Learning about Forests (LEAF)
Monthly Planning Guide
for LINKS Chapters

April 2024

Overview

Monthly Theme	Environmental Awareness Days	Cultural and Identity Awareness Days
Forests for All: Greening our Communities	Environmental Education Week (19-23) | Eco-Careers Conference (6 and 7) | Earth Day (22) | Arbor Day (26)	Arab-American Heritage Month Celebrate Diversity Month NSBE Founding Anniversary |Emancipation Day (16)

Elementary	1. Activity 1: Host a Tree Planting or Giveaway Event 2. Activity 2: Earth Day: Planet vs. Plastics 3. Activity 3: Extraordinary Earth Art Project
Middle and High School	1. Activity 1: Host a Tree Planting or Giveaway Event 2. Activity 2: Earth Day: Planet vs. Plastics 3. Activity 3: Extraordinary Earth Art Project

Mentoring Moment Suggestion

Seek out passionate volunteers, activists, elders, and Indigenous members of the community, consider accessing the expertise of arborists, gardeners, naturalists, ecologists, park managers, foresters, landscape architects/designers, city planners, elected leaders, stewardship groups, civic organizations, or journalists.

Forests for All: Greening Our Communities

ELEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

SUMMARY

April is Earth Month and a perfect time to come together in your community to care for the land, water, and air that sustains all living things. These activities will provide youth—and their families, neighbors, or classes—with opportunities to engage in service and stewardship for the Earth.

MATERIALS

- **Trees for Wildlife™ Event Planning Guide**
- **Arbor Day Event Calendar** (https://www.arborday.org/celebrate/all-events.cfm)
- **NWF Native Plant Finder**
- **Earth Day 2024 Action Toolkit** *(attached)*
- **Students Rebuild Extraordinary Art Project** *(attached)*

BACKGROUND[1]

April is the month we come together to celebrate this incredible planet on which we live. Biodiversity loss, pollution, and a warming climate can bring up many emotions, but we have hope, and hope is powerful. Start with one simple action that can be taken no matter where you live.

The activities below will guide groups in taking actions for the planet by planting trees, planning stewardship events, joining public awareness campaigns, creating climate-themed art, and more.

Activity 1: Host a Tree Planting or Giveaway Event

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Partner with National Wildlife Federation to Host a tree Planting or Giveaway Event.

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Arbor Day
In addition to the Trees for Wildlife™ program, **National Arbor Day** is always celebrated on the last Friday in April, but many states observe Arbor Day on different dates based on the best tree planting times for their area. Planting events and celebrations take place all over the U.S. **Search the Arbor Day event calendar** to see if your community is hosting tree plantings, giveaways, or celebrations for Arbor Day.

WHAT TO DO

The following instructions outline how to select sites and plant a tree. The complete **Trees for Wildlife™ Event Planning Guide** outlines the benefits of trees, planting instructions, and step by step instructions for hosting a tree planting event in your community.

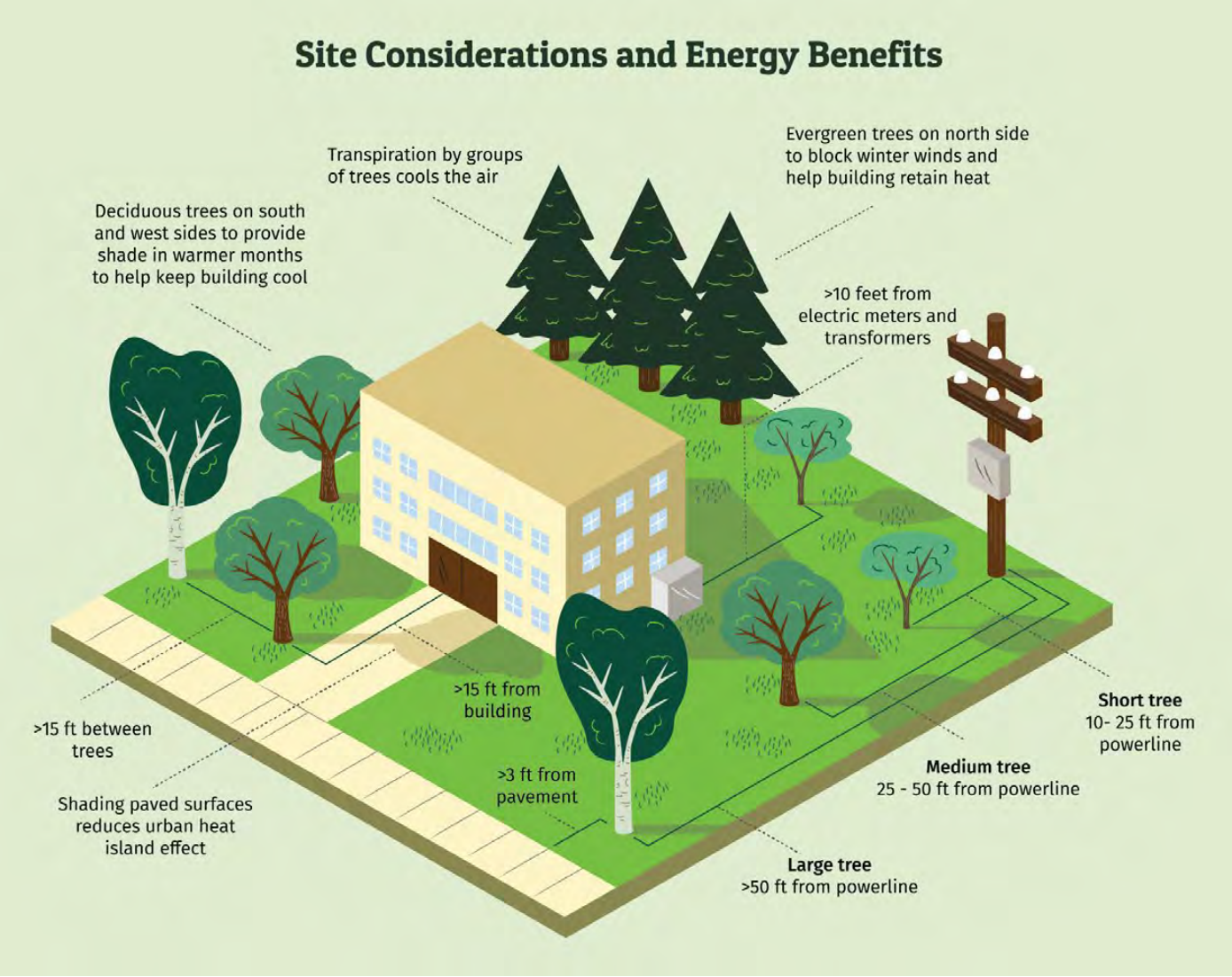
Plant Trees!

1. Select a site in your community.
Begin by identifying a site and making sure you have approval to plant a tree(s). You may wish to consider multiple locations up front, since not all locations may be appropriate for trees in the long run. Some suggested locations you can explore in your community are: schools, library, senior center, house of worship, park, apartment complex, or community center.

2. Research Native Tree Species for the Site
A tree field guide or the **USDA Plant Database** are both great places to look up information about trees and their characteristics such mature height, amount of sun or shade needed, preferred native habitat and tolerance for different kinds of soil and drainage conditions. These factors will also play into whether a plant is suitable for sites that are urban, rural or somewhere in between.

In addition to being attractive, the flowers of some trees are particularly beneficial to pollinators and trees with fruits or nuts will provide food for birds and small mammals. Trees that are host plants to butterfly and moth species, as identified in **NWF's Native Plant Finder**, will support these amazing insects as caterpillars and in turn provide food to help birds raise their young. Selecting keystone tree species, ones that host the greatest numbers of butterflies and moths, is a strategic way to greatly enhance the wildlife value of a planting.

3. *Assess the site.*
Follow these considerations to help you to determine which of the sites is the most appropriate for the trees to be planted.



How to Plant your Tree

	BARE ROOT TREE	SEEDLING PLUG TREE
1) PREPARE THE HOLE	Mark an area that is wide enough for the roots to spread, remove sod and dig the hole. The depth of the hole should be about equal to the longest root.	Mark an area at least 2-3 times the width of the roots, remove sod and dig the hole. The depth of the hole should equal the height of the root ball (not the container).
	Loosen soil along the edges of the hole to make it easier for tree roots to spread and pile all soil next to the planting hole to refill quickly.	
2) PLACE THE TREE	Form some of the loose soil into a cone-shaped mound at the bottom of the planting hole to help encourage roots to spread. Handling the roots gently, hold the tree above the mound and spread roots outward.	Remove the tree from its plug or container carefully, applying pressure around each of the sides if tight. Loosen any roots that seem to be tight, tangled, or circling and gently arrange the loose roots outward.
	Set the tree straight up and down at the center of the hole and check to be sure that all of the roots will be covered but none of the root collar/flare of the tree where the trunk begins.	
3) BACK-FILL THE HOLE	Return some of the loose soil to the hole around the root ball and tamp gently in place by hand. Ensure the tree remains upright and any loose roots continue to spread outward. Continue filling and gently tamping the remaining soil into the planting hole until level with the ground. Test settling by adding some water, then add more soil if necessary. Excess soil can be used to create a small berm or raised edge around the planting hole to form a shallow basin that will help encourage water to soak in rather than run off.	
4) WATER	Generously water the newly-planted tree using a hose, sprinkler or water poured slowly from a bucket.	
5) APPLY MULCH	Add a 2-3” layer of mulch in a 1-3’ circle around the tree, taking care that mulch does not contact the trunk.	
6) CLEAN UP	Remove any tags, wires, stakes or other trash so that they do not hinder future tree growth or litter the site.	

Activity 2: Earth Day 2024: Planet vs. Plastics[2]

Planet vs. Plastics unites students, parents, businesses, governments, churches, unions, individuals, and NGOs in an unwavering commitment to call for the end of plastics for the sake of human and planetary health, demanding a 60% reduction in the production of plastics by 2040 and an ultimate goal of building a plastic-free future for generations to come.

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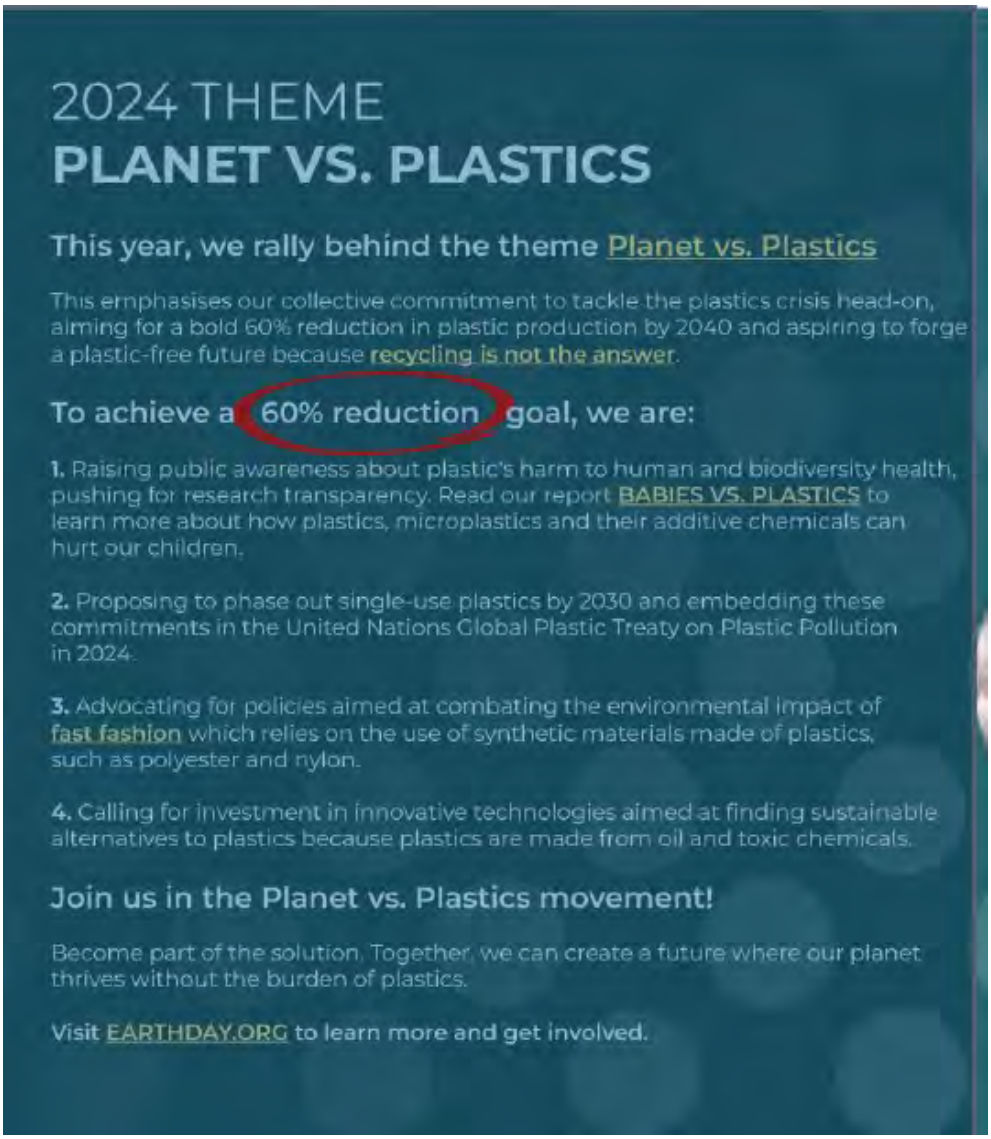
WHAT TO DO

1. Use the Earth Day 2024 Action Toolkit (attached) to join campaigns, plan events, or find resources to build public awareness about plastic's harm to humans and the environment.



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Activity 3: Students Rebuild Extraordinary Earth Project

Youth will channel their learnings in sustainability to create beautiful works of art using found objects in nature.

The art guide (linked below and attached) will share instructions for getting started on the Extraordinary Earth Project, how to submit your art, and a suggested art project.

- **Spring 2024 Art Making Guide**
- **Spring 2024 Art Making Guide** (En Español)

WHAT TO DO

1.Watch the introduction video below to learn how to get started on the Extraordinary Earth Project.

2. Register, set, go!

Learn about how we can protect the extraordinary Earth through tackling global environmental issues like climate change. We provide the lessons, content guides and other website resources.

3. Create your art.

Create art out of recycled materials that helps deepen connections with the following environmental themes: Repurposing Waste, Deforestation, Clean Air and Ecosystems.

4. ***Share your artwork.***

For each artwork you submit, the Bezos Family Foundation will make a $5 donation to organizations tackling environmental issues responding to the climate crisis across the world.

Forests for All: Greening Our Communities

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

SUMMARY

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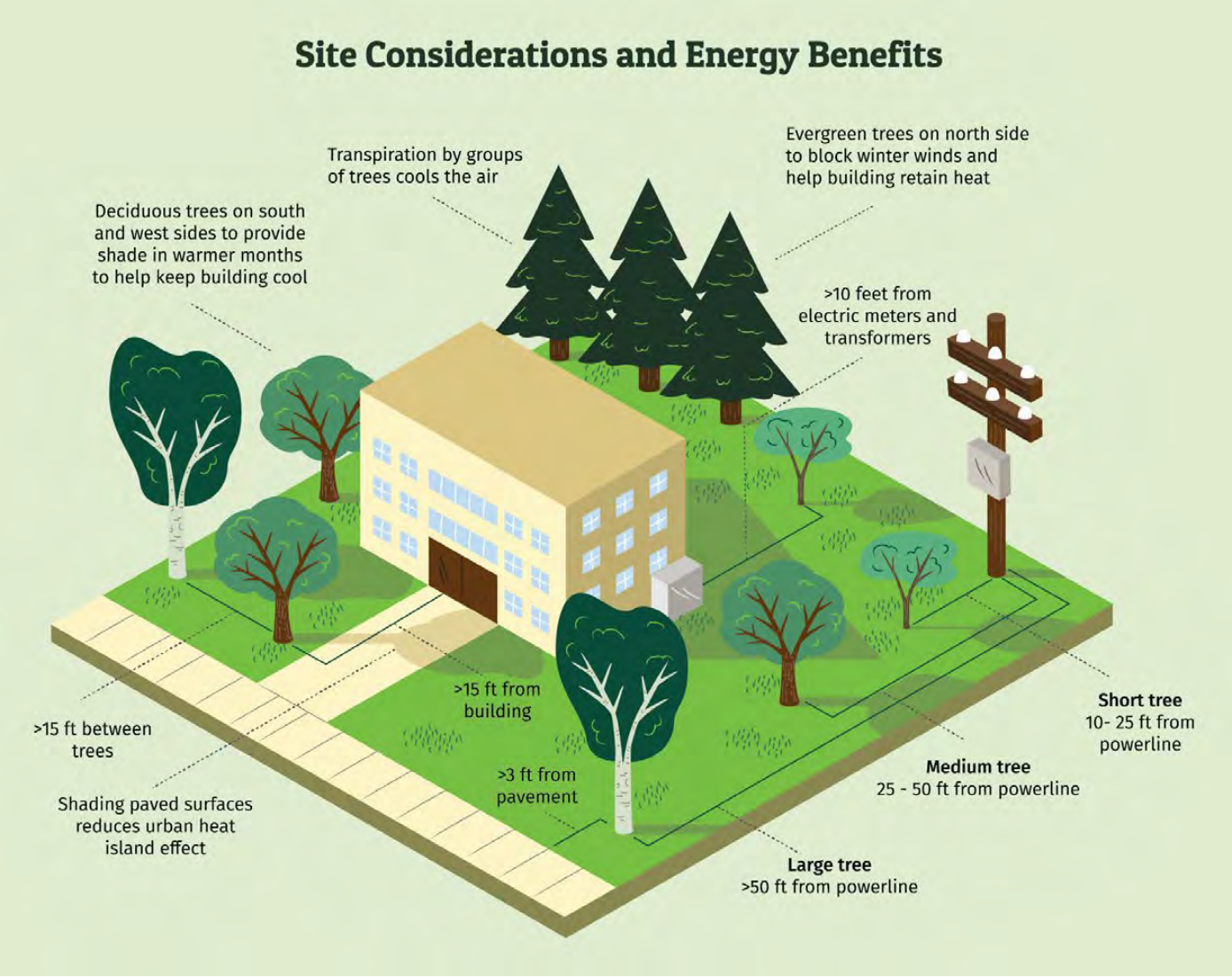

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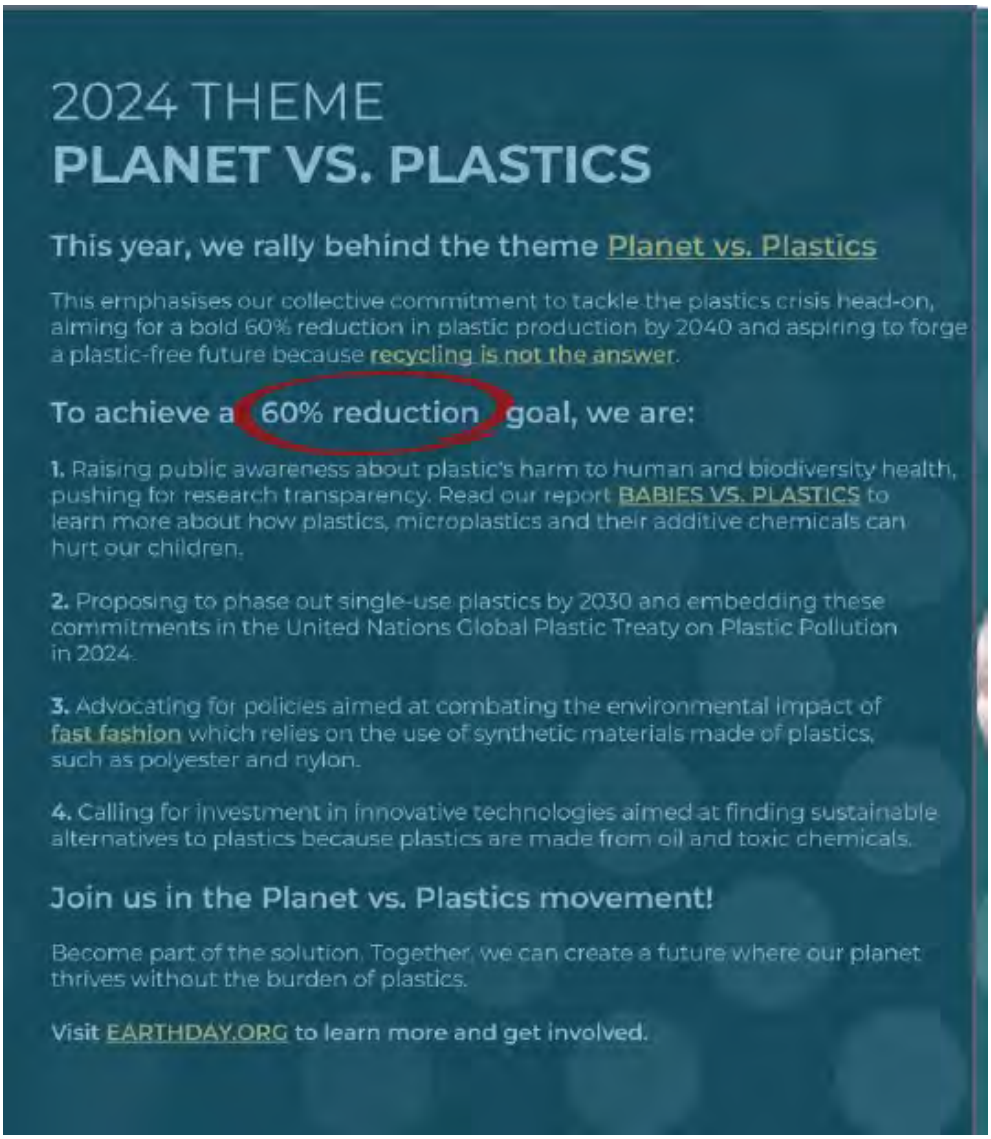

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EARTH DAY 2024

ACTION **TOOLKIT**

EARTHDAY.ORG

ABOUT
EARTH DAY

WELCOME TO THE WORLD'S LARGEST ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT!

Every April 22nd individuals from all backgrounds and walks of life unite in a global effort to advance sustainability and climate action, marking the annual observation of Earth Day.

Our world is at a **pivotal moment,** necessitating a collective call from citizens worldwide to encourage governments and the private sector to acknowledge and rectify their roles in the environmental crisis.

Simultaneously, we advocate for the exploration of bold, creative, and innovative solutions.

YOUR ROLE IS VITAL!

As a consumer, voter, and community member, your influence matters.

Whether in business or local communities, you, as an individual, hold power to drive change.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPACT OF YOUR VOICE!

When your actions sync with millions globally, we create an inclusive and impactful movement impossible to ignore.

EARTHDAY.ORG

2024 THEME
PLANET VS. PLASTICS

This year, we rally behind the theme Planet vs. Plastics

This emphasises our collective commitment to tackle the plastics crisis head-on, aiming for a bold 60% reduction in plastic production by 2040 and aspiring to forge a plastic-free future because recycling is not the answer.

To achieve a 60% reduction goal, we are:

1. Raising public awareness about plastic's harm to human and biodiversity health, pushing for research transparency. Read our report BABIES VS. PLASTICS to learn more about how plastics, microplastics and their additive chemicals can hurt our children.

2. Proposing to phase out single-use plastics by 2030 and embedding these commitments in the United Nations Global Plastic Treaty on Plastic Pollution in 2024.

3. Advocating for policies aimed at combating the environmental impact of fast fashion which relies on the use of synthetic materials made of plastics, such as polyester and nylon.

4. Calling for investment in innovative technologies aimed at finding sustainable alternatives to plastics because plastics are made from oil and toxic chemicals.

Join us in the Planet vs. Plastics movement!

Become part of the solution. Together, we can create a future where our planet thrives without the burden of plastics.

Visit EARTHDAY.ORG to learn more and get involved.

EARTHDAY.ORG

MORE WAYS
TO TAKE ACTION

1. Sign the EDO Global Plastics Treaty petition
Plastics pose a global threat, endangering the environment, biodiversity, and human health, but collective efforts can avert the looming crisis and necessitate decisive action.

2. Join the Social Squad
Make an impact right from your chair! Get regular emails with posts to share on Facebook and Twitter, boosting the environmental movement to reach more people with just a few clicks.

3. Reject Fast Fashion
Learn how fast fashion fuels overconsumption, disposability, and environmental harm while perpetuating social injustice through exploitative labor practices and a lack of regulatory oversight. And learn how to build a sustainable, affordable, and fashionable closet.

4. Take the #PlasticsDetoxChallenge
Reduce your plastic use by avoiding single-use items, share eco-friendly swaps on social media using #PlasticDetox, & inspire a wider shift towards a plastic-free lifestyle for a collective impact on a plastic-free future!

5. Educate yourself on Plastics
Shift your perspective towards plastics, understand the detrimental impacts to human and planetary health, and find sustainable alternatives to foster positive change.

6. Explore the State Climate Education Map
See what your state is doing to teach Climate Education and find out who you can petition to write to if they are not.

***Click on the titles above to learn more about the many ways to invest in our planet and support our campaigns.**

EARTHDAY.ORG

MARK EARTH DAY
PLAN YOUR *OWN* EVENT

Embark on your own Earth Day celebration!

Explore the toolkits below for ideas and guidance on organizing a meaningful Earth Day activity for your community: whether it is your local street, your place of work, be it your local school or where you celebrate your faith.

Big or small, you can create a special memory by marking Earth Day and advocating for the health of our planet.

MARCH OR RALLY:

Plan an Earth Day march or rally.

You can call for a reduction in plastic production of 60% by 2040.

JOIN THE GREAT GLOBAL CLEAN UP:

Host or join a cleanup in your community-use our Great Global Clean Up (GGCU) Map here - register your event

Consider doing a brand trash audit at your clean up event too.

LOOK OUT FOR LOCAL EVENTS:

Explore your local newspaper and your town's online noticeboard for other other activities or events being planned in your area to mark Earth Day 2024. Sign up and get involved.

EARTHDAY.ORG

PLAN AN EARTH DAY
MARCH OR RALLY

Step 1: Select an ideal site, date, and time— Earth Day is on April 22nd every year. When planning: (1) consider accessibility and community needs, (2) register your rally on our map, and (3) plan an accessible walking route for a march around significant landmarks.

Step 2: Organize a diverse planning group, including local government members and civic organizations, to appoint site captains and ensure a well-run event.

Step 3: Obtain necessary licenses and permits by researching local protest laws, obtaining permits in advance, and consulting local authorities.

Step 4: Gather volunteers by registering your rally, advertising to various communities, and utilizing online and offline methods for outreach.

Step 5: Line up support and supplies, including organizing a poster-making session, seeking food donations, and gathering necessary event supplies.

Step 6: Start your rally day by checking the weather, sending reminders, inviting media coverage, arriving early to set up, and hosting an orientation for participants.

Step 7: Post to social media using #EarthDay and #PlanetvsPlastics, share images with local media outlets, and send thank-you emails to cooperating entities.

Step 8: Keep momentum after the rally by sharing resources with attendees, such as voter registration information, sustainability goals for local representatives, and participation in cleanups or tree planting initiatives.

Step 9: Encourage ongoing engagement through event registration on the Earth Day map, volunteering with EARTHDAY.ORG, becoming a member, taking quizzes on environmental topics, and signing the Global Plastics Treaty.

EARTHDAY.ORG

HOST OR JOIN
A COMMUNITY CLEANUP

Step 1: Choose a suitable site, date, and time for your cleanup, considering accessibility and weather conditions, and register your event online to connect with global volunteers.

Step 2: Organize a planning group, including members from various organizations and civic entities, appoint site captains, and delegate roles to ensure a smooth cleanup process.

Step 3: Attract volunteers by advertising your cleanup, utilizing online platforms like Facebook or Eventbrite, and distributing posters offline to diverse communities.

Step 4: Arrange supplies, such as trash bags, gloves, & first aid kits, & coordinate with local waste management for proper disposal. Acknowledge contributors in your promotions.

Step 5: On cleanup day, check the weather, send reminders to participants, invite media coverage, and arrive early to set up the event.

Step 6: Prioritize safety during an orientation, emphasizing proper attire, team collaboration, and sensitivity to the environment. Identify what to remove (trash, recyclables) and what to leave (nature, homeless encampments).

Step 7: Dispose of waste responsibly by sorting into categories and contacting local waste departments for guidance if needed.

Step 8: Follow up by reporting your cleanup for tracking on the public map, sharing before-&-after photos on social media using relevant hashtags, tagging @thegreatglobalcleanup, & expressing gratitude to cooperating entities.

***To learn more about EARTHDAY.ORG's Great Global Cleanup, and for additional planning resources and toolkits, please click here**

EXPLORE OTHER EARTH DAY 2024
ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

Idea #1: Explore your local press for what's going on in your area.

Idea #2: Organize a teach-in to educate your peers or students about the importance of environmental action. Check out our climate literacy resources for an in-depth guide!

Idea #3: Plant a pollinator garden using native species to support local populations of butterflies, bees, and other organisms that are critical to biodiversity.

Idea #4: Form a community sustainability committee to create a happier, healthier, and wealthier environment for you and your neighbors.

Idea #5: Help your family and friends register to vote using our Vote Earth resources.

***Important Notes:**

1. Be sure to register any and all events you plan on the official Earth Day Map.

2. Post what you're doing this Earth Day and make sure to tag #EarthDay and/or #PlanetvsPlastics to possibly be featured on our social channels!

EARTHDAY.ORG

EARTH DAY IDEAS
FOR COMMUNITIES

- Universities
- Professors
- Students
- Administrators
- Home Owners
- Parents
- Schools
- Businesses
- City Governments
- Faith Leaders
- Community Groups
- Senior Activists
- Creators
- Non-Profit Organizations

EARTHDAY.ORG

WE LOOK FORWARD

TO SEEING YOUR EARTH DAY EVENTS!

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EARTHDAY.ORG 1752 N STREET NW, SUITE 700, WASHINGTON, DC 20036 INFO@EARTHDAY.ORG (202) 0044-518

EARTHDAY.ORG

students rebuild

EXTRAORDINARY EARTH PROJECT

Spring 2024 Art Guide

Art is a powerful tool for solving global issues.

Throughout history, the arts have inspired action, spread ideas, stirred emotions and built community. This is why art is at the core of Students Rebuild's art for activism, "artivism", program and classroom lesson plans.

This year's Challenge, **The Extraordinary Earth Project**, brings students and classrooms together to connect with nature and create art that protects our Earth.

How does it work?

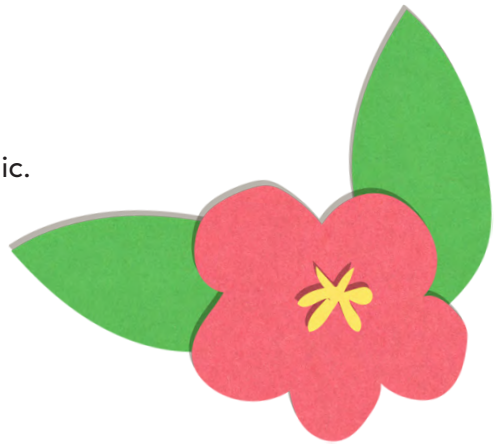
- First, students learn about our environments and ecosystems! Classrooms complete lesson plans to learn more about the extraordinary Earth; lessons may vary based on age and state curriculum, including lessons on ecosystems, environmentalism, climate conservation, the food chain, and more.
- Next, students channel their learnings in sustainability to found objects in nature, creating beautiful works of art using found objects in nature to create beautiful works of art.
- **BE CREATIVE:** Use any artistic medium - painting, digital artwork, poetry, murals and photography — the world needs YOUR art to tackle our climate crisis!

This art guide will share instructions for getting started on the Extraordinary Earth Project, how to submit your art, and a suggested art project.

But, the Challenge accepts all forms of artivism — create art that fits your classroom's lesson plans!

Whatever you do, make it fun, and consider making it public. Our students have a message about environmental conservation; let's share it loud and clear!

Whether you have an hour a week, or just five minutes a month, artivism can be incorporated into most lesson plans to nurture student creativity into climate action!



What are you waiting for?

Let's get started on the Extraordinary Earth Project!

Art is EVERYWHERE!

The following instructions help students think about how the climate crisis affects their communities.

During the planning phase, students should consider the questions below — and perhaps do some quick practice sketches of how they can use materials to create art, produce less waste and clean up their community.

1. **THE ISSUE:** What environment-related issue do you want to address through your art? (i.e. litter, CO2 gas emissions, oil spills, wildlife conservation, and plastic usage.)

2. **THE MESSAGE:** What does connecting with nature and protecting our extraordinary Earth mean to you? What actions do you hope your art will inspire your community to take?

3. **THE ART:** What images will help you achieve this, and how will the elements and principles of art also be used to communicate the message?

   For older students: Use the internet to see examples of how non-profits and other artists are using visuals (art, videos, or photography) to communicate a similar message.

4. **THE MEDIUM:** Different outlets can include different materials—you can draw, paint, block or screen print, collage, use photography, graphic design software, or other methods. What medium do you want to use?

5. **(OPTIONAL) THE TEXT:** What would you like to say about environmentalism, the climate crisis, and/or methods of mitigating impact? Why is eco-climate conservation important to you? Your community? Your future?

6. Finally...**CREATE!** Let students use their plans, sketches and available materials to execute their creative visions and share their art far and wide!

Developing a Healthy Art Process

Promoting Artistic Behaviors and Character Development

The skills and practices exercised in art-making can be applied to personal growth and character development. Here are some tips to help you coach your students in the creative process that will also transfer to social-emotional growth:

- **PROBLEM SOLVE AND EXPLORE:** Drawing or creating any kind of art requires problem-solving, experimentation, and iterations. Allow your students time and space to play with and explore materials, plan and sketch their ideas to discover what works best in their art-making.
- **COLLABORATE:** Consider having students work in pairs or small groups to brainstorm their art and messaging. Teamwork and artistic collaboration can help students generate creative ideas, facilitate informal dialogue about activism and social justice, and encourage peer-to-peer learning and motivation.
- **STRETCH AND TAKE RISKS:** Making art can be a vulnerable and sometimes frustrating experience. Create a respectful, safe space for students to take risks and stretch their abilities through positive reinforcement, and please refrain from defining a "right" or "wrong" way for students to create art. Focus on artistic behaviors (ex. problem solving, persistence) instead of visual outcomes.
- **PERSIST:** Student art might not match their vision at first, or materials and techniques might not work out as planned. Provide constructive feedback and supportive reassurance to help students persist and work through creative or artistic challenges.

Spring 2024 Art Project Challenge: Suggested Lesson Plan

Let's get started with artivism! Teams can complete and upload the following art project to your team dashboard.

EXTRA CREDIT: Post your art on social media and tag your friends at @StudentsRebuild!

Spring 2024 Art Project: Community Engagement

Classrooms will create beautiful art using found materials to learn about local and global ecosystems and climate impact.

Grades K-7	Grades 8+
Nature Creations: Students are asked to go on a nature walk to pick up a piece of nature, i.e. a pinecone. Once inside, students can transform their found piece into their favorite animal. Students use their creativity to learn about animals and their local habitat, something younger students can understand and enjoy. *Additional options for creative digital art submissions.*	**Ecosystem Triarama**: In this art project, students can draw their own neighborhood, or a neighborhood around them, and depict an environment where people, animals, and nature can thrive. Perfect for older students with more advanced art skills and an artistic vision. A project that incorporates different wildlife with nature, including the relationship between humans and their environment. *Additional options for creative digital art submissions.*

Digital Project - All Ages

For these submissions, we invite you to think creatively about the theme through art made on your computer. Digital projects could include graphic design, digital paint, a written essay, poetry, etc., using the following creative prompts:

- What do you hope your community/nature/Earth looks like in 50 years?
- What do you appreciate about the Earth?
- Where is the most beautiful natural area in your town?
- What do you believe is the best way to preserve the environment?

Examples of Artivism in Action!

→ **Meet Monsieur Steve, an art ambassador from Toronto, Canada. Follow his classroom as they explore nature and create animals using collected materials!**

Watch Monsieur Steve on **YouTube** and **Instagram**!

Share your Artivism on Social Media:

Upload your art and tag Students Rebuild to showcase your art for the world.

@StudentsRebuild @studentsrebuild @studentsrebuild

Your team isn't limited to one piece of art—you can continue submitting art that makes a difference all year and explore multiple art challenges from the Fall and Spring art guides.

The Extraordinary Earth Project ends at midnight on June 11, 2024.

How to Submit Your Art!

There are two ways to submit your art to Students Rebuild:

1. **MAIL** us your art pieces
2. **DIGITALLY SUBMIT** them online

To get started, log in to your Students Rebuild portal and go to studentsrebuild.org/submit. From there, you can specify how many people are on your team and how many art pieces you plan to submit at once. Your donation amount will be calculated automatically and shown on your private dashboard, as well as on the team map and your shareable Team Page

For more information on how to submit, including details on mailing your art to Students Rebuild, please refer to the Leader Guide or the submission page of the website.

During February & April Double Months, each art piece submitted will double your team's donation for Extraordinary Earth Project partners, doubling your reach and global impact!

There's much more to explore.
Learn about the Extraordinary Earth Project at studentsrebuild.org/earth.