

Keep Gastonia Beautiful Environmental Education Programs

2026–2027 School Year

Keep Gastonia Beautiful offers a variety of FREE, standards-aligned environmental education programs for public, private, charter, and homeschool students throughout Gaston County. Each interactive program is designed for a single classroom presentation and supports North Carolina curriculum standards.

To request a program, click the link to our Program Request Form below. After your request is submitted, the Keep Gastonia Beautiful staff member assigned to your school will contact you to confirm your preferred date and finalize the details. If you have questions about our programs, please email keepgastoniabeautifulnc@gmail.com, and the appropriate staff member will be happy to assist you.

Ready to schedule a program?

[**Program Request Form**](#)

NEW this school year Curriculum Kits

Need to enrich science time? We have kits that include everything you need for the following lessons.

Water Cycle Game- Incredible Journey

Use our kit to send your students on the journey of a water drop. They will be surprised to see the “cycle” in action is not circular! Comes with options for indoor or outdoor set up and instructions. Pairs great with 5th grade water cycle curriculum, but can be used for any grade with ability to read and follow instructions independently.

Common Water

How is water used and shared by people over time? In this kit you will have the opportunity to see how water resource use has changed as demand by society has increased. What happens if water is polluted? The kit includes sponges and food coloring with instructions. Makes a great addition to social studies/community discussions.

Litter Clean Up

Do you have a group interested in a service project, want to beautify school grounds before a big event, or just see litter on the playground? Check out a kit that includes garbage bags, litter pickers and a scale. Return all items along with your record of how much litter your team collected! Send in pictures and we will shout you out on socials (as allowed). This is a great way to show students how they can make a difference through small actions.

Keep Gastonia Beautiful - First Semester Programming

Kindergarten - Sea Turtle Survival	Students will be engaged in the non-fiction story of Duffy, a sea turtle, who was rescued after mistakenly eating plastic trash. After discovering ways to reduce our use of plastics, the class will join in a "fishing out plastic expedition" to save Duffy. NC Science Standards Correlations: LS.K.1	30 minutes
1st Grade - Hands on Dirt	Feel how sand, silt and clay are different! Make a mud milkshake for the class to see what kinds of soil types you have at your school. Investigate local soil types and what amazing things we can do with soil from pottery to bricks and more! With hands-on learning (and wipes to clean up) students will get a feel for the "dirt beneath their feet!" NC Science Standards Correlation: ESS.1.2	30 minutes
2nd Grade - Eyes on Weather	Students and teachers will learn how watching the weather, recording temperature and measuring rainfall can help determine patterns in plant growth and help us become better aware of the world around us. Students will learn how to use weather related scientific tools and participate in citizen science. Teachers can decide to turn this program into a year long investigation and borrow weather tools for the year to regularly chart and investigate the weather. NC Science Standards Correlation: ESS.2.1	45 minutes
3rd Grade - Tree Identification	North Carolina has so many different tree species and trees are an amazing kind of plant to study right outside your classroom! Explore 10 basic trees by identifying leaf shape and other distinguishing features in this hands-on exploration. Students will observe, classify, and take home a dichotomous key and leaf rubbings NC Science Standards Correlation: LS.3.2	45 minutes
4th Grade - Pollinator Adaptations	Bees and other pollinators are vital to our agricultural economy. After exploring the how's and why's of pollination, students will learn about adaptations and our environmental impact through a fast-paced game. This action-packed learning game works best outside with lots of room for our pollinators to get to work. NC Science Standards Correlation: LS.4.1	45 minutes
5th Grade - Vermicompost & the Soil Food Web	Introducing students to the "superhero" of composting - Worms! We will investigate food waste and its effect on landfills. Students will examine live worms and build a worm hotel from repurposed plastic soda bottles. Classes will keep this ecosystem throughout the school year in order to observe the worms' living and eating patterns. NC Science Standards Correlation: LS.5.2	60 minutes

Keep Gastonia Beautiful - Second Semester Programming

Kindergarten - Super Trees Through the Seasons	Superheroes come in all shapes and sizes. Learn the 5 superhero traits of the biggest plants on Earth: TREES! Student interactive presentation as we explore the benefits of trees throughout the year. NC Science Standards Correlation: LS.K.2	30 minutes
1st Grade - Earth Magic	Learning through play! Students will get a small tray and build out the important parts to make a small local ecosystem: air, sunlight, soil, plants and animals will be added one at a time to create the best habitat! And you know what's NOT in our perfect, magical Earth? Trash! NC Science Standards Correlation: L.S.1	45 minutes
2nd Grade - Recycle Jams	Dive into the world of sound by crafting your very own musical instruments from recycled materials! In this hands-on adventure, young creators will explore how soundwaves work while learning the importance of reusing and recycling. Build, play, and discover the science of sound and the power of conservation—together! NC Science Standards Correlation: PS.2.2	30 minutes
3rd Grade - Waste Detectives	Students will learn about waste while sorting through a mock trashcan based on real classroom waste. Using pickers and instructive charts, students will sort and weigh different types of garbage to create data sets to analyze. What kinds of habits can we work on to reduce our waste? NC Math Standards Correlation: NC.3.MD.3	45 minutes
4th Grade - Wanderin' about Watersheds?	Students will learn how rivers help to shape the land. They will have hands-on activities to build out a mountain range and then "rain" will form the rivers. Watch to see where the rain goes and pools. What happens when we have pollution in our communities? Where will it go when it rains? NC Science Standards Correlations: ESS.4.2	45 minutes
5th Grade - Wrapping Up the Food Web	Students will complete the 1st Semester Vermicomposting Experiment by harvesting the worm castings and disassembling their worm hotel. They will investigate the ecosystem by looking for and identifying producers, consumers and decomposers in this hands-on Food Web wrap up. EOG Science Review	30 minutes

Additional Resources for Schools

Field Trip Stopovers

Extend your field trip with a visit to one of our self-guided educational experiences!



- **StoryWalk® at Rankin Lake Park**

Begin your journey at the boathouse and follow the short, paved path to the pavilions while enjoying a featured environmentally themed children's book. The StoryWalk® combines reading, movement, and nature for a fun learning experience.

- **Chronolog Time-Lapse Stations**

Explore our Chronolog stations to see how local landscapes change over time. Visit one at the Rankin Lake Park bridge between the parking lots, and another along the Avon Creek Greenway near Lineberger Park.



Black Gold Compost

Keep Gastonia Beautiful offers Black Gold Compost to schools with existing school gardens or those looking to beautify their campus through landscaping and planting projects.

- **Available:** April–May and September–October
- **Pickup Only:** Delivery is not available.

To request Black Gold Compost or learn more, contact rebecca.brannon@gastonianc.gov



Recycled Tennis Balls

Through our partnership with the Gastonia Racquet Club, Keep Gastonia Beautiful collects and redistributes gently used tennis balls to local schools. Tennis balls are a simple solution for reducing classroom noise by placing them on the bottoms of desks and chairs. To request tennis balls, email rebecca.brannon@gastonianc.gov with your school name and the quantity of tennis balls needed.