



Westchester 2023 Pumpkin Smash

As Halloween approaches, so too does Westchester's 5th annual Pumpkin Smash brought to you by the Green Residents of Westchester (GROW). The Pumpkin Smash is an annual effort by communities to divert pumpkins from landfills by providing locations for residents to drop-off jack-o-lanterns (*minus candles*) and other gourds to be composted. It is held each year the Saturday after Halloween and this year that will be on November 4th.

Many people are surprised to find out that Illinois produces three and a half times the amount of pumpkins as the second most productive states, California and Indiana. So why bother to compost them instead of just throwing them in the trash?

Pumpkins are nutritionally valuable since they contain significant amounts of fiber, potassium and protein. Pumpkins are also 90% water and thus when disposed of in a landfill these nutrients and water are lost from the environment rather than being recycled or reinvested back into the environment. Decomposition of organic matter, such as pumpkins, produces greenhouse gasses. Landfills are the 3rd largest

producers of greenhouse gasses so by composting them we can significantly reduce those emissions.

Composting any organic matter is also just plain beneficial. Compost reduces and in some cases eliminates the need for chemical fertilizers. It is a nutrient-dense soil amendment which can provide cost savings over conventional soil remediation. Lastly, compost enhances water retention in soils helping to reduce flooding in our yards and streets.

In 2023, Westchester joined with 76 other communities to divert pumpkins from making it into landfills. Since 2014, over 1000 tons have been composted. This translates to 751 tons less CO₂ greenhouse gas emissions and has saved over 217,000 gallons of water from landfills

This year we will have two locations!

1. Behind the Westchester Community Church: 1840 Westchester Boulevard.
2. In the Mayfair parking lot by the fitness center: 10835 Wakefield St.

If you have any questions please email Commissioner Matt Downs at mdowns@westchester-il.gov. The GROW commission generally meets the first Thursday of each month at 6:30pm. Join us in striving for a green Village!

