

Earth Day Facts:

First launched as an environmental awareness event in the United States in 1970, Earth Day (April 22) is celebrated as the birth of the environmental movement.

The first Earth Day, spearheaded by Wisconsin Governor Gaylord Nelson and Harvard University student Denis Hayes, involved 20 million participants in teach-ins that addressed decades of environmental pollution. The event influenced the US Congress to pass clean air and water acts, and establish the Environmental Protection Agency to research and monitor environmental issues and enforce environmental laws.

In 1990, two million Canadians joined 200 million people in 141 nations in celebrating the first International Earth Day. In many countries, the global event brought pressure on heads of state to take part in the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro to address issues such as climate change and the world wide loss of species.

In Canada, Earth Day has grown into Earth Weeks and even Earth Month to accommodate the profusion of events and projects. They range from large public events, such as Victoria's Earth Walk (5000 participants), Edmonton's Earth Day Festival at Hawrelak Park (30,000 participants), and Oakville, Ontario's Waterways Clean-up (2,000 participants) to the thousands of small, private events staged by schools, employee groups and community groups.

General Earth Day events include tree plantings, planting native gardens, neighbourhood clean-ups, workshops and seminars, concerts, eco-fairs, parades, cultural events, waste reduction projects, the implementation/expansion of environmental programs, wildlife conservation projects, and much more.

Today, 500 million people in over 164 countries continue to celebrate International Earth Day. Over 6 million Canadians participate. This includes schools, community and youth groups, employee groups, and environmental organizations.

School children are the most active Earth Day participants. Virtually every school child takes part in an Earth Day event. Earth Day is the third most important date on the school activities calendar (after Halloween and Christmas).

Earth Day Canada is the environmental communications organization that coordinates Canada's celebration of International Earth Day. Earth Day Canada is mandated to improve the state of the environment by empowering and helping Canadians to take positive action and achieve local solutions.



Environmental Actions & Statistics

1. Could you use some extra cash?

Reduce your energy bill by 30% to 40% by filling in air leaks in your home. Leaks are the number one cause of energy loss in winter and summer.

2. Having a bad air day?

Take a breath of fresh air. Reduce your car use when possible. Take public transit, car pool, ride your bike or walk. Car exhaust produces pollutants which contribute to acid rain, global warming, smog, and reduced air quality and breathing illnesses. Automobile exhaust is the major contributor to smog. Prolonged exposure to smog can lead to lung damage and immune system impairment.

3. It's a health hazard!

Avoid dumping household hazardous waste (HHW) in the garbage and down the drain. Properly dispose of common household chemicals (such as paint, oil, solvents, batteries, pesticides and chemical fertilizers) at your local hazardous waste depot. Contact your local government to find out its location. If your community doesn't have one, lobby your local government to implement one. Every year, the average Canadian throws out 23 kg (50 lbs) of HHW. (Ontario Ministry of Environment)

4. It keeps on going and going and going and...

Avoid using disposable products, such as paper towels, plastic cutlery, and foam cups and plates. Instead, use products designed for durability and reuse, such as cloth napkins and towels, ceramic mugs and dishes, and steel cutlery. Canadians throw away 1.7 billion disposable diapers every year. This accounts for about 2.5% of all residential waste sent to a landfill. The manufacture of disposable diapers in Canada consumes about 65,500 tonnes of pulp, 8,800 tonnes of plastic and 9,800 tonnes of packing material. (Environment Canada)