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How You Can Invest in Our Planet



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

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This year, [EarthDay.org](#) wants everyone to invest in the earth. Sure, that could mean buying stock in sustainable companies, but it doesn't have to. [Investing in our planet](#) is about everybody doing their part – governments, industry, and individuals. It's about creating a sustainable green economy through a paradigm shift like the global transition from analog to digital that resulted from the space race. Most people don't have stock portfolios, but fortunately, individuals can invest in a green economy as consumers, citizens, and community members.

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“Everything has to be reinvented in a world of shrinking resources. So why not teach it? Why not embrace it? Why not say we’re going to the moon?” asks Kathleen Rogers, president and CEO of EarthDay.org, the nonprofit formerly known as Earth Day Network.

Consumers

It’s a little bit of a free-market myth that companies only provide what consumers want – if that were true, advertising wouldn’t be the [billion-dollar industry](#) that it is. But consumers can sway the market. If everyone bought electric vehicles instead of SUVs, the auto industry would respond with more EV options and fewer gas hogs.

Consumers can educate themselves and choose sustainable alternatives. Websites like this one are filled with information on finding greener options – from [mattresses](#) to [shampoo](#). Every little bit helps, but it’s impossible to shop our way out of climate change.

“We all have hard choices to make and can’t do everything right,” says Rogers. We just have to do the best we can, starting with the most obvious improvements.

“Don’t buy pesticides,” says Rogers. Simply eliminating the intentional purchase of poisons makes a big difference. After that, prioritize choices that either require little effort, like [recycling](#), or that make a [big difference](#) in your impact.

Citizens

“Being a conscious citizen is the political piece. It’s [register and vote](#) for candidates who have really good plans that will not just promote the economy, but a green one. Because that’s the future,” says Rogers. “There’s some great Republicans on the environment, great Democrats, great Independents. Find them. Find them and vote for them. For the health of our kids, vote green.” If you can’t find a good candidate, become one yourself and run for office.

Don’t underestimate the importance of local elections. EarthDay.org is campaigning for universal [climate education](#) in classrooms because schools determine whether kids develop the 21st-century skills that will allow them to make green innovations and discover sustainable climate change solutions.

“If you don’t have an educated public and workforce, who’s going to make the stuff? If you don’t build green consumers, who’s going to buy the stuff? If you don’t educate the kids, who’s going to vote for green politicians?” asks Rogers. If you have kids in school, get involved in the PTA and [help ensure kids have access](#) to climate literacy education.

Citizens are also responsible for holding their elected representatives accountable. [Write or call your representatives](#) about environmental issues often.

Community

Whether you run for office yourself or can't stomach politics longer than it takes to fill out a ballot, you can still be a civic-minded member of your community. You can join local [cleanups](#); support local businesses, especially [regenerative farmers](#); and plant trees.

EarthDay.org's [Canopy Project](#) primarily works with communities in developing countries. But you can be part of urban reforestation in your own neighborhood.

"We urge people to take tree cover seriously," says Rogers. Too many homeowners consider trees a nuisance, blocking views and buckling sidewalks. But [trees are awesome](#), and they provide more than just aesthetic benefits: habitat, [carbon sequestration](#), minimizing the [heat island effect](#) (which is increasingly important as climate change leads to hotter summers), and even [filtering pollutants](#).

Even if you can't plant a tree, you can grow a [tomato plant in a pot](#) by your front door or [herbs in an apartment window](#). "It connects us to the natural world in a way nothing else can, and it's a great educational tool for kids," says Rogers.

Your workplace is also your community, so individuals are also part of the business side of the green economy triumvirate.

"Every industry has opportunities," says Rogers. Look at the way yours works. Try to influence your own company's processes and procurement choices to be more green.

And if you can't fit green consumerism, citizenship, and community action into your life all at once – or ever – don't beat yourself up.

"Stop blaming us and look at the combination of issues," says Rogers. No one person has to do it all; we all just have to do the best we can.

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