

Earth Day 2020

Earth Day is a global event that happens every year on 22nd April. The first Earth Day was held in America in 1970. Around 20 million Americans marched in many different cities to protest for laws to protect the environment. Now, 50 years later, 1 billion people from over 192 countries are taking action in many different ways to protect our planet against climate change and preserve it for current and future generations.



What Is the Aim of Earth Day?

The theme for Earth Day 2020 is Climate Action. The aim is to educate as many people as possible about the importance of looking after our natural world - helping millions of people to make small but important changes. On 22nd April, a worldwide 'cleanup' of the planet's green and urban spaces will take place. It is hoped to be one of the largest volunteer events in history. Many people are also organising climate change rallies and protests. Hopefully, these events will inspire many people, including schools, governments and businesses, to take action to protect our planet and move towards a zero-carbon future.

There are lots of ways YOU can help the environment this Earth Day.

Our Plastic Problem

In the UK, we throw away around 295 billion pieces of plastic yearly. Plastic doesn't biodegrade and lots of it can't be recycled. This plastic waste ends up in the world's oceans and river systems. Current research shows that 90% of the world's seabirds and more than 50% of the world's sea turtles have plastic in their stomachs. It is even finding its way into the stomachs of marine mammals such as whales and dolphins. Plastics can also cause problems for humans because, as they break down, tiny pieces of plastic can end up in our food and water. Scientists think that eating these microplastics could lead to health problems but it has not yet been widely researched. By carefully sorting your household rubbish to recycle as much as possible and reusing plastic products, you can do your part to solve the plastic problem.



What's the Buzz?

Plants are a vital part of our planet's ecosystem. They help take warming gases, such as carbon dioxide, out of the atmosphere and provide food for important pollinating insects, like bees. These stripy, furry fliers help a variety of plants to grow by carrying pollen from one plant to another. They are incredibly important to our delicate ecosystem. It is because of bees that many species of plants are pollinated, which then provide food for wild animals. Help to protect this crucial species by creating a bee-friendly habitat, either in your back garden or in your local area.



Follow these tips to attract as many bees as possible.

- Choose flowers with one flower top, such as daisies and marigolds;
- Avoid using pesticides in your garden;
- Plant different types of flowers that bloom at different times to attract bees from spring to autumn.

Eat Less Meat

Deforestation and the destruction of natural habitats to make space for farm animals to graze is having a devastating impact on the planet. Studies suggest that switching to a plant-based diet would be more sustainable and would reduce the amount of land needed for farming by up to 70%. Interestingly, it appears that a plant-based diet would also have a positive impact on emissions of warming gases, also called greenhouse gases. The amount of energy from fossil fuels used to produce a calorie of animal protein is more than 11 times higher than the amount used to produce the same amount of grain protein. See if you can convince your family to reduce the amount of meat they eat - there are lots of creative and delicious alternatives being developed every year!

As you can see, there are many ways we can take action to help the planet this Earth Day. What will you choose?

Questions

1. What day does Earth Day happen each year? Tick **one**.

- ☐ 3rd May
- ☐ 22nd April
- ☐ 1st February
- ☐ 22nd August

2. Number these sentences to show the order they appear in the text.
The first one has been done for you.

- ☐ Plants and trees are a vital part of our planet's ecosystem.
- ☐ Scientists think that this could lead to health problems.
- ☐ Plastic doesn't biodegrade over time.
- ☐ See if you can convince your family to reduce the amount of meat they eat.
- ☒ **1** The first Earth Day was held in America in 1970.

3. What kind of future would the Earth Day organisers like to move towards?

4. How much plastic does the UK throw away each year?

5. Look at the section titled **What's the Buzz?**

Find and **copy** the word that means the same as 'vital'.

6. **'There are lots of ways YOU can help the environment'**

Why do you think the author wrote the word 'YOU' in capital letters?

7. Why do you think scientists have not yet researched the impact of microplastics on human health?

8. Summarise why plants are important.

9. What do you think would be a good theme for next year's Earth Day?
Explain your reasoning.

Answers

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3. What kind of future would the Earth Day organisers like to move towards?

A zero-carbon future

4. How much plastic does the UK throw away each year?

295 billion pieces

5. Look at the section titled **What's the Buzz?**

Find and **copy** the word that means the same as 'vital'.

crucial

6. **'There are lots of ways YOU can help the environment'**

Why do you think the author wrote the word 'YOU' in capital letters?

Pupils' own responses, such as: To emphasise how important is that the reader also makes changes to their life to help the environment.

7. Why do you think scientists have not yet researched the impact of microplastics on human health?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think it hasn't been researched because plastic hasn't been around that long and we are only starting to realise that it might cause problems.