

ALL THINGS SPRING

What do daffodils, dogwood trees, and MLB's Opening Day have in common? They are telltale signs of spring, of course! It's the season of starting over.

It's time to break free from the cold, dark days of winter and start fresh. It's time to clean and declutter, pack away the winter coat, plant a garden, find a fair or festival, and welcome back migrating birds and the animals waking from hibernation.

In our part of the world, the first day of spring is March 19th. During this spring equinox (or vernal equinox, as it's known worldwide), the length of day and night is roughly the same across the entire globe, and it only happens twice a year—spring and fall. In fact, the word equinox has a Latin origin: *aequus* (equal) and *nox* (night). While the vernal equinox introduces the arrival of spring in the Northern Hemisphere, it marks the beginning of fall in the Southern Hemisphere due to the tilt of the Earth's axis.

With springtime comes more daylight, and light and warmth mean more activity! Birds follow the path of the sun and migrate northward. Many experts believe the extended hours of sunlight prompt them to sing! The warmer weather causes other animals to shed their winter coats while trees, shrubs, and flowers start to bloom.

Farmers have looked for clues to decide when to plant spring crops for centuries. Although the first day of spring is a typical day to start a garden, farmers would historically get more help from Mother Nature. In addition to watching the moon's phases, they discovered other helpful springtime hints. For example, don't plant potatoes before the dandelions bloom, and only plant peas, onions, and lettuce after the forsythias blossom.

Spring is a time of growth and rebirth, and the season is aptly named. Around the 14th century, spring was known as "springing time," in reference to vegetation springing up from the ground. It later became known as "springtime" and then "spring."

Whatever you call it, spring is the season of new beginnings. Many animals in nature start their families in spring while flowers and trees come back to life. Another transformative example is that spring is graduation season; students finish school and move on to their next chapter in life.

Smile. There are many reasons to be happy this spring and science agrees. Research shows that extended daylight can improve energy and mood. Spring has also been referred to as the season of optimism! Audrey Hepburn said it well, "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."

EARTH DAY

There are countless ways to connect with Mother Earth. Walk barefoot in the grass or wade in a creek. Hike a rocky trail or marvel at the beautiful scenery, sunset, or wildlife.

Spending time in nature is not only enjoyable - it's linked to better health. For example, studies have shown that feeling connected to nature for twenty minutes or more each day reduces the stress hormone cortisol levels. Other advantages can include improving one's concentration, memory, and overall mood.

So, if Mother Earth is helping us stay happy and healthy, shouldn't we return the favor?

April 22nd is our annual reminder to do just that. Founded in 1970 by US Senator Gaylord Nelson, the first Earth Day was in response to a west coast oil spill. It mobilized millions of Americans in a grassroots effort to protect the planet, starting an environmental revolution. This wave of activism included the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the passage of legislation like The Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts.

Other nations followed suit, and Earth Day has become a global experience. Now, 52 years later, it's the world's largest civic event each year. It's estimated that 1 billion people (15% of the world's population) participate in Earth Day annually. This year's theme is *Invest In Our Planet*.

Taking steps to invest in Mother Earth and improve her overall health isn't just the right thing to do – it is vital to our existence. Government, industry, and individuals can all help in big and small ways. So to celebrate Earth Day 2022, take action.

Plant a tree

Millions of acres of the world's forests are lost every year. And it's estimated that humans have cleared approximately half of the planet's tropical forests.

Planting trees is perhaps one of the best ways to celebrate Earth Day. It's also one of the easiest ways to take harmful CO2 out of the atmosphere and take on the climate crisis. Trees cut carbon, but they also purify the air by removing pollutants. In addition, tree canopies help regulate temperatures and provide essential habitat for wildlife. So for all the good they do, it's understandable why people hug trees!

Clean up

Whether it's a community-wide effort or a solo venture, anyone can help make our planet cleaner and greener.

Pull trash out of a waterway or pick up discarded plastic in the park. If everyone did just a little, the reward would be a lot. Just imagine if everyone cleaned up and pitched in!

End single-use plastic

Ten percent of all human-generated waste is plastic. Single-use straws, utensils, water bottles, and shopping bags (including those extra produce bags!) are all culprits. Easy swaps include using stainless steel straws (or no straws) and other reusable versions of the same utensils, water bottles, and cloth shopping bags. Keeping these items in your car or purse makes it convenient and easy to go green.

Help the bees and butterflies

Pollinators are essential to our food supply and the overall health of our planet. Plants, including flowering crops, can't create seeds without pollination. Our flying friends provide this service by spreading pollen from flower to flower. You can help protect these essential workers by planting native plants around your home and going pesticide-free!

Resist Fast Fashion

The fashion industry is known for its enormous amount of waste. It not only strips the planet of resources, but it's also responsible for over 8% of total greenhouse gas emissions as tens of millions of tons of textiles are dumped and incinerated each year.

Instead of buying lots of new and cheap clothes, focus on quality over quantity. Natural materials like organic cotton, linen, and hemp are better for the environment than plastic-based polyester and nylon. Another responsible choice is 100% recycled fabrics. Research and support those brands that practice sustainability. Or give clothes a second life when you buy second hand.

Recycle

It's never been easier to recycle.

Everyday items like cans, milk jugs, cardboard, and plastic can be easily disposed of in recycling bins. For most of us, it's part of the daily routine. It's taken away along with our trash. If you don't have a service that picks up recycling, there are drop-off sites.

Special items like batteries, old paint, and electronics can be taken to designated recycling centers. It may cost a small fee, but certain things shouldn't go into a landfill.

Upcycle

Give an old item new life! The possibilities are endless.

Update worn furniture with chalk paint. Turn wine corks into a custom bulletin board. Add architectural interest with old window panes. Upcycle an unwanted item and transform it into a beloved treasure. And if you're unsure where to start, let Pinterest be your guide.

Make your voice heard

Speak up! Communicate about climate.

Research tells us that people tend to care more about an issue when they hear others in their circle talking about it. Discuss both climate problems and solutions. Invite friends and family to participate in a recycling event or a community clean-up.

Look for opportunities to speak up in the workplace. Try to educate and inspire your company to make better – and greener – choices.

Get educated

Whether casting a ballot or buying a product, there are always options. And a little research goes a long way.

When deciding between political candidates, find those whose views and voting records align most closely with your ideas. And the same goes for finding out what products to buy and which companies to support. Again, websites like this can help www.earth911.com as you look for greener solutions.

Prepare our youth

This Earth Day, educate children about taking care of the planet. Teach them about reusing, recycling, and using less energy. Go hands-on with composting or gardening. And don't forget a nature walk.

We must get young people interested in our environmental challenges. It's these children, and their own, who will be living with the cascading consequences of climate change and pollution. It's up to leaders from these younger generations to engage and challenge other young people to do the same.

THE GREAT NORTH AMERICAN ECLIPSE

Grab your solar eclipse glasses. Soon, Earth, its moon, and the sun will put on a rare show and be in perfect alignment - for a few minutes, anyway.

On April 8th, North America will experience total darkness from Sinaloa, Mexico, to Newfoundland, Canada. Once again, the Midwest, including areas of Missouri and Illinois, will be in the path of totality! In our area, the eclipse begins around 12:40 CDT but check [NASA's website](#) for details.

It's being called "the Great North American Eclipse." Although the last comparable eclipse was in 2017, another one of this importance won't happen in the contiguous US for a while. Alaska will have its own show in 2033, and Montana and North Dakota will get a turn in 2044. However, the next coast-to-coast eclipse will not happen until 2045, when it will travel from Northern California to Cape Canaveral, Florida.

If you haven't already, mark your calendar for Monday! The Great North American Eclipse starts in Texas at about 1:27 CDT and will trek over Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and finally, Maine. Tennessee and Michigan barely register on the route, making the official path.

Totality refers to when the moon blocks the sun 100%, and it's estimated that 32 million people live in the path of totality. Areas outside this route will not see total darkness, but many cities will see a partial eclipse. Understandably, the closer you are to the path, the better the view - meaning, the smaller the sliver of remaining sun.

Although the St. Louis area is not in the path of totality, a short drive will get you there. If you're in Missouri, head south to areas including Farmington, Ste. Genevieve, Poplar Bluff, or Cape Girardeau. If you're in Illinois, cities like Evansville and Carbondale will see total darkness. But make your plans early; people travel from around the world to see this celestial spectacle.

The Great North American Eclipse will start as a partial eclipse and build its way up to totality. The times of darkness differ along the path. While in San Antonio, Texas, they can expect more than 4 minutes of total darkness, the experience will last about 2 minutes and 40 seconds in St. Genevieve, Missouri. Cloud cover is another factor that can change viewing conditions.

An interesting fact about this eclipse is that it will cross the path of the last total solar eclipse of August 2017. That precise point is in Makanda, Illinois, near Carbondale.

Although there has been much eclipse news in our region during recent years, it is really a breathtaking celestial wonder. Please don't take it for granted. Turning day into darkness is something special.

DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

The "dog days of summer" are here. Technically described as a span of 40 days from July 3 through August 11, this toasty block of time has nothing to do with our canine friends on Earth. Instead, we can find the origins of this idiom when we look up to the skies.

The phrase "dog days" dates to ancient times and civilizations that tracked the seasons with help from the stars. One of the most significant stars was—and is—Sirius.

Commonly known as the "dog star," Sirius is the brightest star in the sky (second only to the Sun). Its name comes from the ancient Greek word for "scorching" or "glowing." A fitting location, the sparkling Sirius marks the nose of the constellation Canis Major, which means "Greater Dog."

Sirius stays behind the Sun until shortly after the summer solstice in the Northern Hemisphere. Then, it becomes visible in the East just before sunrise and remains near the Sun during the day. Historians say the Romans called this time "dies caniculares" or "days of the dog star," which has since turned into "dog days."

There were mixed feelings about this time of year in ancient times. The Egyptians noticed a correlation between the appearance of Sirius and the welcomed annual flooding of the Nile. On the other hand, the ancient Greeks and Romans believed the bright star's arrival contributed to the extreme heat and temperatures and brought drought, disease, bad luck, and unrest.

In the first century BC, a Greek astronomer named Geminus debunked the theory that Sirius influenced rising temperatures. With Sirius being more than eight light-years away from Earth, it does not affect our planet's weather or temperature. Instead, seasons are a direct result of our planet's tilt on its axis; when the Sun's rays hit at a more direct angle for extended periods, it results in longer and hotter days. Therefore, summer's "dog days" depend on timing and geographic location.

Today, "dog days" are more closely associated with extreme heat and temperatures and have far less to do with Sirius. Although we experience severe temperatures outside of this 40-day window, "dog days" simply refer to the hottest, most unbearable days of the year in the Northern Hemisphere—typically July and August.

If you'd like help finding the brightest star, Sirius, you can get help [here](#).

314 DAY

Pi is a mathematical constant with a value of 3.14. And someone (likely a mathematician?) had the bright idea that this numerical value represents the date March 14th, which should be hailed as Pi Day.

There are different ways to celebrate Pi Day. While some people may dabble in math or physics computations, others prefer to bake pies. But if you're from St. Louis, you probably have a different idea about this day altogether.

In the Lou, March 14th is known as 3-1-4 day. Again, it's the same numerical date, but it's said or read like a telephone area code. And it's not just any area code; 314 covers most of – you guessed it - the St. Louis region! So, in our town, 314 Day celebrates all things St. Louis! It's a day to shop local, support local, dine local, and appreciate LOCAL.

Two St. Louis natives, Tatum Polk and Terrell “Dip” Evans are co-founders of 314 Day. It began in 2006 when Evans wished there was some type of holiday for their hometown – a day for unity, peace, and positivity. It dawned on Evans that the main area code for St. Louis was the perfect date to promote all good things about the city.

Now 18 years later, 314 Day has grown. See how area businesses and attractions participate the entire week leading up to 314 Day. Check out the planned events and where to find deals on your favorite attractions and local products. The calendar is on STL.com.

Pay the low price point of \$3.14 on everything from a great cup of joe at one of the participating coffee hotspots to an STL-inspired burger, craft beer, gooey butter cake, and more. Or spend your three bucks and change on bowling, mini golf, a carousel ride at Union Station, or locally made items at SqWires restaurant and market.

If you're looking for a unique way to celebrate, be part of the 314 Day Block Party or join a world record attempt at City Museum! Other options include a film expo featuring shorts shot in St. Louis or the 314 Day Local Vendor & Wellness Expo at Armory, St. Louis. Plus, find out where you can get your hands on a toasted ravioli taco (yes, you read that right), offered one day only on March 14th.

Polk and Evans want to remind everyone what makes our city unique. In addition to the list of deals and events, don't forget other reasons to be proud of St. Louis. From developing top talent in countless areas and industries - to our unwavering support for our top-tier sports teams - St. Louis has much to be proud of. And don't overlook the city's rich history! Learn more about it with videos assembled all in one place on hecmedia.org.

Whether you call it Pi Day or 314 Day, March 14th is a day to show your St. Louis pride. Buy a ticket to one of your favorite attractions, get a great deal at a local business, or

attend one of the special events. And be sure to spread the love on social media. Tell the entire world why you love St. Louis.