



# EARTH DAY *garden party*

Color your world a little greener with our 10 simple tips for eco-friendly merrymaking.

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*Start an annual rite of spring* by gathering folks for a down-to-earth celebration that's more hip than hippie. Join the worldwide tradition of celebrating nature on Earth Day (April 22). Or, in the spirit of enjoying the environment all year, choose your date to gather with family, friends, and neighbors. That's what we did on a gorgeous spring day on an Iowa family farm.



Use and adapt these simple and beautiful ideas as you focus on everything green:

- ✓ Plan your outdoor gala with a garden-fresh feast and Earth-friendly activities.
- ✓ Envision a festive fresh-air setting—a garden, park, or schoolyard, for example—that's naturally decorated with blue sky, lush turf, and tree shade.
- ✓ Set the tone for your celebration by making all-natural invitations. Try to use recyclable materials during your party's activity time.
- ✓ Keep the menu simple. Use healthful ingredients that are in-season, locally grown, or organic.

You can lessen the environmental impact of entertaining. Now is your chance to walk the walk and practice the four Rs: reduce, reuse, recycle, and rethink. Have fun making party favors that use materials you have on hand. When it comes to party goods, select products that give back to the environment, such as reusable bamboo dishes and recycled glassware. Send your guests home with an eco-style gift ready to grow. You'll show people that being easy on the planet and being fabulous are one and the same.



### 1. seeded invitation

Oh, grow on, send handmade invitations with instructions to watch them bloom where they're planted. Crafted with tree-free paper that's embedded with seeds, this invitation is plantable. The paper recycles naturally as wildflower seedlings grow. Achieve a handwritten look using a script font on your home computer. Complete the invitation with a twine-and-twig closure. Then, pique anticipation by tucking the invites into translucent vellum envelopes.

### 2. bright banner

Fly your message for all to see: Welcome! Let's celebrate the day! Turn recycled pillowcases into bright flags showing natural icons. Just use your creative side with some freehand drawing and lettering—plus scissors, crafts glue, and markers. Slide a length of clothesline through the hem of each flag, and you're ready to fly Earth's colors.



### 3. earth-friendly gift exchange

Go way beyond traditional spring cleaning. Invite guests to bring an unused or gently worn item that needs a new home. Especially welcome are items that give back to nature, such as butterfly and birdhouses, cloth shopping bags, recycled-paper note cards, gardening books, nature journals, and so on. As guests arrive, collect the things in a wheelbarrow and then encourage everyone to select something as they head home.



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#### 4. bottled waters

Prepare plenty of tall, cool, and portable drinks in advance. Add fresh mint and strawberries or lemon slices to wide-mouth bottles of water or tea. Squeaky-clean recycled bottles work well and keep with the Earth theme. Keep the subtly flavored waters chilly in a tub of ice where they'll be handy for help-yourself serving.

#### 5. casual & rustic

Set a relaxed atmosphere with a table decorated in casual and rustic elements. Fern-twig fencing makes a texture-rich table cover. Flowery centerpieces—planted rustic urns and a canning jar filled with fresh daisies—sit on a moss runner. Serve garden-fresh ingredients and locally produced organic bread and cheese.

#### 6. tree chunk chair

Rescue a tree-trunk chunk and transform it into an earthy perch. A woven rattan cushion or small pillow makes a tree stump surprisingly comfortable.

#### 7. place cards

Each personalized place setting consists of a burlap-bagged baby evergreen and a hardwood garden stake intended for planting. Write each guest's name at the top of a bark-on stake. If guests don't have a place for planting, encourage them to donate theirs to a school, community center, or neighborhood park.



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### 8. branching chandelier

You won't have to look far for materials to make this glittery, earthy candelabra. Create the hanging tea light or votive holders from baby food jars and stainless-steel wire. Gather a handful of branches—naked, budded, or flowering—from the yard or pruning pile. Anchor the branches in a half-gallon jar filled with pretty beach stones. We used a bird's nest found after a storm as a final adornment. (Remember, it's illegal to ever take a nest from the wild.) Display the decorative candleholder where it will highlight party favors for the guests.

### 9. party favors

Whether you plan your gathering for Earth Day or another day, send guests home with gifts that will live on. Tiny burlap bags hold Colorado blue spruce seedlings. Sheer fabric sachets hold handfuls of wildflower seeds. Make this easy gift in minutes by placing seeds in the center of a 5-inch square of tulle or similar fabric, gathering the material into a bunch, and tying with jute or another natural fiber. Don't forget to include planting directions!



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### 10. time to plant a tree

It's no wonder that tree planting is the most popular way to celebrate Earth Day. As an act of environmental responsibility and optimism, it's an ideal activity for anyone. Public or private lands in any community benefit from additional trees as they grow and provide beauty, shade, food, pollution control, shelter for wildlife, and a legacy to future residents.

See Resources on page 108.

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**1.** Select a site with enough room for the tree (roots and branches) to reach full size. Consider the tree's needs for light, moisture, and soil. (The spruce shown will thrive in most parts of the United States.) In an area safe to dig, prepare a hole as deep as the seedling's pot and at least twice as wide.

**2.** Gently remove the tree seedling from its container, handling the tree by its root ball, not by the trunk or the branches. Set the root ball in the prepared planting hole. Replace the soil around the root ball—amendments are not necessary. Gently tamp the soil to remove any existing air pockets.

**3.** Mound a ring of soil about a foot from the base of the tree trunk, forming a water-holding basin, and water until full. Once the water soaks in, spread a 2-inch layer of mulch a few inches away from the base of the tree. Water again. Water weekly (if it doesn't rain) through the first season.

