found at: [www.foodwastepreventionweek.com](http://www.foodwastepreventionweek.com).





# Connecting Pollinators to Composting

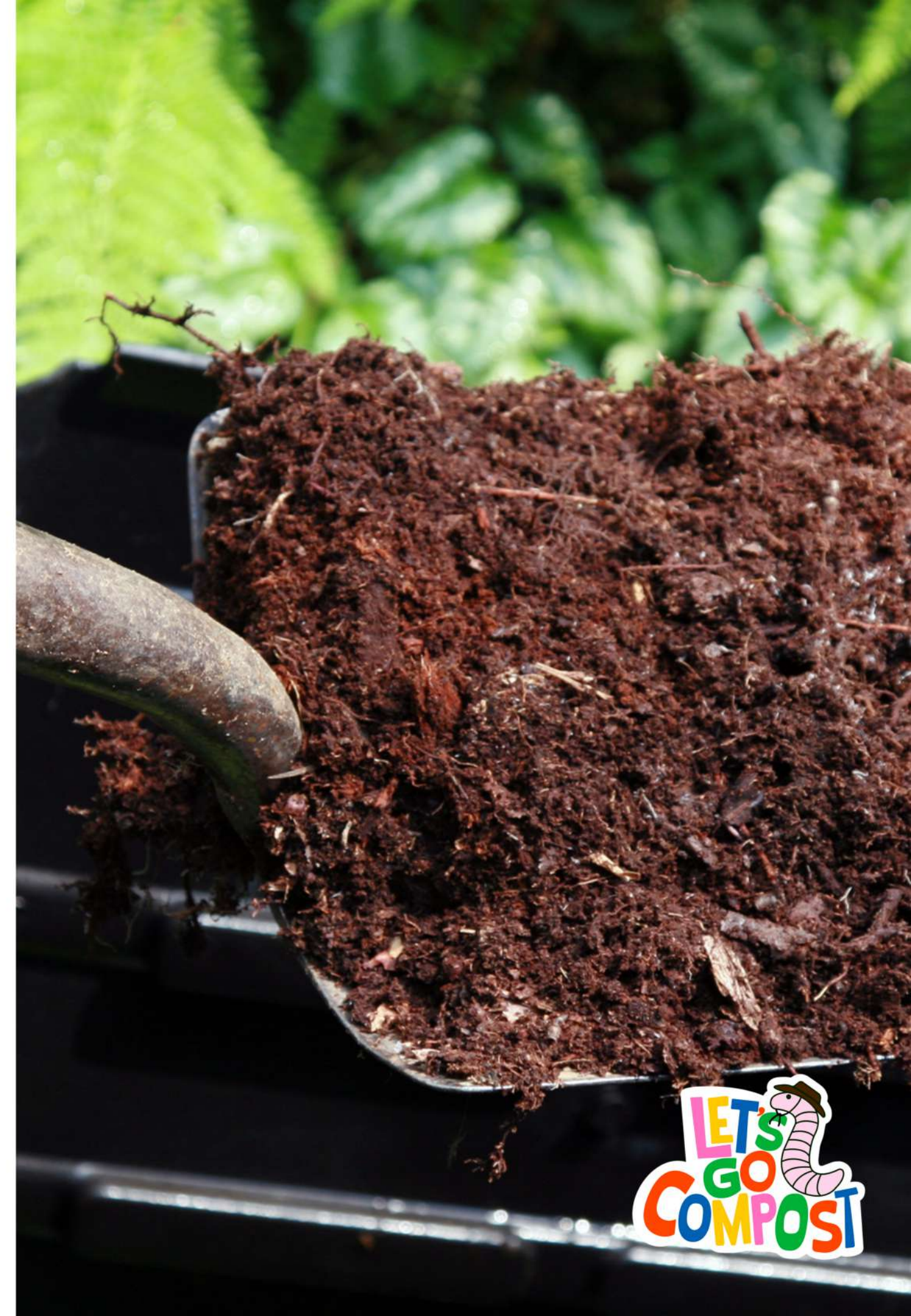
- **Pollinators** like bees, bats, butterflies, and birds support local food systems, ensuring we have fresh fruits and vegetables.
- **Composting** improves soil health, making gardens more productive and resilient.
- When **schools** integrate both pollinator-friendly gardening and composting, they create thriving ecosystems for students to learn from.





# Our Agenda

- First, **Pollinator Partnership** will share their BeeSmart School Garden Kit and Bee Friendly Gardening program.
- Then, **Let's Go Compost** will discuss composting basics and a school composting education program.
- We'll end with a **Q&A session**. Drop your questions in the chat as we go!





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# Meet Let's Go Compost

Let's Go Compost is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit empowering K-12 public schools with the tools, training, and resources to reduce food waste through real-world STEAM/STEM education.

112 Schools, 10 States, 11,000+ Students Impacted

[www.letsgocompost.org](http://www.letsgocompost.org) | @letsgocompost





# What is *composting*?

- **Composting:** A natural process that decomposes organic material into nutrient-rich soil under controlled aerobic conditions.
- **The Benefits:**
  - Diverts organic waste from landfills
  - Reduces greenhouse gases
    - 39–84% lower methane emissions
  - End-use **compost** can be used to enrich soil, promoting plant growth and biodiversity

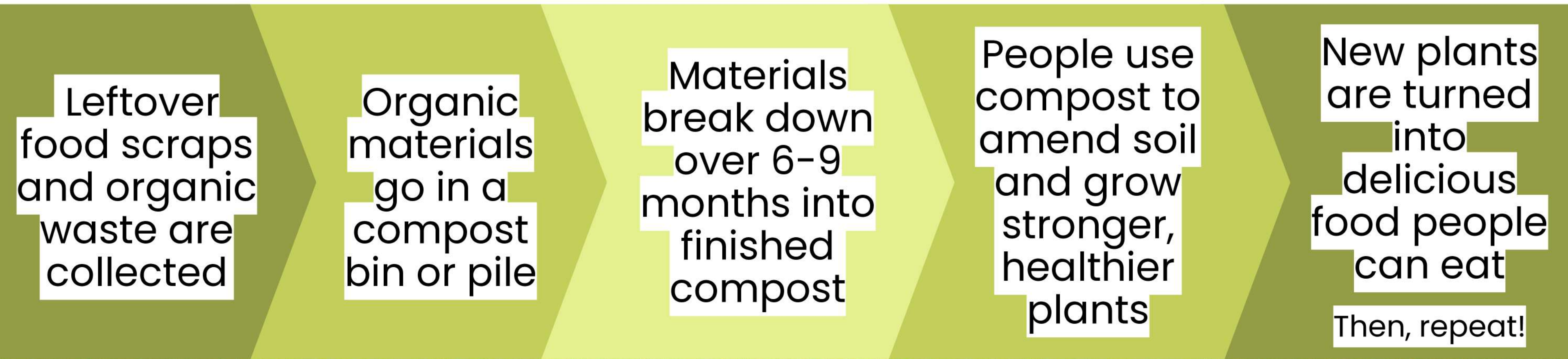
Wasted food makes up 11% of the world's emissions.

Source: <https://www.rts.com/resources/guides/food-waste-america/>





# The Compost Cycle



Closing the Loop: Composting creates a closed-loop system by converting waste into valuable compost, which can then be used for agricultural purposes. This aligns with the principles of a circular economy.



# What Can and Can't Be Composted?

- **Biodegradability:** Compostable materials are typically organic and biodegradable, meaning they can be broken down by microorganisms.
- **Chemical Structure:** Natural materials like food scraps, yard waste, and paper have structures that microorganisms can easily break down. Synthetic materials like plastics and metals are chemically complex and resistant to microbial action.
- **Moisture Content:** Compostable materials typically have adequate moisture, which is necessary for microbial activity.
- **Oxygen Availability:** Aerobic bacteria need oxygen to decompose materials effectively. Non-compostable materials might be too dense or impermeable, preventing oxygen from reaching the microbes.
- **Presence of Toxic Substances:** Some materials contain chemicals or toxins (e.g., treated wood, certain inks, and dyes) that are harmful to the microorganisms responsible for decomposition.

In 2015, the USDA and EPA set a goal to cut America's food waste by 50% by 2030.

Source: <https://www.usda.gov/foodwaste/FAQs>





# Types of Composting

Traditional 3-Bin Style



Compost Tumbler



Worm Compost  
(Vermicompost)



In-Ground  
Compost Bin



Curbside Compost Pick Up  
(Hauler, Farmers, + Industrial)  
Only 3% of Americans have access  
to these programs.



Electric ***Pre***-Composter  
(AKA Food Dehydrator)

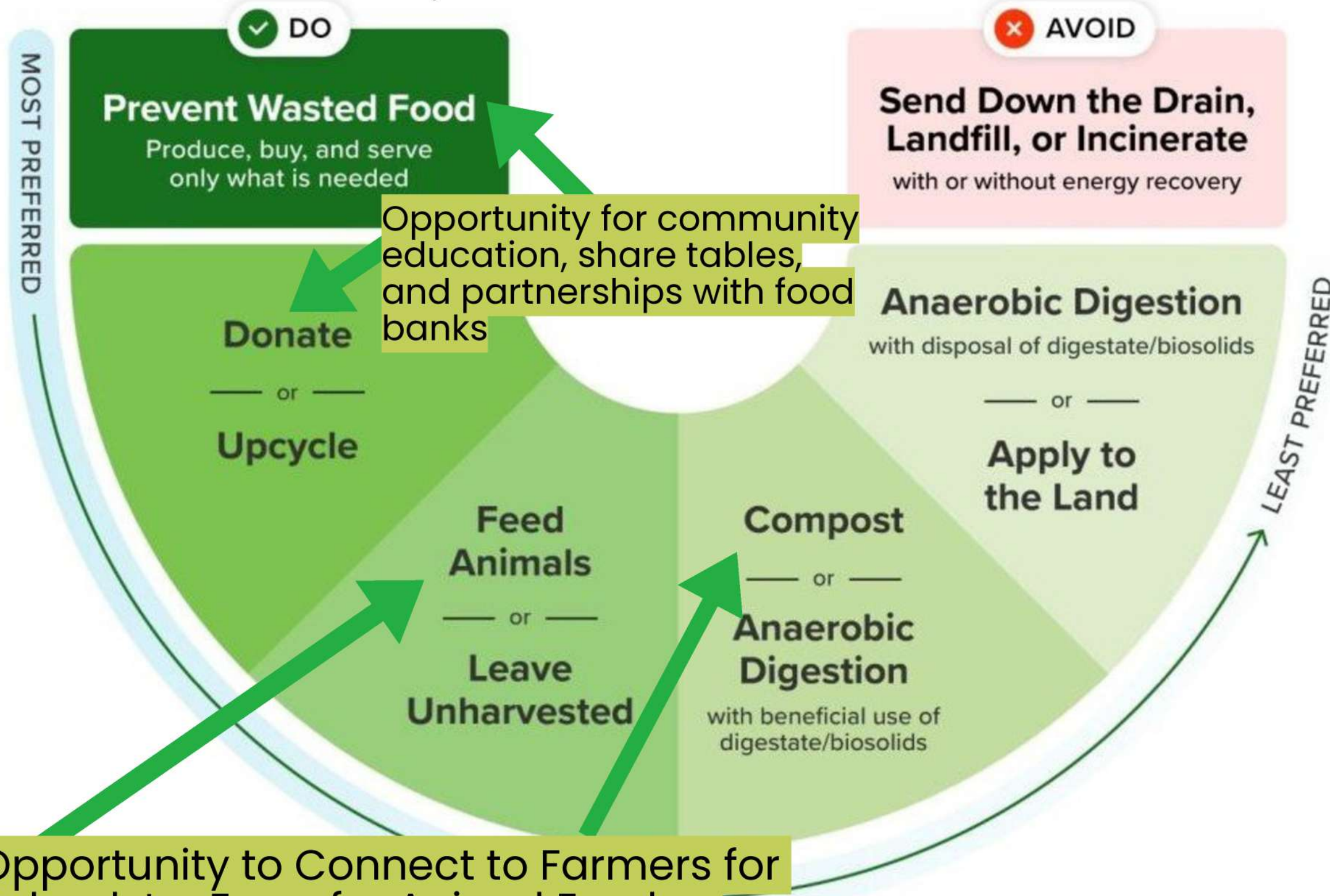
Don't want to compost yourself?  
[Makesoil.org](https://makesoil.org) is a free resource to  
find food scrap drop-off locations  
near you!





# Reduce, Reuse, then Rot

EPA Wasted Food Scale, October 2023



Opportunity for community education, share tables, and partnerships with food banks

Opportunity to Connect to Farmers for School-to-Farm for Animal Feed or Traditional Compost Collection



Each year, 119 billion pounds of food is wasted in the United States. That equates to 130 billion meals.

Source: Feeding America "Food Waste and Food Rescue"





# Compostable Packaging and Cutlery

Many companies are increasing their compostable product offerings, particularly single-use items like straws, cups, cutlery, and silverware. These compostable products are often sold in markets that lack adequate industrial composting infrastructure necessary for proper disposal.

Single-use items labeled as "compostable" will not compost if they end up in landfills or incinerators, contributing to environmental issues rather than mitigating them.

Remember: Reduce your waste, reuse when you can, and *then* rot or recycle.

Many items labeled as "compostable" are made from materials like **bioplastics**, which are derived from plant-based sources. However, these items can only be composted under specific conditions that are typically met in industrial composting facilities. Unfortunately, **these facilities are not available** to most people, and most **public composting systems or home compost bins do not have the capability to effectively break down these materials.**



# Compost Use in Pollinator Gardens

- **Improved Soil Structure:** Compost adds organic matter to the soil, which helps to improve its structure, making it easier for roots to penetrate and allowing for better aeration and drainage.
- **Enhanced Fertility:** Compost is rich in nutrients, which are essential for plant growth and development, ensuring that pollinator-friendly plants have the resources they need to thrive.
- **Better Water Retention:** Compost helps the soil retain moisture, which is crucial, especially in regions with dry spells or during hot weather, ensuring that plants have access to water when they need it.
- **Reduced Reliance on Synthetic Fertilizers:** Using compost can reduce your reliance on synthetic fertilizers, which can be harmful to pollinators and the environment.
- **Revitalizing Degraded Soils:** Compost can revitalize and restore native pollinator habitats that may have been compromised by human activities or agricultural practices.



Research the PH and nutrient needs of your pollinator plants before adding compost into the soil.



# Learn More About Composting



Set Your Initiative Up  
for Success Through  
All-Team Baseline  
Education



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

## Master Composter Online Course

[Register](#)

### Course Overview

In this course, you will gain a deeper understanding of composting - the soils and essential nutrients that make our gardens thrive!

### Course Topics

- Introduction, History & Composting Overview
- Composting Basics
- Composting Methods
- Vermicomposting
- Soils and Compost
- Compost Use & Fertility
- Yard Waste Reduction
- Personal Goals

### Course Format

Self-paced Online Course

### Price

FREE





# Food Waste in K-12 Public Schools

- The average U.S. K-12 student produces **39.2 pounds of food waste** each year – at school alone (9% higher than the average amount each American wastes at home)
- This amounts to to approximately **530,000 tons per year** (with 1.9 million metric tons of greenhouse gasses emitted and 20.9 billion gallons of wasted water)
- At the landfill, the waste then emits an additional estimated **217,500 tons of MTCO<sub>2</sub>e** (methane gas)
- The combined impact of sending school food waste to landfills is equivalent to adding 46,100 vehicles to the road each year!

The concentration of methane in the atmosphere has more than doubled over the past 200 years.

Source: [https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/methane/?intent=121#:~:text=The%20concentration%20of%20methane%20in,\(which%20began%20in%201750\).](https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/methane/?intent=121#:~:text=The%20concentration%20of%20methane%20in,(which%20began%20in%201750).)





# Help Schools Reach Zero Food Waste

1. All **edible food** should first be utilized at a food share table and/or with a food bank.
2. Conduct **research** on preferred composting methods (for education purposes) and offsite hauler options (for bulk collection purposes).
3. Obtain necessary **permissions** and approvals (school, district, and/or municipality).
4. Conduct staff **training** (teachers, janitorial, administration, aides, school garden volunteers) on composting procedures to create buy-in.
5. **Implement** Let's Go Compost's composting lessons and activities in classrooms.
6. **Engage** students in hands-on, small scale composting projects for baseline education to reduce contamination and build internal capacity for larger food waste diversion programs.

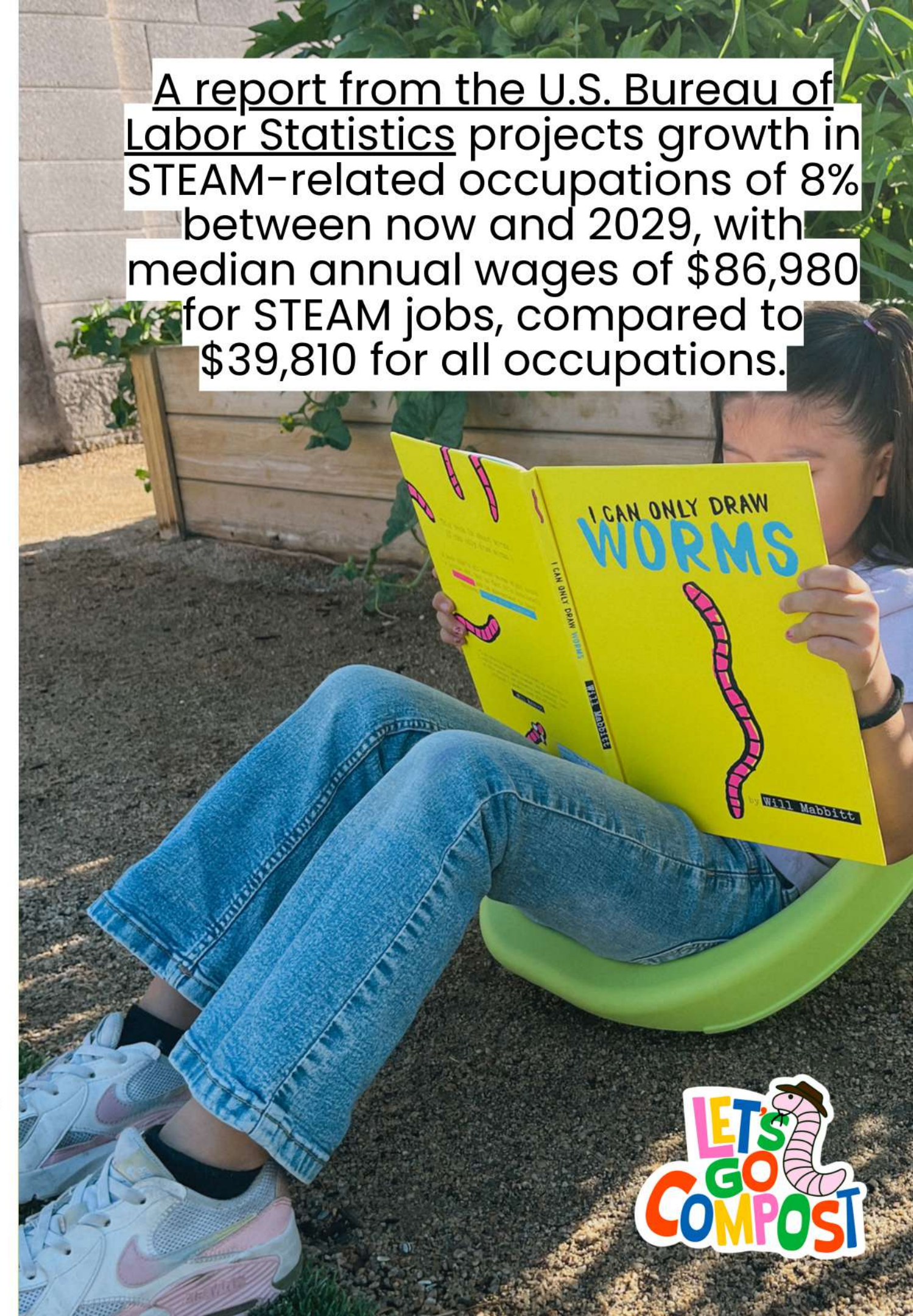




# Let's Go Compost's Youth Programs

- K-12 STEAM Classroom Composting
  - Free K-12 downloadable scaffolding curriculum
    - Integrates indoor vermicomposting into the curriculum
    - Small-scale education to lead up to larger initiatives
    - Set to NGSS standards based on STEAM principles
    - 5 weeks, 1-2 hours/week
    - Includes lesson plans, posters, assessments, and guides to support teachers and parents
  - Annual material donations
    - Worm farms, tumblers, books, & more!
    - Interest list opening in Summer 2025 for 2025-2026 school year
- STEAM Girl Scouts Who Compost Program

A report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects growth in STEAM-related occupations of 8% between now and 2029, with median annual wages of \$86,980 for STEAM jobs, compared to \$39,810 for all occupations.





# Next Steps

- Download our free curriculum at [letsgocompost.org/schools](https://letsgocompost.org/schools)
  - Obtain vermicompost bin and composting worms for next school year
  - Additional funding opportunities, grants, and scholarships posted on our social media platforms and email newsletter



## DOWNLOADABLES



Click below to download our K-12 STEAM Classroom Composting curriculum! Note: This program is free for personal and classroom use only. Redistribution or resale is *strictly prohibited*. Unauthorized use may result in legal action. Let's Go Compost reserves the right to modify or discontinue the program. By using this program, you agree to these terms.

### KINDERGARTEN

[Unit Assessment Tools and Rubric, Lesson-Specific Objectives, and Week 1-5 Teacher Guides, Lesson Overviews, and Worksheets](#)

Presentations: [Week 1](#) | [Week 2](#) | [Week 3](#) | [Week 4](#) | [Week 5](#)

### FIRST GRADE

[Unit Assessment Tools and Rubric, Lesson-Specific Objectives, and Week 1-5 Teacher Guides, Lesson Overviews, and Worksheets](#)

Presentations: [Week 1](#) | [Week 2](#) | [Week 3](#) | [Week 4](#) | [Week 5](#)

### SECOND GRADE

[Unit Assessment Tools and Rubric, Lesson-Specific Objectives, and Week 1-5 Teacher Guides, Lesson Overviews, and Worksheets](#)

Presentations: [Week 1](#) | [Week 2](#) | [Week 3](#) | [Week 4](#) | [Week 5](#)

### THIRD GRADE

[Unit Assessment Tools and Rubric, Lesson-Specific Objectives, and Week 1-5 Teacher Guides, Lesson Overviews, and Worksheets](#)

Presentations: [Week 1](#) | [Week 2](#) | [Week 3](#) | [Week 4](#) | [Week 5](#)

### FOURTH GRADE

[Unit Assessment Tools and Rubric, Lesson-Specific Objectives, and Week 1-5 Teacher Guides, Lesson Overviews, and Worksheets](#)

Presentations: [Week 1](#) | [Week 2](#) | [Week 3](#) | [Week 4](#) | [Week 5](#)

### FIFTH GRADE

[Unit Assessment Tools and Rubric, Lesson-Specific Objectives, and Week 1-5 Teacher Guides, Lesson Overviews, and Worksheets](#)

Presentations: [Week 1](#) | [Week 2](#) | [Week 3](#) | [Week 4](#) | [Week 5](#)

### SIXTH GRADE

[Unit Assessment Tools and Rubric, Lesson-Specific Objectives, and Week 1-5 Teacher Guides, Lesson Overviews, and Worksheets](#)

Presentations: [Week 1](#) | [Week 2](#) | [Week 3](#) | [Week 4](#) | [Week 5](#)



# Start Small, Scale Up

- Using end-use compost for a new tree on campus or native **pollinator** garden
- Conducting a school-wide “green” **assembly**, with each grade focused on one issue (food waste, water, transportation, electricity, etc.)
- **Writing** letters/emails to a local municipality or state office about why being able to compost at their school is important to them
- Conduct a student-led cafeteria waste **audit**
- Launch or grow an **edible food diversion** program with share tables or a local food bank
- Connect with a local composter or hauler for a **bulk cafeteria diversion program**







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Q & A