

IT'S ALL CONNECTED

Inspiring ↔ Informative ↔ Actionable

presented by



Not Your Backyard, But a National Park

This Spring, we urge you to join in a nationwide movement to turn millions of acres of backyard lawn into native habitat which will sustain and nourish our nature neighbors. In the words of Doug Tallamy, co-founder of [Homegrown National Park](#), “every human being on this planet needs diverse highly productive ecosystems to survive.”

As we discussed in [Volume 1](#) last year, lawns are monocultures that offer little or no benefit to animals and insects while also requiring immense resources to maintain. Opting to switch some of your lawn space into native plantings takes advantage of tremendous conservation potential in our own backyards. This is “a bottom-up call-to-action to restore habitat where we live and work.” By doing so, we help provide more habitat and more connectivity for the plants and animals that help us by supplying oxygen, pest control, carbon sequestration, flood control, and so much more.

Steps to take to rewild your outdoor space:

- **Shrink your lawn**, save water and pesticide use while adding valuable habitat.
- **Remove invasive plants** as they sustain less animal diversity than natives do, and may even crowd out indigenous flora. Some of the worst offenders include: Japanese honeysuckle, Oriental bittersweet, multiflora rose and kudzu.
- Create **no-mow zones under trees** because native caterpillars drop from a tree's canopy to the ground to complete their life cycle. Opt for mulch or a native ground cover around the base to serve as shelter for the insects. Birds will benefit, as well as moths and butterflies.
- Equip your outdoor **lights with motion sensors** as well as hoods that focus the light down in a narrow field. White lights blazing all night can disrupt animal life cycles. Replace bulbs with LED devices that use less energy, and install yellow lights as they attracts fewer flying insects.
- Choose to include [keystone plant species](#) since some plants contribute more to the food web than others.



- **Pruning on the flowers.** A native plant garden doesn't have to be boring. Attract pollinators with lovely goldenrod, native willows, asters, sunflowers, evening primrose and violets that support beleaguered native bees.
- For unwanted weeds, dig them up, torch them on hardscaping, or douse them with vinegar. You may also discourage crabgrass by mowing your lawn 3 inches high which will also save on watering.

"In the United States, lawn irrigation consumes an average of eight billion gallons of water daily," and "Forty percent of the chemicals used by the lawn-care industry are banned in other countries because they are carcinogenic." - Doug Tallamy, [Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation in your Yard](#)



If you are still on the fence, consider that a recent study found a “multiplier effect.” For every 100 homes that [converted their yards using a rebate](#), an additional 132 nearby homes converted their grass without the rebate incentive. Another study estimated the reversion rate. It found that less than 4% of participants who received a turf rebate later reverted to grass.

Go native and go natural and get digging!

Music To My Ears

The one and only beloved Dan Rather opened my eyes this week to an organization, [Playing For Change](#), which brings music education to underprivileged people around the world. Not only that, but they have gathered musicians far and wide to sing [Waiting On The World To Change](#), written by John Mayer with a message of climate change much like *Live Aid* and *We Are The World* was to famine. Listen, sing along, tap your toes, and share this universal musical message with your friends and family.



Quick Connections

Books, websites, documentaries, podcasts, events, quotes, and more



What Do You Hear?

How much sound is too much in nature? [Take this quiz](#) from Leave No Trace.



Quote we're pondering

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, the stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." - **Aldo Leopold**



We Keep Just 1%

[The Story of Stuff](#) is a good reminder about what really goes on behind the scenes on the road to making the things we buy.

The [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) is coming up, February 16-19, 2024. Join in, get to know your backyard and neighborhood birds, and do some community science. Need help with your bird ID skills, the [Sibley Guide To Birds](#) is an excellent resource. We also suggest the [Merlin Bird ID](#) app, it's free and can help you identify birds by sound or using visual markers.

Community Connections

We want to connect with you.

Do you have native plants in your landscape? If so, have you noticed any increase in visits from your nature neighbors, such as insects or birds?

We read each and every response and will share selected reader stories in upcoming newsletters.

Your feedback is important. [Tell us](#) how we are doing and what you would like to see covered in future newsletters.

Every connection counts! Please help grow our community of everyday heroes by sharing this newsletter with a friend or colleague.

Thank you,

Michael Hawk, Founder

Laura Schare, Editor

Jumpstart Nature

PO Box 53842

San Jose, California 95153

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