

MiSustainable Holland

About this series

The MiSustainable Holland column is a collection of community voices sharing updates about local sustainability initiatives.

This Week's Sustainability Framework Theme:

Environmental Awareness/Action: Environmental education and integrating environmental practices into our planning will change negative outcomes of the past and improve our future.

New Toolkit helps celebrate Earth Day through personal and community action

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Though we may strive to consider our planet every day of the year, celebrating Earth Day in April offers the opportunity to focus on learning new skills and attending programs or cleanups alongside people who also specifically care about the well-being of Holland and West Michigan communities.

The City of Holland, in partnership with the ODC Network, has created an [Earth Day Toolkit](#) to help direct residents to useful information and beneficial actions to lower their impact on the planet, save money, and support our community. The Toolkit includes a great variety of resources, such as the following ideas.

Reducing energy use at home is an easy way to increase personal comfort while saving money and energy. Contact your utility provider such as Holland BPW, Semco, or Consumers Energy, or access free materials and personalized recommendations, by signing up for a Home Energy 101 visit.

Reusing and maintaining existing belongings also lessens unnecessary spending and energy investments. Join the ODC Network and local experts to learn about Bike Maintenance and Repair at the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council with Cross Country Cycles, or attend one (or more) Clothing Repair Workshops with CultureWorks.

Recycling is a useful practice, but it is easy to fall into the trap of “wish-cycling” – that is, including ultimately unsuitable items that we hope are able to be recycled. Doing so causes entire batches of otherwise eligible materials to get sent to a landfill. To prevent this, brush up on the exact items accepted by your service provider, as well as learn about local options for recycling non-curb-side items.

Learning about earth-conscious lawn and landscaping practices is a great way to steward personal properties in a way that saves time and money while also protecting water quality and creating habitat for local wildlife. Read up on ways to implement easy techniques for the upcoming Low Mow May movement.

Source native plants more easily through the Ottawa Conservation District's Native Plant Sale and Native Tree Seedling Sale. If you would like personalized assistance with making changes to your landscaping, sign up for a Macatawa Watershed Rainscaping site assessment.

Attending local cleanup events has the benefit of seeing the real-time need for removing pollution and improving native environments while spending time outside! Join Hope College students and staff as they clean up Holland State Park and Kollen Park, or partner with the ODC Network at Stu Visser Trails.

Adding native plants to your outdoor spaces attracts pollinators to your yard, protects water quality, and improves soil structure. Native plants can also decrease the amount of regular yard work required while improving the aesthetic of your yard!

This Toolkit is meant as a jumping-off point for people looking to make a positive impact in their life and on the Holland community. It by no means encapsulates the full extent of helpful actions!

By finding options that fit your interests and lifestyle, you can enjoy knowing that you're making a difference in a much more sustainable way, and hopefully you'll get to work alongside other people with similar interests – both known and newly met – in your endeavor!

■ *Sarah Washabaugh is a conservation educator with the ODC Network.*