

SPRING '23 NEWSLETTER



COMPOST CLUB UPDATES

We are excited to say that we recently expanded into the Hinsdale and Willowbrook neighborhoods. Please take advantage of our referral program if you know anyone there. [You can see our service map on our website here.](#) Know of someone just outside of our Service Area that is interested in composting? Encourage them to contact the Compost Club! We always are looking to work with surrounding communities to expand to new areas around the city.

Spring is here and soil is back in season. If you are interested in receiving finished compost as your Compost Club reward, please email us! If you are currently signed up to receive finished compost, you can sign in to your new Member Portal to place your order. Your portal is also a handy place to access records of your total impact and weight totals per pick up. As always, you can email us with requests and questions at compost@theurbancanopy.org

WELCOME TO COMPOST CLUB

We would like to welcome all our new and returning members to Urban Canopy's Compost Club for the new season! We are so excited to continue to welcome new numbers, expand our service area, and build our community. Don't forget to refer a friend!

By being a member of Urban Canopy's Compost Club, you are helping close the loop on the urban food cycle. Spring is here and it is so awesome to see the various branches here at Urban Canopy flourish. Our farm is well underway preparing for this growing season and our farmers markets will start up this May. If you didn't get a chance to sign up for a LUCSCA share for this Summer season, don't hesitate on your next opportunity and sign up on their ["interested member's form here."](#) If you have any questions about LUCSCA feel free to reach out to our friends in the LUCSCA branch to ask. LUCSCA@theurbancanopy.org

Check Out Our Healthy Soil!



Spring is finally here and that means more garden work. This means more weeding, tilling, watering, planting, trimming...the list is never ending. Fortunately, there is a simple solution to make your life as a gardener easier and make your garden happy. The application of finished compost! Not to be confused with the compostable waste that we collect, incorporating finished compost in your garden or houseplants is one of the best things you can do for the continued health of your growing environment.

Compost has many benefits, the main one being that of nutrients! Often times more "traditional" gardening methods utilize chemical fertilizers that feed the plants directly. This sounds like a good idea at first, but your plants are only a small portion of the ecosystem of your garden, and any unused fertilizer from your plants can build up as dangerous salts in your soil or worse, seep into our water supply damaging native plants and animals. Compost on the other hand feeds the soil. Microorganisms, nematodes, fungi, and more thrive on the nutrients available in compost. Their presence and waste materials provide both the nutrients your plants need, and act as a natural pest control as many of the organisms that thrive in a compost rich environment also predate the common pests your garden might have to battle though the year, further reducing your need for chemical pesticides and producing healthier and safer food for you and your family.

On top of the nutritional benefits the application of compost saves you precious time by retaining water. Compost particles are larger than regular soil and can absorb more water, acting like a nutrient dense sponge for your plants to drink from all season long. We mix our compost into the soil of new garden beds directly at a 2:1 ratio of topsoil to compost or by tilling in around 1"-2" of compost to 3"-5" of existing garden soil.

For houseplants or areas where you do not want to disturb the existing soil, we recommend making a simple compost tea. It is a little time consuming, but worth the wait. The first step for compost tea is dechlorinated water, we don't want to kill off all the beneficial bacteria! If you do not have access dechlorinated water simply set out a large open container of water for over 24 hours and the chlorine and other preservatives should evaporate out. Once you have done this, add 1 part compost to 5 parts water in an unsealed container, remember to put a lid on and give it a shake each day to speed up the process. After about a week of brewing the tea will be ready for you to pour into your houseplants as a liquid fertilizer providing nutrients without disturbing the soil of you more sensitive houseplants.

As our Compost Club members know we distribute free finished compost to our members as rewards right to your door and sell additional amounts, in sizes from from buckets to dump trucks, on our website. Visit us or reach out to Compost@theurbancanopy.org for prices, recipes for more complex compost teas, and our other ever expanding line of garden additives



Earth Day History

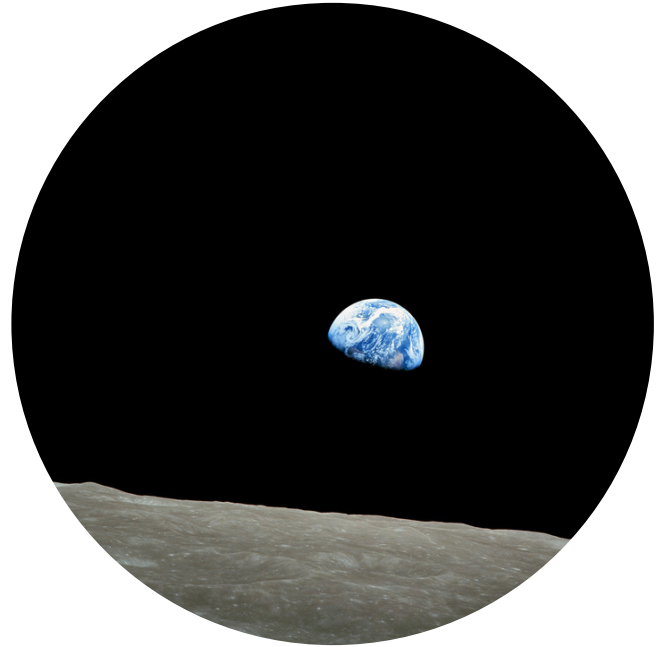
It might be hard for some to image that there was a time in recent American history where the EPA didn't even exist, nor did a Clean Water or Clean Air Act; however, considering the numerous environmental tragedies that have taken place over the past couple of decades since it is still important to remember how far we have come and yet how far we still have to go towards being a truly environmental conscious society.

In 1969 there was a deadly oil spill in Santa Barbara, later that same year the Cauyahoga River caught fire as well as the picture "Earth Rising" was taken and a new perceptive of our place here on Planet Earth was founded.

A senator from Wisconsin, Gaylord Nelson, after seeing the oil slick from his plane began working with a with young activist named Denis Hayes, and they, along with a few other senators enacted a declaration of Environment Rights. The creation of the National environmental Policy Act along with its subsequent conference became what Hayes called, "A baptism of the movement," which ended up with the organization of a national day called Earth Day on April 22 1970.

This ripple waded across the entire United States all the way to New York City where Mayor John Lindsay declared that two miles of 5th avenue be shut down as well as Central park be made available for an Earth Day celebration that an estimated 20,000 people attended! It is strange to say it, but maybe we can work out way back to how much folks cared about the environment in the 70s. The picture to the right is Senator Edmund Muskie speaking at the Earth Day in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia on April 22, 1970 to around 40,000 folks as the author if the Clean Water and Air Acts of 1972 and '77 respectively. These were the first major legislative steps towards a wider environmental movement in the United States and world wide.

It is wild to think how far we have come considering it is estimated that more than 1 billion people participate in Earth Day worldwide, yet how much farther we still have to go. The path to an environmental conscious planet doesn't seem to be linear, but rather more like a coil with many ups and downs.



If you are in the area around Park Forest, come and say hello to us at the Second Annual Southland Local Food System Expo! It is on 4/22 between 1pm and 4pm at Dining on the Green located at 349 Main St Park Forest, IL, 60466. You can meet and connect with local farms and other food sustainability experts.



Ramps! They are Literally the Best

If you didn't already know, we are living on a gold mine of beautiful onions. We all love Chicago, but being cooped up inside all winter makes even the most patient among us restless. Besides the warm weather, our favorite part of spring is the fresh, local ingredients found at farmer's markets. There is one ingredient in particular that really gets us pumped up, and those are ramps. What is a "ramp" besides the obvious use of the word as a basic machine?

Scientifically speaking, ramps are known as *Allium tricoccum*, but we can also call them spring onions, wild leeks, or even wild garlic. Ramps are indigenous to eastern North America and Canada and can be used in a variety of ways. Ramps have a beautifully pungent odor and a piquant onion and garlic pop of flavor. They have wonderful slim green leaves with white or purple stems. Depending on whether you cook or eat them raw, the whole plant is edible, but I would at least cut the roots off! Before we offer one of our favorite recipes with ramps, take a moment to learn some interesting folklore that will make the graceful ramp more prestigious and delicious.

Though ramps grow across the Eastern United States, they are special to the Chicago region in particular. Before Chicago became the roaring metropolis it is today, it was a gorgeous swamp where many Algonquian people made it not only their home, but the area served as a large trading outpost as well. How did the *city of big shoulders* get the name it has today? There are many theories, but one stems from the Algonquian word, 'shikaakwa,' which means 'stripped skunk' or 'stinky onion.' The first French explorer in the region, Robert LaSalle, noted the abundance of wild garlic in the region and found the name appropriate.

It is always essential one recognizes the atrocities of colonial practices while diving into historical exploration. And that being said, to put it lightly, after a series of unfavorable treaties that forced the then, Potawatomi, off the land, 'shikaakwa' was frenchified into 'Checagou' and eventually into the name we know today as 'Chicago.' So quite literally, the city of Chicago is named after the illustrious *Allium tricoccum*. So, you can imagine that ramps hold a special culinary place in the heart of Chicago. Be on the lookout for ramps at your local farmers market if you live anywhere on the eastern side of the United States.

Ramps can be used in a variety of ways like we mentioned previously. You can sauté them with some bacon and fresh mushrooms (morels or chanterelles) and serve them as a side, you can pickle them, you can toss them in some aioli or a vinaigrette, or you can serve them raw as a garnish. Yes, they are pungent, but it's a good pungency! Their flavor is somewhat similar to that of a shallot, but we find ramps to be far more delicate and dare we say delicious? Below we have included Andrew's own recipe for a Ramp Pesto.



Ramp Pesto

Pestos are fun in general because they are so customizable. We encourage you to mess around with the ingredients themselves and the amounts of ingredients until you develop something that fits your flavor profile to perfection. You don't even need a knife for this recipe, but what you do need is a blender of some sort. We prefer a stick blender/immersion myself. If you don't already have one of these, we highly suggest the All-Clad immersion blender. Before we get started, we always encourage folks to use fresh, organic ingredients. This is what you will need:

Ingredients:

- 6oz Ramps
- 3oz Cilantro
- 3oz Basil
- 2 Cloves of Garlic (optional)
- ¼ cup of Parmesan (optional)
- 1/3-1/2 cups Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2-4 tablespoons of Walnuts, Pine Nuts, or Pecans
- Salt & Pepper to Taste



Into a 32oz deli style container, something similar, add whole ramps, cilantro, and basil (this means stem and all! You can cut the roots off the ramps if you like, but they are edible). Blend while slowly adding your oil (garlic and parmesan if you chose) to obtain the consistency you want. If you prefer your pesto to be very thick, don't add as much oil. After you blend your greens nearly to where you want them, add which ever nuts you choose for texture. Toast those nuts for added flavor-town! Blend in your nuts to your desired consistency and add salt and pepper to taste. Boom! You've got yourself a delicious seasonal pesto. Use it in pasta, spread it on a baguette, or even use it like a chimichurri and put it on your proteins! The sky is the limit and we encourage you to keep playing with the recipe and make it use to your liking. For example its asparagus season, so maybe try using asparagus in your pesto too. Remember, cooking isn't an exact science, and it's supposed to be fun!

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