

PUT THE ACTION INTO SOCIAL ACTION

Fifty years ago, April 20 was designated as Earth Day to give a voice to an emerging public consciousness about the state of our planet.

In the decades leading up to the first Earth Day, Americans consumed vast amounts of leaded gas through massive and inefficient automobiles; industry belched out smoke and sludge with little fear of the consequences from either the law or bad press; and air pollution was commonly accepted as the smell of prosperity. Until this point, mainstream America remained largely oblivious to environmental concerns and how a polluted environment threatens human health.



However, the stage was set for change with the publication of Rachel Carson's New York Times bestseller *Silent Spring* in 1962. The book represented a watershed moment, selling more than 500,000 copies in 24 countries as it raised public awareness and concern for living organisms, the environment and the inextricable links between pollution and public health.

We spent Earth Day 2020 quarantined in our homes in attempt to slow the spread of a deadly new virus. During that time, the air has improved, vegetation has grown back, pollution has decreased, and animals thought nearly extinct—or nonexistent in our more urbanized world—have reappeared.

What can we do to keep our environment healthy even after quarantine ends and we resume our lives? Here are some things you can do to get ready for that day.



GREEN TIPS:

Saving water around the home is another way to reduce the environmental impact of your lifestyle and, as with reducing energy usage, can save you plenty of money.

- **Use short cycles for washing clothes:** Modern washing machines have an “Eco Wash” option you should take full advantage of.
- **Fix leaks:** Ensure there are no leaks in your plumbing system—including pipes, taps, toilets—to prevent unnecessary water wastage.
- **Take short showers:** Hot showers are an incredible luxury, so don't waste this by spending far too long in the shower.
- **Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth:** This often-forgotten habit wastes gallons of water. Turn off the tap.
- **Install tap aerators on all your taps:** Aerators are cheap additions to the end of taps that reduce the flow of water while improving the pressure of a tap's stream.
- **Install a low-flow shower head:** Low-flow shower heads work in a similar way to tap aerators—aerating the stream of water, improving pressure, and saving plenty of water and energy.

Correction: Regarding the suggestion to replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), CFLs have been made all but obsolete with the advances in LED sources. LED bulbs are more energy-efficient and longer lasting than their competitors. LEDs fit in more types of fixtures and are dimmable by more types of existing dimmers. LED light bulbs come in a range of colors from warm to cool. Finally, the quality of light from LEDs is much more acceptable for residential applications. For more information, click [HERE](#).



Make Your Own Cleaning Products

Modern household cleaning products are expensive and often damage the environment, so a great green alternative is to make some yourself.

Safe and environmentally-friendly substitutes use ingredients such as baking soda, soap flakes, lemon, cornstarch, and vinegar.

It's quick to find recipes for them on the internet; try [Better Home & Gardens](#) for a helping hand.

Make a Green Craft

We will also post directions to create a craft that will enhance the environment. These crafts won't require anything special—just stuff you have around the house or items that you would normally throw in the garbage. Occasionally, you may have to purchase a few items at the supermarket or craft store, but most craft activities will be simple and will involve even the youngest family members.

This week, we'll give you directions to make a **nature suncatcher wind chime** you can hang on your porch, balcony, the branch of a tree in your yard or even a smaller version inside near a window that is open for fresh air.



Homemade Nature Suncatcher Wind Chime

Start by getting the kids involved and active. Send them into the backyard or take a walk to gather sticks, weeds, and pickable blooms. Try to keep everything small in size, but don't limit to just that.

You could definitely make this part an entire activity in itself and do a scavenger hunt for certain colors, textures, or shapes. Kids always love a good scavenger hunt, and nature ones are classic!

Note: You don't have to be a kid to make one of these nifty wind chimes yourself. On your daily walk or around your yard or apartment complex, look for natural items you can use to make a wind chime.

Finding special things in nature is fun, but remember that a little bit will go a long way for this activity.

MATERIALS:

- Sticks, weeds, leaves, and pickable blooms
- Clear contact paper or wax paper
- Scissors
- Marker or pen
- Rings from Mason jar lids (Available in the supermarket)
- String (we used hemp cord, but yarn works too)
- A sturdy stick

SUNCATCHER WIND CHIMES STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Cut a piece of contact paper and trace the mason jar rings onto the contact paper side (not the part you peel off). Trace as many as you have rings for.
2. Then peel the backing off the contact paper and tape the sheet onto the surface, sticky side up.
3. Hand over the stash of nature items they found and let them fill in those circles. It can very cool to peel apart the flowers if they were big. You can use a petal instead of a whole flower. Or if the flower is closed up or bell-shaped, peel it open to fan it out.
4. Create a collage by placing the flowers/leaves/twigs/petals face-down on each contact paper circle.
5. Finish off the suncatcher with another piece of contact paper over top, sticky side down. Press them as flat as you can, sticking the contact paper wherever you can.
6. Then cut the collages out along the circles we traced.
7. Take a piece of string and tie a knot around the rings.
8. Push the suncatcher circles into the rings. You shouldn't have to tape them; they should stay securely in place.
9. Tie the strings onto a stick to make them into a wind chime and tie another string to each end of the stick. Hang it from your porch or a nearby tree.