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Building a Better Future with Compost

International Compost Awareness Week

May 6 – 12, 2018

(Bochum, April 19, 2018) International Compost Awareness Week (ICAW) is the largest and most comprehensive education initiative of the compost industry. It is celebrated nationwide and in other countries each year during the first full week of May. Started in Canada in 1995, ICAW has continued to grow as more people, businesses, municipalities, schools and organizations are recognizing the importance of compost and the long-term benefits from organics recycling.

The goal of the program is to raise the awareness of the public regarding the benefits of using compost to improve or maintain high quality soil, to grow healthy plants, reduce the use of fertilizer and pesticides, improve water quality and protect the environment. The program includes a poster contest in the U.S., programs at schools and activities and events promoted through governments, public municipalities and local businesses. This year, activities span the globe with celebrations planned across the United States, Canada, Europe, Italy, Ireland and Australia.

Throughout the week of ICAW, community and business events are held to encourage and celebrate the recycling of organics. All types of organics recycling – from backyard to large-scale are promoted. Events include tours of compost facilities, school gardening programs, compost workshops, lectures by well-known gardening experts, compost give-away days, to name just a few.

While details vary amongst countries and continents, the following facts and benefits about organics recycling and compost use transcend political and cultural boundaries:

- Soil health and productivity are dependent on organic matter in the form of compost or humus to provide the sustenance for the biological diversity in the soil. Plants depend on this to convert materials into plant-available nutrients and to keep the soil well-aerated. Additional benefits include the reduced need for pesticide usage to ward off soil-borne and other plant diseases.
- Compost offers a significant answer to climate change mitigation. Compost's return to the soil serves as a "carbon bank," helping to store carbon thereby removing it from the atmosphere.

- Methane, a greenhouse gas twenty-five times as powerful as carbon dioxide, can be significantly reduced through the recycling of organics instead of their being landfilled.
- The use of landfill space and incineration can be reduced by at least one-third when organics are recycled. Focused attention on recycling organic residuals is key to achieving high diversion rates.

Globally, we have seen that innovative programs and successful efforts have improved organics recycling and sustainability. Working together to promote ICAW, the international partners are coming together to broaden the understanding of compost use and promote awareness of the recycling of organic residuals.

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