

# PRESS



# RELEASE

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## CELEBRATE NATIONAL AMERICA RECYCLES DAY AND LEARN ABOUT VERMICULTURE (WORM) COMPOSTING IN OUR LOCAL SCHOOLS

November 15 is the annual America Recycles Day – a time to celebrate the good recycling work we all do, and to pledge to do more to reduce, recycle and re-use. For the past year, the non-profit North Coast Resource Conservation & Development Council (NCRC&DC) has been encouraging schools to collect their food scraps and recycle the waste into rich compost for use in school gardens. The NCRC&DC received a small grant from the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency to develop and implement a “Vermiculture Composting in Your School” project in Sonoma County schools.

The NCRC&DC’s vermiculture composting project fosters on-the-ground change plus environmental education with our program to divert school food waste from landfills. Reducing a school’s food waste stream through a campus wide composting program diverts a significant amount of food waste from greenhouse gas-producing landfills, and instead transforms this waste into vermicompost, a useful product beneficial to the planet. Susan Warner, grant manager for the NCRC&DC, points out that “these small grassroots actions can cumulatively make for big changes to conserve landfill space and to reduce or slow climate change.”

The NCRC&DC conservationists include the founder of the Healdsburg-based Compost Club, Rick Kaye, who developed this important waste recycling program. Kaye and other NCRC&DC conservationists visit the schools and provide a fun, and engaging environmental education module that strives to teach students the importance of sustainable practices related to waste handling. At seven schools in Sonoma County over the past year, the NCRC&DC has also provided the schools with technical and monetary support while installing an on-site vermiculture composting system (worm bin composter) to reduce the school’s food waste stream. The concept is simple, and builds upon the Compost Club’s model for waste reduction. “I was struck by the amount of organic waste generated by a school that then required disposal,” Kaye noted. “Organic waste generated in public institutions often has no place to go except ‘away.’ The first school I worked with to start a vermiculture program quickly diverted a half ton of food scraps from the landfill, while creating a rich soil amendment for the school garden and fundraising purposes. It was a win-win for both the school and all of us interested in reducing our waste footprint on the planet.”

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Over the years, the Compost Club has been educating and installing worm bin systems at schools, businesses, and institutions. More than thirty five sites now engage in daily recycling of food and organic waste using the Club's simple approach. The NCRC&DC has supported the Club, which is now merging into the NCRC&DC's ongoing program of resource conservation. The NCRC&DC will continue to expand the use of vermiculture composting as a natural and effective waste handling process. The organization encourages schools to apply to their waiting list ([ncrcandd@sonic.net](mailto:ncrcandd@sonic.net)), and join in being change-makers for waste reduction in Sonoma County, as well as Marin, Mendocino, and Lake Counties.

On November 15, celebrate America Recycles Day and add composting of your food scraps as a daily activity. Building a worm composter bin is a great Do-It-Yourself project ([www.compostclub.org](http://www.compostclub.org)), and especially fun for the whole family. Although you can buy elaborate worm composting systems, generally less is more when it comes to worms (and recycling). A simple container is all you really need, along with newspaper/cardboard, soil media, starter worms, and a little care. Worms can eat their weight in food scraps each day, but it takes a while to reach that level of efficiency—new bins need a break-in period before the worms become truly wizards of waste. In the meantime, don't overfeed. The rich worm casting compost produced in your bin will be a perfect addition to your garden.

Full information on vermiculture composting can be found at [www.compostclub.org](http://www.compostclub.org). Funding for this work has been provided by the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, the Sunrise Rotary Club, and individual donors. The NCRC&DC is a local 501(c)3 non-profit organization working in Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino, and Lake Counties. The NCRC&DC's overall goal is to protect water, soil, and air resources while enhancing sustainable communities. The NCRC&DC works to protect pollinator habitat, conserve water with "Rain Catchers in Your School," reduce wastes going to landfills by vermiculture composting in schools and other facilities, promote new and expanding small agricultural entrepreneurship, and encourage use of biochar for improving soil health.

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