

From the EAC

Earth Day is on April 22. Here are some ways to celebrate for the whole year:

5 ways to help the planet in 2021

Ditch the glitter

When tiny pieces of plastic enter the ocean, fish, seabirds and other marine life gobble them up. Sure, it's fun, but glitter is still plastic, and "all that glitter goes down the drain into our waterways," says Laurie David, co-author of *Imagine It!: A Handbook for a Happier Planet*. Last year, scientists found the highest concentration of dangerous-to-sea-life microplastics ever measured on the ocean floor, about 1.9 million pieces in 11 square miles. Even if you're not glittering your kids' art projects (colored salt or rice is a good substitute), check your makeup kit. That added sparkle may come from microplastics. Instead, consider products that use synthetic mica, a sparkly but biodegradable alternative to plastic glitter. (**Many examples can be found through an online search for "synthetic mica."**)

Try a new way to compost

Food scraps and yard waste make up more than 30 percent of what we throw away. Composting is "one of the biggest ways to have an impact and reduce waste," says Kathryn Kellogg, author of *101 Ways to Go Zero Waste*. Food scraps don't break down in landfills; they take up space and release methane, a big contributor to global warming. Home composting doesn't have to stink or attract rodents. In fact, Bokashi (loosely translated from a Japanese word for fermentation) composting uses microorganisms to effectively "pickle" food waste (including meat scraps, bones and oil) into a nutrient-rich mix that can be dug into soil, where it breaks down completely within a few weeks. (**More information on Bokashi composting: [Bokashi composting](#)**)

Embrace Earth-friendly fashion

11.3 million tons of textiles went into landfills in 2018. "If we can keep the stuff that's already been made in circulation a little longer, there's less impact on the planet from production," says Darby Hoover, senior resource specialist with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). That means, think before you buy. Could you patch the jeans you have, shop an online second-hand store like thredUP or buy from Patagonia's Worn Wear line of clothing made from recycled garments? Or maybe you could trade your jeans for something else in a local [BuyNothing](#) group (members gift each other stuff they no longer need or want). If you are investing in a new pair, consider companies like Levi's and Madewell, which have partnered with Cotton's [Blue Jeans Go Green program](#), which gives discounts to those who turn in a pair of jeans before buying a new one. Patagonia also gives you a store credit for returning merchandise to them when you no longer want it.

Quit the plastic habit

We eat, swallow or breathe 2,000 particles of plastic a week, about the weight of a credit card. If we don't [cut back on plastic](#), scientists predict that the amount dumped in our oceans (11 million metric tons each year) will triple in 20 years. It's so pervasive, in fact, that if you take a minute to walk room by room through your home, you'll see it everywhere, says environmental activist David. "You will be floored." It all adds up: If you floss every day, you're tossing 7.3 little plastic floss containers every year—not to mention shampoo bottles, kitchen sponges and plastic straws. Instead, try products that are made with non-plastic or biodegradable materials or with containers that can be refilled or reused (such as **shampoo bars, reusable produce bags, zero-waste dental floss and laundry detergent sheets**. Examples of these products are increasingly available at neighborhood grocery stores, including Giant, Whole Foods, and Weaver's Way, as well as Target and Walmart. There are many options for online purchase, as well.).

Be food smart

We throw away 30 to 40 percent of our food supply—219 pounds per person—in the U.S. every year. The majority of food waste happens in grocery stores, restaurants and food service businesses, but it happens at home too. Every person who eliminates a little food waste "saves money and saves landfill space," says Hoover. The longer your food stays fresh, the less likely you are to toss it. (For more information on this issue: [The Impacts of Food Waste](#)

(adapted from *Parade*, April 9, 2021 by Kathleen McCleary)

And here's a sixth way:

Plant a native tree (or several!)

Planting native trees is one of the best ways we can help our planet. Among their many benefits, trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, thereby helping to mitigate the problem of excessive CO₂; they provide food and habitat for birds, insects, and other wildlife that are necessary for a healthy ecosystem; their fallen leaves enrich the soil as they decay and, when shredded, act as a wonderful mulch for cultivated gardens; their leafy branches intercept and hold rainfall, which can lessen the storm water burden in our municipalities; plus, they are beautiful to look at. For lists of native trees and where to obtain them, look here: [PA Native Trees and Plants](#); [Where to Buy Native Plants](#)

For more ideas about helping the planet, check out the US EPA website: [US EPA Earth Day](#)