

A Better Tomorrow—Today

By Woodland Publishing, Inc.

The future of our planet is in the hands of our children. Not only will children inherit the planet, but they also inherit our environmental practices. Whether this is good or bad depends on what we teach them.

Earth Day, celebrated on April 22, provides the perfect opportunity to teach kids about caring for the environment. The following are a few things you can teach your children to honor the planet on Earth Day—or any other day:

1. *Spend time in nature.* Petey Giroux, coordinator for Georgia's Project WET (Water Education for Teachers), suggests exposing children to nature. Giroux said, "When a person understands and relates to their natural world, they are thoughtful in their attitudes and behavior to it." For Earth Day, visit a state park or hike through the woods. The rest of the year, encourage children to spend time in the backyard or at a local park, where they will forge relationships with nature (not the TV). "It is difficult to pollute or harm what we understand and that with which we have formed a relationship," said Giroux.
2. *Bring nature home.* Plant a garden with your children on Earth Day. Planting a garden gives children a responsibility and a chance to play outside. As children care for a garden, they will be continually reminded of their connection to the Earth. The Eartheasy Web site (www.eartheasy.com), provides a list of top crops for kids, including sunflowers, cherry tomatoes and pumpkins.
3. *Leave the car at home.* Walk to school with your children on Earth Day. In September 2007, the *New York Times* reported that fewer than 15 percent of students walk or ride their bikes to school, compared to 50 percent 40 years ago. This change has led to increased traffic and pollution around schools. Walking children to school benefits the planet by reducing air pollution. It also benefits children's health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that walking to school protects children against obesity and chronic disease by encouraging daily physical activity.
4. *Do some spring-cleaning.* Teach kids a sense of responsibility by helping your them clean up the neighborhood or their favorite park. Pick up the litter, take recyclable materials to a recycling center and place the rest where it belongs—in the trash. Discuss with your children how litter affects the planet and everyone on it.

Earth Day is a perfect day to plan activities that teach children the importance of caring for the planet, but you can teach children every day through a good example. Be a role model of sustainability and teach children the importance of conservation by the choices you make. The lessons you teach today will lead to a better tomorrow.