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Restore Our Earth With Reforestation



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

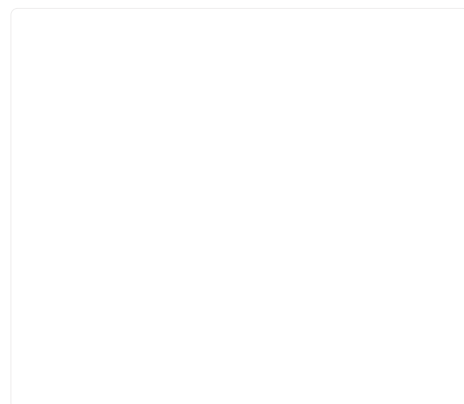
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[Canopy Project](#)



Americans don't pay much attention to trees. Sometimes we are reminded that tropical rainforests are still being cleared for agriculture. But deforestation is much more serious than most of us realize. The theme for Earth Day 2021 is "Restore Our Earth." With that theme, EARTHDAY.ORG (formerly Earth Day Network) is raising awareness of the global impacts of deforestation and working towards the solution: reforestation.

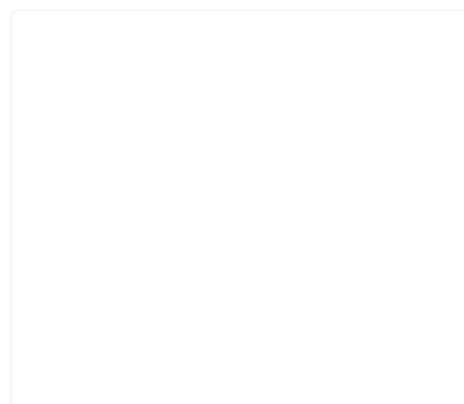
Deforestation



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Deforestation is the intentional, permanent removal of forests for other uses.

“We’ve obviously clear-cut huge parts of the planet’s surface and as a result, we’ve lost huge amounts of biodiversity, we now find ourselves with polluted waterways, because the roots of trees and plants obviously prevent that from happening. Or maybe it’s not so obvious and that’s why they do it,” says Kathleen Rogers, CEO and president of EARTHDAY.ORG.

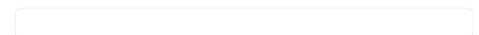
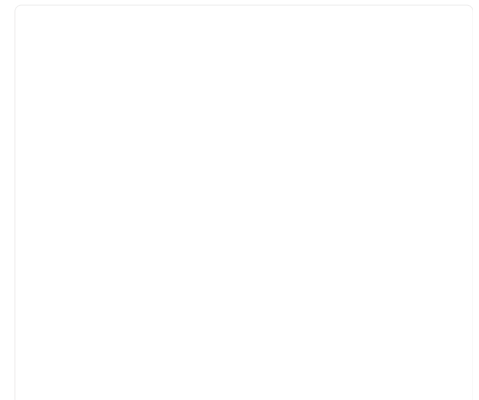
It’s estimated that [half of North America’s forests](#) had already been destroyed by the beginning of the 20th century. Globally, the World Bank [estimates](#) that about 3.9 million square miles of forest have been lost since the beginning of the 20th century – about 20% of the world’s canopy. In 2018, [The Guardian reported](#) that every second, a chunk of forest the size of a soccer field is lost. Farming, grazing of livestock, mining, and drilling account for [more than half of all deforestation](#).

Forests and Climate Change

According to the UN’s [2018 State of the World’s Forests report](#), healthy and productive forests are essential to sustainable agriculture. Forests and trees contribute to water quality, future energy needs, and to sustainable, healthy cities. Forests are home to 80% of the terrestrial biodiversity of plants, animals, and microbes. About [250 million people](#), mostly the rural poor, depend on forests directly for subsistence and income. But perhaps the most significant role forests play is in climate regulation. The United Nations FAO says that deforestation is the [second-leading cause of climate change](#) after burning fossil fuels. It accounts for nearly 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity has called on world governments to [protect 30%](#) of lands and oceans worldwide by the end of the decade to combat climate change. In January of 2021, President Biden [committed](#) the United States to this goal.

Reforestation



Scientists and activists alike agree that “30 by 30” is a valid goal. But with so much forestland already destroyed, some land needs to be restored before it can be preserved.

Reforestation is the process of planting trees in a forest where the number of trees has been decreasing.

“Reforestation, whether it’s in areas where bamboo naturally occurs or trying to support old-growth forest to come back or new trees that we’re planting in communities is an attempt to use the Earth’s natural systems to give us back our oxygen and to protect our water and biodiversity,” says Rogers.

Although it will take billions of trees, reforestation is also one of the cheapest ways to sequester atmospheric carbon and tackle the climate crisis.



The Canopy Project

It’s more straightforward than other forms of carbon sequestration, but reforestation is **not easy**, and there are **pitfalls to avoid**. Climate change has already made it harder for forests to regrow without active management, and many reforestation projects fail because nearby communities harvest the saplings for wood. Learning from historical reforestation failures, EARTHDAY.ORG developed [The Canopy Project](#).

“The Canopy Project has a significant education component. So we’re not just planting the trees, we’re working with communities to make sure they are benefitting from it and that they understand the value. So they end up protecting the trees themselves,” says Rogers.

EARTHDAY.ORG works with global partners in areas that are

most at-risk from climate change and environmental degradation, and in areas where environmental disasters have already struck. In Canopy Project forests, nursery-grown saplings are maintained for the first years after planting. Whenever possible, local workers are trained and employed as stewards of the restored habitat.

You can [donate](#) directly to The Canopy Project, where \$1 plants 1 tree.

Earth Day Every Day

[Keep learning](#) about deforestation after Earth Day. [Planting trees](#) is a good idea, but you don't have to live in the woods to help. Buy [certified wood products](#). Go paperless whenever possible, and when it's not possible, buy recycled paper and recycle what you buy.

Beef and soy production (most of which is grown for livestock feed) drive more than [two-thirds of the deforestation](#) in South America. Reduce your consumption of beef, and when you eat soy, look for [responsible options](#). Palm oil is an ingredient in half of all packaged foods that drives tropical deforestation. Seek out [sustainable palm oil](#) to make a difference. If you can afford it, buy [shade-grown coffee](#). To minimize agricultural expansion into previously undeveloped areas, try to support sustainable agricultural practices whenever you shop.

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