

WHAT'S NEW ON EVERYTHING EARTH

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Celebrate Earth's Small Gifts

The Legend of Poinsettias

Crispy Sweet Potatoes Your
Guests Will Actually Like

Last words for 2022

CELEBRATE EARTH THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The earth will not survive climate change intact. The impact on species alone is enormous. Scientists estimate that there are between 3 million and 100 million species on earth and that between 0.01 and 0.1% of all species will become extinct annually, equaling between 300 and 100,000 species gone forever each year. That's quite a range, highlighting how little we know about Earth's treasures. Most will be gone before we know they exist.

Extinction is natural. But the rapid loss of species we are seeing today is estimated by experts to be between 1,000 and 10,000 times higher than the natural extinction rate. And global heating continues to supercharge extreme weather at an astonishing speed, causing scientists to estimate that 20% of species on Earth currently face extinction. The climate change trajectory causes that estimate rise to 50% by the end of the century.

It can feel distant, even unimportant, to lose a single species. Yet the reverberations are immense. I spent many years working with colleagues on both sides of the Mexican border to revive the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem including its endangered iconic species the vaquita, the world's smallest porpoise. Their demise began with the damming of the Colorado River so thoroughly that less than 1% of the natural flow now reaches the Gulf of Mexico delta.

In researching this article, I learned that only 18 individual vaquita remain in existence. *Epic failure.*

It's so much more than the loss of one species. It's the destruction of an entire ecosystem. It's the transformation of lush forests, wetlands and green lagoons teeming with life into a giant dead mudflat. It's the devastation of the indigenous Cucupa "River People". It's personal.



Once the most widespread of Asian rhinoceroses, only 60 individual Javan rhinos remain, hunted nearly to extinction due to ignorant lore about their horns.



Photo by USAF Sr. Airman Joshua Strang

So, what's to celebrate?

Earth is incredibly resilient. The planet's phenomena—even the few we humans have studied—still baffle and surprise us. From the magnificent aurora borealis to the power inside the tiniest seed, Earth holds mysterious powers including perhaps the resilience to survive humans.

The coming winter solstice when daylight wanes and earth rests is the perfect time to enjoy the delights nature still has to offer.

No need to go in search of Earth's most incredible spectacles. There's magic in Earth's everyday gifts—in rich soil, unfurling fronds, dormant trees, migrating flocks, in rain and snowflakes, in the animals willing to share the earth with us—if we just slow down enough to notice them. This holiday season, skip the malls and celebrate earth. For 2023, let's reconnect.



THE LEGEND OF POINSETTIAS



Why are poinsettias the traditional Christmas flower when they collapse at temperatures of less than 50 degrees, they are **deadly poisonous especially to cats** and they were once considered a weed? It's all about the legend of Pepita.

In their native region of southern Mexico, poinsettias flower during the winter season. According to Mexican lore, there was a young child, Pepita, who did not have a gift for the baby Jesus at a Christmas Eve service. She was very poor so all she could do was pick a bouquet of weeds to offer. The angels felt compassion for her plight. So after Pepita set the bouquet of weeds at the crèche of the nativity on Christmas Eve, the angels transformed the weeds into beautiful red flowers with lush green leaves. This is why red and green are the colors of Christmas today.

For more winter color including a carousel made of roses and seeds, see [Delightful December Flowers.](#)



SWEET POTATOES YOUR GUESTS WILL LOVE... FOR A CHANGE

Are you dreading another round of mushy sweet potatoes just after you got through a pile of them at Thanksgiving? Especially if they've been ruined with a ghastly marshmallow topping? Me too.

But they are traditional and somehow required with holiday meals.

Here's a solution: [Crispy Roasted Sweet Potato Chunkies.](#) These potatoes are caramelized and crispy on the outside and delectably moist on the inside. Plus, you can trick kids into gobbling down these nutrient-packed potatoes by slicing them into French fry like wedges.

These will not only fail to horrify but will be requested again and again as your contribution to a holiday dinner. Use as an appetizer or side dish any time of year.



Why is sweet potato a Superfood? They're loaded with beta carotene, a potent antioxidant and a rich source of vitamin A.

LAST WORDS FOR 2022

"Because you are alive, everything is possible."

— [Thich Nhat Hanh](#)

STAY TUNED FOR "WHAT'S NEW ON EVERYTHING EARTH" IN THE NEW YEAR!

Meanwhile, please feel free to [Contact Us](#) with questions or to sign up for this monthly newsletter.