

INTERNATIONAL COMPOST AWARENESS WEEK

HOW TO CELEBRATE MANUAL

Presented by



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Welcome!

Introduction to ICAW

“Compost!” is the message that will be spreading globally during International Compost Awareness Week, the first full week of May. Celebrated annually, the week is designed to promote the benefits of composting and compost for effective resource management, soil health and plant growth. Thanks to a combined partnership between the UK Composting Council, Composting Council of Canada and U.S. Composting Council, millions of people across Europe, Canada and the U.S. will be introduced to ***The Possibilities are Endless...Compost!*** This rallying cry is the perfect backdrop for your company, municipality or facility to engage customers and employees in activities that will encourage and celebrate composting.

For assistance in planning your events, refer to the **“Compost Week”** section on the USCC web site at <http://www.compostingcouncil.org>. Simply select “How To Celebrate Compost Awareness Week.” Refer to the site often to find out what’s going on in your area and for event tools such as sample press releases and proclamations and for successful promotions in past years that will help you plan your own campaign. If you’re interested in sponsoring this year’s National poster, please contact the USCC office at 631-737-4931. Each Council member will receive a complimentary poster. Additional posters will be available for \$5.00 each to cover printing and postage.

Throughout the week, community events will be held to encourage and celebrate composting. All types of composting – from “do it yourself” composting in your backyard to large-scale community-wide composting – will be promoted. The importance of the use of compost for strong, healthy soil and plant growth will also be strongly emphasized. Communities, local environmental groups as well as composting facilities and private companies organize local events to promote composting to their area. Backyard composting distribution programs, tours of compost facilities, school gardening programs are just some of the many activities that have been spearheaded as part of the week’s programs. For a list of events for you to consider, refer to page 6, “Community Outreach” for suggestions.

In many communities, the public has little knowledge about how compost can benefit them – their soil quality, their plants and their environment. Reaching out to communities across the nation is one way to build bridges between government and citizens. It also gives private and public organizations the opportunity to talk with their neighbors.

No matter how you're involved in composting, ICAW is a great way for you to focus on your customers and partners. By planning activities with businesses and government agencies in your local and regional area ICAW, you will help to broaden the understanding of compost use and promote grass roots awareness of composting. As you plan your ICAW celebration(s), we encourage you to make expanded media coverage an integral part of your complete plan. If the American public is to understand who the U.S. Composting Council is and what compost can do for them, all of us need to tell our stories. We need to make sure our neighbors understand our contributions to the community, the environment and to the nation. We need to tell people about our innovative programs and our successful efforts to improve community sustainability by promoting the use of renewable resources in landscaping, horticulture and agriculture. Most of all, we need to put a face to composting.

International Compost Awareness Week also offers us a great opportunity to educate young people about organics recycling – those individuals who will someday be the catalysts for future recycling efforts world-wide.

This manual has been developed for you. Whether or not you have celebrated ICAW in the past, read through this information. We hope you find some new inspiration and new direction in planning your ICAW events – the possibilities are endless!

-- Wayne King, EARTH Products
Chair, International Compost Awareness Week

-- Teri Sorg-McManamon, BioCycle
Co-Chair, International Compost Awareness Week

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Tips for ICAW Event Success

The ICAW Committee is made up of individuals who have a passion for composting. Most of us have planned and celebrated their own ICAW activities over the years. We're here to assist you in any way we can. Here is a list of steps that you can take to ensure a successful ICAW campaign:

- Begin planning now. The earlier the better.
- Read through the ideas in this manual.
- Form a committee, establish tasks and create a timeline of steps to take. Many ideas are simple but need to be scheduled far in advance of the week.
- Brainstorm activities and events and discuss the logistics of each.
- Designate an ICAW point of contact for your company, organization or municipality.
- Appoint a media outreach person or committee, and get them started on publicity.
- Contact local businesses (also see the "Partners" section) and see how they can participate in your plans.
- Order your ICAW posters ASAP, using the form on the USCC web site.
- Keep in touch with the USCC. Fill out the ICAW Event Form on the USCC web site. Doing so will inform us of your planned activities and ensure that your events are listed on the USCC event calendar on our web site.
- Let others know about the week. Emailing to customers and business partners letting them know what you're up to for ICAW is a great way to build the excitement and momentum of planning your activities. (You may even get some sponsorships that way!)
- Provide the USCC with your contact information (email, fax and phone numbers) so we can keep in touch with any updates.

Partnerships

International Compost Awareness Week is an opportunity to build new partnerships with both public and private enterprise. Increasing the awareness of the benefits of compost will increase the success of your business or program. By contacting associations, community organizations and private corporations you can mobilize these groups and work in cooperation and create or strengthen any existing relationships. To obtain a high level of participation, consider collaborating with any or all of the following groups when planning ICAW activities. (Planning meetings and discussions among your team can ensure that you won't leave anyone out.)

Regional/Local

- Commercial Composters
- Master Composters
- Construction Companies
- County and regional extension professionals
- Chapters of landscape architects, nursery associations, recycling organizations
- Businesses in the "green industry" – garden centers, nurseries, landscape and lawn care companies and golf courses
- Farmers and farming organizations (e.g. Farm Bureau)
- Grocery Stores
- Civic groups
- Coffeehouses
- Colleges and Universities (and students)
- Public elementary and secondary schools
- Businesses (and customers) who can display posters or sponsor your events
- Youth groups (Girls Scouts, Boy Scouts, Future Farmers of America (FFA), 4-H Clubs – any group who would care about environmental programs in their community.)

Side Note: – With the close proximity of Earth Day to ICAW, there may be opportunities for piggy backing ICAW activities to compliment Earth Day. Also, be aware of potential conflicts and competing activities between the two events. We will pass along suggestions, as they arise, for combining ICAW and Earth Day activities to the benefit of both of these important programs.

Community Outreach – Examples of ICAW Celebrations

- Participate in the National Poster Campaign through the USCC by becoming a sponsor. Use this as the anchor to other ICAW activities you plan.
- Hand deliver the official ICAW poster to local businesses as a thank you for their efforts in recycling and composting
- Hold an open house at your facility, compost application site or company
- Offer tours of your facility, company, etc.
- Hold a backyard compost bin promotion
- Conduct a tree planting project or ceremony using compost
- Hold a compost workshop or course
- Sponsor an informal lecture or talk by a well known gardening expert
- Participate in a local “Environmental Expo” or Water Festival with an educational booth – inform visitors about how to compost at home, what materials can be composted, the many benefits of using compost in the garden and where compost can be purchased
- Develop a compost site demonstration
- Sponsor a book signing and compost discussion at your local bookstore
- Distribute news releases and PSAs to local media (see page 8)
- Hold a “Buy One – Get One Free” promotion with local dealers and landscape supply stores
- Plan a Compost Give Away Day
- Offer free deliveries of bulk compost during ICAW
- Unveil a special program, dedicate a new building or draw attention to the special work you do by placing an advertisement in the local newspaper
- Speak Out! Many Chambers of Commerce have monthly meetings and invite businesses to give a “2-minute commercial” for upcoming events and activities. Check out other civic groups (Rotary Int’l, Kiwanis, etc.) for similar opportunities and schedule a presentation during ICAW.
- Hold a poster-drawing contest at a school -- students draw pictures showing compost utilization. Tie it into a class visit where compost is discussed and use a pizza lunch or gift to the class as an award incentive.

Awards

Many companies and municipalities have existing awards programs for their employees – if you do, consider incorporating your annual awards ceremony during ICAW. What better time to recognize a “Job Well Done” than during ICAW activities when publicity is high. Use this to your advantage and recognize outstanding individual employees, teams of employees or programs.

- Employee recognition – present each employee with a certificate “For a Job Well Done.”
- Volunteer recognition – thank publicly those who contribute to the success of your composting program

Proclamations

Requesting a proclamation from your mayor, city council, governor or other official is a simple way to bring attention to ICAW and to ensure that elected officials are aware of its existence. A proclamation draft is available for your use on the USCC web site.

- Send a letter with the draft proclamation to the official(s) you are requesting it from. Include any plans you have to commemorate the week.
- Arrange for the proclamation to be signed or presented during a public event – a city council meeting, etc.
- Send a photo of the presentation to your local newspaper(s).
- Provide a small gift to city council members (i.e. planted flower or coffee mug or item with your logo and ICAW theme.)

NOTE: International Compost Awareness Week is usually held the first full week of May. See the “Future ICAW Dates” on page 12. You may want to consider sending a draft proclamation for all future ICAW dates so the proclamations will be given in advance.

Considering Special Invitations

Depending on how you decide to celebrate ICAW, you may want to consider inviting prominent individuals in the community to attend the activity. Inviting a federal, state or local legislator, governor, or mayor, for example, not only provides publicity for your event (most newspapers will cover the attendance of these individuals at an event) but also demonstrates to them the interest in composting that many of their constituents have. Although this may not influence policy directly, it may give additional weight to your comments and input about composting and organics recycling issues in the future. It may also be helpful if your organization is involved in a campaign related to composting that involves legislation.

Some other possibilities include the deans of local universities or other prominent university figures, or school principals, especially if there is a composting program at campus dining facilities. The participation of prominent business leaders might also increase the public and media interest in your activities.

Create a special invitation that gives details of the event/activity and explains why you would like the individual to attend. You might provide an opportunity for he or she to speak briefly about why they have come or why they have an interest in composting. Request an RSVP so that you can make appropriate plans if the invitation is accepted. Include in your invitation the benefits that your invited guests will receive from participating – visibility, support for recycling and the environment, a green “get your hands dirty” image.

Media Outreach – Creating Publicity Materials

Publicizing your ICAW activities may be the most important work you do to ensure a successful week. Take advantage of as many media outlets that you can think of to reach the widest audience possible, making them aware of your events and activities and reminding them of the place, day(s), and time it is taking place. To boost turnout, review your advertising budget and list all the publicity options that are available in your area. (It's important to have printed material available as soon as possible for your use.)

By using the ICAW theme in publicity material throughout the year you will build recognition of the slogan so when you start publicizing specific ICAW events they are more likely to register with the reader. The theme is usually announced in the fall which gives you more than six months to use the slogan in materials. (PROP sample attached.)

Consider the following methods of publicity:

- **Public service announcements**

Radio and television stations will often devote airtime to a community calendar or announcements about local events that are open to the public. To have your ICAW activity included in these listings, you should create a PSA. This is a short sound bite that covers the 5W's: who, what, when, where and why. The first line should give the date on which the PSA expires (the date(s) of your activities) and request that the announcement be read on or before that date. The announcement should be as brief as possible, giving the details necessary to inform people about the time and place of the event and how to get there. You might also mention any primary sponsors or speaker (if applicable) to attract listener interest. Simply sending a PSA is not a guarantee that the station will use it. When possible, direct your materials to an individual at the station with whom you have a working relationship with – remember that this can be the start of a working relationship as well for future ICAW. Follow up with a phone call.

Note: Consider incorporating PSAs and news releases throughout the year around composting and compost use issues (not just ICAW). Use ICAW as a *tool* to get local media companies to run these informative PSA and news releases.

- **Flyers**

Easy on the budget and informative, posting flyers in area businesses, library or other public kiosks; inserting a flyer in invoices to customers or mailing to a list you're maintaining is a great way to let people know what you're planning for ICAW. Prominently display a flyer in your own reception area or common bulletin board.

- **Press releases**

The ICAW Committee of the USCC will send out press releases and advertisements to national media outlets for broader coverage of International Compost Awareness Week, however you should plan to send releases to local outlets incorporating your specific activity/event information. Consider sending along a copy of the "Compost Trivia" fact sheet with your releases or an "Information Sheet" – both are currently on the USCC web site. Media outlets can pickup and use the information at their discretion.

Faxing or mailing press releases to newsletters, newspapers, local radio and television stations is a standard way of disseminating information to all forms of media. These media receive many press releases each month, so it's important that you follow the correct style and also be attractive and interesting.

If your initial press release does not result in media coverage, you might consider sending or dropping off the entire media packet. You can also submit an editorial or column to the garden or environmental editor in advance of ICAW to start the buzz about the topic of composting in your community.

NOTE: Be aware of deadlines for submissions, since they vary from source to source and are usually well in advance of publication. Adding these deadlines to the task list and timeline may be helpful. Call ahead to find out what the deadlines and requirements are.

Guidelines for ICAW Press Releases

Most contacts receive hundreds of press releases every week. Unfortunately, they cannot guarantee to run any particular item, but a few simple procedures can help ensure that your release gets to the right editors and increase your chances of getting coverage.

In general, a good press release is a concise, complete description of an upcoming news event; a timely report of an event that has just occurred; notification of important personnel or procedural changes in an organization; or other news or feature tips.

For anyone writing an ICAW press release – follow this easy format:

- Keep releases short.
- Double-space.
- Write clearly, addressing who, what, where, why and when in the first two paragraphs.
- Identify the organization or individual sending the release and include the name and daytime phone number (with area code) of someone we can contact if we have questions.
- Date the release and include whether the material is for immediate use or for release at a later date.
- If you send materials to more than one section/department simultaneously, attach a note telling the contacts which sections/departments you are sending the press release to. This will assist any editors in preventing duplication.
- If the release is longer than one page, type "more" at the bottom of each page and identify following pages with either the subject of the release or the name of your organization.
- Type "end" or "###" at the bottom of the last page.
- **Media packets**

If you already have a media packet for your company, facility or organization's use throughout the year, be sure to add your ICAW press release to it along with any ICAW materials you're creating.

A media packet is simply a packet of information available to media outlets when they follow-up on a press release and want more information. Include contact information for your in-house spokesperson for ICAW to answer additional questions.

Incorporate these items within your Media Packets:

- a company profile
- products and services
- program(s) outline
- articles that have been published on your behalf
- composting fact sheets
- photos

- **Advertisements**

Local newspapers usually provide the least expensive advertising. Wide distribution and large readership ensures that your ad will reach as many people as possible. Advertising can be a large expense, so it's worthwhile to contact local media to see if they would donate free advertising for your ICAW events. Many papers now have "GO" sections which list a calendar of events – and write-ups about current "happenings" in the area. You could inquire about free advertising when you send out press releases. Ask about a non-profit discount if that's applicable to your situation. If discounts or free ads are not an option, be sure to review your budget carefully and use advertising that is most cost-effective. Another option is to contact a billboard company and see if they have available "free" space or non-profit rates.

- **Displays**

A public library, school, mall or other public place may provide a display case or bulletin board for a month-long display about ICAW. The focus of the display should be a specific issue related to composting and your activities should be "advertised" as an opportunity to learn more about it. These kinds of displays are great for publicity because they appear in places where people have the time to browse and read more than just the five W's of International Compost Awareness Week activities that you're offering.

- **Web sites**

Take advantage of your own web site by listing your planned activities and inviting visitors to attend. Also consider contacting town and city webmasters and ask them to post a link to your site to increase visibility.

Educational Outreach

Maximize the educational impact of International Compost Awareness Week and your planned activities by engaging teachers. Working with teachers you can help them educate their students about composting. By providing teachers with the current "Information Sheets" and "Compost Trivia" sheet available on the USCC web site, they'll be able to enhance their activities with students. An *ICAW Teachers Kit* is in the works and will be available for 2006 ICAW Celebrations.

Facts About Compost

Key Messages and Information

International Composting Awareness Week unites the composting industry under a common banner. It is a unique opportunity allowing individual organizations involved in composting to benefit from a wider campaign and to form partnerships with organizations within your community. Here are some facts about the benefits of composting, the U.S. composting industry and International Compost Awareness Week for you to incorporate into your activities.

The basic goals of Compost Awareness Week:

1. To increase the diversion of organics from the main waste stream through increasing awareness of, and participation in organics diversion initiatives (centralized composting, curbside, home composting, community composting) and;

2. To increase awareness of, and advocate the proper use of, 'soil-improving composts'

Benefits of composting and using soil enriching composts:

- Soil enriching composts improve the structure of sandy soils allowing them to retain moisture and nutrients longer.
- Compost helps maintain healthy plant growth.
- Soil-enriching composts provide the nutrients necessary for healthy plant growth and intense colors throughout the growing season.
- Save time money, and help save the environment by enriching and amending your soil with Compost.
- Compost helps improve the structure of clay and sandy soils.
- The organic matter in soil enriching composts helps break up heavy and clay soils making them lighter, freer draining and easier to work.
- Compost will cut down your watering requirements.
- Using sustainable soil-enriching composts helps prevent erosion of valuable topsoil without depleting valuable wildlife habitats.
- Composts encourage nature to work for you. Earthworms and many other beneficial creatures flourish in enriched soils. Their activities help release essential nutrients, which strengthen plants and increase their resistance to disease.
- Composts help to quickly establish new shrubs, plants and turf. The improved structure of enriched soils provides excellent growing conditions and aids root-zone establishment.
- The U.S. Composting Council operates a *Seal of Testing Assurance (STA)* program that enables participating composters to label their compost as STA approved, giving the consumer an informed choice of high quality products. (Refer to the STA section of the USCC web site for more facts and benefits.)
- Composting reduces the quantity of waste going to landfill. Composting can reduce the amount of materials discarded to landfills by up to 50%. If landfilled untreated, these organic materials will breakdown to release methane, a potent greenhouse gas, and leachate.
- A blanket of compost used to re-seed land grows vegetation more quickly and more cheaply than more mainstream methods.

Future International Compost Awareness Week Dates

2006: Sunday May 7 - Saturday May 13

2007: Sunday May 6 - Saturday May 12

2008: Sunday May 4 - Saturday May 10

2009: Sunday May 3 - Saturday May 9

2010: Sunday May 2 - Saturday May 8

Post ICAW Strategies

- After International Compost Awareness Week is over take time to evaluate the organization of the activities and event(s) itself and meet with your team to discuss the week's event(s).
- Send a follow-up press release along with photo(s) for additional press for your business or organization. Following up with the media and your partners not only provides input and constructive critique for next year's ICAW but also lets the public know that the event was a success and is another opportunity to present composting in a positive light.
- Send a thank you letter to public officials, business and community leaders and celebrities that participated in ICAW activities. This includes public officials who signed proclamations. Let them know how well the activities and events went and how much their participation helped.
- Consider sending a broadcast thank you in the form of a letter to the editor. Publicly thanking those who made your ICAW activities a success for the community
- Compile two sets of all the publicity materials incorporate your favorite photos taken during the week and write down any additional comments and thoughts about the week from your team. Put one set in an **ICAW 2006** folder and send the other copy to the **USCC to be used on their web site for others to incorporate among their tools and resources to use in the future.
- Update your media files with changes/additions to contact names.
- Provide information and feedback about your ICAW activities, experiences, successes and lessons to the USCC so they can be shared with other compost advocates. What went well. What didn't work out. What ideas and suggestions do you have for next year?

**** Please Note:** We would like to use the ICAW section of the USCC web site as a clearinghouse for ICAW celebrations around the country. If you have any press releases, announcements, programs, schedules, pictures or any other information relevant to the week, please send them to Teri Sorg-McManamon at advert@jgpress.com

ICAW Partnership – Global Activities

For more information on ICAW activities in Canada, Europe and the United Kingdom visit:

The Composting Council of Canada

<http://www.composting.org>

The Composting Association

<http://www.compost.org.uk>

European Compost Network

<http://www.compostnetwork.info>

ICAW Planning Notes