

Earth Day is honored around the world on April 22, although larger events such as festivals and rallies are often organized for the weekends before or after today. But why do we need an Earth Day?

In 1970 we were slurping leaded gas with massive V8 sedans, and industry belched out smoke and sludge with little fear of legal consequences or bad press. Air pollution was commonly accepted as the smell of prosperity. Although mainstream America was relatively oblivious to environmental concerns at that time, the stage for change had been set by Rachel Carson in 1962 with the release of her bestseller, *Silent Spring*. She drew attention to the effects of pesticide use on our health and environment. Its been 45 years since that first Earth day - so how are we doing? I think it's safe to say Rachel Carson would not just be turning over in her grave, she would be spinning. Although, DDT has been banned, the use of ever more hazardous pesticides has only increased. And now we even have genetically engineered plants that produce their own pesticides 24/7.

Our family has slowly transitioned from eating solely conventional food, to reading labels in order to eliminate problem ingredients, to buying primarily locally sourced and organic. I'm a little more lax than my wife, believing my immune system is strong enough to cope with the occasional pesticide-laden food. Her response is usually something like, "Well I have a strong immune system too and I know my body is perfectly capable of healing a burn. But that doesn't mean I'm going to put my hand on a hot stove just to prove a point. That's just plain dumb." She's probably right, god love her, but sometimes she makes life so difficult. She won't even let me bring home anything in plastic any more.

Earth Day 1970 achieved a rare political alignment, enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, city slickers and farmers, tycoons and labor leaders. The first Earth Day

led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the signing of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts by Richard Nixon. Since then the base of support for environmental programs has broadened, rekindling public commitment and community activism around the world through a broad range of events and activities.

I'm a firm believer that many small actions can make a difference. So here's a challenge, dear listeners. Commit to eliminating at least one toxic product you're using in the garden, or one toxic cleaning product, or one personal care product with questionable ingredients, or all three. You will be healthier and you'll be leaving your corner of this tiny blue dot called earth in just a little better shape.