



A Quarterly Newsletter from the NJ Department of Agriculture  
Farm to Everything Program

# JERSEY FRESH FARM TO SCHOOL SPIRIT WEEK

## SEPT. 23rd - 27th, 2024

**Muddy Monday**

✓ Plant seeds and watch them grow!



**NJ  
FARMER  
TRADING  
CARDS**



**Climate Change  
Standards**

**Tasting Tuesday**


✓ Feature Jersey Fresh produce in a tasting or on the menu



**TASTE TEST  
STICKERS**

**Wellness Wednesday**


✓ Become a "Farm to School" chef -use MyPlate and NJ Seasonality Chart to create a "Cool Food Menu" item



**Traveling Thursday**

✓ Map out how far your lunch food has traveled or plan a Farm to Table lunch using a NJ map


**From the Garden State to Your Plate**  
Farming Fruits and Vegetables in New Jersey



A publication of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

**Farmer Friday**

✓ Dress up as a farmer.  
✓ Invite a farmer or food producer to eat with students in the lunchroom.



# TOP TOMATO FALL 2024

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON THOSE MAKING  
A DIFFERENCE IN FARM TO SCHOOL

**Margaret Zelenka**  
Science Teacher, Memorial High School  
West New York, NJ



In the field of educational innovation, Margaret Zelenka stands out for her dedication to cultivating creativity and sustainability in the classroom. As a high school science teacher and our newest recipient of the NJ Department of Agriculture's "Top Tomato" award, Margaret has pioneered a new course in urban agriculture.

Margaret's journey began in 2018 when she revamped her specialized honors course from "Science of Alternative Fuels" to "Environmental Science Honors," with an emphasis on student-centered, project-based learning. Starting modestly with a shaky growing stand and a hand-me-down tank, Margaret introduced her students to the wonders of aquaponics.

Since then, her curriculum has blossomed into a diverse array of projects, from custom aquaponics and hydroponics systems to vermicomposting, microgreen farming, and even incorporating 3D printing into agriculture.

Looking forward, Margaret and her students have ambitious plans. They aim to design their own custom hydroponics system and explore the creation of medicinal tinctures and culinary oils from their harvests. Beyond the classroom, Margaret encourages collaboration with the school cafeteria, integrating what her students grow into nutritious meal options for the entire school community.

Reflecting on her journey, Margaret shares valuable insights, "Always say yes to a proposed project. You won't know everything (or perhaps anything) about it, but you will learn along the way, and that is the best part." Her philosophy emphasizes the spirit of experimentation and discovery that defines her teaching approach.

Margaret Zelenka's dedication to pushing the limits of small-space agriculture and empowering students through hands-on learning exemplifies the spirit of innovation and growth that NJ's Department of Agriculture celebrates. Her impact extends beyond the classroom, inspiring a new generation to embrace sustainability and creativity in urban settings.





# NJDA Farm to School Across the State

## UPCOMING WORKSHOPS



Farm to School Professional Development workshop for educators, food service professionals, and community partners. Registration is now open!

Oct. 9th, 2024 [Click Here to Register](#)



## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

### NJ School Board Association Conference

Oct. 21 – 24, 2024 - Tell your superintendent & board members to visit our booth! [Click Here](#) for Schedule of Events

### NJ School Nutrition Association Conference

Nov. 8, 2024 - Farm to School will lead a session titled, "Creating Climate Friendly Food Service."

[Click Here](#) for Schedule of Events

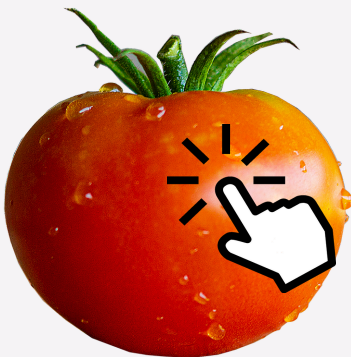
### NJEA Education Association Conference

Nov. 7 – 8, 2024 - Visit our table for educational materials! [Click Here](#) for Schedule of Events

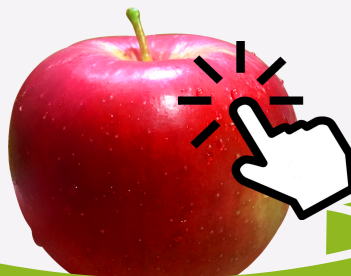


## Jersey Tastes! Monthly Activity Center

**September**



**October**



**National Farm to School Month**

**November**



NJ DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
DIVISION OF FOOD & NUTRITION  
JERSEY FRESH FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

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#F2SWEEK #JERSEYTASTES  
OR EMAIL YOUR PHOTOS & STORIES TO  
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