



“Compost? Never heard of it!”

By: Jesse Kerns

The reasons why some New Yorkers do not compost are as diverse as New Yorkers themselves. Some may not have adequate space or resources, others may find the process inconvenient or unsavory, and others may be unaware of the financial and environmental benefits of composting. Regardless, to increase statewide participation, no single solution exists. Instead, there is a need to establish and implement a range of solutions that strategically target identified roadblocks. These solutions could include legislation, financial support, infrastructure expansion, end use development, and outreach and education.

Yes, you read that correctly, outreach and education. Though some suggest this particular strategy has been done to death, there are New Yorkers who still do not know what composting is. “Who are these people?” you may ask, and that is a great question to be asking. As with all compost initiatives, we need to continually ask ourselves, “Which audiences are not being engaged, and what unique challenges do these audiences face?” The answers to these questions will guide us in the development and use of new tools.

One such tool is International Compost Awareness Week (ICAW). Organized by the Composting Council Research and Education Foundation (CCREF), this annual initiative occurs during the first full week of May in states across the U.S. and countries around the world. The 2017 ICAW will take place from May 7th – May 13th, and is themed “Compost! Healthy Soil, Healthy Food”, which draws attention to the important role compost plays in building and maintaining soil vitality and producing nutritious food.

ICAW is an opportunity for municipalities and local organizations across NYS to engage those who may be vaguely or completely unaware of composting. The week provides a synergistic setting through which to educate about the process of composting, as well as its numerous benefits such as improved soil and water quality, decreased greenhouse gas emissions, decreased fertilizer and pesticide use, and more. For ICAW to be impactful, it is crucial for municipalities to have one or more local champions to help organize and promote the week, and to engage citizens with in-person events that allow for hands-on learning and community building. Some

events to consider include a how-to compost workshop, a compost bin bulk sale, a compost giveaway, a compost facility tour, a tree or community garden planting (using compost), and many more.

For more information and further inspiration, please visit: <http://compostfoundation.org/icaw>. And remember, the more events occurring during ICAW, the greater the buzz will be, and the more success we'll have bringing new audiences to the compost discussion.



Ursula Gutowski's winning poster design for the 2017 ICAW