

Our mission is to increase awareness and understanding of agriculture among New Jersey educators and students. You can learn more on our website newjersey.agclassroom.org



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Do your students know that the sugary treats they crave actually come from two plants: sugar beets and sugar cane? During this month of chocolates and candy hearts, your students can learn the source of some of their favorite candy with our lesson [Where Does My Candy Come From?](#)

Dive Into Hydroponics

Bring some green into your classroom during these dreary winter days, and show your students how to grow plants indoors without soil. You don't need an expensive hydroponics system. All you need is a soda bottle, some cotton balls, a strip of cotton, and some lettuce seeds. Check out our *Soda Bottle Hydroponics* lesson below, an activity that works for all grades.



Lessons of the Month

Soda Bottle Hydroponics **Grades K-5**

In this lesson, students explore how to grow plants indoors without soil and why people would want to grow plants this way. By making a

Lessons of the Month

Aeroponic Engineering and Vertical Gardening

Grades 6-8
Grades 9-12

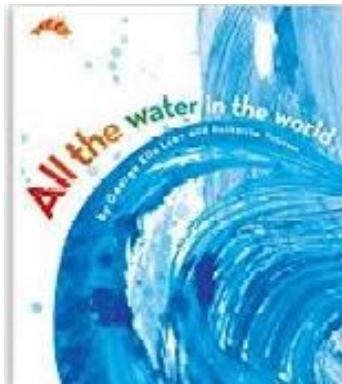
In this lesson, students develop and build an aeroponic garden to grow a food crop.

Using their knowledge of plant structures and how they work, students discuss the possibilities and limitations of using vertical farming to produce our food.

Click [here](#) for the lesson for grades 6-8. Click [here](#) for the lesson for grades 9-12.

hydroponics system out of a soda bottle, cotton balls, and a strip of cotton, students see exactly how hydroponics works. Click [here](#) for the lesson.

Our PowerPoint presentation *Hydroponics - Growing Plants Indoors Without Soil* explains the advantages of hydroponics, how it works, and what plants grow best without soil. Click [here](#) for the presentation.



Library Corner

All the Water in the World By George Ella Lyon Grades PreK-2

This delightful book explains how the water cycle works with poetic language and eye-catching digital illustrations that look like paint and paper collages. *"Where does it come from? Water doesn't come. It goes around."*

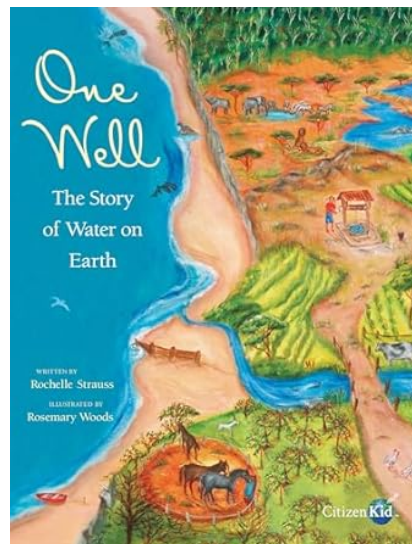


Library Corner

One Well The Story of Water on Earth by Rochelle Strauss Grades 3-6

"All the water we have is all the water we will ever have."

This book offers a comprehensive look at the water on Earth: an explanation of the water cycle, how much water is available for people to use, how plants and animals use water, and how the distribution of water is so uneven that one-fifth of the world's population does not have access to enough.



Apply Now To be NJAITC's Teacher of the Year

NJAITC is looking for PreK-12 teachers who believe their students should understand the importance of agriculture, so they slip lessons about farming into other subjects, such as math, science, social studies, and language arts.

If you are one of these teachers, NJAITC would like you to apply to be our 2025 Teacher of the Year.

The 2025 NJAITC Teacher of the Year will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to the National Agriculture in the Classroom annual conference, which will be held in Minneapolis on June 23 to June 26.

Agriculture is a crucial part of everyone's life. If you include agriculture in your teaching, let us know! Click [here](#) to apply to be our 2025 Teacher of the Year. The deadline to apply is March 3.

Meet a New Jersey Farmer

Keith Mitzak of AquaSprout Farms

AquaSprout Farms in Branchburg, Somerset County, raises leafy greens including kale, lettuce, swiss chard, and arugula, as well as tilapia, in an aquaponics greenhouse.



What is the most important thing you want students to know that you learned on the farm?

There are a lot of intricacies involved with running this business and many interconnected parts. In aquaponics, both the fish and the plants rely on each other and are in tune to create a fine balance. Chemistry and biology are both important sciences to study to run an aquaponics farm.

What is your biggest challenge on your family farm?

There never seems to be enough time in the day to do everything. There was a steep learning curve to aquaponics and to gathering the background information needed to run the system. Getting practical experience to run this unique farm was very hard.

Tell us your farm story.

My brother Stephen and I first got interested in this business after reading a book about aquaponics. We went to a few conferences on the subject and started looking for property. We found an old nursery that had a lot of the infrastructure we needed in 2017. By 2018, we were selling our product at farmers markets and have been going ever since.

What is your favorite part of your job?

The day-to-day activities in the greenhouse are my favorite things. The humming and droning of the fans are very calming. I enjoy just being there!

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