

Promoting environmental awareness by recycling of organic waste in primary schools

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Abstract:

Awareness of the importance of soil in daily life is a critical part of environmental education for school children. The paper describes a project promoted by the council of Livorno (Italy) for the study of the biodiversity of soil and how to make compost at school. The project is now in its sixth year. Each year 3-5 primary schools join in with 1-2 classes. The local council supplies the compost bins, the children collect the waste from the tables after lunch, and the waste from their school's garden. They monitor the transformation by measuring the temperature. One of the most exciting experiments they do is with a Berlese to observe the meso-fauna, with the help of a stereomicroscope and a web camera insects can be shown on a monitor. The experience starts at the beginning of the school year in September, and by spring the compost at the base of the bins is ready for use in allotments or in pots, after a simple phytotoxicity test. This educational course is very effective in teaching kids the importance of soil, organic matter and the cycling of nutrient elements- It is also a fundamental contribution to the public collection of organic waste. In fact, in Italy there is a serious indifference towards municipal organic waste which ends up only being collected by volunteers.

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