

MiSustainable Holland

About this series

The MiSustainable Holland column is a collection of community voices sharing updates about local sustainability initiatives.

This Week's Sustainability Framework Theme:

Environmental Awareness/Action: Environmental education and integrating environmental practices into our planning will change negative outcomes of the past and improve our future.

Composting initiative grows at Hope College

By Carly Ervin
Hope Advocates for Sustainability

Hope College now has composting available in all residential halls, with one student from six of these residential halls selected to become the Compost Champion representative on behalf of their hall.

In addition to maintaining a compost bin for their hall, the champions explain to other students which items can be composted at Hope, such as fruit and vegetable scraps, eggshells, coffee grounds, plants, paper towels, and even moldy bread. They also show how to find contamination in their individual compost bins.

Students also are encouraged to opt-in individually to receive a compost bin for their living space.

Composting is an important and sustainable process. Some of the benefits of composting include reducing our carbon footprint, decreasing waste, and improving the health and structure of soil. When done correctly, composting acts as a fertilizer by retaining nutrients that allow plants to grow.

In 2022, Hope collected 1,752 pounds of compost from the cottages and apartments alone. With residential halls included for 2023, it will be exciting to see what amount of waste will be diverted from landfills in the 2023-2024 school year.

Marcel ter Veen, groundskeeper and irrigation specialist at the Physical Plant for Hope College, agrees that students are looking to get involved in sustainable initiatives on campus.

"As time has gone by, there is an increased interest among students as far as sustainability goes," he noted, reflecting on his six years working on campus.

The Compost Champion Program has encouraged students to be sustainable in small ways around campus, but that also means taking the time to learn how to go about that.

There are hopeful developments to come in future years for composting on campus, as well. ter Veen is eager for the upcoming semester, in which he will work to introduce vermicomposting, which is when earthworms are used to break down organic waste.

Other new projects, such as allowing commercially compostable products to be composted on campus, are underway. If this process is successful, even more waste will be able to be turned into fertilizer. For example, composting coffee cups with a bioplastic lining may be possible in the next few years at Hope.

Also, just recently, composting has become available again in various dining facilities, where employees are able to significantly reduce the amount of food scraps wasted.

Members of the student group Hope Advocates of Sustainability are encouraged by the increasing involvement in initiatives such as the Compost Champion Program on campus. They hope to see a continual rise with the interest in sustainability in the years to come.

- *Carly Ervin is a sophomore at Hope College this year majoring in business. She is the residential hall intern for Hope Advocates of Sustainability.*