

April 2007: 30 Days of Green

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

April is National Garden Month® — When you garden, you GROW!

[home](#) [index of activities](#)

April 6

Appreciate GREEN SPACE

Imagine a world without parks and other open spaces for picnics, playing ball, and other recreation.

[>>Printer-friendly pdf](#)

background

Since the beginning of civilization, green space has been a valued part of human settlements. Land owned "in common" was often used for food production or hunting grounds. It was important for survival, and also as a source of pleasure.

As urban populations grew the amount of common land left open for green space decreased. With the rise of factory jobs during Industrial Revolution, many workers flooded into cities. Close-built houses were constructed on whatever space was available, including natural areas. But this way of life began to take its toll on residents' psychological well being, and crime and other social ills were blamed on the bleak urban landscape. City leaders began to call for parks — publicly owned land set aside specifically as green space for the enjoyment of all residents.

These parks gave city residents some space for outdoor recreation. The fresh air and green landscapes were designed to renew spirits and invite people to exercise. They were also intended as positive places for neighbors to interact and to foster pride in their city, building a strong sense of community.

New York City was a leader in the parks movement. The city's first park, Bowling Green Park, was established in 1733. In 1856 the city acquired the land for what is probably the most famous city park in the world: Central Park.

It wasn't just urban communities that recognized the need to preserve natural lands. In 1870 a group of visionaries began the process of establishing a national park to prevent the privatization of some of the spectacular natural landmarks in this country, and as a result, Yellowstone became the first National Park in 1872. Parkland acquisition continued, and in 1916 the National Park Service was created to oversee management. Today there are more than 400 national parks scattered across the country. Check the [National Park Service Web site](#) to find one near you.

Who "owns" parks? Neighborhoods, cities, counties, states, and the national government all hold land in the public trust. Other parks are privately owned by individuals or organizations. They vary in size from less than an acre to thousands of acres, and may feature built structures such as playgrounds, sports fields, reservoirs, and walking trails. But what they all share is the goal of providing people access to a little slice of nature.



activity

- Brainstorm a list of parks and other green spaces in your community. Find out who owns and maintains the various lands. Research their origins, including why they were started and who was involved in their creation.
- If possible, arrange for a class trip to a local park or garden and a tour with employees to find out what it takes to keep their organization running. If a trip is not possible, invite a local park or garden staff member to come speak to the class to talk about their organization's role in the community.
- Ask students to write about an experience they had at

For more information about the history of parks visit [The History of Parks Family Tree Web site](#).

a park or garden. What did they do at the park? How did it make them feel? What does it mean to them?

- As a creative writing and/or extension, ask student to plan a new park. What features do they want to include? How big would it be? Where would it be located?

sponsored by:

