



La Vista Ecological Learning Center

April E-News and Eco-Spiritual Calendar

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A ministry of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate

Bloom Where You May Not Have Been Planted



April is the lovely month when native wildflowers and trees start blooming, often where they were not planted since they are NATIVES! What does that mean? Native plants are ones that originally occur within a region as the result of natural processes rather than human intervention. Since they evolved in a region, they are aligned with it and are more beneficial to the Earth community than non-natives, called exotics, which often require fertilizing and lots of watering. Natives serve wildlife with nectar, seeds and nuts, since they evolved together. They are essential to a healthy ecosystem.

Think about yourself: do you live like a native or an exotic? Native plants and trees can teach us how to live sustainably and gently on Earth. They model for us what it means to improve life by our very being and to live in scale with our surroundings. Natives remind us to give back to Earth and not take more than our share of Earth's goodness. Natives encourage us to be humble rather than showy, with a special kind of natural beauty.

For a meditation this month, spend time with a flowering dogwood or redbud, with Dutchman's breeches, harbinger of spring, or Virginia bluebells. Let natives teach you about living with dignity as an integral member of Earth's amazing community of life.

Among the Trees, A Retreat Day April 6, 10:00 am - 3:30 pm (Rain date: April 20)

As a special part of your celebration of Earth month, please join us for a day of retreat among the trees at La Vista.

We'll receive input from an architect and on our *inner sapling*, participate in a hike among the trees led by a master naturalist, and have time for journaling and conversation as we consider the intelligence, wisdom, and social nature of trees and of ourselves.

What to bring:

Something from your area such as a rock, leaf, flower, that will be used for ambience and conversation.

A favorite quote or brief reading about trees.

A snack like fruit, nuts, bread, to complete a lunch of hearty

soup we will provide.

A lawn chair, if you wish, and your water bottle.

Cost: Your donation will be greatly appreciated and well-used.

Registration: Call 618-466-5004 or info@lavistaelc.org

This event is a project of the Confluence Climate Collaborative.



Tuesday, April 9: Work Day in the Oblates' Woods Nature Preserve Noon - 3:30 pm



Why do our faithful volunteers return to La Vista month after month, year after year? We are motivated, in part, by our concern for biodiversity. Invasive plant species like bush honeysuckle and euonymus spread quickly and can displace native plants, preventing native plant growth and reducing species diversity. Committed to supporting a healthy plant community at La Vista, we meet to protect and promote biodiversity with our efforts. It is a good way to show care for our common home. Will you join us

Picture: Volunteer Cheryl Hertzelle (left), Sister Maxine (right) and just-pulled euonymus (everywhere)!

Registration: Call 618-466-5004

Sunday, April 21: Easter

Let these words by John Surette, S.J. provide material for meditation at Eastertime:

There can be no Easter for us without dying - as individuals, as a people, as a nation - to those parts of ourselves in which we are only too much alive, that is, to our agitations, our fears, our selfishness, our need to control our lives, the lives of others, and everything else that exists.

There can be no Easter for us without leaving behind an old life and an old bread in order to live a new life and to taste a new bread ... a life of communion with all that exists, human and other-than-human, and a new bread of justice, peace, and love.

May you have a blessed Easter!

Monday, April 22: Earth Day

This year the Earth Day Network is asking us to join their *Protect Our Species* campaign. Goals include:

1. educating and raising awareness about the accelerating rate of extinction of millions of species and the causes and consequences of this phenomenon;
2. achieving major policy victories that protect broad groups of species as well as individual species in their habitats;
3. building and activating a global movement that embraces nature and its values; and
4. encouraging individual actions such as adopting a plant-based diet and stopping pesticide and herbicide use. **(WE CAN ALL DO THIS!!!!!!)**

How can you join in the *Protect Our Species* campaign as you honor Earth on this day and every day?

Friday, April 26: National Arbor Day

The best seller *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben would be a great read for this day. In his book we learn that trees are social by nature and are much like our families, with tree *parents* living with their *children*, sharing nutrients with those that are sick, and creating an ecosystem that lessens the impact of extreme heat and cold for the whole group. How fascinating!

This should not come as a surprise to anyone who is familiar with the Universe Story. We know that everything in the Universe has its own interiority, its own voice and self-organizing ability, its own "within", its own sacredness. Why, then, are so many surprised by Wohlleben's findings? We have inherited a Western humanistic tradition that has devalued matter by separating it from spirit, denying matter intelligence and holiness. Consequently, matter has become merely "stuff", or in the case of trees, simply lumber for our use.

Arbor Day is an opportunity to recognize that the mystery of trees, the mystery of all beings, is rooted in the Divine and carries revelation. We become reverent before that truth and humble before its depth.

(Inspiration for this reflection is the article "The Within of Things" by John Surette, S.J.)

Sketching and Nature Journaling Backyard Birds Saturday, May 18, 10:00 am - Noon

Investigate the world of backyard birds! Drawing lessons, hints, tips, and nature journaling suggestions will get you well on your way to the enriching experience of sketching birds and recording your observations. Beginners and those who wish to broaden their drawing skills are welcome. Artistic skills are not required.

Cost: \$20

Presenter: Angie Jungbluth is a veteran science and nature journaling teacher whose enthusiasm is contagious.

Supples: unlined drawing paper (in a binder or journal with space to sketch and write), pencil, and eraser.

Registration: Send payment to La Vista, 4300 Levis Lane, Godfrey, IL 62035

