Edition # 33
March 2026

NEWAYGO COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION

NCEC NEWS

The Environmental Resource Hub for Newaygo County

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The Newaygo County Environmental Coalition aims to foster an educated, active, and collaborative community dedicated to protecting, respecting, and promoting a sustainable natural world.

March NCEC & Ally Events

Growing Together: Homegrown Garden Gathering

Saturday 3/14
1 pm - 4 pm
True North Community Services
6308 S Warner Ave, Fremont

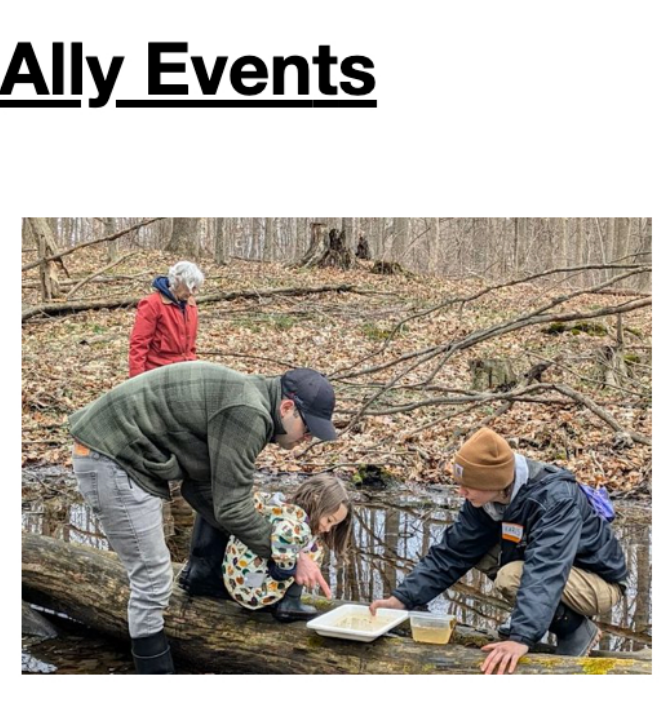
At this FREE event you will learn about:

🌼 Winter Seed Sowing for Garden Vegetables & Native Pollinator Plants
🥕 Starting your vegetable seeds in "Seed Blocks
♻️ Home Composting to enrich your Garden Soil
🌱 Microgreens for indoor winter nutrition
🧑‍🌾 Safe growing & harvesting practices for your vegetables & fruits
.....and much more!

Make It & Take It Home with YOU:

- A Milk Jug Greenhouse with seeds ready to grow!
- A Seed Soil Block with seeds ready to grow!

Free Registration



Discover the Wonders of Newaygo County's Vernal Pools

Saturday 3/28
1 pm - 4 pm

Kropscott Farm & Environmental Center
6523 W Baseline Rd, Fremont

This is an all-ages friendly event. Tickets are limited to 20 total, so please register ahead.

Join NCEC to explore Vernal Pools - temporary wetlands that shelter amphibians, insects, and emerging native plants. We will start in the classroom for an hour presentation that explains what a vernal pool is, why they matter, and a bit about the MI Vernal Pool Patrol and how you can get involved in mapping and monitoring vernal pools.

If the weather is agreeable, we will explore the vernal pools located in the forest on the Kropscott Farm and Environmental Center's grounds. Dress for hiking.

You can contact Katie with any questions..

Free Registration

March Habitat Workday

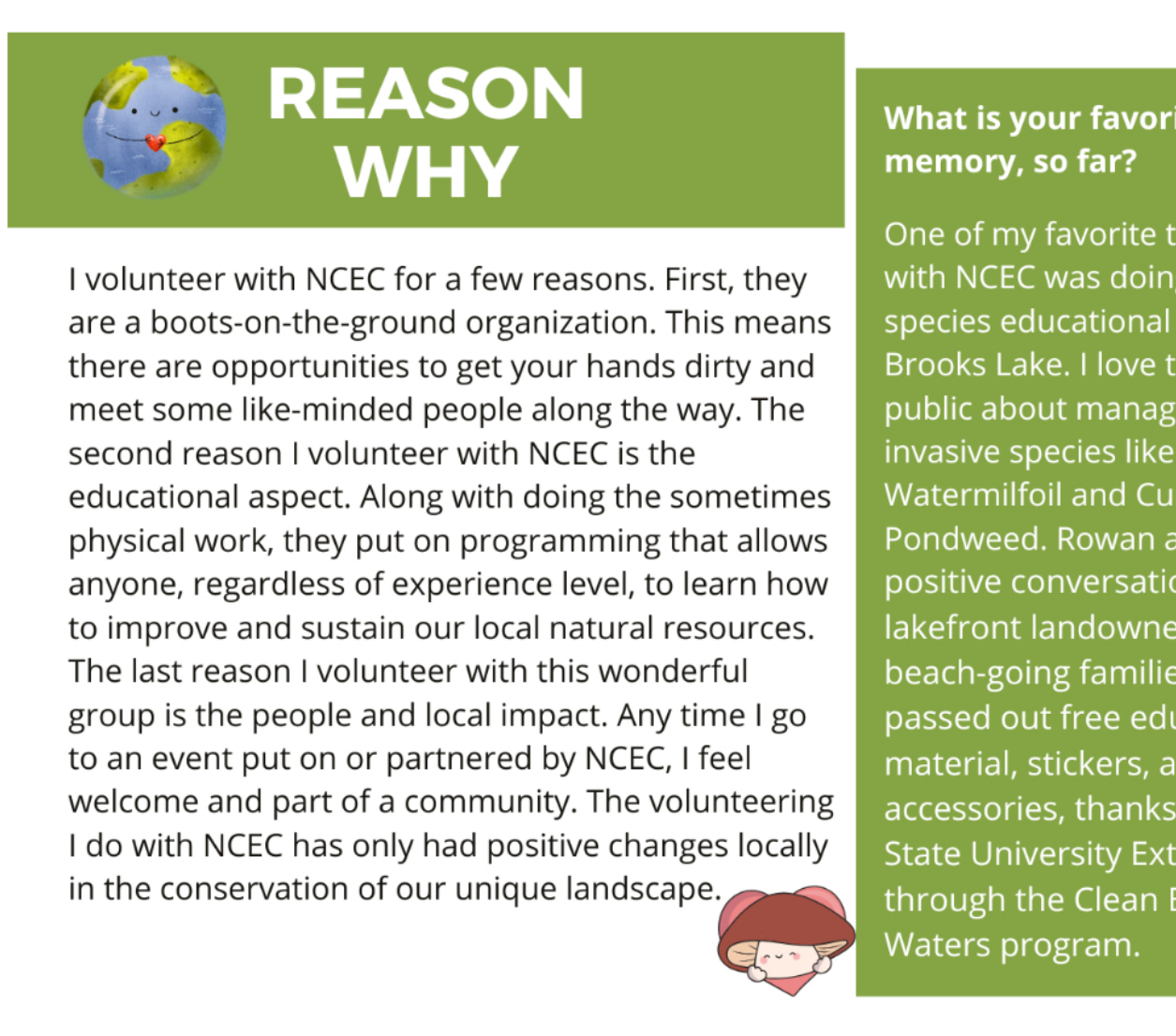
Inaugural Stewardship Workday at Bigelow Creek Nature Sanctuary (and Free Food!)

Saturday 3/7, 10 am - 1 pm

Bigelow Creek is the newest property in Brooks Township under MNA's stewardship! Join us in the field for a property tour, free hot food, and a moment of recognition for the land during this inaugural TLC workday. We'll also be doing some tree and brush thinning, and brush pile burning if conditions allow! Wear weather appropriate clothing and loppers if you have some.

How to get there: From Newaygo & Croton: Take Croton Drive to Barberry Ave and turn North, then West on 58th. From White Cloud and Hardy: Take 40th st to Poplar and turn South, then West on 58th. **We will be parked on the North side of the road, East of Outaway Dr.**

If the event is canceled due to weather, an email announcement will be sent and you can also check the NCEC web calendar for cancelation updates.



NCEC VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: JEN BURFIELD

REASON WHY

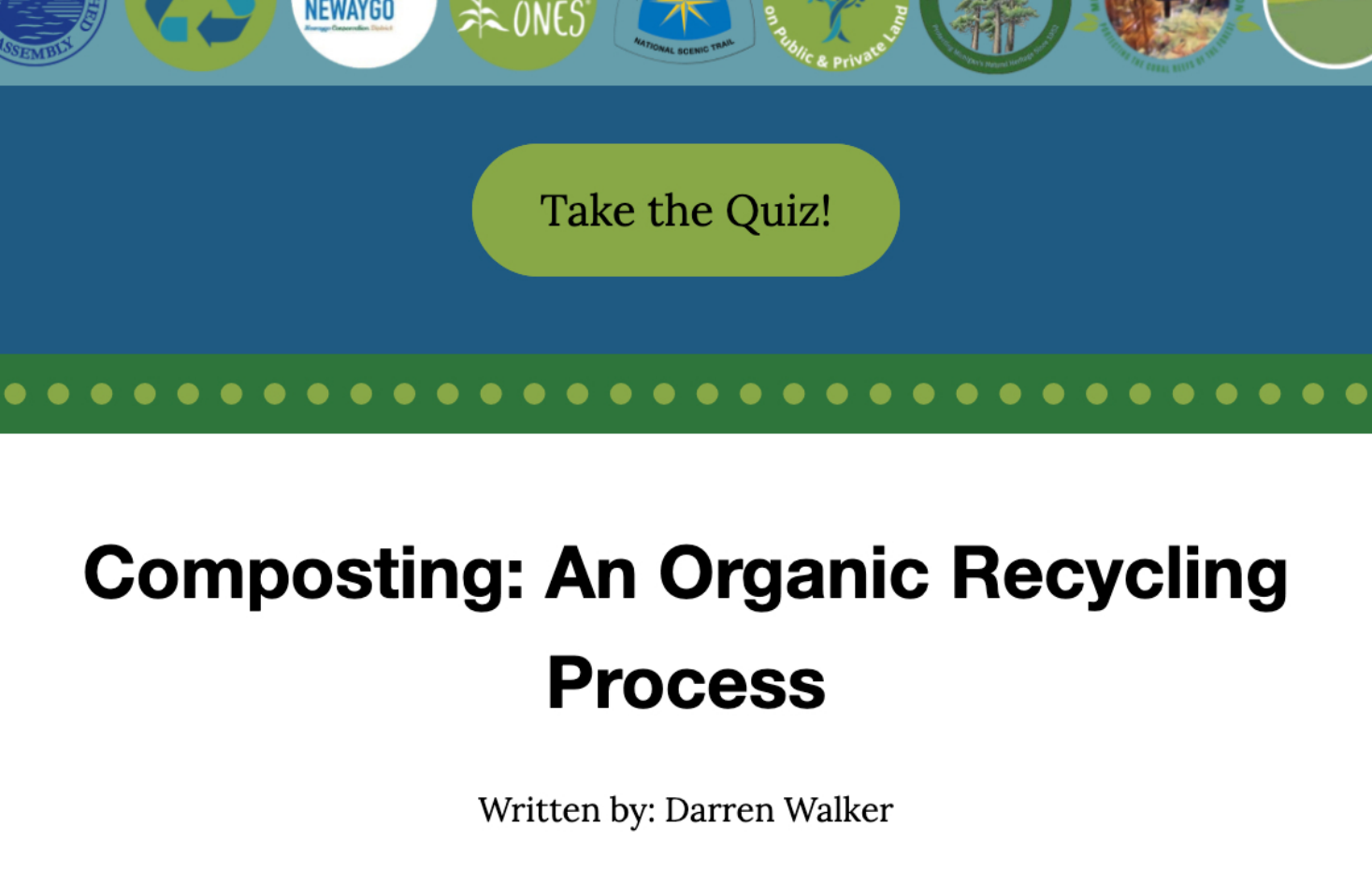
I volunteer with NCEC for a few reasons. First, they are a boots-on-the-ground organization. This means there are opportunities to get your hands dirty and meet some like-minded people along the way. The second reason I volunteer with NCEC is the educational aspect. Along with doing the sometimes physical work, they put on programming that allows anyone, regardless of experience level, to learn how to improve and sustain our local natural resources. The last reason I volunteer with this wonderful group is the people and local impact. Any time I go to an event put on or partnered by NCEC, I feel welcome and part of a community. The volunteering I do with NCEC has only had positive changes locally in the conservation of our unique landscape.

What is your favorite volunteer memory, so far?

One of my favorite times volunteering with NCEC was doing aquatic invasive species educational outreach on Brooks Lake. I love talking to the public about managing aquatic invasive species like Eurasian Watermilfoil and Curly Leaf Pondweed. Rowan and I had positive conversations with the lakefront landowners, boaters, and beach-going families. We also passed out free educational material, stickers, and boating accessories, thanks to a Michigan State University Extension grant through the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program.

Take A Quiz to Find Your Fit!

Maybe you've thought about trying to get more involved in local environmental efforts, but you feel too busy, or aren't sure where to start or what way of getting involved would work best for you. 2026 is your year! Its time to harness that spring energy and reach out to one group to see how your passions align with our environment's needs. This short, 7-question quiz will guide you to the NCEC Team or ally organization best suited to your interests, schedule, and volunteer style. At the end you'll be presented with your recommended team, and be given a few options of next steps you can take to make 2026 the year you connect more with the nature around you.



What's Your Environmental Team?

Take our fun, 7-question quiz for a recommendation of which environmental group you should connect with this year based on your interests!

2 Which is your biggest priority for how to spend your time and energy this year?
Connecting more with nature and spending more time outside
Meeting new people, making friends, and building community
Protecting the environment and helping build sustainable futures
Gaining new knowledge and skills

Show all
MUSKEGON RIVER WATERSHED ASSEMBLY
Reduce Reuse Recycle
NEWAYGO
WILD ONES
NORTH COUNTRY NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL
Healthy Habitats on Public & Private Land
MICHIGAN NATURE ASSOCIATION
MI VERNAL POOL PATROL

Take the Quiz!

Composting: An Organic Recycling Process

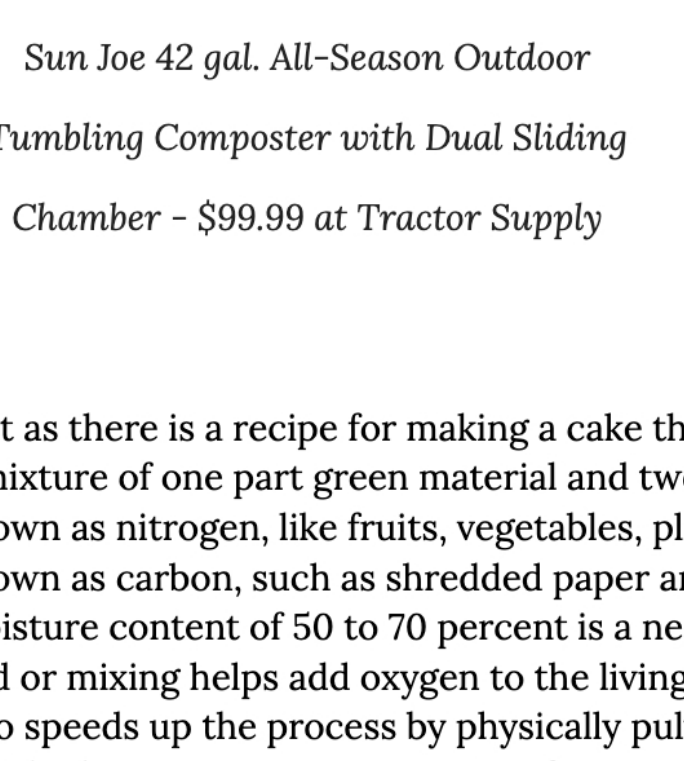
Written by: Darren Walker

Many people have heard of composting, but not everyone knows just how powerful it can be. Compost in its simplest description is organic material that has gone through a decomposition process. This process is called composting. It creates an amazing soil amendment that is packed full of bacteria, fungi, minerals and nutrients that naturally feed your soil and plants. Compost promotes healthy plant growth, both above and below the soil. It suppresses pest and provides disease resistance. Applying compost helps in retaining water and improving clay and sandy soil structures. By using compost you are getting carbon back into the soil where plants can uptake it and use it for building their leaves, stems and roots.

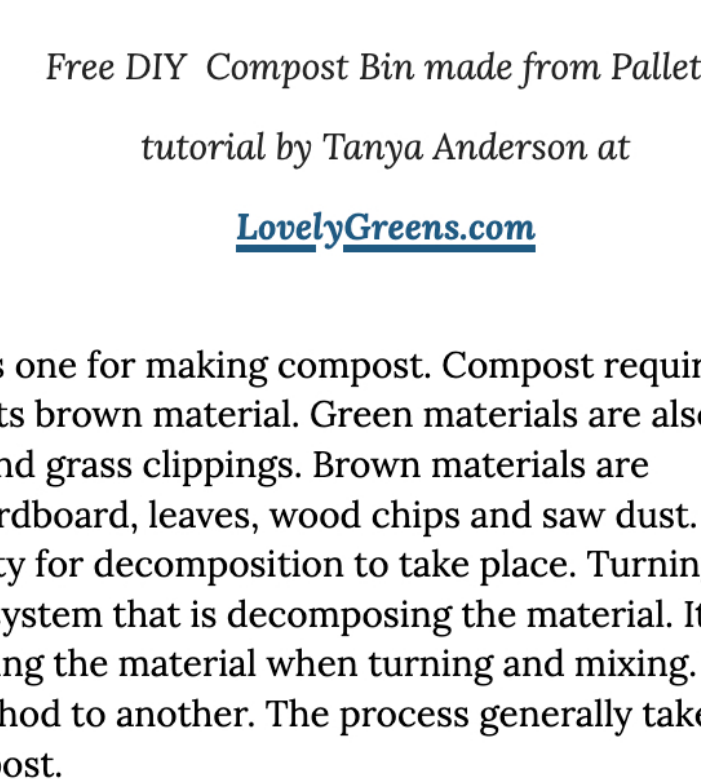
Composting has been around for over 4000 years. It is one of the oldest recycling practices in human history. Early farmers noticed that that adding dead plant matter and animal manure to the soil made their crops flourish. Chinese texts and Egyptian tomb writings, describe spreading decomposed organic matter on fields. Even the Hebrew Bible and Greek and Roman writings also mention compost like soil enrichment practices.

Why should we compost? I believe composting just makes sense. Organic waste, which is food and yard waste, makes up 30 to 35 percent of what we throw away in our landfills, only to generate methane, a greenhouse gas. By removing organics from the landfill, you not only get rid of the methane but you increase the life and longevity of the landfill. Compost can be used to regenerate the lifeless soils that have been over tilled and chemically treated with pesticides and herbicides. By using compost you are adding nutrients naturally. Compost retains water, so less irrigation is needed. Most of all compost closes the food loop by turning waste in to new soil to grow more food.

Many think that composting is complicated, stinky, and lots of work. Based upon your space and amount of organic waste, there are a multitude of ways to easily compost your organic waste. Compost tumblers, bins and backyard piles are amongst the most popular methods of composting.



Sun Joe 42 gal. All-Season Outdoor Tumbling Composter with Dual Sliding Chamber - $99.99 at Tractor Supply



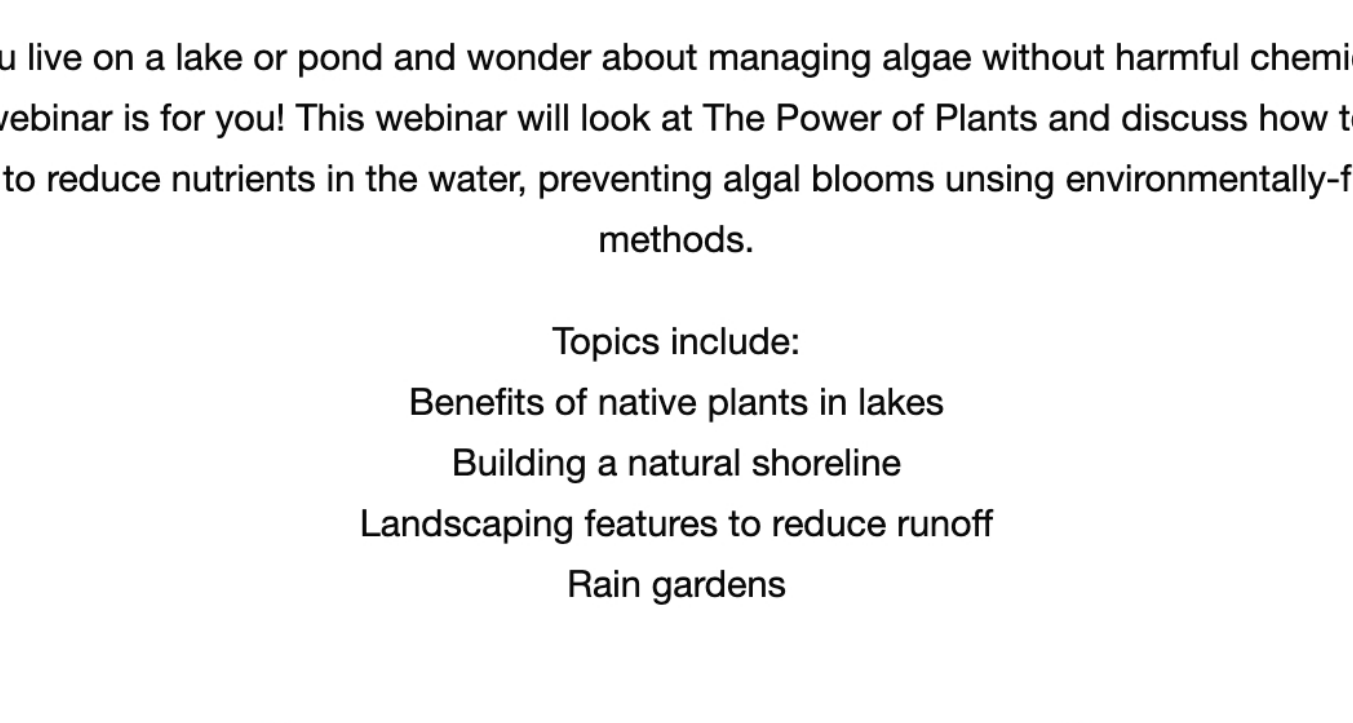
Free DIY Compost Bin made from Pallets, tutorial by Tanya Anderson at LovelyGreens.com

Just as there is a recipe for making a cake there is one for making compost. Compost requires a mixture of one part green material and two parts brown material. Green materials are also known as nitrogen, like fruits, vegetables, plant and grass clippings. Brown materials are known as carbon, such as shredded paper and cardboard, leaves, wood chips and saw dust. A moisture content of 50 to 70 percent is a necessity for decomposition to take place. Turning and or mixing helps add oxygen to the living ecosystem that is decomposing the material. It also speeds up the process by physically pulverizing the material when turning and mixing. Finished compost may vary in time from one method to another. The process generally takes 3 months to a year to become fully finished compost.

Many people have taken to vermicomposting. This process uses composting worms to recycle organic waste. Composting with worms can be done on a small scale such as a bin in the kitchen closet or outside in large worm bins. The worms eat the bacteria, fungi and other soil microbes that are breaking down the waste and then create a super charged compost that is known as "worm castings." Or worm poop. Some also call it "Black Gold" because castings are one of the most effective and valuable natural fertilizers.

In 2021, I started a worm farm called Healthy Plant, LLC. My goal was to create the best nutrient rich worm castings to sell to all types of gardeners and growers, farmers and businesses. I purchased 6000 red wiggler composting worms and began. As my worm population grew, so did their appetite. As I was researching what the best foods were to feed them. I read about the amount of food waste all around the U.S. and was astonished. Our landfills are filling up faster than expected while pouring methane into the atmosphere. Our soil has been over tilled, the top soil is depleting, and heavily sprayed with herbicides and pesticides. I saw food waste everywhere I went, including in my own kitchen. I made the decision to use food waste collected from local schools, camps, grocery stores, restaurants and multiple businesses within our community. Tree and landscaped companies drop off wood chips and fall leaves to mix with the food waste. Students from the camps and schools have been engaging in field trips that inform, educate and incite them in the world of worms, compost and waste. Last year Healthy Plant LLC collected over 120,000 lbs. of food waste from our community, fed it to over 4 million worms and turned it all into a usable, sensible, sustainable product.

Free Webinar on Managing Harmful Algal Blooms in Inland Waters!



If you live on a lake or pond and wonder about managing algae without harmful chemicals, this webinar is for you! This webinar will look at The Power of Plants and discuss how to use plants to reduce nutrients in the water, preventing algal blooms unsing environmentally-friendly methods.

Topics include:
Benefits of native plants in lakes
Building a natural shoreline
Landscaping features to reduce runoff
Rain gardens

More Information and Registration

What Else Can I Do?

1. Share our website, posts, and E-news with Newaygo Community members and Organizations.

2. Join a Team! NCEC has teams about invasive species, native landscapes, ad restoration opportunities. More info on our website.

3. Bring your skills and knowledge to NCEC. Contact us if you have ideas of skills or offerings you'd like to bring to our community in partnership with NCEC.

4. If you work with another local organization doing similar work to protect our environment, your organization can become an NCEC Ally. It's free, and your organization can apply here.

5. Click here to Donate!

Your Support Makes A Difference

NCEC is a small but mighty 501c3 non-profit organization! We depend on your tax deductible donations to continue our work, and to help us grow with our Newaygo County Environment needs.

Donate

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