



HAPPY EARTH DAY

Ways to celebrate Earth Day at home

Not sure how to celebrate Earth Day this year? Below are some great things you can do for Earth Day week with suggestions coming from The Old Farmer's Almanac and wildlife expert sources.

SUPPORT OUR POLLINATORS, ETC.

Plant a flower bed or garden to help bees. The top varieties to attract the pollinators that provide so much of our food are borage, butterfly bush, coneflower, cow parsnip, dahlia, daisy, dandelion, goldenrod, lavender, marigold, milkweed, snapdragon and sunflower.

To help feed monarch butterflies, plant either common or/and spider milkweed. Chives, which can also be grown for your culinary creations, orange Siberian wallflowers, and blue or purple May Night Salvia will help them, too, as they migrate.

For hummingbirds, top choices are beebalm, coral or trumpet honeysuckle, cardinal flower and sages. Providing a water source is also important for pollinators.

CLEAN UP PLASTIC IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD OR LOCAL PARK

One of the best ways to connect with the Earth is through cleanups! Go on a walk with a trash bag and help to clean up any plastic that you find. Perhaps you know of a nearby ditch that is polluted with trash that needs a spring cleaning! You'll start to realize that plastic permeates every aspect of our lives. Don't forget to recycle what plastic you can.

SWAP OUT YOUR KITCHEN AND HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

Let's talk about the cooking and

cleaning products that touch the food we eat as well as our skin. This year, we've discovered a line of kitchen and household products called "If You Care." Everything's biodegradable. Think 100% recycled aluminum foil, chemical-free parchment paper for baking, compostable bags made with potato starch, and even vegetable-based inks for their packaging. We love the company's motto: "We care simply because it's the right thing to do!"

PLANT A TREE

We love our trees! They capture carbon, cool overheated places, benefit agriculture, support pollinators, reduce the risk of disease transmission and boost local economies.

Did you know that planting one oak tree brings in more insect and bird species than an entire yard of plants? Talk to your local government about planting more trees and native garden beds in public spaces or consider planting your own on your property!

USE WILDFLOWERS AND NATIVE PLANTS

Wildflowers and indigenous species are not only beautiful but also attract native and beneficial insects that improve both pest control and pollination - meaning bigger flowers and bigger harvests. Try to simply add a couple of native plants to your garden each year, and you'll be amazed at the difference - they'll bring in pollinators as well as birds!

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE IN THE GARDEN

Caring about yourself and nature means being less wasteful and saving money, too. Who could argue with this? If you are a gardener,

here are just a few ideas: Buy in bulk when you know that you'll need a lot of topsoil, mulch, compost, or other materials. This cuts down on plastic bags. Many garden centers will even deliver right to your yard.

Reuse, recycle, or return old plastic pots and trays.

STOP PESTICIDES AND CHEMICALS IN THE GARDEN

Many beginner gardeners say these days they want to start growing without chemicals or pesticide in a way that works and saves money.

Much of this is simply about focusing less on the plant and more on the health of the soil that supports the plant. If it's nutrient-rich with organic matter, plants thrive.

You don't need chemicals to get rid of pesky garden pests: Companion planting, natural remedies, and

attracting predators, such as some insects and worms, to your garden can save you money and also save your plants.

Gardening and farming methods, such as not tilling the soil, growing cover crops during the off-season, and rotating crops (and grazing) help to retain organic materials in the soil.

CONSERVE WATER

We waste a lot of water. Avoid overwatering your plants and improve their health by knowing how much your garden really needs.

Avoid watering your garden vegetables and plants from overhead, which invites fungal disease. Water at the soil level.

For gardens, flower beds, trees, and other nonlawn areas, consider installing a drip irrigation system or

hose with irrigation holes that puts the water right into the soil, where you want it. If you must use sprinklers, put them on timers.

Harvest your rainwater from a roof, gutters, and the sky with a rain barrel. If you have a low-lying area, consider planting a "rain garden", which captures runoff, filters out pollutants and provides food and shelter for butterflies, songbirds, and other wildlife. A rain garden is a depressed area planted with grasses and flowering perennials that collects the water and allows it to soak into the ground and reduce run-off.

GET KIDS INVOLVED

Pass down a love of nature and plants to kids. There are lots of opportunities for hands-on learning experiences outside.

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The History of Earth Day

The 1960s saw a dramatic uptick in environmental concerns in the U.S. With several environmental catastrophes, particularly the Santa Barbara oil spill and the Cuyahoga River fires of 1969, many Americans felt it was time we took a more active approach in the stewardship of our planet. Gaylord Nelson was one of these people.

Inspired by these environmental disasters, the junior senator from Wisconsin established the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, to bring light to the issue of environmental responsibility and transform the public's attitude.

Inspired by the Vietnam War protests across the nations, Gaylord organized a "teach-in" on college campuses along with congressman Pete McCloskey and activist Denis Hayes. The group chose April 22,

"a weekday falling between Spring Break and Final Exams, to maximize the greatest student participation."

Of that first Earth Day, Nelson later wrote in an article, "It was on that day that Americans made it clear that they understood and were deeply concerned over the deterioration of our environment and the mindless dissipation of our resources. That day left a permanent impact on the politics of America. ... In short, Earth Day launched the Environmental decade with a bang."

Earth Day was the push the nation needed, and shortly afterward Congress passed major initiatives that would become the foundation of the nation's environmental laws, including the National Environmental Education Act, the

Occupational Safety and Health Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act. Earth Day and EarthDay.org would launch A Billion Acts of Green across the globe.

In 2020, Earth Day marked 50 years of environmental activism and showed no signs of slowing down. Despite taking place during a pandemic, Earth Day included more than 100 million people across 192 countries participating.

CELEBRATING EARTH DAY 2021



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Spring gardening with Jan

By Janice R. Edwards

The Bulletin

Every spring, my fingers get to yearning to play in the dirt and get something growing, and they won't let up on me until I get some kind of garden started.

I learned in my first few years that planting a garden directly in the ground wasn't going to work.

First, there was always a chance the San Bernard River's muddy water would inundate and destroy whatever was

planted before the harvest. And, if

that wasn't the case, my husband, Roy, refused to mow around it.

It was a problem until Dona Worrell showed me the cinder block off-the-ground planter for her container garden that her husband, Tommy, built for her. That solved a whole lot of problems. Container gardens are built up, so they stay out of most inundations, and you don't have to bend over so far to work the garden. It even keeps out some bugs. She also introduced me to heirloom vegetables, but that's another story.

I told Roy what I wanted, and my container garden began. Roy split two 55-gallon plastic drums, made cradles for them, and for extra

height, he fit them into the landing on our stairs facing the river – full sun.

We filled them with a mixture of sand and potting soil, and I started planting. It started out with just tomatoes – eight, I think. Two for each barrel half. I fed them Urban Farms tomato plant food (developed in this area of the world), and they took off.

Some days I felt like that landing was the "Little Shop Around the Corner," and I could almost hear the plants crying,

"Feed Me!" Yeah, eight was too many; this year I am down to two, and I try different things each year.

Two of the barrels have one heirloom tomato plant in them – a German Johnson and a Pink Brandywine. The one with the German Johnson in it also is growing a yellow bell pepper. Trying to find sweet peppers was hard to do this year. There were trays and trays of every hot pepper you can imagine but sweet peppers, not so much.

I have one other half barrel dedicated to Asparagus. Did you know that they have two ways of propagating? By roots and by seeds. I keep letting my asparagus go to fern stage and create seeds, hoping

they will fall below the planter and that someday we'll have wild asparagus growing there. So far, that hasn't happened, but they did come back after the freeze. I just knew I had lost them.

The last half barrel is my experimental barrel. I've tried brussels sprouts, broccoli, radishes, squash, and green beans in it. No luck at all with radishes or brussels sprouts. Great luck with squash, which Roy won't eat, until blossom end rot sets in, and broccoli, until the heat sets in.

The summer sun kills out the green beans before I have the chance to harvest more than a handful. This year, I planted new potatoes and beets. I'm pretty sure I can get a crop of new potatoes before summer gets them, but I think the beets are going to be a bust. We'll see.

On my deck, I keep a couple of buckets of multiplying green onions for cooking. It's so nice to harvest fresh ones when the recipe calls for them – so much more flavor. I am also reintroducing my loofah gourd, which makes loofah sponges. No, I am not going crazy. The loofah sponge you use in the bath or a natural scrubbing sponge in the kitchen is made from this gourd – not a marine animal like most folks think.

I planted them here once before when I was a weekender. You must leave the loofah on the vine until completely dry in order to harvest the sponge inside the gourd; otherwise, you get a mess.

So, I decided then to leave my beautiful gourds on the vine for one more week. When we got back the next weekend, every loofah (dry or green) had been purloined. Even the vines had been destroyed by the thief or thieves.

I'll devote my next column to why I like gardening and more about growing loofahs.

But loofah thieves, be forewarned. We're not weekenders this year, and my shotgun is loaded.

(Write Jan in care of The Bulletin. Email: john.bulletin@gmail.com. Snail mail: The Bulletin, PO Box 2426, Angleton TX, 77516.)



Jan's German Johnson Tomato and yellow bell pepper growing this Spring.



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