

# Earth Day *everyday*

Your guide for *taking action*  
to protect our planet

**W**e don't have to tell you that this big, amazing planet we share is facing some serious challenges. That's why this Earth Day Guide is here to help you take action — so those of us who care about the future of our planet can help lead the way to a more sustainable tomorrow.

You already know that species are disappearing and climate change gets more alarming every day. So, this guide tackles issues like invasive species, plastics pollution, your carbon footprint and more.

Thank you for rolling up your sleeves and standing with The Nature Conservancy to protect the planet we all cherish.

**In the pages ahead, find out how to...**

- ▶ **Stop Invasives** [\*pg 3\*](#)
- ▶ **Fight the Plastics Problem** [\*pg 6\*](#)
- ▶ **Tackle Climate Change** [\*pg 9\*](#)

Cover art: The Nature Conservancy's Bear Rocks Preserve, WV © Kent Mason

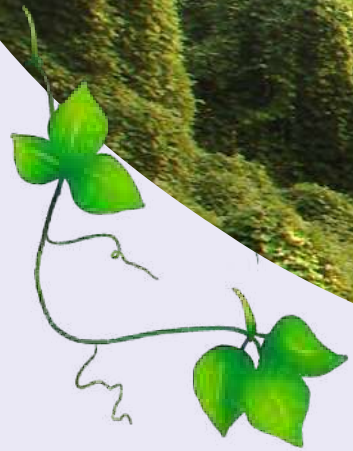


## **Invasive species demand action**

An invasive species is a plant or animal that isn't native to its surroundings. Without natural predators or competitors, they can thrive and spread aggressively. They crowd out native species, destroy habitat and can even hurt our health.

To give you some sense, **more than 100 million acres of public land in the United States are infested with invasive plants.** And every year, they spread across three million more acres – an area twice the size of Delaware.

Invasive kudzu overtakes trees and shrubs on a hillside in Blount County, Tennessee.  
© Katie Ashdown/Flickr  
(CC BY 2.0)



HELP STOP  
*Invasives*

# Act *for the* Earth

▶ **HELP STOP INVASIVES**



## **In Your Kitchen**

Eat invasives, when possible. Did you know, some invasive species are actually safe to eat and delicious? Buying and eating invasive species also helps support food producers, like fishermen, who catch and remove them.

If you're a fan of fish, check your grocery store or local restaurant for invasives, such as blue catfish (VA,

MD, DE and NY), Asian carp (Mississippi River and Great Lakes), northern snakehead (NY, PA and AK) or green crab (Atlantic and Pacific coasts).



## **In Your Backyard**

Check your yard and remove any invasives you find. By their very nature, invasives are stubborn, so seek out instructions online to learn how to deal with each species. There's no one-size-fits-all removal method.

Look up native plants for your area and plant them in your yard or garden. Replace any invasive plants with non-invasive alternatives. Check the plant tags at your local nursery to see if the plant is native — they're often labeled. Ask the nursery to carry native species so they know customers like you want them. This will encourage them to sell more native plants instead of invasives.

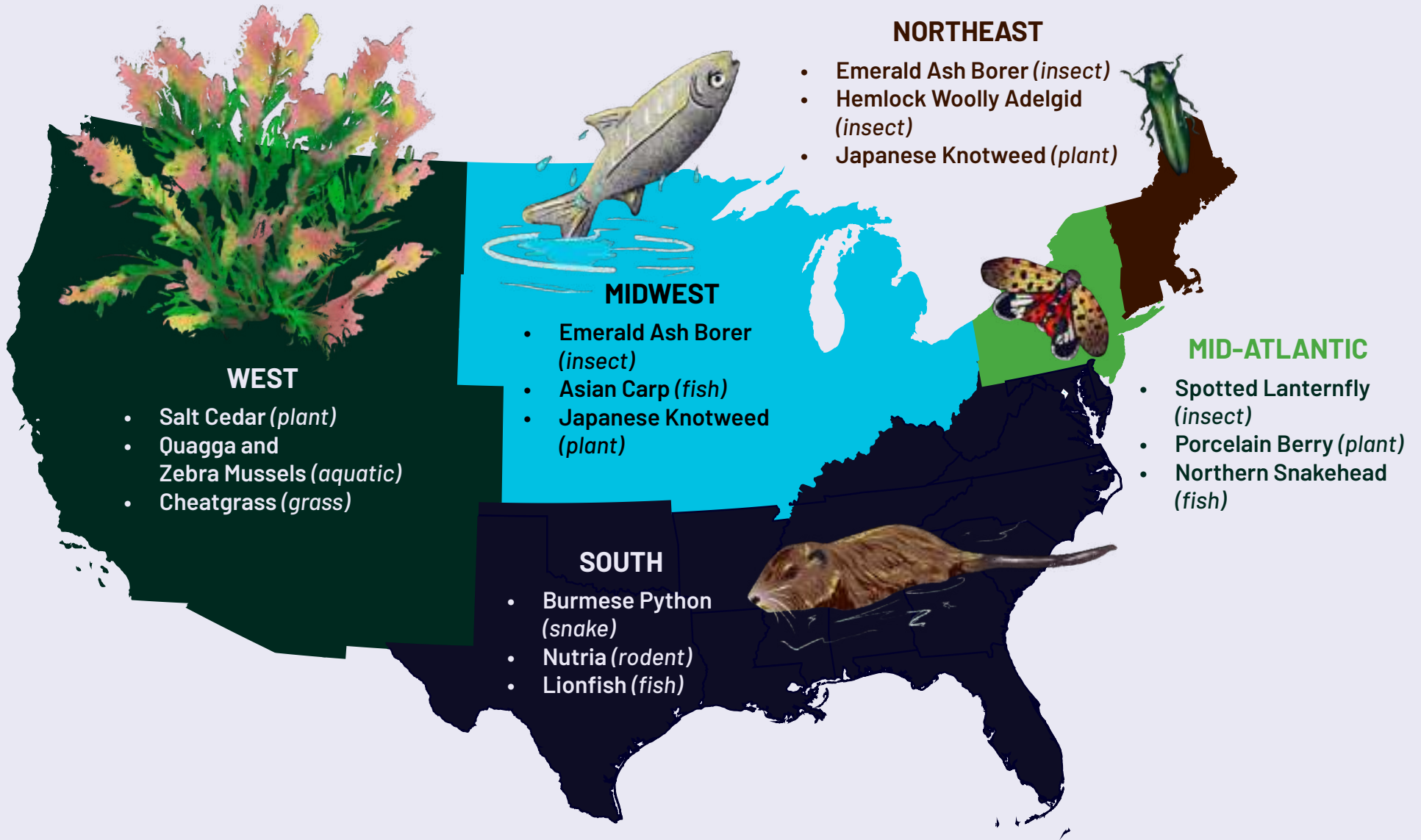
And it might be more than plants you need to be on the lookout for. Look up invasive pests in your area and learn how to deal with them. In some cases, like the spotted lanternfly in the eastern U.S., experts recommend killing them on sight because the destruction they cause is so great.



## **In Your Community**

Here are three ways to stop invasives outside of your home:

- ▶ Volunteer with local nature groups, or at your local public park to help remove invasive species in your area.
- ▶ Don't "pack a pest" when traveling. Fruits and vegetables, plants, insects and animals can carry pests or become invasive themselves.
- ▶ Don't move firewood (it can hold forest pests), clean your bags and boots after each hike, and throw out food before you travel from place to place.



# What's in your backyard?

Here are just a few examples.



**FIGHT THE**  
*Plastics*  
*Problem*

### **Plastics demand action**

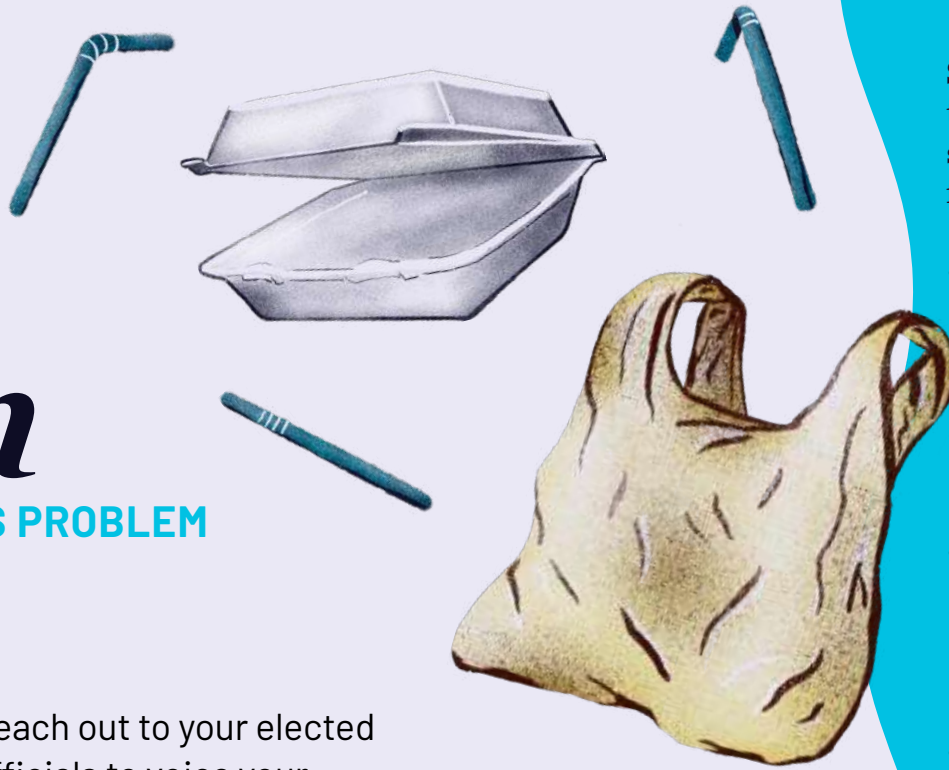
Most plastic is made from fossil fuel, and the pace of plastic production is skyrocketing. Plastic pollution is so widespread that tiny microplastics you can't see are contaminating our food, drinking water and even our bodies.

The plastic industry wants to make the problem our responsibility. They've made it our job to recycle and clean up our beaches, all while they ramp up plastic production every year. But we can't solve this problem by cleaning up the mess for them – we have to work together to clean up the plastic industry.

A plastic bag floating in the ocean, Shellharbour, Australia.  
© Aristo Risi/  
TNC Photo Contest 2018

# Act *for the* Earth

▶ FIGHT THE PLASTICS PROBLEM



## Speak Up Against Plastic Pollution

Stand with organizations like The Nature Conservancy that are advocating for the systemic changes we need to get the plastics problem under control.

Find out what local or state laws can make a difference where you live and get involved to support them.

Reach out to your elected officials to voice your concern about plastics and call on them to enact real policy solutions.

For example, The Nature Conservancy in California recently helped pass the Plastic Waste Reduction Act – the country’s most comprehensive legislation to curb plastic pollution. This law requires a

25 percent reduction in single-use plastic production and protects and restores habitat and communities most impacted by plastic pollution.

You can bring change to your community by speaking up for laws that limit single-use plastics like bags and straws.

Several major cities and states in the U.S. have passed laws against single-use plastics. Here are a few examples:

- **San Francisco, CA** became the first major city to ban single-use plastic bags. It has expanded to include polystyrene foam (commonly known as Styrofoam), food containers and plastic straws.
- **New Jersey** banned single-use plastic and paper bags in stores and restaurants, as well as polystyrene food containers.
- **Atlanta, GA** banned single-use plastic bags, straws and polystyrene food containers for city operations.
- **Vermont** banned single-use plastic bags, plastic straws and polystyrene containers.
- **Seattle, WA** banned single-use plastic straws, utensils and carryout bags.

Currently, there are 18 states that prevent local communities from banning plastic bags. If you live in one of these states, step one is speak up and get that overturned!



## Urge Global Leaders to Act

The United Nations (UN) is working to adopt the first-ever international, legally-binding agreement to end plastic pollution. And we're urging leaders from more than 175 countries to make this a strong and binding treaty.

The most recent UN meeting ended without an agreement, so it's critical we keep up pressure on countries to do the right thing during their next meeting.

[Add your voice by signing this pledge](#) and stand with The Nature Conservancy as we call on world leaders to come together and tackle plastic pollution.



## Don't Wash Plastics Down the Drain

Reforming the plastic industry is what will make the biggest difference, but one thing you can do as an individual is choose natural fabrics over synthetics. That's because our clothes release microplastics (called microfibers) into the environment during manufacturing and when they're washed.

Estimates show that for every 500 t-shirts manufactured, the equivalent of one t-shirt is lost as microfiber pollution during production alone. And every wash cycle can generate as many as 18 million microfibers.

Diver collecting plastic waste in the Mediterranean Sea.

© Sebnem Coskun/  
TNC Photo Contest 2021



Allmende-Kontor Community Garden) in Tempelhofer Feld, Berlin. The citizens of Berlin advocated for Tempelhofer Feld to not be developed once the airport closed. It has become a public space used for recreation, gardening, and other activities. © Jen Guyton

## Climate change demands action

The effects of climate change are growing in front of our eyes. From record-breaking temperatures, to catastrophic wildfires and floods. It's clear that we must come together and act to create a healthier future for our planet.

And while it may feel like it's too big of a problem, there are steps each of us can take to make a difference today.

# TACKLE *Climate Change*

# Act *for the* Earth

▶ TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE



## Get Involved in Your Community

Some of the most exciting opportunities – and progress – are happening in cities and states across the country.

If you aren't already, get involved in your community! Support laws and policies that aim to increase renewable energy like solar or wind, invest in infrastructure for electric vehicles, reduce emissions

and improve public transportation.

Your voice is incredibly powerful when advocating with local leaders. Make calls, write emails and attend community meetings to show your support for important measures like these.



## Cut Back on Air Travel

Air travel is one of the biggest contributors to

climate change. So, if you're a frequent flyer, try cutting back on air travel when possible. This is one of the biggest things you can do to reduce your carbon footprint. It also helps to limit layovers or stops you take along the way.

For your next trip, try exploring places a little closer to home. There may be spots a few hours away that feel like a complete change of scenery. Even in

your own backyard, going for walks in nearby parks, exploring local bike trails or checking out a new museum or restaurant can feel like a getaway. You'll also save some money and get to know your area better.

View of the Manhattan skyline from Governors Island in the New York Harbor. The southern portion of the island is an artificially created, storm-resistant landscape built up from recycled demolition debris. © Diane Cook and Len Jenshel

# Act *for the* Earth

▶ TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE



## Eat More Plant-Based Foods

Eating fruits and vegetables is not only good for your health, but also for the planet. Plant-based foods generally have a lower carbon footprint than meat.

It doesn't have to be all or nothing. Adding more plant-based foods to your meals once or twice a week can make a difference.

And luckily, plant-based alternatives are getting tastier and more creative every day.

It's important to mention that in places like the central and western U.S., sustainably grazing cattle and bison help protect and manage grasslands, while in other places like Brazil the global demand for meat is driving deforestation.

## Good Sources of Plant-Based Protein

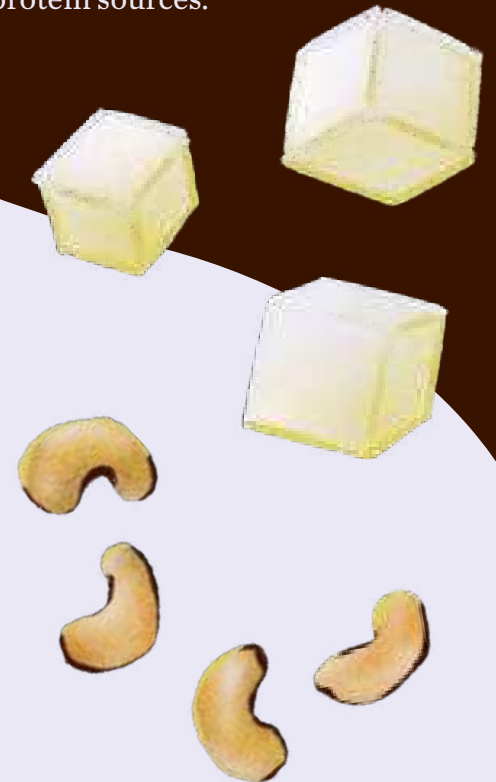
**Legumes and Pulses** (including beans, lentils and peas). These high-protein foods have the lowest impact on the environment.

**Nuts and Seeds.** While they use more water to grow than some other high-protein plant foods, they still offer a great way to get a little extra protein.

**Meat Alternatives.** From foods like tofu that have been around for thousands of years, to newer products like veggie burgers and sausages, they're quick and easy protein sources.

When you do eat meat, try to find producers who are committed to sustainable grazing and managing forests responsibly.

Making small changes to your diet can add up to a big impact!






**T**hank you again for your willingness to do your part and help protect our planet. We hope you'll put these tips to use, not just for Earth Day but all year long!

Our individual actions matter – and we also need big picture policy change to make a difference at a large-scale too. **Together we can – and must – find a way to change course to a more sustainable future.**

If you'd like to do even more to help, consider supporting The Nature Conservancy's hands-on conservation work [with a recurring or one-time donation](#). However you choose to stay involved, we're so grateful to have you with us.

 Sunrise on Mount Kaputar,  
New South Wales, Australia  
© Steffen Bollmann/  
TNC Photo Contest 2019