



What is Earth Day?

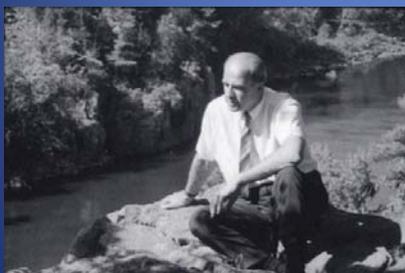
What is Earth Day?

Earth Day is a day to make people aware of environmental issues concerning their communities. A day to remember to take care of our planet, Earth.

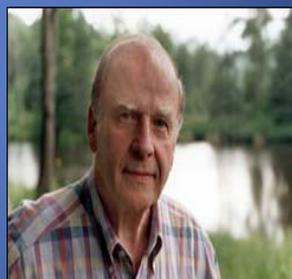


How did Earth Day get started?

In 1963, former Senator Gaylord Nelson began to worry about our planet. He knew that our world was getting polluted and that many of our plants and animals were dying. Senator Nelson decided something needed to be done to protect the environment.



Gaylord Nelson at the St. Croix River.
Courtesy of NelsonEarthDay.net.



Gaylord Nelson, the man whose work resulted in the creation of Earth Day—an international holiday.
(Photo: Fritz Albert)

Nelson first met with Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who agreed that it was an important issue. President Kennedy soon heard of Nelson's concerns and agreed that action should be taken. They decided that the President would go around the country to tell people about these concerns. President Kennedy embarked on a five-day tour in September of 1963 to discuss pollution and the environmental issues it caused. The people of the United States became more concerned about the environmental issues, but there was still nothing on the political agenda, even after President Kennedy's tour.



Robert F. Kennedy



This image from the Nelson Papers shows Kennedy during his 1963 conservation tour's stop on Wisconsin's Apostle Islands



Public Domain John F. Kennedy in New York

Nelson noticed that a number of small organizations had achieved some success in promoting environmental issues locally. Inspired by these events, he decided to have a special day to teach every one about the things that needed changing in our environment. In 1969 Nelson organized a single day environmental teach-in to put pollution, and other green issues at the top of our nation's political agenda. He wrote letters to all of the colleges and put a special article in "Scholastic Magazine" (Nelson knew that most schools got his magazine and that the kids would want to help) and took out a full-page ad in "The New York Times" announcing that Earth Day would take place on Wednesday, April 22, 1970.



Earth Day, 1971, with Jon Paris and Peter Barnes, Milwaukee



Celebrate Earth Day at the UC Davis Whole Earth Festival! | Davis, CA



earth day is held in Washington on April 22nd 1970

On that first Earth Day Celebration on April 22, 1970, it was estimated that some 20 million people took to the streets, parks and auditoriums to show their support for a cleaner America. School children, college students, moms and dads, doctors, religious leaders, bankers, farmers, and everyone in between joined in on thousands of local Earth Day Activities.

THE GAYLORD NELSON NEWSLETTER
Washington, D.C. May 1970

Earth Day - 1970

Mass Movement Begins

In New York City, thousands of persons thronged in the warm Spring sunshine, and the world-famous FINE Avenue belonged to the people. For a few hours, a small portion of the great city banded motor vehicles, and people promenade on a grand boulevard usually congested with buses, taxis and cars. It was April 22—Earth Day in New York—and it was a holiday. Assistant Chief Inspector Arthur Morgan, who was in charge of the police on the scene, observed:

"Everyone's beautiful. Just look at them. We're actually enjoying it."

In Madison, Wis., Earth Day was observed at sunrise over Lake Monona with a beautiful illumination and a reading of the last chapter of the Book of Genesis with an apology to God for man's attitude on the landscape.

Earth Day observers in Milwaukee mimicked the mood, the prying motto and the lobbying as substitutes for 227.

In Greensboro, N.C., in Atlanta, Ga., and in Miami, Fla., thousands marched in demonstrations for a clean environment. The Governor of Maine called for the Earth Day commitment to be "a truly lasting one," and the mighty Chicago Tribune observed incredulously that, after demonstrations on the city's broad new Civic Center Plaza, "there was no post-rally litter remaining to be cleaned up."

A new movement had begun, and unprecedented millions—students, laborers, farmers, housewives, politicians, professional people, liberals and conservatives—who might have found it difficult to find common agreement on any other subject, were gathering together in a massive educational effort to talk about survival and the quality of survival in a world they all share.

In the little more than seven months after Sen. Gaylord Nelson suggested the idea of national teach-ins to discuss the crisis of the environment, the movement grew rapidly through March and April. On Earth Day, it was estimated that 2,000 college campuses, 2,000 community groups and 10,000 elementary and secondary schools were holding events.

In some places it was the poet recollected while watching a rally of 10,000 in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, an "educational picnic" in other it was the serious business of government.

Special Legislation

During April, the state legislatures of Massachusetts and the House of Representatives in Pennsylvania set aside time for important addresses on the environment and the introduction and passage of legislation aimed at protecting, preserving and restoring the environment.

Scientists, ecologists, environmentalists, educators and political leaders warned daily before massive gatherings and small meetings that time was running out for the world and that all men had a responsibility to themselves and to leave a legacy of life for their children.

500 Invitations

Senator Nelson, who received nearly 500 invitations to speak at Earth Day observances, described the national teach-in as "dramatic and successful" in their educational value, but warned that Earth Day

Image courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society

One person had an idea and kept working until everyone began working together to solve it. Since the first Earth Day, the concerns about pollution have spread all over the planet. People all over the world know that there are problems we need to work on and this is our special day to look at the planet and see what needs changing. On March 21, 1971, the United Nations Secretary-General signed a proclamation establishing Earth Day an official International holiday. Now people all over the world are learning about environmental issues in their communities. The First Earth Day also led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water and Endangered Species Acts. This is what happens when people care about our world.



How can we help save the Earth?

To save the Earth we need to conserve natural resources and keep our planet clean. Most important we need to ensure that future generations have clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, as well as forests, fields, and beaches to enjoy by keeping our planet clean.



To keep our planet clean
we need to:



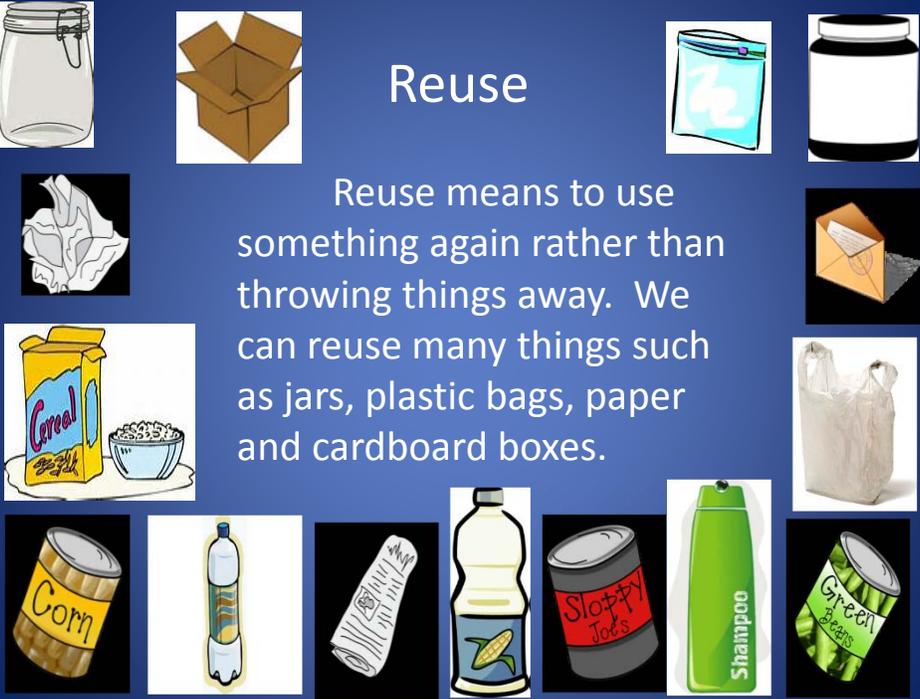
Reduce

Reduce means to use less. Sometimes we can use reduce by just using less. In stead of using paper plates, cups and napkins, use real plates and cloth napkins you can wash and reuse.



Reuse

Reuse means to use something again rather than throwing things away. We can reuse many things such as jars, plastic bags, paper and cardboard boxes.





Recycle

Recycle means to make something new from something old. We can recycle things such as plastic, paper, metal and cardboard. If you take these materials to a recycling drop off site or a recycling center then they can be made into new things.



Earth Day

On April 22nd, remind every one you know to reduce reuse and recycle. And that we should make every day Earth Day!!!!



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