

EARTHFEST 2025, BACK WITH A PURPOSE

By Theresa Furnari, Frederick County Master Gardener, May, 2025

Join the Frederick County Master Gardeners on May 31st, for EarthFest, an annual celebration of our relationship with the natural world and a day full of fun, family-friendly activities, and gardening inspiration. While EarthFest 2024 was canceled due to extreme heat, we're back in 2025 with fingers crossed for milder spring weather!

EarthFest invites visitors to explore beautiful gardens, connect with nature, and gather tips for their own yards and planting projects. Special activities just for kids include finger puppet crafts and Storytime in the Children's Garden. Rock painting is also available throughout the day for the kid in all of us!

This free open house will take place on May 31, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. both inside the first-floor rooms of the University of Maryland Extension building and outside on the grounds at 330 Montevue Lane, Frederick. Ample parking is available.

In addition to fun activities, EarthFest offers you a chance to learn how our everyday choices can help support a healthier environment. You can explore exhibits from the Master Gardeners, 4-H, several local nonprofits, as well as Frederick County departments that focus on sustainability and conservation.

The heart of EarthFest is the Demonstration Garden (behind the Extension Building), where native plants and wildlife thrive side-by-side. As you stroll through, enjoy the native plants in bloom and the active bees, butterflies, and birds. You can discover gardening techniques and plant choices that can work in your own space. Master Gardeners will be on hand throughout the garden to answer questions and offer advice about vegetable and flower gardening. If you are interested in creating your own native pollinator garden, a display by the Master Gardeners will teach you how.

The garden also showcases the role native trees play in supporting our environment and regulating the climate. The trunks, branches, leaves, fruit, and nuts of trees provide habitat for many insects, birds, squirrels, and even deer. The shade they provide and their absorption of carbon dioxide while releasing oxygen into the atmosphere counter the increase in temperatures and greenhouse gases. Despite the increase in storm water, the root systems of trees and native plants stabilize the soil and decrease erosion.

The value of native trees is immeasurable. For example, according to the entomologist Dr. Douglas Tallamy, native oak trees support over 500 species of caterpillars, whereas a non-native tree from Asia, the ginkgo, hosts only five species of caterpillars. Because 96 percent of terrestrial songbirds rely on caterpillars to feed their babies, caterpillars are important for a healthy ecosystem. It's one of many fascinating examples of how thoughtful planting helps nature thrive.

Interactive exhibits that will entertain and educate continue throughout the event. Learn about fascinating insects from members of the 4-H. Get inspired by stories about our environment and its inhabitants, from the Frederick County Public Libraries. Chat with local experts from the Frederick County Beekeepers Association, Habitat Advisors, and Frederick Bird Club as to identities and benefits

of bees and birds that share our backyards and their importance in our environment, as well as the threats they experience. Get active and motivated about local environmental issues by visiting the Sierra Club Catocin Group table.

Stop by the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin's table to see how stormwater affects the Potomac River's health. Although stormwater generally drains into the soil, when it cannot because of more intense and frequent storms, it may run along streets and parking lots, picking up trash, oil, salt, and other pollutants. These flow into our rivers and streams, affecting drinking water and aquatic fish and plants. Near the ICPRB, the Master Gardeners will share tips for creating a yard that helps rainwater soak into the soil instead of washing pollution into waterways.

New this year are exhibits from Mobilize Frederick, which shares ideas for climate resilience; Wild Ones, a group focused on native plant landscaping; and the Frederick County Division of Energy & Environment, promoting sustainability practices.

EarthFest is a day to celebrate, connect, and come away with fresh ideas for living in harmony with the natural world. We hope to see you there!



Master Gardeners answer gardening questions at the 2023 EarthFest on the University of Maryland Extension Office grounds, 330 Montevue Lane, Frederick. This year's EarthFest will be on May 31, 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (photo courtesy of Frederick County Master Gardeners)

Part of the **Children's Garden** on the University of Maryland Extension Office grounds, 330 Montevue Lane, Frederick. "Storytime" is held here at 10:00 a.m., weather permitting, the first Wednesday of each month, May through October. (Photo courtesy of Frederick County Master Gardeners)



An indoor display at the University of Maryland Extension, Frederick Office, highlights the many activities in which youth can participate. (Photo courtesy of Frederick County Master Gardeners)



Painted rocks

One of the most popular Earthfest activities at the University of Maryland Extension Office, 330 Montevue Lane, Frederick, is painting rocks to resemble anything from a flower garden to ladybugs or bees. Just use your imagination! (Photo courtesy of the Frederick County Master Gardeners)

Pictured on the right are a few vendors at the 2023 Earthfest. This year's Earthfest will include activities for children, such as finger puppet crafts and a "Storytime in the Garden." EarthFest attendees can talk with representatives from Master Gardeners, 4-H, local non-profits, the Frederick County Beekeepers' Association, the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, Habitat Advisors, the Frederick Bird Club, and the Sierra Club Catoclin Group. New this year are exhibits from Mobilize Frederick (ideas for climate resilience); Wild Ones (native plant landscaping); and the Frederick County Division of Energy & Environment (promoting sustainability practices). (Photo courtesy of the Frederick County Master Gardeners)



Check our website or Facebook for upcoming free seminars, Master Gardener certification classes, gardening information, advice, and publications, as well as other announcements, at the following URLs, or call us at 301-600-1596:

- Frederick County Master Gardeners' website, <bit.ly/FCMG-Home-Gardening>;
- Facebook, <https://bit.ly/FCMGFacebook>;
- Instagram, <https://bit.ly/FCMGinstagram>
- University of Maryland Extension Home and Garden Information Center, bit.ly/UME-HGIC;
- Frederick County Master Gardeners publications, <<http://extension.umd.edu/locations/frederick-county/home-gardening>>.

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