March 2022

Golden Age

1915 S. 18th St. Centerville, Iowa 52544 Phone # 1-641-856-2757

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of

Mary McCoy

Barbara Smaniotto 6th
Henry Sleeth 13th
Tammy Whitworth 15th
Norma Evens 30th

Celebrating March

Mardi Gras
March 1

What If Cats and Dogs Had Opposable Thumbs Day?
March 3

International Women's Day
March 8

St. Patrick's Day
March 17

Worldwide Quilting Day
March 19

World Poetry Day
March 21

Shakespeare Week
March 21–27

Little Red Wagon Day
March 30

Life from the Ground Up

With the International Day of Forests on March 21 and World Wildlife Day on March 3, the month of March provides ample opportunities to reflect on the extraordinary diversity of life on our planet. Our planet nurtures and supports so much life, it's no wonder we call her "Mother Earth."

When we hear that Earth "teems with life," our imaginations often conjure vast forests crawling with animals, oceans alive with fish, or blue skies filled with soaring birds. The primary engine of life, however, lies beneath our feet. Soil biodiversity—the vast mix of insects, worms, bacteria, fungi, and other living organisms in the dirt—regulates and balances the nutrients that allow for life aboveground. The longer soil remains undisturbed, the longer its organisms grow and thrive. Healthy soils are fertile, filter and store water, and resist erosion. Soil provides the foundation for all living things.

It is amazing that life must begin so small and unnoticed before growing into towering redwoods and gargantuan blue whales. For life to flourish, Mother Earth does not have to work on her own. We can provide the building blocks that sustain woodlands and their wildlife right in our own backyards.

Compost can be added to nutrient-poor soils to increase soil biodiversity. The root systems of different plants support different organisms underground, so planting a wide variety of native flowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees also improves soil. Best of all, a wide variety of native plants also harbors life aboveground. Insects are attracted to native plants and trees. Birds and other animals are attracted to insects. Before you know it, a simple backyard garden has become a refuge for all sorts of local wildlife. Of course, life doesn't happen overnight. It can take years for a healthy soil community to grow, for native roots to take hold, for trees to mature, and for animals to discover their new sanctuary. Nature requires patience. Mother Earth has always played the long game.

History in Bloom

On March 27, 1912, Mayor Yukio Ozaki of Tokyo gifted 3,020 cherry trees to Washington, D.C., as a gesture of friendship and cooperation between Japan and the United States. Over 100 years later, Washington's Cherry Blossom Festival remains one of the capital's most beloved events, drawing over one million visitors each year.

The story of the cherry trees began in 1885 with author, geographer, and photographer Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore. Scidmore often accompanied her brother, a diplomat, on assignments to the Far East, enjoying access to parts of countries that ordinary travelers could only dream of. It was Scidmore who, upon her return to Washington D.C. from Japan, first floated the idea of planting cherry trees along the Potomac River. Scidmore's ideas were rebuffed, but she was persistent.

In 1909, Scidmore wrote a letter to the new first lady, Helen Herron Taft, informing the president's wife of her intention to raise money to purchase and donate cherry trees to the city. The first lady was more than receptive. As luck would have it, a Japanese delegation was present in Washington. Hearing of the plan, the delegates graciously offered 2,000 trees, which the first lady accepted. Unfortunately, these trees arrived in America infested with insects and parasites. All 2,000 had to be destroyed. The idea, however, did not die. Japanese officials announced that another 3,020 trees would be shipped to Washington.

It was on March 27 that First Lady Helen Taft and Viscountess Chinda, wife of the Japanese ambassador, planted the first two Yoshino cherry trees on the north bank of the Tidal Basin. Additional trees were planted around the Basin, in East Potomac Park, and at the White House. Many of the original trees, despite being over 150 years old, still bloom each year in Washington to the surprise and delight of botanists. The cherry trees are the most pampered in Washington, getting expert care from National Park Service horticulturalists. The tree crews are tending not only to the trees but also to American history.

Total Bummer

Whether you call it by its original name, the "Bum Bag," or its current name, the "Cross-Body Bag," this fabulous (and some would say unflattering) fashion accessory will forever be known as the fanny pack. Try one on for size on March 12, International Fanny Pack Day.

While some claim that Australian Melba Stone invented the first fanny pack in 1962, Ötzi the Iceman, the prehistoric human found packed in alpine ice, wore a belt pouch 5,000 years ago. Modern iterations of the leather fanny pack first emerged in the 1950s after World War II, when travelers wore them while skiing European peaks. But it wasn't until the 1980s and '90s that fanny packs, manufactured in outlandish neon synthetic fabric, hit peak popularity. Just as rapidly, though, they became the butt of jokes. To wear one was considered unspeakably nerdy. But all fashion is cyclical. As many '90s trends reemerge, so too does the fanny pack! Today, celebrities are spotted wearing versions manufactured by Louis Vuitton. Perhaps to avoid fashion faux pas of the past, these bags are not worn at the waist or fanny, but across the body. We are not fooled. They'll always be fanny packs to us.

Awe-Inspiring

How does one even begin to celebrate International Day of Awesomeness on March 10? This holiday's founders selected the date because it corresponds with the birthday of actor and martial artist Chuck Norris. Are we to believe that Mr. Norris embodies all the essential qualities of awesomeness? Norris has certainly achieved cult status amongst his fans thanks to his tough-guy persona. Perhaps Norris embodies the true meaning of *awe*, defined as a "feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder." Psychologists believe that experiencing true awe is healthy. These experiences enhance well-being and make us more altruistic.

Puppetry for the People

Since 2003, March 21 has been celebrated as World Puppetry Day. Puppetry is one of humanity's most ancient art forms. As a form of theater, historians believe that puppets were used on stage even before human actors. Puppets have been discovered in the ancient civilizations of Egypt, India, China, and Greece, offering evidence that puppetry is a universal art form dear to all cultures.

What is it about puppetry that makes it so special? As children, it is common to imbue our toys with life, emotion, and drama and play with them. Some could argue that every child who has ever played with a doll or teddy bear is an amateur puppeteer. Child psychologists and educators have taken notice of the power of puppetry. Puppets are often used as a form of art therapy to help children identify their feelings and communicate with others. This sort of play demonstrates the power of puppetry, our ability to transfer ourselves, our personality, our feelings, our thoughts, our voice, our movements, into the object of the puppet. It takes extraordinary empathy to bring a puppet to life, not to mention the skill it takes for a puppeteer to show how their puppet reacts to others. Yet, even if the puppet is acting out an uncomfortable or disarming emotion, puppets offer safety. The puppeteer, after all, is always in control.

Puppets are inanimate vessels brought to life by puppeteers, but only the most skilled puppeteers can make an audience believe that the puppet is more than stuffing and fabric, that the puppet is truly capable of interacting with others. Some puppets have become celebrities in their own right, largely thanks to the expertise of their puppeteers. Howdy Doody was the star of a television series that ran for 13 years. The sock puppet Lamb Chop, played by Shari Lewis, won an Emmy in 1973. Jim Henson's puppets are so popular that they are known by their own name, the Muppets. Henson's perennial collaborator, Frank Oz, performed as the Jedi Master Yoda in George Lucas' *The Empire Strikes Back*.

Fabric of Society

If you're wondering what to wear this month, make it easy on yourself and wear plaid. March is Mad for Plaid Month. In order to understand the origin of plaid-patterned fabrics, one must first understand tartan. Tartan is a cloth originating in Scotland, characterized by intersecting stripes of various widths and colors. Certain tartan patterns and colors are associated with certain Scottish clans. Clans can be identified by the tartan kilts or clothing worn by its members.

While plaid, like tartan, consists of intersecting horizontal and vertical lines of color, plaids are not related to clans. Plaids are often made of any color or intersecting patterns. Gingham, Houndstooth, Madras, and Tattersall are all types of plaid. However, to make matters more confusing, the word *plaid* does have a specific meaning for the Scottish. Plaid describes a rectangular piece of tartan worn over the left shoulder, fastened by a brooch, as an accessory to the Highland outfit. These plaids are known by names such as Fly Plaid, Drummer's Plaid, or Shepherd's Plaid.

Radio Reassurances

Eight days after taking office, on March 12, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered the first of his evening radio addresses, warmly known as *fireside chats*. At the time, nearly all of America's banks had closed after a panicked public rushed to make mass withdrawals. It was the lowest point of the Great Depression, with 15 million Americans unemployed. Roosevelt's first fireside chat was meant to calm the public by offering a plan to restore the banking system. Using radio as an effective form of mass media, Roosevelt made 30 fireside chats. He was able to dispel rumors, counter political opposition, and explain his policy decisions. During a time of uncertainty, Roosevelt's voice projected self-assurance and promised steady leadership.

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Postage Information

Night of the Witches

Halloween might be long gone, but Mexico's Night of the Witches is only arriving on the first Friday in March. For centuries, indigenous spiritual beliefs, medieval Spanish traditions of witchcraft, and West African voodoo practices have mingled and persisted in the town of Catemaco. In 1970, a local shaman proposed the idea of hosting a witchcraft convention known as the *Noche de brujas*, Night of the Witches. For the past 50 years, hundreds of witches, shamans, and healers from all over Mexico have converged on a hilltop known as Cerro Mono Blanco to participate in a mass cleansing ritual, ridding the town of negative energies and influences. Of course, 50 years is long enough for the spectacle of the event to become commercialized by the masses, and these days, tourists outnumber the witches. It is easy to buy a protective amulet, sit for a tarot reading, and witness an impressive variety of rituals and spells.

March Birthdays

In astrology, those born from March 1–20 are Pisces' Fish. Pisces are sympathetic and selfless, making them compassionate friends. Their intuitive natures also make Fish creative and expressive artists. Those born from March 21–31 are Aries' Rams. As the first sign of the zodiac, Rams love to lead the charge of change and progress. Sometimes impulsive, always passionate, Rams are dynamic and fun friends.

Lupita Nyong'o (actress) – March 1, 1983
Desi Arnaz (actor) – March 2, 1917
Alexander Graham Bell (inventor) – March 3, 1847
Shaquille O'Neal (athlete) – March 6, 1972
Raul Julia (actor) – March 9, 1940
Liza Minnelli (entertainer) – March 12, 1946
Simone Biles (gymnast) – March 14, 1997
Vanessa Williams (singer) – March 18, 1963
Spike Lee (director) – March 20, 1957
Steve McQueen (actor) – March 24, 1930
Aretha Franklin (singer) – March 25, 1942
Warren Beatty (actor) – March 30, 1937