

**LIVE YOUR
BEST SPRING**
for the climate
#SpringOfHopeY4N





SPRING IS COMING TO EUROPE! WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUTH & FOR NATURE?

I know you feel tired and exhausted from the-pandemic-that-must-not-be-named. Personally, sometimes I get really desperate if I'm missing all of my best years zooming all day. So yes, I know it sucks. If you add the entire climate and environmental crisis situation to the pot, it can become hard to rest our eyes at night. But not to worry, I am not going to add anything to your list of worries.

The overall objective of this toolkit, and of the Spring of Hope campaign, is to tell you, from one youngster living in Europe to another, that **you can take action for the climate crisis and for nature AND rest your eyes at night at the same time.**

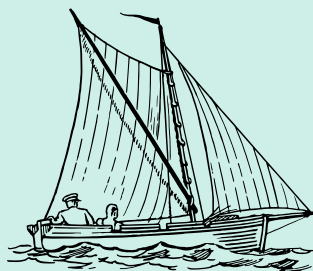
The bad part about systemic change is that transforming the ways we live is tricky because these crises are so interconnected and they feel huge to us. The good part (yes, there is a good part!) is that as long as we act, we know **at least something will come out of it** because when things are interconnected, even a tiny change makes a difference. Ever heard of the ripple effect? Exactly.

In this tool kit, you will learn how to live your best Spring, by acting through **small and feasible everyday actions.**

Welcome on board!

I hope you will enjoy the read.

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WHY ENGAGE WITH NATURE?

Finding solutions in nature is one of the greatest strategies for combating climate change and mitigating its effects, and there are many ways in which we, as a society, can do this.

We can focus attention away from building dams and pipelines to help with the drought and look instead to nature for solutions to problems. This means that instead of building unnatural infrastructure, we can put more of our trust into **naturally occurring** wetlands like streams or lakes. These act as natural storage facilities for water, allowing it to permeate downward and recharge groundwater. Similarly, trees can also store water, using their roots to absorb, store and filter the liquid for when drought occurs.



As **individuals**, this is what you gain when you become friends with nature:

- **Mental health benefits**, there is a lot of research showing that even a little time around nature contributes to mental well-being! (some references [here](#) and [here](#))
- **A sense of purpose**: nothing better than reflecting about our existence, am I right?
- **It can help to boost your career** - corporate sustainability is becoming increasingly more important. It doesn't matter where you work or what field you are in, acting for the environment can give you a plus on your CV and increase employability options! In [this instagram post](#) you see explored some possibilities for climate careers!

(Still on the employability topic, the UK, for example, has been investing in [making every job a green job](#). Also, some stats show that the environmental economy employs 4.2 million people in the European Union, and [there is a tendency to grow](#).) Paying bills + doing something we love + good for the environment = perfect job!

WHAT IS IN THIS TOOLKIT?

This is a quick summary of everything that is covered in the toolkit. You know, so you don't waste your precious time wondering **if this is the right piece of reading for you today.**

- A list with examples of small stuff that you can do for nature in **your own locality**
- If this feels still too big, not to worry! We have a list with even **smaller stuff** you can do for nature!
- Guidance on what to do if the weather sucks, or if the pandemic is threatening every plan of **convening with your community**
- **What's next:** learn cool opportunities of staying engaged with Y4N's mission



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SMALL STUFF YOU CAN DO FOR NATURE IN YOUR OWN LOCALITY

1. PLANT A TREE

Planting trees has many benefits. For example, increasing the number of trees means that the amount of carbon dioxide in the air will decrease because of the trees ability to absorb the carbon and produce oxygen as they grow (respiration). Trees store water in their roots which benefits the soil. In addition to storing water, they also store carbon. They provide shade. Also, it can be very cool to see a tree grow during your lifetime.

When you are choosing which trees to plant, always look for local and native seeds that fit the local ecosystem. You can search which ones are good for that purpose in the [native plant finder](#). Also, new trees store more carbon, so go ahead and plant a bunch!



2. CREATE AN URBAN GARDEN

If you live in a small or big city, it doesn't matter. There's always space for your own urban gardens, either in boxes, pots or directly in the ground!

The purpose of urban agriculture is to give people increased access to food that is locally grown. Prepare yourselves for having many delicious veggies on your table!

However, there are many other benefits to urban agriculture! Urban gardens can also contribute to the reduction of negative environmental impacts by reducing the cost of food transportation and by providing humans, plants, and animals with habitats. All these factors work to improve the ecology of an area.



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2. CREATE AN URBAN GARDEN (CON'T)

Another advantage: urban gardening can be a relaxing exercise! Urban gardening is a way to reconnect urban people to nature and biodiversity. In many dense cities, being in full self sufficiency with urban gardening is not possible but that's ok - it's still a major way to start recognizing how good food is important for ecosystems, humans, and the economy.

Remember when we said that nature can lead to green jobs? Here's an opportunity for you to become an urban gardener, and earn some money from it!



3. BUILD A GREEN WALL

Building green walls or roofs can positively impact the environment. They can be installed in your yard or the exterior wall of your house and they can work to improve air quality. The plants are able to do this by sucking up carbon dioxide like trees and they also release oxygen which benefits living things. In this sense, air around green spaces becomes purified and cleaner than it was previously. The leaves of the plants in these green spaces trap dust and dirty air that resides in urban areas where smoke is present.

Green walls can also act as a cooling mechanism for heat islands that cities become - so especially useful during heat waves that are becoming more common! Here are some tips for a green wall inside your home. There are also some useful tips on a vertical garden you can do outside.



4. PROTECT TREES WITH BIRD'S NESTS

Birding is when someone goes to an area where there are birds and tries to identify the type of bird or birds that are living there. They identify the bird's habitat and nests and report their findings to parties concerned. This allows them to monitor and keep the area protected.

You can contribute to science even - in Paris, for a couple of years, scientists asked locals to send a picture and add to an app whenever they see a bird, with location and date. [More info here!](#)

Trees with heron nests in them are protected year-round under the B.C. (Canada) Wildlife Act. This positively impacts climate change because the trees will not be cut down therefore they can continue absorbing carbon dioxide and improving air quality while also providing these birds with a habitat. One of the ways we can protect bird's nests in trees is by making vegetative buffers that work to reduce noise. Are birds with nests in trees being protected in your area?



DO YOU WANT SOME MORE INSPIRATION?



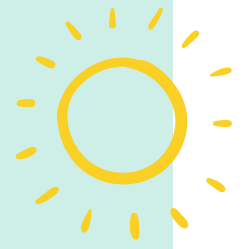
Tiny ecosystems are crucial for the change we need!

Check out [this story from Esmerelda Wirtz](#), about a local composting system that she set up in her community in Belgium after realising there was no place for her to put her food waste in her new urban home.



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EVEN SMALLER STUFF THAT YOU CAN DO FOR CLIMATE AND NATURE



1. Use your **local green spaces**. Take a book to the park!

2. **Go for a walk** - whenever your local COVID-19 allows, go for a walk, maybe just for 10 or 15 minutes, and concentrate in admiring the overall landscape. Take a moment to observe the local biodiversity, and how varied and dense it is!

3. Sit outside and just **listen for 1 minute**. Then write down all the sounds you heard. You might be surprised!

4. Take an afternoon nap in the sun! If you don't feel safe enough to do that outside, you can try to find a place inside your home where **there's some sunshine**.

5. **Talk to your friends** about nature and the climate - maybe discussing some cute birds you saw, or the latest news?

6. **Cook your favorite vegan recipe** - or learn how to cook something simple and easy!



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IF THE WEATHER IS BAD, OR IF THE PANDEMIC MAKES IT DIFFICULT TO MEET PEOPLE FACE-TO-FACE?

So far, we have been focusing on how you, as an individual, can move around to cause some change. But with systems change, a societal and collective movement is needed, which becomes more difficult during a pandemic. But not impossible. **Here's what you can do:**

ONLINE ACTIVISM

Find your own local Fridays for Future chapter and volunteer or attend their events!

ART!

You can start drawing, writing or painting for relieving stress. We talked before in Y4N about activism, and how influential it can be! It doesn't need to be Van Gogh, just about **expressing what you feel** and want to shout to the world.

FIND YOUR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTEER!

There are many ways by which you can volunteer. You can look for the following organizations. You can select the ones that look more interesting for you, and message about volunteering opportunities:

- Charity organizations
- The Red Cross
- Scouts
- Student associations (usually attached to universities!)
- Environmental and conservation organizations



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YOU'VE FINISHED THIS AWESOME TOOL KIT! WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT?

Engaging with nature is much more beneficial than one might think and these are just some examples of ways in which we can be doing meaningful activities and using nature-based solutions this spring. Paying close attention to how we can engage with nature when it comes to its natural solutions to defend against the impacts of climate change, **will serve as inspiration for those who care about the planet.** So, get out and engage with nature in whatever way you can this spring!

And, how can you be engaged with Youth4Nature?

Youth4Nature is here to empower youth all around the globe to take action for the climate crisis and become ambassadors of nature.

- Share your story with nature and climate for our Storytelling Campaign!
- Stay tuned in the #SpringofHopeY4N, and the associated events! Take part, join, bring your hope and your nice spirit.
- Take part in the Treasure Hunt! You can get a prize worth up to U\$60 in value!
- Volunteer for Youth4Nature! You can fill this form and we'll be in touch with you.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Raysa França

Raysa is from Brazil, but for more than a year, she has called Finland her home. She acts as a Regional Director for Europe & Central Asia at Y4N. Raysa holds a bachelor's degree in Social Sciences from the Federal University of Minas Gerais, and she is currently studying an MSc in Leadership for Change, Governance for Sustainable Change at Tampere University. In her free time, you may find her going to sauna and swimming on the ice, or exploring the unlimited possibilities of vegan cuisine.

Luca Forsyth

Luca Forsyth is a grade eleven student at the Vancouver Waldorf High School in Vancouver, BC, Canada. He loves nature, sports, graphic design and the environment. He also enjoys painting and drawing. His past experiences include volunteering for the environmental organization Ocean Ambassadors Canada and designing labels for his father's brewery.



Julia Bethe

Julia is a French girl passionate about History and Nature who studied History and Biology during her Bachelor's and specialised in climate studies and ecosystems at Université Paris Saclay - AgroParisTech. Through her professional experiences and master thesis, she gained expertise on the private sector, agriculture, nature-based solutions, international policies and the health effects of climate change. Besides enjoying her time as Global Ambassador at Y4N, she loves being on the move, discovering new places be it countries or landscapes with unique biodiversity and full of hiking potential, and meeting new passionate people.



Editors

Rachel Boere
Julia Bethe

Design

Luca Forsyth
Rachel Boere
Raysa França