

Framework topic: Environmental Awareness/Action - The natural and built environments interact with one another over time with intended and unintended consequences. Educating the public on environmental protection and integrating these ideas in our city planning can change negative outcomes of the past and improve our future state.

Local Opportunities to Celebrate Earth Month

By: Sarah Washabaugh

When considering how to help the planet, many say they “just want to do the right thing,” but find it difficult to know where to begin. This year’s Earth Month Toolkit highlights some local Earth-conscious events happening in April. It can be helpful to prioritize what you value, and choose the option(s) that align with those values best!

REUSE

If you value resource sharing, learning new skills, or tenacity in problem-solving, help keep things out of the landfill by donating/sharing with others or repairing items instead of replacing them! Organize your own resource swap to increase access to beneficial items without requiring new raw materials. If you have items that you’d like to repair but don’t quite know how to, visit the [Repair Cafe](#) at Herrick District Library. At this event, expert tinkerers will be on site to repair many different items. (If you’re a tinkerer with skills you’d like to share, [sign up to volunteer here!](#))

REINTRODUCE

If you value caring for the physical environment, plants, and animals, you could reintroduce native plants to your yard to increase essential habitat for native species (among other benefits). Families are invited to learn the basics and complete a hands-on activity at the Holland Museum’s Native Plant Night on their [Free Second Monday](#) in April! Native plants can be more difficult to source, but many can be preordered from your county’s local Conservation District. Allegan Conservation District will have their [Spring Shrub & Tree Sale](#), with plants available by preorder (due 4/18).

REMOVE

If you value improving outdoor spaces, or the mindful management of materials, you could help remove unwanted items and dispose of them appropriately. City of Holland residents can participate in the [Spring Clean Up](#) by placing yard waste on the road shoulder in front of their house (keeping in mind neighbors, storm drains, traffic, and utility structures). On April 7, City Department Street Crews will scoop up yard waste, which can be composted and used in landscaping elsewhere.

Otherwise, improve our shared outdoor spaces near your home or join an existing clean up event. Those living on the south side of Lake Macatawa can help Hope College pick up trash at Kollen Park at their [Watershed Clean Up](#). On the north side of the lake, Ottawa County Parks will spend their [Service Saturday](#) pulling invasive garlic mustard plants and picking up litter at Tunnel Park.

RETHINK

If you value connection with others, especially when pursuing shared causes, there are many ways to get involved! Seek out local produce stands or visit the [Farmer's Market](#) to get to know the people growing and providing our food. To further discuss issues facing the Great Lakes and how they have changed from our desire to manage them, join Herrick District Library's [Environmental Book Club](#) in reading *The Death and Life of the Great Lakes*, by Dan Egan.

By no means is this an exhaustive list! Make time this April to lean on the creativity, knowledge, and skills that exist within you and your community, and pursue both learning and sharing when possible!

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