



Earth Matter NY 2020 Annual Report

**Compost
Learning Center**



**Zero Waste
Island**



**Soil Start
Farm**



**Lavender
Field**



Letter from Co-Founder and Executive Director



Dear friends and supporters,

Welcome to our very first annual report. Thanks to each of you for participating in our journey that begins with the truism regarding waste - there is no “away” ... it simply moves into our neighbors’ yards.

From the vantage point of our 11-year journey, rooted in volunteering with the Fort Greene Compost Project, the Trust for Public Land’s land trusts’ operations committees, and Waterfront Alliance’s City of Water Day, the growth of NYC’s community composting movement continues to amaze us. Compost has become much more of an everyday vocabulary word than we dared dream in 2009.

Seven years ago, New Yorkers elected an administration that embraced and funded curbside and commercial organics collections. Earlier this year, we were truly inspired when thousands of NYC voices demanded the City Council reinstate the community composting budget after it was eliminated by pandemic driven cuts. This restoring of funding by our electeds had a direct impact on Earth Matter NY’s ability to sustain our collection and processing work this year. Most importantly, this political impact enabled many New Yorkers to feel that their voices are powerful instruments and that change is within reach.

The concept of recycling one’s food as a fundamental way forward in care of our earth resonates now more than ever. It’s time to put our energies into these ideas:

- Can we nurture soil to grow healthy food for all?
- After ensuring we all have nutritious food to eat, can we encourage composting leftover scraps?
- Can we reconsider how we view organics recycling, seeing it as a part of “resource management” rather than “waste management”?
- Can we advocate for municipalities to embrace composting as a key to advancing a long term, systemic transformation of our society?

Earth Matter NY’s “boots on the ground” educational approach helps answer peoples’ sustainability questions and sets the stage for more informed, more creative acts of care for our Earth. For many of us, questions arise as we work, and solutions emerge as we toil. Earth Matter facilitates that exploratory process throughout our educational experiences.

We see challenges ahead and are already working to overcome them:

- Physical distancing requires us to expand the ways we connect with one another, yet through virtual support and sharing of knowledge, we can reach even more people!
- The learning curriculum for people of all ages must increasingly include the benefits of composting and the practice of separating organics. Incentivizing society to manage waste as a resource is ultimately more cost effective than throwing it all “away”.



We are grateful that so many of you are pitchforking beside us, creating a pile that includes many diverse ingredients. And with this annual report, we invite you to monitor the process as we all nurture a healthier environment for our future.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marisa".

**Marisa DeDominicis,
Co-Founder and Executive Director**

Mission and History

Mission “We seek to reduce the organic waste misdirected into the garbage stream by encouraging neighbor participation and leadership in composting”



Earth Matter NY

With over a decade of experience in the field of composting, resource recovery, and sustainability initiatives, Earth Matter NY is a leader in the composting, zero waste and closed-loop movement. The programming of the Compost Learning Center encompasses the Zero Waste Island Initiative, Soil Start Farm, The Lavender Field and New York City Compost Project hosted by Earth Matter NY. All the projects experienced significant growth and change in 2020.

The Trust for Governors Island/Governors Island

The operational characteristics of Governors Island make it an ideal model for zero waste and close-loop practices. The Island is only accessible by ferry. This offers the unique opportunity to quantify materials coming on and off the island. In addition, The Trust is able to regulate waste disposal procedures.

History

2009

Founded by Kendall Morrison, Marisa DeDominicis and Charlie Bayrer, who had met and bonded working with the Brooklyn Queens Land Trust and the Fort Green Compost Project. Debuted Zero Waste Island to recover the resources from 10,000 attendees at the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance City of Water Day.



2010

Granted a seasonal event permit by the Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation (predecessor to The Trust) to open the Compost Learning Center at Picnic Point. Interns from the Green Guerrillas, NYHS students, and volunteers helped establish and manage the Center and its programming - Zero Waste Island events and public resources recovery stations, open hours, vendor scrap collection, and the Island's leaves.

2011

Added a flock of chickens and began to accept group educational bookings. Took in and processed GrowNYC market drop-off scraps for the first time.



2012

Added two kid goats on a seasonal basis to devour landscape debris. Entered into a partnership with GrowNYC and the DSNY (the New York City Compost Project Local Organic's Recovery Program) to process collections from GrowNYC Greenmarkets. Launched the Compost Apprenticeship, Friday workdays, and Monday Community Compost Build days. Began processing the full volume of leaf waste generated each year on the Island.

2014

Developed the initial restaurant shell collection program for the Billion Oyster Project with their funding from the National Science Foundation. Consolidated public programming and organics processing at Brick Village. Joined by Grow NYC's Teaching Garden, in what The Trust would christen The Urban Farm in 2017. Created the Soil Start Farm project at the Brick Village site.



2017

Formalized our Zero Waste Island Partnership with The Trust for Governors Island. Launched our Lavender Field, designed and managed by our compost apprentice graduates Sarah Lehigh and Perry Leung

2020

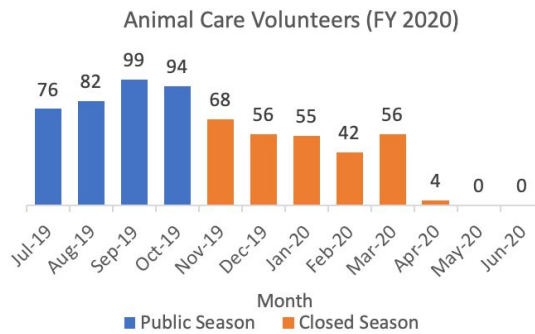
Launched the Heritage Bed Project at Soil Start Farm to weave NYC's melting pot agri-cultural traditions. We responded to pandemic food insecurity conditions by donating produce and eggs to The Catholic Worker's soup kitchen. Launched the Compostable Serviceware Buyers Club to provide products to Island food vendors.



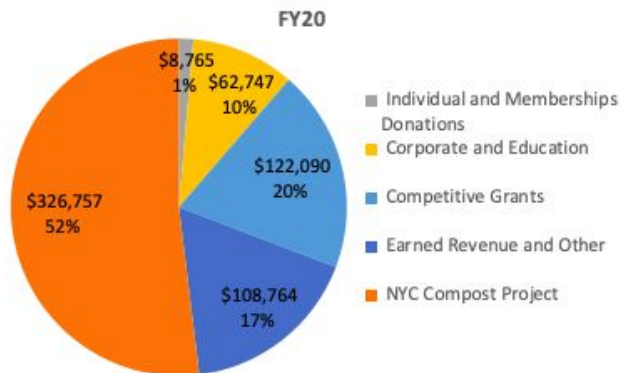
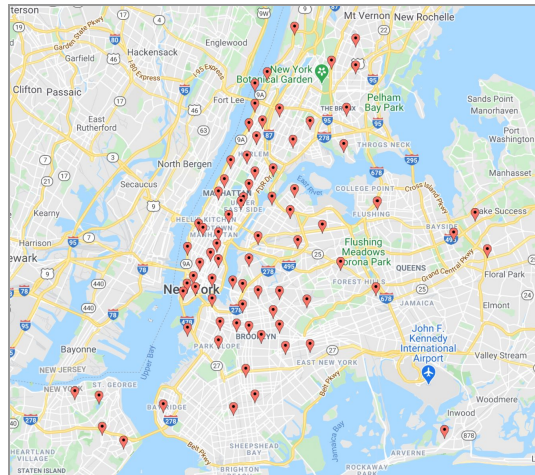
Performance:

Achieving goals through intelligent volunteerism as well as financial support

Earth Matter NY’s fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. The first half of FY20, when Governors Island was open to the public, we saw increasing numbers of volunteers journey to the Island to care for our chickens and goats, which unassumingly work to educate about the recycling of food scraps. The numbers naturally decreased when the goats departed to return to their place of birth. When the pandemic shut down volunteer activities, Earth Matter NY’s staff and essential farm workers performed the entire daily care of our flock.



Volunteers - Earth Matter NY volunteers travel to Governors Island from throughout the five boroughs. Their dedication to Earth Matter NY’s four key initiatives helped drive our achievements during FY20. Thank you to those who joined us in FY20 to work on our Compost initiatives. Soil Start Farm, Lavender Field, or Zero Waste Island. Many joined through the Earth Matter NY website, while others volunteered through New York Cares, Corporate or Educational Groups, or as Earth Matter NY Interns. In total, we directly engaged nearly 1000 volunteers in FY20.



Financial Highlights - Earth Matter NY’s funding kept our initiatives strong during FY20. The Department of Sanitation’s NYC Compost Project provided just over half of all revenue while proceeds from competitive grants increased by 144% to become our second largest funding source. Other significant donations came from Council Member Margaret Chin for the “Heritage Beds” project as well as from corporate and educational sponsors and vendor sales of products grown on the Farm and in the Lavender Field. We aim to double individual and membership donations in FY21.

Compost Learning Center: Turning waste into inspiration and black gold

The Compost Learning Center is Earth Matter NY's educational hub to demonstrate methods for making and using compost in New York City. Through our sizable compost processing operation we provide a multitude of hands-on activities as a way for visitors, volunteers and students to learn about turning food scraps into a rich soil amendment. Our NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Registered Facility processes NYC residential food scraps that are dropped off at many locations in the city as well as all of the Governors Island visitor, vendor, event, and landscape waste.



This Year's Achievements



Hosted 30 Friday volunteer work days - Friday work day activities offer a safe outdoor environment for up to 20 individuals. "I found my people" is a recurring response among volunteers, as they find they are not alone in wanting to give and get skills to help sustain our organization's mission and Mother Earth. We also hosted 73 educational, team building, corporate, and community service group work days and tours. Participants often report the reason they come to volunteer is to initiate and strengthen their own best practices around composting.

Hosted over 5,000 visitors during seasonal weekend open hours - In the 2019 season, we had a robust number of people visit on Sundays to experience our compost workers --our kid goats and our chickens. We converse with many about their connections with nature, and "talk trash" asking them about their relationships with their waste as a way to expand and pass on knowledge.

Established our first Food Scrap Drop Off In Lower Manhattan - This year, we took a giant step forward in strengthening ties between downtown residents and our Compost Learning Center by hosting a Food Scrap Drop-off site at Bowling Green where we are able to showcase our hyper-local closed-loop processing in people's own "backyard".

Processed 600 tons of food scraps and Governors Island landscape waste - Until March, when COVID forced diversion of compost operations funding to emergency food aid, we **hosted weekly Community Compost Builds**. This popular volunteer opportunity allowed people to participate in composting with their fellow New Yorkers' food scraps, and even learn to identify their own mix!

Stepped up our compost distribution - Earth Matter NY compost distribution grew beyond nurturing Governors Island's lawns and planted areas, to include Battery Park City where it helps green their landscapes. In early spring, Tilder Block Association Victory gardens received 16 cubic yards. As outdoor dining sprouted, we collaborated with the Chinatown BID to provide a soil blend for restaurant planter boxes. This fall brought collaborations with NYC Parks Greenthumb and GrowNYC to facilitate distribution to community gardens and nonprofits.

Zero Waste Island Initiative: No waste wasted on Governors Island

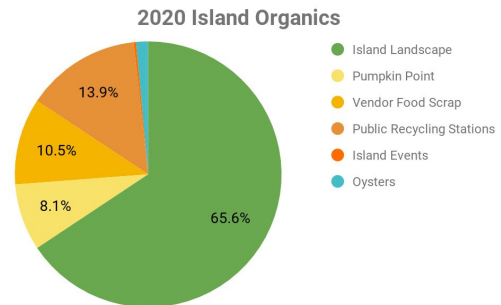


The Zero Waste Island Initiative on Governors Island is a three-year old partnership between the Trust for Governors Island and Earth Matter NY. Together, we aim to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill. All of the waste is composted at the Earth Matter NY Compost Learning Center. The finished compost is used as a rich, pesticide-free soil amendment to nurture the public green spaces across the Island and NYC.

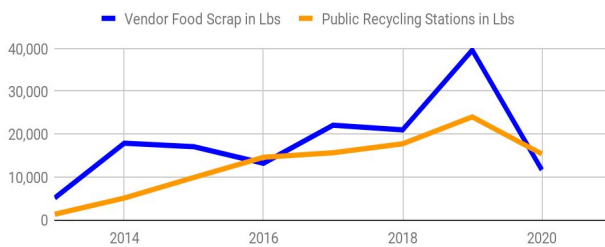
This Year's Achievements

Lower contamination rates and increased volume of organic collected and processed

The initiative has helped lower the rate of non compostables from 14% four years ago to below 9%. Our team worked all season building relationships by educating island vendors and visitors on waste reduction and proper sorting. During this pandemic year, with substantially fewer island visitors and 10 fewer weeks of visitor open season access, we captured more than 78,000 lbs. of organic waste. This volume is more than what we captured in 2019!



Governors Island Organic Waste Diversion



Signage - Collaborated with The Trust to improve vendor and “waste station” signage for visitors to recycle their organics and, unique to the Island, vendors are mandated to use only compostable serveware.

The Compostable Serveware Supply Pilot -

Marketed and distributed compostable products to 10 island partners using funding from the NY State Pollution Prevention Institute. We received positive feedback about this convenient and cost-savings initiative.

Hosted Sunday Compost Learning Center Open Hours - Engaged with visitors providing participatory activities of waste sorting, lifestyle surveys, and sifting compost samples to take home.

Graduated Four Zero Waste Island Interns - Activities focused on training vendors, event management, education, sorting, processing, auditing, making compost and team building.

“Through the Earth Matter NY ZWI internship I’ve been able to learn so much about compost and waste management through hands-on experience and was able to be a part of a group that was enacting a sustainable future in the present moment.” - Abby Terrigino



Soil Start Farm: *Showing the way from “Table-to-Farm”*



Earth Matter NY created Soil Start Farm to show how gardeners and farmers can use locally available organic waste to create compost and grow food in urban soil conditions. We divert waste from landfills and then bring to life techniques for soil amendment, pest control and urban farming. The result— sustainable solutions to growing fresh produce and flowers for New Yorkers.

This Year’s Achievements

Apprenticeship Program- The year 2020 was Earth Matter NY’s eighth year of compost and farm apprentice education. This year we graduated six apprentices from our intensive 150 hour/20 week Saturday program. With onsite training made challenging in the early Spring by the pandemic, we pivoted successfully to regular weekly virtual workshops that kept the cohort focused and connected. Through our “mutual assistance” model, trainees then reinforced what they learned by staffing our Saturday visitor open hours and co-leading participatory activities once the Island opened again to the public. The program has shown success with the outside hiring of graduating interns and apprentices to compost positions and as farm managers. Some have started their own compost companies, and all have strengthened the NYC and state community composting movement as educators, writers, and neighborhood organizers.

NYC Community Gardener Compost Training - This year we trained 9 gardeners from NYC Parks GreenThumb, and assisted Green Thumb in creating composting safety protocols for COVID -19.

Heritage Beds - Soil Start Farm partnered with City Council Member Margaret Chin to create ten “Heritage Beds”. Each bed represents a different NYC cultural community including Black Southern, Chinese, European Jewish, First Nation, German, Italian, Japanese, LatinX, Japanese, and Peruvian cuisines.



Emergency Food During Pandemic - The farm grew vegetables and herbs for emergency food programs, including Catholic Worker’s “Soup to Go”. Their program, which had provided 50 lunches daily, grew during COVID to serve over 250. We donated 80 pounds of fresh produce and five dozen eggs each week.

The Lavender Field: *A healing space for the community, the bees, and the Earth*



Life can be challenging as climate change, environmental issues and other concerns impact today's quality of life. Members of the NYC community from all walks of life seek local open-access "escapes" and nature-based activities. The Lavender Field on Governors Island, launched in 2017, provides visitors with a serene, fragrant oasis to set aside the stresses of city life.

The Lavender Field is a living laboratory where numerous volunteers as well as local educational and community service groups study and nurture the plants. Farm apprentices and Zero Waste Island Interns powerfully demonstrate how the soil, enriched by Governor's Island compost, helps nourish the earth while keeping food waste out of New York City landfills. In turn, the plants' blooms provide sustenance to Governors Island's bees and other pollinators.

The sights, sounds and smells from the field serve as a perfect venue for many special activities including yoga, meditation, pollinator walks, Harvest-Your-Own Bouquet Days, and the Annual Lavender Festival. This year, the field's open outdoor setting allowed for small gatherings and hosted workshops for Friends of Governors Island and Earth Matter NY members. In addition, we held essential farm field maintenance sessions in lieu of the public events and harvest activities in a non-COVID year. We also produced and delivered over 400 lavender sachets to essential workers during the height of the stay-at-home period.



Bouquets are available at **Stems Brooklyn**



The success of the Lavender Field is driven by many volunteers, donors, and supporters, as well as purchases of lavender product offerings at the Friends of Governors Islands' gift shop, and other vendors.

Support

Earth Matter NY appreciates the many members, advisors, collaborators, supporters and funders who generously support our programs and help us overcome challenges to fulfill our mission of empowering New Yorkers to imagine and nurture a more sustainable Earth.



Major Funders

Earth Matter NY thanks the organizations that have donated money and resources, and which have been a huge source of support and collaboration in helping us achieve our mission.



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Supporters

Earth Matter NY thanks the members of the organizations below who have provided funding and/or goods. Most of these groups' members have also volunteered time to help us achieve our mission.

ABC Beer Co

Ace and Jig

Adform

Alphabet Wine Co.

Bank Of America

Battery Park City Authority

Billion Oyster Project

Bio Basics Inc.

Blueprint Research Group

Brooklyn Butcher Block

Chinatown BID

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Simms Recycling

SL Green Realty

Soxco's Stairs

Stems Brooklyn

Trust for Public Land- Parks and People

White and Warren

Vegeware



Island Partners

Earth Matter NY appreciates our fruitful collaborations with many like-minded and diverse organizations that reside in our Island community.

American Indian Community House

The Bee Conservancy

Billion Oyster Project

Climate Reality Project

Collective Retreats

4Heads Art Collective

Friends of Governors Island

GrowNYC's Teaching Garden

Island Oyster

Joe Coffee

Little Eva's + Sea Biscuit

Lower Manhattan Cultural Council

Makina

New York Harbor School

New York Harbor School PTA

NYC Audubon

Pizza Yard

Play:groundNYC

SWALE

Taco Vista

Threes Brewing

The Trust for Governors Island

West Harlem Art Fund

THE TRUST FOR
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Collaborators

Earth Matter NY thanks the organizations that help extend our reach to their communities through participation in education, special projects and workshops as well as hands-on skills-building experiences, services, and goods.

Bard High School Early College
Bio Basic Inc.
Biocycle
Brotherhood Sister Sol
Catholic Worker
City Service Corps
Columbia Nourish
Consulate General of the Netherlands
DownTown Alliance
EcoWomen
Ellie Lessen Group - Drawdown Project
Farm School NYC
Girls Prep LES Middle Charter School
Green Map
Hamilton Madison House
Hksinc Inc



HYPOTHEkids
Institute for Local Self Reliance
Manhattan Solid Waste Advisory Board
Michael Kors
The New School
NY2X Coalition
NYC Parks Department
NYSAR 3
NYU Earth Matters Club
Pace University
Pioneer Works
Riverdale Country Day School
SEED: Harlem - MS 371
Transportation Alternatives
Uptown Boogie
US Composting Council

Earth Matter NY thanks the organizations and individuals who have provided invaluable insights, guidance and time to help us achieve our mission.

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Biodegradable Product Institute
Kendall Q. Morrison
Lawyers Alliance
Marvel Architects
New York Council Of Nonprofits
Paul A Castrucci Architects
Sidley Austin LLC

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Earth Matter NY thanks our members, whose financial aid and commitment to our organization have helped secure our core functionality.



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