

An Altogether Advantage

How Celebrating Earth Day Will Help Both the Earth and You

by Melanie Albright

Since 1970, Earth Day has been gracing us with its presence every year on the 22nd of April, serving as a reminder and informer of how we've improved on environmental awareness and treatment as well as encouraging us to keep it up. Planting trees is a very popular and effective method in achieving the goal of alleviating the stresses we put on our planet, but, while this is the most common method of celebrating Earth Day, one can go much farther than that. Creating a greener environment in honor of Earth Day is beneficial for the place we call home as well as for us at the same time.

This year, don't stop at planting a tree when celebrating Earth Day. Do the planet and yourself a favor by installing beautiful flowering plants as well. Not only will these help to improve the purity of the air we breathe, but flowers have shown to generate happiness by improving the aesthetics of one's environment. Stress can be caused by a bounty of things, many of which we have no control over or hope of removing from our lives. One simple way to undercut some of this stress is to have a flourishing garden and hanging planters just outside your window and perhaps even some flower décor inside your home. Just being surrounded by beautiful foliage can increase happiness by diminishing stress levels, making one feel more secure and relaxed. **Tip: Hanging plants offer a great way to start your day. After the sun has risen, give them a drink of water, which hydrates them while simultaneously giving you a breath of fresh air and a bit of physical activity before you've had your coffee or tea. Watering your hanging plants first thing in the morning will set the tone for a productive and proactive day. Another idea to make you feel good is to create a floral**

display in a vase. Cutting the ends of the stems and adding water is just the beginning. You can pick your favorite flowers and arrange them any way you like, bringing plants into your home while getting your creative energy flowing.



The benefits of being encompassed in a well-landscaped and flourishing environment don't stop at improving your mental health. These benefits stretch into improving your general performance as well since your perception of vitality will increase, leaving you energized and willing to put more effort into the task at hand, whether it is of work or play. Furthermore, your sense of focus on and understanding of what you're doing will sharpen thanks to a lively environment. Studies show that work is normally of higher quality and completed with a much higher accuracy rate when done in environments that contain nature.

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Celebrating Earth Day through planting trees, flowers and shrubs proves as a wise investment, yielding not only environmental benefits, but social ones too. Taking steps to enhance the quality of your environment by increasing the plant life in your yard is essential, as the aesthetic appeal of one's landscape can shape and reflect that of one's mind. ✦



Did You Know

1. More trees are killed or ruined each year from improper pruning than by pests. Improper can mean too early, too late, too much or too little, depending on the plant. Early spring is the best time to prune for most plant-life. For budding plants, you'll want to get all of the buds off so new ones can grow in and the plant is able to reach its full potential, but remember that the optimal pruning time does vary based on when the plant flowers. The

best thing to do if you're concerned with the timing of a particular plant is to simply ask your landscape specialist.

2. When spring comes around (which, by the way, is March 20th), the thought that many have after that feeling of relief from the cold days of winter being over is generally one along the lines of cleaning. Not only is it important to make sure the innards of one's home are in tip-top shape, but the outer parts shouldn't be overlooked as well. Spring cleaning is necessary for your yard and it doesn't stop at pruning away what didn't survive in the winter. Mulch beds will need to be thinned out, as temperatures will start to rise, leaving plants susceptible to overheating if a thick layer of mulch is left. Another necessity is to spray for weeds, as the rising temps will also promote their growths.
3. Spring break is approaching and while it does give family an opportunity to spend more time together, it is also infamous for dissipating any and all of the information children have learned in the semester leading up to the break. The presence of plants, however, can prevent this dissipation from occurring. Being around plant life has shown to increase memory retention and concentration up to twenty percent according to a University of Michigan study. The presence of nature, whether at home or in the workplace, stimulates both the senses and the mind, improving mental cognition and performance.

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