

During Earth Month, while you're at home with your family, try some of these ways to appreciate nature and help the Earth:

Go for a bird walk. Spring in Wilmette is absolutely the best time to spot colorful birds as they make their way north to their summer breeding grounds. They can be found in shrubs and trees or on the ground along the lakeshore, in the Forest Preserves, along the Canal Shores Golf Course and in *your* yard! To get new birders and kids interested in birding, try these tips from the Audubon Society:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/easy-ways-get-kids-birding> . You can find a Chicago area birding chart here: <https://www.gogreenwilmette.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/GV-Bird-Identification-Chart-PDF.pdf> , plus more kids' birding activities at <https://www.wbu.com/kids-activities/>

Teach yourself about insects. For much too long, humans have regarded insects with annoyance and fear. But as they disappear, we are learning more and more about the vital role insects play in keeping nature working the way it should. Children can hunt for crawling and flying bugs in the yard or the park. And many documentaries exist to teach your family about these fascinating creatures. Just do an online search for "insect documentaries." Also, here is a quick guide to help parents teach children about insects: <https://thegrownetwork.com/teach-kids-bugs/>

Start a container garden. You can grow herbs, lettuces, chard, peppers, tomatoes and more in pots on your deck or patio. Of course, you can grow flowers as well. Marigolds even repel mosquitoes! Order supplies from local nurseries or online. Here's a handy guide for getting started with a vegetable container garden of your own: <https://www.thespruce.com/vegetable-container-gardening-for-beginners-848161>

Identify your trees with sidewalk chalk. Learn what kind of trees you have growing in your front yard or parkway, and write down its species name on the sidewalk with chalk. That way, we can all learn a little more about our beautiful tree neighbors. Some phone apps that can help you identify your tree include: PictureThis; iNaturalist; and PlantSnap.

Do a solo or family beach clean up. Just like beaches around the world, Wilmette's beach suffers from lots of plastic pollution, especially small pieces called micro-plastics washed up on our beaches during storms. You can help our beach and our wildlife by picking up trash and throwing it in proper receptacles. Sift through the sand to find the smaller pieces. Just keep a safe distance from others while doing so!

Pick up trash in other places. Many trails and roads could benefit from your family's efforts. Wear reusable gloves, practice social distancing, and see how many pieces and what types of garbage you can find. Research to find out how long it would have lasted in nature if your family had not picked it up.

Complete a gardening chore for an elderly neighbor. Maybe you and your family can help someone with raking, edging, weeding or planting chores. The effort might save money and reduce pollution by keeping gas-powered leaf blowers out of your neighbor's yard.

Get your bikes ready to roll. Pump your tires and adjust your helmets. Learn to do simple repairs or arrange for an overhaul with the Wilmette Bicycle & Sport Shop. Then, head out and explore. It's the perfect time, with less car traffic and cleaner air than usual! Wear bright colors for most visibility.

Start food composting. Now that you are cooking more at home, start collecting your food scraps and have a daily or weekly weigh-in. Decide if commercial pick up, Village curbside collection or backyard composting is the right choice for you and give it a try!

Launch a green family makeover or a waste reduction contest. Take a look around your house for products and practices you could easily swap for more earth-friendly choices. Use this [checklist](#) to track your progress and make changes that matter!

Check out more Earth Day ideas from the Peggy Notebaert Museum, here:

<https://naturemuseum.org/Media/Default/Page/Plant%20Sale/caspnm-pfp-brochure-web.pdf>

And the Chicago Botanic Garden here:

https://www.chicagobotanic.org/blog/learning/happy_earth_day?utm_source=Full%20Sustainable%20List&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Spring+Content+Campaign+-+April+17_4/17/2020&utm_content=https%3a%2f%2fwww.chicagobotanic.org%2fblog%2flearning%2fhappy_earth_day