

April 22, 2020

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## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day!

<https://earthday.org/>

Happy Earth Day to all the Green E-News subscribers!

While every April 22<sup>nd</sup> is an opportunity for us to celebrate and redouble our efforts to highlight environmental awareness, this year is particularly special, as it marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [first Earth Day celebration](#). On April 22, 1970, then-Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin worked with a young activist named Denis Hayes to organize teach-ins at thousands of schools across the country. This effort was able to build off an environmental awareness that had been growing since Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* offered a sobering look at our impact on the natural world around us, and incidents such as the burning of the Cuyahoga River and a massive oil spill at a well near Santa Barbara shocked the nation and laid bare the ramifications of unrestricted pollution.



Every year, celebrations are held around the world in an ongoing expansion of that first day of teach-ins, a tremendous legacy left by Wisconsin's own Senator and Governor, and a continuous reminder for us to keep striving to leave this world better than we found it for those who share the planet with us and those who will come after us.

## Celebrating Earth Day During A Crisis

For all we have to celebrate with this special anniversary, it's nearly impossible to discuss anything of significance without also recognizing the extreme stress and uncertainty facing all of us right now, both locally in Fitchburg and also throughout the entire country and world. With increased focus on maintaining distance from each other, uncertain economic situations, a chaotic news blitz fighting for every ounce of our attention, and trying to keep ourselves both

mentally and physically healthy while in relative solitude, it may feel like an odd time to celebrate much of anything.

But perhaps this is the perfect time to think about the steps we can still take to make a positive impact on the world from where we are right now. Taking a day or a week to consider our connection to the bigger world and what sort of positive things we can still do may in some small way help to ease our feelings of isolation, give us a greater sense of agency, and remind us of some of the things we will continue to fight for throughout and beyond this pandemic as climate change continues to threaten our planet and we continue to push for a more sustainable way of living.

## Ideas for celebrating Earth Day during stay-at-home

*some ideas taken from [Vox.com](https://www.vox.com),*

1. **Adopt your street** – All you need are a pair of gloves and a trash bag—items many of us have been looking to stock up on in recent weeks—and you can help to beautify your local streets all by yourself or with anybody you live with! Make sure to wear bright colors for visibility and maintain appropriate distancing from anybody else you encounter.
2. **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle** – The 3 R's are always relevant, perhaps especially now when so many people are increasing their reliance on delivered food and other items. “Reduce” comes first for a reason, but if you can't minimize packaging, look to reuse or recycle as much as possible to cut down on our use of natural resources.
3. **Don't drive your car!** – Okay, this may be cheating a bit, but if you've been unable to travel to work for the past month, think about all the gasoline you've been saving by not driving nearly as often, and the positive impact that's having on our atmosphere and local air quality. Think about whether some of the driving you may have taken for granted previously might have been unnecessary and could be kept at a more reduced level going forward.
4. **Turn off the AC/heat** – Just in time for Earth Week, the weather has been getting milder and more conducive to turning off your home's HVAC and letting a nice breeze blow through your windows.
5. **Build a bird feeder** – If you're spending more time at home and you have a yard that's bird feeder-friendly, you can craft a feeder from spare wood you've got lying around, an empty milk jug or 2-liter bottle, and more.
6. **Home energy audit** – While you may be using more energy than usual if you've been at home all day, this is an opportunity for you to think about places your home could be more efficient, where you could take advantage of smart thermostats or LED bulbs or “smart” power strips for energy savings. Try adjusting your thermostat just a few degrees to save energy today, and see if that can become a new normal for your home.

7. **Spring cleaning and donation prep** – You may be more acutely aware than usual of the items you’ve got in your closet, your dresser, or storage boxes that are just taking up space and don’t need to be in your life. Put together a collection of gently/never used items that, when businesses begin opening again, you can donate to thrift stores or nonprofits that work with families in need or transitioning to self-reliance.
8. **Watch nature** – If you have a backyard, spend some time enjoying whatever wildlife passes through, studying habits and learning to identify everything you see. If not much wildlife passes just beyond your windows, you can find numerous excellent nature documentaries streaming or online.
9. **Contact your elected officials** – One of the most effective ways to help enact change at a structural level remains reaching out to your elected leaders and stressing to them the importance of prioritizing environmental protection and justice in all of the legislation and acts they consider.
10. **Follow Earth Day events online** – From EarthDay.org, to a 3-day series of events hosted by the US Climate Strike Coalition, and beyond, numerous organizations are (see details at the end of this newsletter). Find some events you can participate in from home, like virtual art shows and gardening contests!

## Positive Impacts of Less Driving

In the weeks and months since countries began imposing varying degrees of social distancing and business/school closures, vehicle miles traveled have been plummeting around the world. Apart from the most noticeable impact of less traffic noise and fewer congested roads, climate researchers and satellite-image observers have noticed a striking reduction in air pollutants as a result of this decreased automobile usage.

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, NASA [shared evidence](#) that nitrogen dioxide levels were significantly reduced over much of eastern China, due at least in part due to economic slowdowns related to the novel coronavirus outbreak, both reductions in driving and the closure of factories and power plants. Similarly, according to [CNBC](#), Sao Paulo and New Delhi are among 9 major cities found to be experiencing reductions in particulate matter pollution over the same period in 2019, and Los Angeles has seen its longest-ever stretch of meeting United Nations clean air guidelines.

Of course, while such improvements in air quality are encouraging and can be inspiration for us going forward, given that these pollution reductions are tied to the slowdowns associated with combatting the spread of COVID-19, we can’t expect them to continue indefinitely, nor is a pollution reduction strategy linked to keeping millions of people out of work and school a feasible one. But as we recover from this pandemic and begin to return to some semblance of normalcy in our daily lives, it’s worth considering what activities we’ve cut out of our lives due to necessity that perhaps we don’t need to add back in. Maybe we find that telecommuting is

more doable than we had previously understood, and companies increasingly support such work with their policies and technical capabilities. Perhaps we discover that connecting with family and friends virtually can be rewarding, and being able to access museum collections and parks online justifies fewer long trips or flights to see such sights in the future. Or maybe we push for a faster transition to greater use of electric cars and clean energy, which can pair continuing economic growth with a reduction in emissions and associated pollutants.

Sustainability calls for not just environmental protections, but economic and social equity, and so a more sustainable future means getting back to a point where we can all contribute on a daily basis and be compensated with livable wages and healthy, vibrant communities. But it is worth exploring, as we begin to recover from this economic drop, what are the environmental improvements we're seeing over these months that can be carried forward and made a more permanent part of our lives, perhaps starting with a continuation of our lower driving miles and some decreased consumption.

### April 23 is World Book Day

<https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/worldbookday>

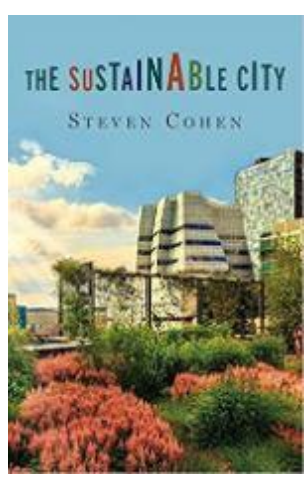
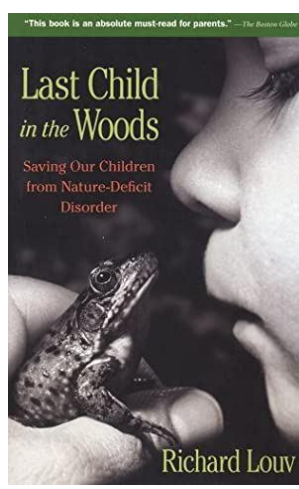
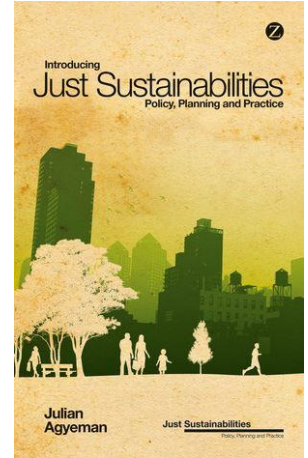
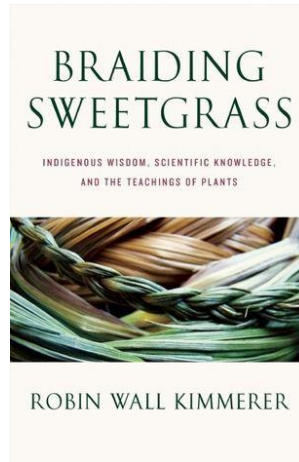
The day after Earth Day, celebrate World Book Day with other readers around the globe. Organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to promote reading worldwide, this is a great opportunity to get back to that reading list you set for yourself on January 1<sup>st</sup>, or create a new list to carry you through this time at home and beyond.

You can find any number of great book recommendations, suggested reading lists, apps and websites to help you discover and track what you read, and your local librarians would also love to help you discover great new reads. In conjunction with Earth Day, Earth Week, and Earth Month, here's a short list of some sustainability-themed books to get you started:

Title	Author	Date
A Sand County Almanac	Aldo Leopold	1949
Animal, Vegetable, Miracle	Barbara Kingsolver	2007
Braiding Sweetgrass	Robin Wall Kimmerer	2013
Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things	William McDonough	2002
Deep Economy	Bill McKibben	2007
Desert Solitaire	Edward Abbey	1968
Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Every Proposed to Reverse Global Warming	Paul Hawken	2019
Introducing Just Sustainabilities	Julian Agyeman	2013
Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder	Richard Louv	2005
The Lorax	Dr. Seuss	1971
No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference	Greta Thunberg	2019
Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion	Elizabeth L. Cline	2012
Silent Spring	Rachel Carson	1962
Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor	Rob Nixon	2011



The Story of Stuff	Annie Leonard	2010
The Sustainable City	Steven Cohen	2017
The World Without Us	Alan Weisman	2007



## Dane County Climate Action Plan Released

<https://daneclimateaction.org/documents/CAP-2020/Dane-Co-Climate-Action-Plan-202004-web.pdf>

The Dane County Office of Energy & Climate Change released its highly-anticipated Climate Action Plan this week (“Today’s Opportunity for a Better Tomorrow”), setting a list of goals and planned actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the county as much as 50% by 2030. Check out the CAP using the link above, and learn what Dane County has planned for the coming years and how you can help to make this plan a reality.

## Arbor Day – Friday, April 25

Each year Arbor Day is celebrated the final Friday in April, typically coinciding with the end of Earth Week. This year, due to social distancing guidelines, group tree plantings are difficult to schedule, but you can still order saplings to plant in your own yard, or begin growing trees from seeds that can be purchased online or from local suppliers. Spend the day getting to know some of the trees in your neighborhood and learn about the many ways in which trees provide vital ecosystem services to our community.

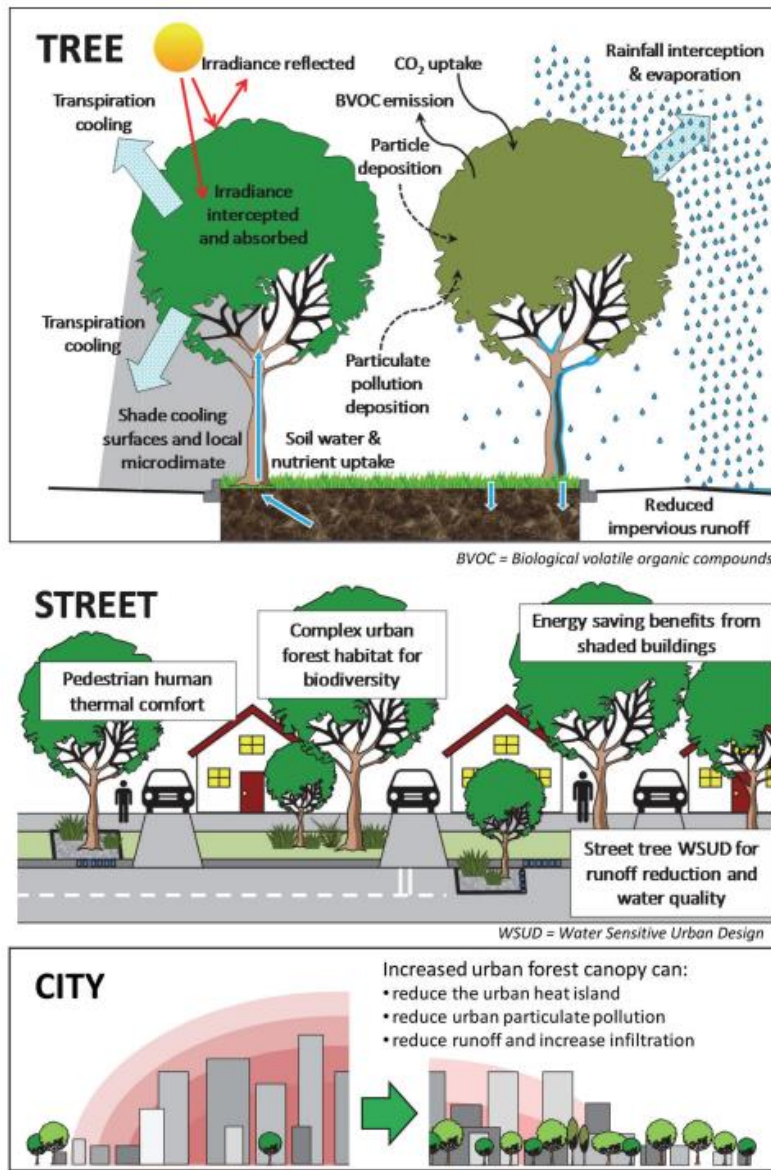


Figure taken from [Livesley et al.](#), "The Urban Forest and Ecosystem Services: Impacts on Urban Water, Heat, and Pollution Cycles at the Tree, Street, and City Scale." *Journal of Environmental Quality* 45 (2016): 119-124.

## Earth Day/Week/Month Events

### [Official Earth Day Live webcast](#)

Visit **EarthDay.org** for a full day of celebration activities, including talks from leading environmental thinkers and activists, performances from musical artists, vegan cooking tips, meditation, and even an evening message from Pope Francis.

**April 22, 9am-9pm**

**<https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-live/>**

### [Earth Day 2020 from Columbia University](#)

Columbia University's Earth Institute celebrates Earth Day's big anniversary with a variety of online events, continuing the celebrations through the rest of the week and month.

**April 22-29**

**<https://earthday.ei.columbia.edu/>**

### [Earth Day Live 2020](#)

The US Climate Strike Coalition and Stop The Money Pipeline Coalition, in lieu of their original plan for 3 days of protests to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, are hosting a 3-day Earth Day celebration event online, featuring musical performances, yoga sessions, meditations, environmental messages, and more.

**April 22-24**

**<https://www.earthdaylive2020.org/>**

### [#EarthDayAtHome with NASA](#)

Celebrate Earth Day today with NASA, as the agency provides online videos, activities you can do at home, mobile apps, social media events, and even some Lego activities!

**April 22**

**<https://www.nasa.gov/feature/goddard/2020/earthdayathome-with-nasa/>**

### Share the News

Tell your friends to subscribe to Green Fitchburg on the city website  
<http://www.fitchburgwi.gov/list.aspx> > Green Fitchburg

- a. Visit Fitchburg's "Notify Me®" web page:  
<http://www.fitchburgwi.gov/list.aspx>
- b. Type your email address in the box and select "Sign In"
- c. To receive text messages enter your phone number and select "Save"
- d. Click  (to subscribe/unsubscribe to emails) and/or  (to subscribe/unsubscribe) next to the lists to which you wish to subscribe / unsubscribe (e.g. "Green Fitchburg" is the mailing list for environmentally friendly suggestions or events)

Please contact Phil Grupe, Sustainability Specialist, at [phil.grupe@fitchburgwi.gov](mailto:phil.grupe@fitchburgwi.gov) or 270-4259, if you have any questions, comments, and/or suggestions for future Green E-News topics.

