

There are several ways to appreciate Earth Day

BY JOHN CARMAN
Guest columnist

It's another beautiful spring day in Aiken. And soon it will be Earth Day, celebrated around the globe during the third week of April. This is the 53rd anniversary of the first Earth Day observed on April 22, 1970.

In Aiken we enjoy a rich and vibrant life that includes many natural wonders.

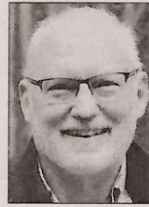
For example, we enjoy the benefits of living in a Tree City USA community. While growing up on the flat lands of the Midwest prairie, I learned that trees will grow when planted, but sometimes struggle if left unaided by human hands. Similarly, here in Aiken we benefit from the hands of others who planted our magnificent trees years ago.

Caring human hands are also key to our beautiful natural features. Many of these caring hands come together each year to celebrate Earth Day in Aiken. We can all appreciate the tenets of Earth Day:

- Be a good steward. Using our natural resources in a way that preserves and embellishes will ensure they remain here for our children and grandchildren.

- Be a conservationist. Recognize that wasting resources is not a right. We can still be great consumers. We need to ensure we are also informed and

then make the best possible decisions as we use our resources.



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- Be respectful of science and technology, and the innovation that pushes our boundaries forward. Many advances improve our health, happiness and quality of life. The best advances also consider the use of energy and other resources while minimizing adverse effects on our environment.

- Be curious about emerging energy options, including solar power and electric-powered/hybrid vehicles. Future advances in battery storage will likely expand the daily use of both.

- Be aware of our limits. We are a country blessed with vast natural resources, but it is also important to limit our uses in some areas. For example, water is a finite resource, both underground and flowing in our rivers and streams. It sustains life.

Closer to home, consider some personal options:

- Join a garden group or sign up for a gardening or naturalist class. Our city parks and gardens are truly remarkable. Extend that experience into your individual outdoor spaces for the enjoyment of all. And consider helping a friend or youngster to experience the joy of growing things.

- Join a group to help remove litter on our streets and roads.

- Begin hiking every day in our parks and other natural areas. Aiken is blessed with a network of trails that include access to a rare Carolina Bay. The magnificent trees of Colleton Avenue, the recently landscaped boulevard walk on Park Avenue, as well as the extensive natural areas – including the nationally renowned Hopelands Gardens and Hitchcock Woods – all deserve our attention.

- Help a local beekeeper. Even if you can't have honey bees near your home, know what plants they frequent and add some to your landscape.

- Find out what butterflies need and plant the flowers they visit and serve as their hosts.

- Join the local Blue Bird Society and help to maintain their life-giving network of bird houses. Aiken is the statewide leader in this exceptional conservation effort.

Do what you can to tend to our natural environment, and conserve what we have, while using it wisely.

Please join us on Newberry Street and The Alley for the Earth Day Aiken Festival from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday.

John Carman is a member of the City of Aiken Energy and Environmental Committee's Earth Day Aiken Planning Group.