

Help Scientists with Cutting-Edge Research

You can play a major role in discovering new sources of biofuels

In the era of “going-green” you can be vital to the development of new environmentally friendly biofuels. Algae have been found to possess properties that make them a natural source for producing oil. The Saint Louis Science Center is teaming up with the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center this summer in Backyard Biofuels, a citizen scientist program, to collect algae samples and test them for potential use as biofuels.

The Donald Danforth Plant Science Center is helping St. Louis become an emerging leader in algae fuel research. St. Louis’ climate provides great potential for mass cultivation of algae, and the research being done will help scientists determine just what kind of algae is the best for biofuels.

Algae is perfect for producing biofuels because it grows much denser, requires less water, and is not used as food source so has no competition unlike other sources of biofuels. It can also produce more fuel per square inch.

Different types of algae produce different amounts of bio-oils, which can be processed into biofuels. When grown in large concentrations, the oils can be extracted and used as diesel fuel. The fuel from algae is structured and used in almost the same way as the diesel fuel you would find at a gas station.

This is where you come in. Beginning in May, the Life Science Lab at the Saint Louis Science Center will be handing out algae collecting kits. Once you have your kit, grab some friends and a camera and venture out into nature to gather some algae samples.

You can find algae samples in most natural water sources. All you need to do is collect your samples and bring them back to the Saint Louis Science Center within a week. Once your samples have been cultured and studied, you will get an email with pictures and information about your algae. You could be the one to find the species of algae that works best as biofuel!

There are loads of unidentified and untested algae species in nature, so your odds of helping scientists are high. With St. Louis citizens participating, scientists hope the city can become a hub for this type of research.

Your discoveries could make St. Louis burst with activity on the economic front. With the economy in its current state, becoming the hotspot for biofuel development would give St. Louis a push in the right direction creating tons of jobs and opportunities in the area.

So make sure to come to the Science Center after May 1st so you can help with this breakthrough research. And don’t forget to take your camera; photos of your algae-collecting adventure could be featured on the Science Center’s website!