

Every day is Earth Day

Yesterday, gloriously warm and sunny, was Earth Day. Like many days recently, it was hard to believe it is only the end of April.

This is the time of year when it is hard to miss nature at work. A vibrant green is enveloping our lawns and fields. Trees, once dormant, are starting to leaf out. Colourful crocuses, daffodils and tulips are leading us back outside to our gardens. Peeper frogs can be heard emerging from ponds and streams in the evening. Blackbirds and robins have returned from a long winter hiatus. In spring, the beauty of nature is revealed.

Of course, once the snow has disappeared, the trash accumulated over the winter, along our walkways and roadways, is also revealed. When it comes to our own private properties, most of us are outside cleaning things up as soon as we get the opportunity. But what is being done for our shared spaces?

Thankfully, on Earth Day, many people, both young and old, volunteer their time to clean up public spaces. It is a day in which we are asked to consider the earth, and make an effort to lessen the negative impact we have on it. Practice the three R's: re-use, reduce, and recycle. Plant a tree. Pick up garbage.

It is fitting that yesterday, on this Earth Day, Premier McGuinty announced that the Province of Ontario is going to ban the cosmetic use of pesticides.

This also happens to be "Pitch-in-Canada" week. The Municipality is offering a number of initiatives through "Operation Clean Sweep" to keep Clarington clean and green. Schools, community groups and families can be seen pitching in and picking up trash along our roads and nature trails. To date 29 groups have volunteered their time to clean up a portion of their municipality. But mere hours after the efforts of a group of school children along one of our regional roads this week had left the area pristine, the trash could be seen accumulating again.

We need to give, nature a break from our constant assault on it. One day or week a year does not appear to be doing the trick. Perhaps it is time to re-think our trashy habits. We need to effect change from the companies that produce the plastic bags and bottles, and disposable coffee cups that litter our beautiful community. At the very least, the companies that produce the trash that litter our roadways should be sponsoring clean-up initiatives to remove their wasted packaging from public property.

It is time to have a serious look at reducing the amount of packaging we buy. It is time to press companies to use only biodegradable or recyclable packaging, if they must use any packaging at all. It is time to teach not just our children but also ourselves to respect the earth.

What is needed is real action, and real action by each of us. Turning off a few light bulbs, and legislating away certain insecticides is barely a start. We need to demand from our governments tough legislation on packaging, and a real reduction in the use of gasoline and oil burning technologies: In our homes, we need to turn down the heat and the air conditioning, reduce the use of washers and dryers, and we need to return to a culture of walking, instead of jumping into our polluting vehicles ten times a day.

All of the community groups in the region could not have cleaned up the smog that was evident this Earth Day. McGuinty knows we must stop the use of coal powered generating stations. We can impact the earth, we are impacting the earth. Let's get serious.

It is springtime - a time when it is obvious that every day should be Earth Day.